

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED



THREE KINGDOMS

A HISTORICAL NOVEL

Attributed to

LUO GUANZHONG

Translated from the Chinese
with Notes and an Afterword by

MOSS ROBERTS

1
PART

"The Iliad of China."—Anthony C. Yu, University of Chicago

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Foreword by John S. Service

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Moss Roberts

A number of people have made this project possible and helped bring it to completion— first of all my teachers, whose devotion to the subject matters of sinology has inspired me and guided my studies. Among the most influential were the late P. A. Boodberg, who instructed me in ancient Chinese and the connections between language and history, and W. T. de Bary, whose instruction in Chinese thought has stood me in good stead as a translator. As a student, I also benefited from the devoted labor of many language lecturers at Columbia University and the University of California at Berkeley, who shared their learning without stint.

This project first took shape as an abridged *Three Kingdoms*, which Pantheon Books published in 1976 for use in college classes. The abridged version has its limitations and its mistakes, however, and I harbored the hope that some day the opportunity to translate the entire text would present itself. That opportunity came in 1982 when the late Luo Liang, deputy editor-in-chief at the Foreign Languages Press, proposed that I translate the whole novel for the Press. He and Israel Epstein arranged for me to spend the year 1983-84 at the FLP as a foreign expert. I arrived in Beijing and began work in September of 1983. At the FLP I enjoyed the friendship and benefited from the advice of a number of colleagues. I wish to thank the staff of the English section, in particular the senior staff, for the help and encouragement that made that first year of work so pleasantly memorable. I was also fortunate to have been awarded a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship for the translation.

In the middle stages of the project Xu Mingqiang, vice director at FLP, and his colleague Huang Youyi, deputy editor-in-chief, facilitated my work in many ways. I am particularly grateful that they arranged to have the late C. C. Yin (Ren Jiazhen) serve as the FLP's reader. Mr. Yin read the whole manuscript with painstaking care and his recommendations improved the translation considerably. I thank him for sharing his learning and experience with me. At the same time I benefited from the erudition of my life-long teacher, friend, and colleague C. N. Tay, now retired from New York University. Professor Tay served as my reader, and many of his suggestions have been incorporated into the translation.

During 1984 Brian George of the University of California Press visited the FLP and helped to prepare the way for joint FLP-UCP publication. I thank him for his interest in my work and his encouragement over the long years of this project. William McClung and James Clark of the UCP arranged the joint publication with the late Zhao Yihe of the FLP. Shortly thereafter, the UCP, the FLP, and I concluded that the Western reader would be best served by adding a full set of notes and an extended commentary on the text. This format was adopted, and the translation became eligible for support from the National Endowment for the Humanities; in 1985 and 1986 I was fortunate to hold a fifteen-month fellowship from the NEH that relieved me of half my teaching duties.

The translation owes much to the wisdom of John S. Service, whom the UCP engaged to serve as its reader when the manuscript was completed. His stylistic grace has refined many a phrase, and his pertinent and penetrating queries on both the text and the introduction were of great value to me. Having so demanding and knowledgeable a reader turned the arduous last years of the project into an energizing experience. I also wish to thank Deborah Rudolph for contributing her considerable sinological and proofreading skills. In the later stages of the project William McClung and Betsey

Scheiner of the UCP were generous with their encouragement and good counsel, lightening my task and my spirits.

Another scholar I wish to thank is Robert Hegel, who read the first half of the manuscript for the UCP I made use of a significant number of his suggestions. Chauncey S. Goodrich kindly read the introduction in draft and suggested useful changes; these too have been incorporated. I would like to thank as well my friend James Peck; although he did not work directly on the manuscript, his thoughtful comments have widened the view on many issues. Mr. Peck was the editor for the abridged version published by Pantheon, and his continued interest in the project has been encouraging.

The abovementioned, by giving so generously of their time and talent, have improved this project greatly. Errors and doubtful points surely remain, and for these I take full responsibility. A word of recognition is also due to C. H. Brewitt-Taylor, whose 1925 translation of *Three Kingdoms* I read long before gathering enough Chinese to confront the original.

To the students in my Chinese language and literature classes, my thanks for twenty years of challenge and excitement in what has been (at least for me) a learning experience; and to my colleagues in the East Asian Studies Program of Washington Square College, New York University, my appreciation for the years of sustaining companionship and critical interchange.

To my mother, Helen, who takes a loving interest in my work, my gratitude for years of support and encouragement. The translation is dedicated to my wife, Florence, who serves the poorer citizens of New York City as a Legal Services attorney in family law.

FOREWORD

John S. Service

In 1942, during China's war against Japan, I happened to be a solitary American traveling with a party of Chinese from Chengdu to Lanzhou and beyond. They were officials and engineers of the National Resources Commission, with a sprinkling of journalists. All were college graduates; many had advanced degrees from foreign study. We rode together intimately in a small bus, and our first main objective was Hanzhong in southern Shaanxi.

Almost from the start I noticed that my companions were having vigorous discussions that seemed to involve the old names of various towns that our road passed through. Changing place-names are one of the problems of Chinese history, and I paid little attention. About the third day the discussions could no longer be ignored. Our youngest member, the *Dagong bao* correspondent, excitedly announced that the walled town we were approaching was the site of Zhuge Liang's "Empty City Stratagem."¹ The whole area we were passing through, it turned out, had been the scene of many hard-fought campaigns during the wars of the Three Kingdoms.

Years before, as a boy in China, I had heard vaguely of the famous novel. Travel in Sichuan in those days was by sedan chair. About once an hour the bearers would set us down while they regained strength at a tea shop. Sometimes, sitting at a small raised table at the rear, there would be a storyteller. To my queries, my patient father usually replied: "Probably something from *Three Kingdoms*." Also, we occasionally saw a snatch of Chinese opera. Again, it seemed to be "something from *Three Kingdoms*." But the tea shop rests were brief, and missionary families did not spend much time at the Chinese opera. Having read about King Arthur and his knights of the round table, I decided that *Three Kingdoms* must be something of the same: romantic myths of a misty never-never land of long ago. It was startling to find that for these men of modern China it was fact and history. Furthermore, these tales of martial valor and deepest loyalty had special relevance for them in that time of foreign aggression—with Chinese resistance being based on the actual area of Liu Bei's old kingdom of Shu.

Eventually, of course, I read *Three Kingdoms*. It was like donning a special pair of glasses. Our family's life while I was growing up in Sichuan had been dominated by the cataclysmic ebb and flow of local warlord politics (having the misfortune to be both rich and populous, Sichuan perhaps surpassed all other provinces as a "warlord *tianxia*"). Now the dramatic posturings and righteous manifestoes, the unending intrigues and sudden changes of alliances, the forays and retreats and occasional battles, even the actual tactics used—all had a familiar ring. The whole cast of players, it seemed, had absorbed the stories and lessons of *Three Kingdoms* and could not forget them.

It was not only the warlords who found guidance and inspiration in *Three Kingdoms*. After the success of the Communists' Long March, the Guomindang spent the years from 1934 to 1937 in largely fruitless efforts to obliterate all traces of the remnants left behind. It is recorded that the military leader of the old Eyuwan base area "was an avid reader, though not apparently of Marxist books. His favorite works included . . . *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. [This] he carried with him always, while fighting or marching, and he consulted it as a military manual between battles."²

The Guomindang, too, was not immune. When Chiang Kai-shek commissioned Dai Li in 1932 to set up a military secret service, he is reported to have instructed Dai to look for an organizational

ethos in the Chinese traditional novels. Thus Dai's organization adopted operational techniques from the KGB, the Gestapo, and eventually the FBI, but it was built as a sworn brotherhood devoted to benevolence and righteousness and held together by bonds of mutual loyalty and obligation—with a clear model in *Three Kingdoms*.³

One could go on. But perhaps I have sufficiently made the point that *Three Kingdoms* continues to have vitality in Chinese attitudes and behavior. That fact alone makes it important to us outsiders who seek to know and understand China.

There is another important reason, more general and nonutilitarian, why *Three Kingdoms* well merits a reading. For at least four hundred years it has continued to be a favorite of the world's largest public. The literate of China read and reread it; those who can not read learn it (perhaps even more intensely) from storytellers and opera and word of mouth. It is, simply, a terrific story. Every element is there: drama and suspense, valor and cowardice, loyalty and betrayal, power and subtlety, chivalry and statecraft, the obligations of ruler and subject, conflicts in the basic ties of brotherhood and lineage. By any criterion, I suggest, it is an important piece of world literature.

We are fortunate, therefore, to have this new complete and, for the first time, annotated translation by Moss Roberts. Professor Roberts has admirably preserved the vigor and flavor of the Chinese text. His erudition and patience have produced a clarity of language and yet enable us to enjoy the subtleties and wordplays of the original. His translations of the poems, important in the story, are often inspired.

Though urging the reader on, I cannot promise that it will be an easy read. The story, admittedly, is long and complex. We are doubly fortunate, then, that Professor Roberts has complemented his excellent translation with background information and the translated notes and commentary by the editor of the traditional Chinese version of the novel. With the help of his research and the guidance of the Chinese commentary, the way is greatly eased. Few, I hope, will falter and thus fail fully to enjoy this absorbing, rewarding, and majestic novel.

NOTES

[1.](#) See chapter 95.

[2.](#) My thanks to Gregor Benton of the University of Leeds, whose forthcoming history of the Three Year War will be published by the University of California Press.

[3.](#) Wen-hsin Yeh, "Dai Li and the Liu Geqing Affair: Heroism in the Chinese Secret Service During the War of Resistance," *Journal of Asian Studies* 48, (1989): 545-47.

THREE KINGDOMS

A Historical Novel

*On and on the Great River rolls, racing east.
Of proud and gallant heroes its white-tops leave no trace,
As right and wrong, pride and fall turn all at once unreal.
Yet ever the green hills stay
To blaze in the west-waning day.*

*Fishers and woodsmen comb the river isles.
White-crowned, they've seen enough of spring and autumn tide
To make good company over the wine jar,
Where many a famed event
Provides their merriment.¹*



Three Bold Spirits Plight Mutual Faith in the Peach Garden; Heroes and Champions Win First Honors Fighting the Yellow Scarves

HERE BEGINS OUR TALE. The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide. Thus it has ever been. In the closing years of the Zhou dynasty,¹ seven kingdoms warred among themselves until the kingdom of Qin prevailed and absorbed the other six. But Qin soon fell, and on its ruins two opposing kingdoms, Chu and Han, fought for mastery until the kingdom of Han prevailed and absorbed its rival, as Qin had done before.² The Han court's rise to power began when the Supreme Ancestor slew a white serpent, inspiring an uprising that ended with Han's ruling a unified empire.

Two hundred years later, after Wang Mang's usurpation, Emperor Guang Wu restored the dynasty, and Han emperors ruled for another two hundred years down to the reign of Xian, after whom the realm split into three kingdoms.³ The cause of Han's fall may be traced to the reigns of Xian's two predecessors, Huan and Ling. Huan drove from office and persecuted officials of integrity and ability, giving all his trust to his eunuchs.⁴ After Ling succeeded Huan as emperor, Regent-Marshal Dou Wu and Imperial Guardian Chen Fan, joint sustainers of the throne, planned to execute the power-abusing eunuch Cao Jie and his cohorts.⁵ But the plot came to light, and Dou Wu and Chen Fan were themselves put to death. From then on, the Minions of the Palace knew no restraint.

On the fifteenth day of the fourth month of the second year of the reign Established Calm (Jian Ning),⁶ the Emperor arrived at the Great Hall of Benign Virtue for the full-moon ancestral rites. As he was about to seat himself, a strong wind began issuing out of a corner of the hall. From the same direction a green serpent appeared, slid down off a beam, and coiled itself on the throne. The Emperor fainted and was rushed to his private chambers. The assembled officials fled. The next moment the serpent vanished, and a sudden thunderstorm broke. Rain laced with hailstones pelted down for half the night, wrecking countless buildings.

In the second month of the fourth year of Established Calm an earthquake struck Luoyang, the capital, and tidal waves swept coastal dwellers out to sea. In the first year of Radiant Harmony (Guang He) hens were transformed into roosters.⁷ And on the first day of the sixth month a murky cloud more than one hundred spans in length floated into the Great Hall of Benign Virtue.⁸ The next month a secondary rainbow was observed in the Chamber of the Consorts. Finally, a part of the cliffs of the Yuan Mountains plunged to earth.⁹ All these evil portents, and more, appeared—too many to be dismissed as isolated signs.

Emperor Ling called on his officials to explain these disasters and omens. A court counselor, Cai Yong, argued bluntly that the secondary rainbow and the transformation of the hens were the result of interference in government by empresses and eunuchs. The Emperor merely read the report, sighed, and withdrew.

The eunuch Cao Jie observed this session unseen and informed his associates. They framed Cai Yong in another matter, and he was dismissed from office and retired to his village. After that a vicious gang of eunuchs known as the Ten Regular Attendants— Zhang Rang, Zhao Zhong, Feng Xu, Duan Gui, Cao Jie, Hou Lan, Jian Shuo, Cheng Kuang, Xia Yun, and Guo Sheng—took charge.¹⁰ Zhang Rang gained the confidence of the Emperor, who called him "Nuncle." Court administration became so corrupt that across the land men's thoughts turned to rebellion, and outlaws swarmed like hornets.

One rebel group, the Yellow Scarves, was organized by three brothers from the Julu district— Zhang Jue, Zhang Bao, and Zhang Liang. Zhang Jue had failed the official provincial-level examination and repaired to the hills where he gathered medicinal herbs.¹¹ One day he met an ancient mystic, emerald-eyed and with a youthful face, gripping a staff of goosefoot wood. The old man summoned Zhang Jue into a cave where he placed in his hands a sacred book in three volumes. "Here is the *Essential Arts for the Millennium*," he said. "Now that you have it, spread its teachings far and wide as Heaven's messenger for the salvation of our age. But think no seditious thoughts, or retribution will follow." Zhang Jue asked the old man's name, and he replied, "The Old Hermit From Mount Hua Summit—Zhuang Zi, the Taoist sage." Then he changed into a puff of pure breeze and was gone.

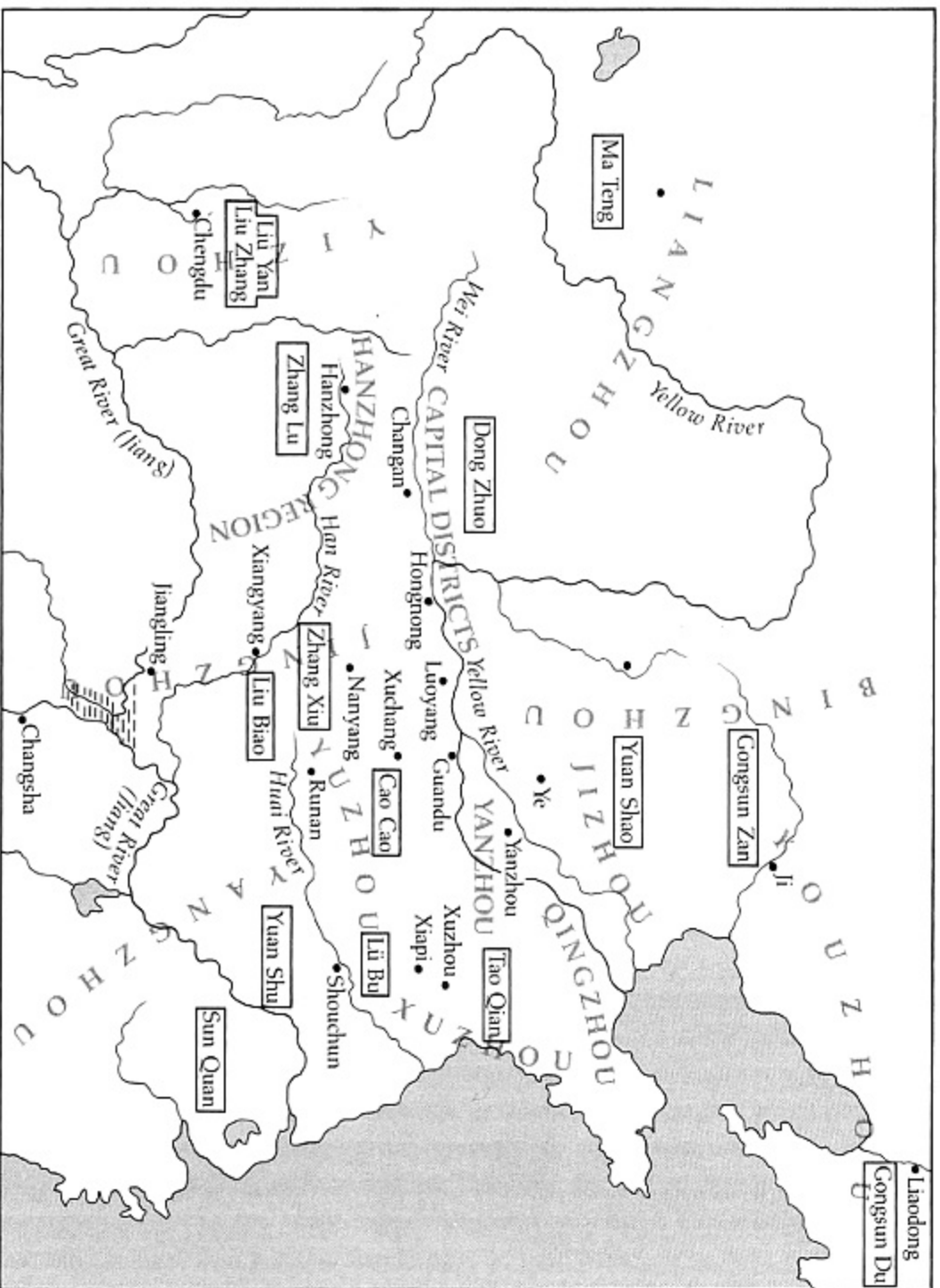
Zhang Jue applied himself to the text day and night. By acquiring such arts as summoning the wind and invoking the rain, he became known as the Master of the Millennium. During the first month of the first year of the reign Central Stability (Zhong Ping),¹² a pestilence spread through the land. Styling himself Great and Worthy Teacher, Zhang Jue distributed charms and potions to the afflicted. He had more than five hundred followers, each of whom could write the charms and recite the spells. They traveled widely, and wherever they passed, new recruits joined until Zhang Jue had established thirty-six commands—ranging in size from six or seven thousand to over ten thousand—under thirty-six chieftains titled general or commander.¹³

A seditious song began to circulate at this time:

The pale sky is on the wane,
Next, a yellow one shall reign;
The calendar's rotation
Spells fortune for the nation.

Jue ordered the words "new cycle" chalked on the front gate of every house, and soon the name Zhang Jue, Great and Worthy Teacher, was hailed throughout the eight provinces of the realm— Qingzhou, Youzhou, Xuzhou, Jizhou, Jingzhou, Yangzhou, Yanzhou, and Yuzhou. At this point Zhang Jue had his trusted follower Ma Yuanyi bribe the eunuch Feng Xu to work inside the court on behalf of the rebels. Then Zhang Jue made a proposal to his two brothers: "Popular support is the hardest thing to win. Today the people favor us. Why waste this chance to seize the realm for ourselves?"

Zhang Jue had yellow banners made ready, fixed the date for the uprising, and sent one of his followers, Tang Zhou, to inform the agent at court, the eunuch Feng Xu. Instead, Tang Zhou reported the imminent insurrection to the palace. The Emperor summoned Regent He Jin to arrest and behead Ma Yuanyi. This done, Feng Xu and his group were seized and jailed.



MAP. 1. Provinces (*zhou*), districts and towns, and military leaders at the end of the Han dynasty. The leaders' names appear in boxes. Source: Liu Chunfan, *Sanguo shihua* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), p. 21.

His plot exposed, Zhang Jue mustered his forces in great haste. Titling himself General of Heaven, his first brother General of the Earth, and his second brother General of Men, he addressed his massed followers: "Han's fated end is near. A new sage is due to appear. Let one and all obey Heaven and follow the true cause so that we may rejoice in the millennium."

From the four corners of the realm the common folk, nearly half a million strong, bound their heads with yellow scarves and followed Zhang Jue in rebellion, gathering such force that the government troops scattered on the rumor of their approach. Regent-Marshal He Jin appealed to the Emperor to order every district to defend itself and every warrior to render distinguished service in putting down the uprising. Meanwhile, the regent also gave three Imperial Corps commanders—Lu Zhi, Huangfu Song, and Zhu Jun—command of three elite field armies with orders to bring the rebels to justice.

As for Zhang Jue's army, it began advancing on Youzhou district. The governor, Liu Yan, was a native of Jingling county in Jiangxia and a descendant of Prince Gong of Lu of the imperial clan. Threatened by the approaching rebels, Liu Yan summoned Commandant Zou Jing for his estimate of the situation. "They are many," said Jing, "and we are few. The best course, Your Lordship, is to recruit an army quickly to deal with the enemy." The governor agreed and issued a call for volunteers loyal to the throne.

The call was posted in Zhuo county, where it drew the attention of a man of heroic mettle. This man, though no scholar, was gentle and generous by nature, taciturn and reserved. His one ambition was to cultivate the friendship of the boldest spirits of the empire. He stood seven and a half spans tall, with arms that reached below his knees. His ear lobes were elongated, his eyes widely set and able to see his own ears. His face was flawless as jade, and his lips like dabs of rouge.

This man was a descendant of Liu Sheng, Prince Jing of Zhongshan, a great-great-grandson of the fourth Han emperor, Jing. His name was Liu Bei; his style, Xuande.¹⁴ Generations before, during the reign of Emperor Wu, Liu Sheng's son, Zhen, was made lord of Zhuolu precinct, but the fief and title were later forfeited when Zhen was accused of making an unsatisfactory offering at the eighth-month libation in the Emperor's ancestral temple.¹⁵ Thus a branch of the Liu family came to settle in Zhuo county.

Xuande's grandfather was Liu Xiong; his father, Liu Hong. Local authorities had recommended Hong to the court for his filial devotion and personal integrity.¹⁶ He received appointment and actually held a minor office; but he died young. Orphaned, Xuande served his widowed mother with unstinting affection. However, they had been left so poor that he had to sell sandals and weave mats to live.

The family resided in a county hamlet called Two-Story Mulberry after a tree of some fifty spans just southeast of their home. Seen from afar, the mulberry rose tall and spread broadly like a carriage canopy. "An eminent man will come from this house," a fortuneteller once predicted. While playing beneath the tree with the boys in the hamlet, young Xuande often boasted, "When I'm the Son of Heaven, my chariot will have a canopy like this." Impressed by these words, his uncle Liu Yuanqi remarked, "This is no ordinary child."¹⁷ Yuanqi sympathized with the impoverished family and often helped out his nephew. At fifteen Xuande was sent away by his mother to study, and Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi were among his teachers.¹⁸ He also formed a close friendship with Gongsun Zan.

Xuande was twenty-eight when Governor Liu issued his call for volunteers. Reading the notice in Zhuo that day, Xuande sighed heavily. "Why such long sighs?" someone behind him asked brusquely.

"A real man should be serving his emperor in the hour of peril." Xuande turned and faced a man eight spans tall, with a blunt head like a panther's, huge round eyes, a swallow's heavy jowls, a tiger's whiskers, a thunderous voice, and a stance like a dashing horse. Half in fear, half in admiration, Xuande asked his name.

"The surname," the man replied, "is Zhang; given name, Fei; style, Yide.¹⁹ We've lived in this county for generations, farming our piece of land, selling wine, and slaughtering pigs. I seek to befriend men of bold spirit; when I saw you sighing and studying the recruitment call, I took the occasion to address you." "As a matter of fact," Xuande answered, "I am related to the imperial family. My surname is Liu; given name, Bei. Reading of the trouble the Yellow Scarves are stirring up, I had decided to help destroy the bandits and protect the people and was sighing for my inability to do so when you came by." "I have resources," said Zhang Fei, "that could be used to recruit in this area. Let's work together for the cause. What about it?"

Xuande was elated, and the two went to a tavern. As they drank, they watched a strapping fellow pushing a wheelbarrow stop to rest at the tavern entrance. "Some wine, and quickly—I'm off to the city to volunteer," the stranger said as he entered and took a seat. Xuande observed him: a man of enormous height, nine spans tall, with a two-foot-long beard flowing from his rich, ruddy cheeks. He had glistening lips, eyes sweeping sharply back like those of the crimson-faced phoenix, and brows like nestling silkworms.²⁰ His stature was imposing, his bearing awesome. Xuande invited him to share their table and asked who he was.

"My surname is Guan," the man replied. "My given name is Yu; my style, Chang-sheng, was later changed to Yunchang.²¹ I am from Jieliang in Hedong, but I had to leave there after killing a local bully who was persecuting his neighbors and have been on the move these five or six years.²² As soon as I heard about the recruitment, I came to sign up." Xuande then told of his own ambitions, to Lord Guan's great satisfaction.²³ Together the three left the tavern and went to Zhang Fei's farm to continue their discussion. "There's a peach garden behind my farm," said Zhang Fei. "The flowers are in full bloom. Tomorrow let us offer sacrifice there to Heaven and earth, and pledge to combine our strength and purpose as sworn brothers. Then we'll plan our course of action."²⁴ Xuande and Lord Guan agreed with one voice: "So be it."

The next day the three men had a black bull, a white horse, and other offerings brought to the peach garden.²⁵ Amid the smoke of incense they performed their ritual prostration and took their oath:

We three, though of separate ancestry, join in brotherhood here, combining strength and purpose, to relieve the present crisis. We will perform our duty to the Emperor and protect the common folk of the land. We dare not hope to be together always but hereby vow to die the selfsame day. Let shining Heaven above and the fruitful land below bear witness to our resolve. May Heaven and man scourge whosoever fails this vow.

So swearing, Xuande became the eldest brother; Lord Guan, the second; and Zhang Fei, the youngest. After the ceremonies they butchered the bull and spread forth a feast in the peach garden for the three hundred local youths they had recruited; and all drank to their heart's content.

The next day they collected weapons, but they wanted for horses. Two visitors whose servants were driving a herd of horses toward Zhang Fei's farm provided the solution. "This must mean that Heaven is with us," said Xuande as the three brothers went forth to greet the men, Zhang Shiping and

Su Shuang, two wealthy traders from Zhongshan. Every year, they said, they went north to sell horses; but this year they had had to turn back because of the Yellow Scarves. Xuande invited them to the farm, where he set out wine and entertained them before revealing his intention to hunt down the rebels and protect the people. The visitors were delighted to support the cause by supplying the brothers with fifty fine mounts, five hundred ounces of gold and silver, and one thousand *jin* of wrought iron to manufacture weapons.²⁶

After bidding the traders a grateful farewell, Xuande had the finest smith forge for him a pair of matching double-edged swords; for Lord Guan a Green Dragon crescent-moon blade, also known as Frozen Glory, weighing eighty-two *jin*,²⁷ and for Zhang Fei, an eighteen-span spear of tempered steel. He also ordered full body armor for each of them.

At the head of five hundred local youths, the brothers presented themselves to Commandant Zou Jing. Jing brought them to Liu Yan, governor of Youzhou, before whom the brothers gave account of themselves. When Xuande mentioned his royal surname, the governor was delighted and acknowledged him as a nephew.

Some days later it was reported that the Yellow Scarves chieftain Cheng Yuanzhi was advancing on Zhuo district with fifty thousand men. The governor had Commandant Zou Jing lead the brothers and their five hundred against the enemy. Eagerly, Xuande took his company to the base of Daxing Mountain where he encountered the rebels, who as always appeared with hair unbound and yellow scarves across their foreheads.

The two forces stood opposed. Xuande rode out, Lord Guan to his left, Zhang Fei to his right. Raising his whip, Xuande cried out, "Traitors to the Emperor, surrender now!" Enraged, Cheng Yuanzhi sent his subordinate commander Deng Mao into the field. Zhang Fei sped out, leveled his eighteen-span serpent-headed spear and jabbed his adversary through the chest. Seeing Deng Mao tumble dead from his horse, Yuanzhi cut toward Zhang Fei, slapping his mount and flourishing his blade. Lord Guan swung out his mighty sword and, giving his horse free rein, rushed the foe. Cheng Yuanzhi gulped with fright and, before he could defend himself, was sliced in two with a stroke of Lord Guan's weapon. A poet of later times praised the two warriors:

Oh, what a day for gallantry unveiled!
One man proved his lance and one his blade.
In maiden trial their martial force was shown.
A thrice-torn land will see them gain renown.

Their leaders slain, the rebels dropped their spears and fled. Xuande pursued, taking more prisoners than could be counted, and the brothers returned triumphant. Governor Liu Yan met them personally and rewarded their soldiers. The next day Liu Yan received an appeal from Governor Gong Jing to relieve the rebel-besieged city of Qingzhou. Xuande volunteered to go there, and Liu Yan ordered Zou Jing to join him and his brothers with five thousand men.

As the rescue force approached Qingzhou, the Yellow Scarves divided their army and tied up the government troops in a tangled struggle. Xuande's fewer numbers could not prevail, and he had to retreat some thirty *li* where he pitched camp. "They are too many for us. We can win only by surprising them," Xuande told his brothers. He had Lord Guan and Zhang Fei march off with one thousand men each and conceal themselves along both sides of a hill.

The following day Xuande and Zou Jing advanced noisily but drew back when the enemy gave battle. The rebel horde eagerly pursued, but as they passed the hill the gongs rang out in unison. From left and right, troops poured down as Xuande swung his soldiers around to resume combat. Squeezed between three forces, the rebels broke up and were driven to the very walls of Qingzhou where an armed populace led by Governor Gong Jing met them. After a period of slaughter the Scarves were routed and the siege of Qingzhou was lifted. In later times a poet praised Xuande:

Seasoned plans and master moves; all's divinely done.
To one mighty dragon two tigers can't compare.
At his first trial what victories are won!
Poor orphan boy? The realm is his to share.

After the governor had feasted the troops, Commandant Zou Jing wanted to return to Youzhou. But Xuande said, "We have word that Imperial Corps Commander Lu Zhi has been battling the rebel chief Zhang Jue at Guangzong. Lu Zhi was once my teacher, and I'd like to help him." So Zou Jing returned to Youzhou with his men, and Xuande headed for Guangzong with his brothers and their five hundred men. They entered Lu Zhi's tent and, after the customary salutations, explained their purpose in coming.

Lu Zhi rejoiced at the arrival of this relief and took the brothers under his command. At this time Zhang Jue's one hundred and fifty thousand and Lu Zhi's fifty thousand were deadlocked at Guangzong. "We have them contained here," Lu Zhi said to Xuande, "but over in Yingchuan, Zhang Jue's two brothers, Zhang Liang and Zhang Bao, are holding out against our generals Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun. Let me add one thousand to your company. Then go and investigate the situation there and fix the time to sweep the rebels out." On Lu Zhi's order, Xuande rode through the night to Yingchuan.

Meanwhile, checked by Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun, the Yingchuan rebels had retreated to Changshe, where they hastily built a campsite near a field. "If they're by a field," General Huangfu Song said to Zhu Jun, "we should attack with fire." They ordered each soldier to lie in wait with unlit torches of straw. That night the wind rose. After the second watch the government soldiers burned the camp.²⁸ Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun attacked the rebels' stockade as flames stretched skyward. Without saddling their horses or buckling their armor, the rebels fled panic-stricken in every direction. The slaughter continued until morning.

Zhang Liang and Zhang Bao were in full flight when their fire-decimated forces were intercepted by a contingent of men with red flags flying. The leader of this new unit flashed into sight—tall, narrow-eyed, with a long beard. This man's rank was cavalry commander. His surname was Cao; his given name, Cao; his style, Mengde. Cao Cao's father, Cao Song, was originally not a Cao but a Xiahou. However, as the adopted son of the eunuch Cao Teng he assumed the surname Cao. Cao Song was Cao Cao's natural father. In addition, Cao Cao had the childhood nickname Ah Man and another given name, Jili.²⁹

As a youth Cao had loved the hunt and delighted in song and dance. He was a boy with ingenious ideas for any situation, a regular storehouse of schemes and machinations. Once Cao's uncle, outraged by his nephew's wild antics, complained to Cao's father, who in turn reproached Cao. The next time the boy saw his uncle, he dropped to the ground and pretended to have a fit. The terrified uncle fetched the father, who rushed to his son's side only to find him perfectly sound. "Your uncle told me

you'd had a fit," said Song. "Has it passed?" "Nothing of the sort ever happened," responded Cao. "My uncle accuses me of everything because I have lost favor with him." The father believed the son and thereafter ignored the uncle's complaints, leaving Cao free to indulge his whims.³⁰

At about that time a man called Qiao Xuan said to Cao, "The empire is near ruin and can be saved only by a man capable of dominating the age. You could be the one." On another occasion He Yu of Nanyang said of Cao Cao, "The house of Han is going to fail. Yet I feel certain this is the man to steady the realm." In Runan a man named Xu Shao, known for his insight into human character, refused to give Cao a reading. But pressed repeatedly, the man finally spoke: "You could be an able statesman in a time of peace or a treacherous villain in a time of chaos." This prediction pleased Cao immensely.

At twenty, Cao received his district's recommendation for filial devotion and personal integrity, and this led to his initial appointment to the palace. Later, he was given command of security in the northern half of the district where the capital, Luoyang, was located. On assuming office he had a dozen decorated cudgels placed at the four gates of the city. They were to be a sign that any violator of the laws, however high or mighty, would be punished. One night the uncle of the eunuch Jian Shuo was seen going through the streets carrying a broadsword. Cao, making his nightly rounds, apprehended him and had one of the bludgeons applied. Thereafter no one dared to break the laws, and Cao Cao's prestige increased. Later he was made magistrate of Dunqiu.

During the Yellow Scarves uprisings the court elevated Cao to the rank of cavalry commander, and it was in this capacity that he led five thousand mounted warriors and foot soldiers to the Yingchuan district. He encountered the routed troops of Zhang Liang and Zhang Bao and cut off their retreat. In the ensuing fray his men took ten thousand heads as well as flags, banners, gongs, drums, and horses in large numbers. Zhang Liang and Zhang Bao, however, managed to escape after a desperate struggle. Cao presented himself to Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun, the imperial field generals, and then went after the two rebel leaders.³¹

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Meanwhile Xuande and his brothers neared Yingchuan, hurrying toward the roar of battle and the glowing night horizon. They reached the scene only to find the rebels already scattered. Xuande presented himself to Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun and explained why Lu Zhi had sent him. "Zhang Jue's two brothers are done for by now," said Huangfu Song. "They'll be taking refuge with Jue at Guangzong. That's where you are needed." Xuande accepted the order and led his men back. En route they came upon some soldiers escorting a cage-cart holding none other than Lu Zhi as prisoner. Amazed to find under arrest the commander whom he so recently had been serving, Xuande dismounted and asked what was the matter. "I had Zhang Jue surrounded and nearly defeated," Lu Zhi explained, "when he prevented our victory by some kind of magic. The court sent the eunuch Zuo Feng from the Inner Bureau to investigate. He was only looking to get paid off, but I told him that with supplies exhausted we had nothing to spare for the imperial envoy. My refusal only angered him. He bore the grudge back to court and reported that I was weakening morale by keeping on the defensive and not engaging the enemy. The court sent Imperial Corps Commander Dong Zhuo to relieve me and return me to the capital to face charges."

Outraged by this treatment of Xuande's former teacher, Zhang Fei moved to cut down the guard

and rescue the prisoner. But Xuande checked him. "The court will see to it that justice is done" he said. "Better not act rashly." They let the escort pass. "With Lu Zhi arrested and replaced," said Lord Guan, "we have nowhere to go but back to Zhuo district." Xuande agreed and began marching north. But on the next day they heard a great tumult beyond a hill. Xuande and his brothers climbed to high ground. A beaten Han army came into their view. Behind it, hill and dale swarmed with Yellow Scarves bearing banners that read "Heavenly Commander." "Zhang Jue himself!" cried Xuande. "Let's attack at once."³²

The three brothers swung their men into fighting position just as Zhang Jue was beating down the forces of Dong Zhuo, Lu Zhi's replacement as Imperial Corps commander. Carried by their momentum, the rebels drove hard until they ran up against the brothers. A murderous clash followed. Jue's men were thrown into confusion and had to retreat more than fifty *li*. The brothers rescued Dong Zhuo and saw him back to his camp. Zhuo inquired what offices they held but, upon learning that they were commoners without position, disdainfully refused to acknowledge their service.³³ The three started to leave the camp with Zhang Fei grumbling, "Is that how the wretch treats us for risking our lives to save him? Then I'll have another kind of satisfaction!" Bent on revenge, Zhang Fei turned and stamped back toward Dong Zhuo's headquarters, a sword in his hand. It was a case where, indeed:

Status is what counts and always has!
Who needs to honor heroes without rank?
Oh, let me have a Zhang Fei straight and true,
Who'll pay out every ingrate what he's due.

Did Zhang Fei kill the Imperial Corps commander?

READ ON.



Zhang Fei Whips the Government Inspector; Imperial In-Law He Jin Plots Against the Eunuchs

GOVERNOR OF HEDONG DONG ZHUO (styled Zhongying), a native of Lintao in Longxi in the far northwest, was a man to whom arrogance came naturally. His rude treatment of Xuande had provoked Zhang Fei to turn back and seek satisfaction, but Xuande and Lord Guan warned their brother, "He holds the court's mandate. You cannot take the law into your own hands." "If we don't do away with the wretch," Fei retorted, "we'll be taking orders from him—the last thing I could stand. You two stay if you like. I'm leaving." "We three, sworn to live and die as one," said Xuande, "must not part. We'll go elsewhere." "We're all going, then?" responded Zhang Fei. "That's some consolation."

Riding all night, the three warriors reached the camp of Zhu Jun, the Imperial Corps commander, who welcomed them heartily and united their forces with his own. Together they advanced against the second rebel brother, Zhang Bao. (The third brother, Zhang Liang, was battling Cao Cao and Huangfu Song at Quyang at the time.) Zhang Bao had command of eighty or ninety thousand troops camped behind a mountain. Zhu Jun sent Xuande forward, and Zhang Bao dispatched his lieutenant Gao Sheng to taunt the government forces. Xuande waved Zhang Fei into combat, and he charged and ran Gao Sheng through after a few brief clashes. Sheng toppled from his horse as Xuande signaled his men to advance.

Zhang Bao, on horseback, unbound his hair and, sword in hand, began to work a magic formula. As throngs of Xuande's soldiers charged, a thunderstorm started to gather, and a black mist surrounded what seemed like an army of warriors in the sky. When the apparition plunged toward them, the men were thrown into confusion. Xuande hurried back to camp to report the defeat. "They were using shamanic tricks," said Zhu Jun. "Tomorrow we will slaughter a pig, a goat, and a dog and throw down on the rebels a mixture of the animals' blood, entrails, and excrement."¹ Xuande placed Lord Guan and Zhang Fei, each with a thousand men, in ambush high on a slope of the hill, ready to hurl down the abominable preparation when Zhang Bao's troops passed.

The next day, with banners waving and drums rolling, Zhang Bao arrived in force. Xuande rode out to face him. As the soldiers prepared to engage in battle, Bao used his powers and a storm sprang up as before. Sand and stones went flying, and a murky mist packed with men and horses began to descend from the sky. Xuande wheeled and fled, drawing Bao in pursuit past the hill. At the given signal Lord Guan and Zhang Fei dumped their concoction over the enemy. In front of everyone's eyes, the storm died away, and the mist dissolved as paper men and straw horses tumbled from the sky every which way. Sand and stone lay still. Seeing his craft undone, Bao retreated quickly, but Lord Guan came forth on his left and Zhang Fei on his right, while Xuande and Zhu Jun raced up behind. Between these converging forces the rebels were crushed.

Xuande spotted Bao's "General of the Earth"² banner some distance away and gave chase. Bao

rode frantically for the brush, but Xuande shot an arrow through his left arm. The wounded rebel sought shelter in the city of Yang, to which Zhu Jun at once lay siege. Zhu Jun also sent for news of Huangfu Song's battle with Zhang Bao's brother, Liang, and received the following message:

Huangfu Song won a great victory, and the court used him to replace the oft-defeated Dong Zhuo. Song arrived to find the chief rebel, Jue, dead, and Liang, who had taken over his command, locked in battle with our units. Song won seven battles in succession; he killed Liang at Quyang. Then they opened up Jue's coffin, mutilated the corpse and impaled his head, which they later sent to the capital. The surviving rebels gave themselves up, and the court rewarded Song with the title of general of Chariots and Cavalry and appointed him protector of Jizhou.³ Song then petitioned the Emperor, stating that Lu Zhi's conduct was meritorious, not blameworthy, and the court restored his former office. Cao Cao's service, too, was recognized, and he was awarded a fief at Jinan. When I left, they were about to return to the capital in triumph before assuming their new posts.

This was heartening news to Zhu Jun, and he pressed the siege harder. The rebels' position became critical. Finally, Zhang Bao was slain by Yan Zheng, one of his own commanders, who then surrendered with his leader's head. The battle won, Zhu Jun pacified several neighboring districts and reported to the throne.

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Meanwhile, three other rebel leaders—Zhao Hong, Han Zhong, and Sun Zhong—had gathered tens of thousands of followers to avenge their fallen master, Zhang Jue, by new acts of plunder and destruction. The court summoned Zhu Jun to punish them with his victorious units. Bearing the imperial command, Zhu Jun advanced on the rebel-held city of Wancheng. Zhao Hong sent Han Zhong to engage Zhu Jun's army. Zhu Jun ordered Xuande and his brothers to attack the southwest corner of the city wall. Han Zhong rushed to its defense with seasoned troops. Zhu Jun personally led two thousand hardened cavalymen directly to the northeast corner. Fearful of losing the city, the rebels quickly withdrew from their southwest position. Xuande beset their rear, and the horde, badly defeated, fled into the city. Zhu Jun responded by dividing his force and surrounding Wancheng. The city was short of food, and Han Zhong offered to surrender. But Zhu Jun refused his offer.

Xuande argued for accepting: "Gao Zu, founder of the Han, won the empire because he knew how to invite surrender and how to receive it. Why refuse their offer, my lord?"

That was then, "Zhu Jun replied." Now is now. Before Han, the empire was convulsed with uprisings against Qin, and there was no established sovereign for the people to acknowledge. To welcome submission and reward allegiance was no doubt the way to attract adherents. But this land of ours enjoys unity today. It is only the Yellow Scarves who have resorted to arms. If we accept their surrender, how will we encourage loyal and decent men? If we allow those who pillage at will when they win to give themselves up when they lose, we give an incentive to subversion. A rather poor idea, I'd say. "

"You are right," Xuande conceded, "to deny an appeal from these criminals. And yet, trapped like this in an iron grip, they can only fight to the last. A myriad single-minded men cannot be withstood, let alone desperadoes several times that number. We could pull back from the southeast and

concentrate on the northwest. The rebels will flee the city; and having lost their taste for combat, they can be quickly captured." Zhu Jun acted on Xuande's suggestion, and the rebel Han Zhong, as expected, led his soldiers in headlong flight from Wancheng. Zhu Jun, joined by Xuande and his two brothers, attacked them in full force. Han Zhong was killed with an arrow shot. The survivors scattered. But as the government forces were mopping up, the battle took another turn. Zhao Hong and Sun Zhong arrived and engaged Jun, who retreated before this unexpected show of strength. The Yellow Scarves retook Wancheng.

Zhu Jun removed ten *li* and was preparing to counterattack when he saw a mass of soldiers coming from the east. At their head was a man of broad forehead and wide face, with a body powerful as a tiger's and a torso thick as a bear's. This man from Fuchun in the imperial district of Wu was surnamed Sun.⁴ His given name was Jian; his style Wen-tai; he was descended from the famous strategist Sunzi.

Years before, when Sun Jian was seventeen, he and his father watched a dozen pirates seize a merchant's goods and divide the spoils on the shore of the Qiantang River. Jian said to his father, "Let's take them prisoner." Sword bared, Jian leaped ashore and confronted the thieves, gesturing left and right as if signaling his followers. Fooled into thinking government troops were nearby, the thieves left their loot and fled, except for one whom Jian killed. This is how he made a name for himself in the region and was recommended for the post of commandant.

Some time after Sun Jian's appointment, one Xu Chang of Kuaiji revolted, titling himself the Sun Emperor and mobilizing tens of thousands of men. Jian and a district commanding officer recruited a thousand fighters and rallied the province's districts. Together they destroyed the rebels and killed Xu Chang and his son Shao. The imperial inspector of the province, Zang Min, reported Sun Jian's achievements to the Emperor, and Jian was promoted to deputy magistrate of Yandu, Xuyi, and Xiapi.

In response to the risings of the Yellow Scarves, Sun Jian gathered young men from his village, as well as many traders and experienced soldiers from the area of the Huai and Si rivers—some fifteen hundred in all—and went to aid the embattled Zhu Jun at Wancheng. Thus reinforced, Zhu Jun ordered Jian to attack the south gate and Xuande to attack the north. Zhu Jun himself lay siege on the west, giving the rebels a way out only on the east. Sun Jian was the first to gain the city wall, where he cut down twenty men and threw the rebels into confusion. Zhao Hong brandished his lance and made for Sun Jian, but Jian flung himself on his attacker, wrested away the lance, and ran him through. Then, taking Hong's horse, he charged the swarming rebels and slew many. Sun Zhong and his rebel force tried to break through the north gate, only to encounter Xuande, before whom Zhong fled in panic. Xuande felled him with a single arrow. Zhu Jun's main force then set upon the rebels from behind. Tens of thousands were beheaded, and untold numbers gave themselves up. Throughout the Nanyang area more than ten imperial districts were pacified.

Zhu Jun returned in triumph to the capital, where he was raised to the rank of general of Chariots and Cavalry and appointed governor of Henan. As governor, he reported to the throne the merits of Sun Jian and Xuande. Profiting from his connections,⁵ Jian obtained a post as an auxiliary district commanding officer and went at once to assume his new office. Only Xuande was left waiting many days, receiving no word of an appointment.

Disheartened, the three brothers were walking in the capital when they came upon the carriage of the courtier Zhang Jun. Xuande presented himself and gave a brief account of his victories. Zhang Jun was surprised that the court had neglected such a man, and at his next audience with the Emperor said, "Sale of office and rank by the Ten Eunuchs is the fundamental cause of the recent uprisings. They have appointed only their own and punished only their enemies, and have thrown the realm into chaos in the process. For peace to prevail, it would behoove Your Majesty to execute the Ten, hang their severed heads outside the south gate of the capital, and proclaim to all the empire that hereafter merit will be well rewarded." The eunuchs counterattacked, accusing Zhang Jun of lese majesty. The Emperor resolved the dispute by ordering his guards to expel Zhang Jun from court.

The eunuchs continued discussing the matter: "This complaint," they agreed, "must have come from some deserving warriors who were passed over. It might be useful to have the central office review some of the lesser ones for appointment. We will have time enough to deal with them afterwards."⁶ And so Xuande was appointed judicial officer of Anxi county in the Zhongshan jurisdiction of Dingzhou imperial district, with orders to depart on a specified date. Xuande disbanded his troops and set out with his brothers and some two dozen followers. In Anxi he avoided all injury to the interests of the local people, and civic morality improved within a month. While in office Xuande shared bed and board with his brothers, and they stood beside him throughout long public sessions.

In a few months' time, however, the court decreed a purge of leading officials whose posts had been awarded in recognition of military service, a measure Xuande suspected would lead to his removal. Just then a district inspector came to Anxi, one of the counties under his jurisdiction. Xuande received the official outside the city with full honors. But the inspector remained mounted, reciprocating Xuande's salutation with a faint flick of his whip. Zhang Fei and Lord Guan seethed with resentment. At the posthouse the inspector seated himself upon a raised platform and faced south like an emperor holding court, while Xuande stood respectfully at the foot of the platform. After an extended wait the official spoke: "Tell me about your background, Officer Liu." "I am a descendant of Prince Jing of Zhongshan," replied Xuande. "I began campaigning against the Yellow Scarves in Zhuo county and have destroyed many of them, achieving some slight merit in over thirty engagements, some small, some large. As a result, I was appointed to this post."

"Isn't your claim of imperial ancestry a lie?" roared the inspector. "Like those phony reports of your 'achievements'? I have here in hand the court's decree purging such undeserving officials and corrupt officers as you." Xuande could only back away, humbly voicing his agreement. "Yes, sir. Yes, sir," he said and returned to the *yamen* to consult with another officer. "The inspector is creating a scene," the latter suggested, "only because he wants a bribe." "But I have never taken advantage of the people here," Xuande argued, "and have acquired nothing of value to give him." The following day the inspector sent for this county officer and pressured him into accusing Officer Liu of abusing the people. Every time Xuande tried to see the inspector to justify himself, guards turned him away.

After comforting himself with a few cups of wine, Zhang Fei rode by the posthouse. At the door he saw dozens of elderly folk weeping and wailing. When Zhang Fei asked the reason, they said, "The inspector is forcing the county officer to make statements that will enable him to get rid of our Lord Liu. We have come to plead for him but cannot get inside. The guards beat us back for our pains."

Zhang Fei's eyes widened with anger. Jaw set, he slid from his saddle and went straight to the posthouse, broke through the guard, and dashed to the rear. He saw the inspector holding formal

session and the county officer, bound, on the ground. "Plague to the people," thundered Zhang Fei, "do you know me?" Before the inspector could open his mouth, Zhang Fei had him by the hair, dragged him to the front of the posthouse, and tied him to the hitching post. Then with some light switches stripped from a nearby willow, he whipped the inspector across the legs so soundly that a dozen of the switches split.

Xuande, having been kept from the inspector's presence, could not tell what was going on. Then he heard the commotion outside the posthouse and was told, "Commander Zhang Fei is beating the life out of somebody there." Xuande found out who the victim was and, aghast, demanded an explanation of Zhang Fei. "This enemy of the people should be beaten to death," his brother said, "and the sooner the better." But the inspector pleaded, "Let me live, my good lord," and Xuande, a kindhearted sort when all was said and done, shouted to Zhang Fei to desist.

At this moment Lord Guan turned up. "Brother," he said, "your great service has been ill rewarded with this miserable post. Add to that this inspector's insults. Does a phoenix belong in a briar patch? Let's kill him, resign the office, and go home to plan for a better day." At these words Xuande took his seal and ribbon of office and hung them on the inspector's neck, saying, "For the harm you've caused the people we should have your life. However, we shall spare you. You may take these back, and I shall take my leave."⁷

The inspector returned to Dingzhou and reported the incident to the governor, who in turn notified higher central and regional authorities in order to have the brothers arrested. But the wanted men found refuge in Daizhou with Liu Hui, who hid them in his home in consideration of Xuande's imperial lineage.

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Meanwhile, at the court the Ten Eunuchs were using their great power to do away with anyone who went against them. Zhao Zhong and Zhang Rang demanded payment of gold and silk from all who had won distinction fighting the Yellow Scarves, and removed from office those who would not pay. In consequence, commanders Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun were deprived of office. The Emperor added the rank of general of Chariots and Cavalry to Zhao Zhong's other honors and awarded lordships to Zhang Rang and twelve others.

Administration worsened and the people grumbled. Ou Xing staged an uprising in Changsha. In Yuyang, Zhang Ju and Zhang Chun rebelled, Zhang Ju claiming to be emperor and Zhang Chun his marshal. The court was swamped with emergency appeals from every quarter of the land, but the Ten blithely filed them away and never informed the throne.

One day the Emperor and the Ten were feasting in the rear garden when Liu Tao, a court counselor, came before the sovereign and began weeping passionately. The Emperor requested an explanation, and Liu Tao replied, "With the empire in peril, how can Your Majesty continue feasting with these capons?" "Why, our nation is as peaceful as ever," the Emperor said. "What 'peril' do you have in mind?" "Bandits and rebels rise everywhere," responded Liu Tao, "plundering province and district—all because of the sale of office and the abuse of the people by the Ten Eunuchs, who have wronged and deceived Your Majesty. All upright men have fled your service. Disaster looms."

At this indictment, the Ten threw down their caps and prostrated themselves. "If Counselor Liu Tao cannot tolerate us," they cried, "we are done for. We beg only our lives and your permission to

return to our farms. Everything we own will be donated to the army." Then they wept freely. The Emperor turned on the count counselor. "You," he said, "have your attendants. Should I not have mine?" He ordered the guards to march Liu Tao out and behead him. "I care not for my life," cried Tao, "but how my heart aches for the empire of Han—on the verge of extinction after four hundred years!" The guards had removed him and were about to execute him when a high official checked them with a shout: "Stay your hand until I make my plea!"

The assembly saw that it was Minister of the Interior Chen Dan, coming directly into the palace to place his objections before the Emperor. "What fault of Counselor Liu's deserves such punishment?" he asked. "He slanders our close attendants," said the Emperor, "and sullies our person." "These eunuchs whom you honor like parents," said the minister, "the people would eat alive if they could. They are raised to lordships without the least merit—to say nothing of the traitors among them like Feng Xu, who colluded with the Yellow Scarves. If Your Majesty will not consider this, the sacred shrines of the royal house could fall at any moment."

The Emperor said, "Feng Xu's role in the rebellion was never proven. As for the Ten Eunuchs, do you mean to tell me there isn't a single one who is loyal?" Chen Dan emphasized his protest by striking his head against the steps below the throne. The indignant Emperor had him dragged off and thrown into prison beside Liu Tao. That night the eunuchs had the two officials murdered. Then they forged an official decree making Sun Jian governor of Changsha with a commission to put down the rebellion of Ou Xing. Within fifty days Sun Jian reported victory and the Jiangxia region was secured.

A decree enfeoffed Sun Jian as lord of Wucheng and made Liu Yu protector of Youzhou.⁸ Liu Yu launched a campaign against Zhang Ju and Zhang Chun in Yuyang; and Liu Hui of Daizhou wrote the new protector recommending Xuande, whom he had sheltered. Liu Yu was delighted and appointed Xuande district commander. Xuande took the battle straight to the bandits' lair. In several days' hard fighting Xuande beat down the impetuous spirit of the rebels, who then turned upon Zhang Chun, their violent and autocratic leader. He was killed by one of his own chieftains, who brought Chun's head to the government authorities and surrendered with his soldiers. Zhang Ju, his position collapsing, hanged himself. Now Yuyang, too, was fully pacified.

Protector Liu Yu reported Xuande's great service to the court. Not only was he forgiven for having flogged the inspector, but he was promoted to deputy magistrate of Xiami and made judicial officer of Gaotang. Gongsun Zan added his praise of Xuande's former service; on his recommendation Xuande was made an auxiliary corps commanding officer and assigned to Pingyuan county as magistrate. At Pingyuan, Xuande had considerable resources and manpower at his disposal and was able to reestablish the atmosphere of former days. Liu Yu, for his great service in quelling the bandits, was made grand commandant.

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In the fourth month of the sixth year of the Zhong Ping reign (A.D. 189), Emperor Ling fell gravely ill and called for Regent He Jin to make plans for the succession. He Jin was from a butcher's family and had attained his powerful position only through the influence of his younger sister, Lady He, a royal concubine who on giving birth to a son, Bian, had become Empress He. Emperor Ling had a second favorite, Beauty Wang. Lady Wang too bore a son, and Empress He out of jealousy poisoned her. The child, Xie, was raised in the palace of the Emperor's mother, Dong.

Queen Mother Dong was the wife of Liu Chang, lord of Jiedu precinct. Because Huan, the previous emperor, had had no male issue, Liu Chang's son was made heir apparent and became Emperor Ling upon the death of Huan. When Ling succeeded to the throne, his mother was taken into the palace and honored as queen mother. In the matter of Ling's heir apparent, Queen Mother Dong urged the Emperor to name Xie, son of the murdered concubine Wang, over Bian, son of Empress He. The Emperor himself was disposed to make this change as he was partial to Prince Xie.

As Emperor Ling's end drew near, the eunuch Jian Shuo⁹ advised him, "If it is Your Majesty's wish that Prince Xie, not Prince Bian, follow you on the throne, first get rid of Regent He Jin, Bian's uncle, to forestall countermeasures." Emperor Ling took his advice and commanded He Jin to appear. He Jin arrived at the palace gate but there was warned by the commanding officer, Pan Yin, not to enter because Jian Shuo meant to kill him. He Jin fled to his quarters and summoned the ministers and high officials to consider executing all the eunuchs. To this drastic step one man rose to object. "The influence of the eunuchs," he argued, "goes back to the reigns of emperors Chong and Zhi [a.d. 145-47], Now they have overrun the court. How can we kill each and every one of them? If discovered, we will be killed and our clans exterminated. Pray consider this thoroughly."

Regent-Marshal He Jin regarded the man. It was Cao Cao, commandant for Military Standards. "What do you junior officers know of court matters?" said Jin, turning disdainfully to Cao. The problem was still under discussion when Commanding Officer Pan Yin brought the news of the Emperor's demise. "Jian Shuo and the eunuchs," he informed He Jin, "plan to keep the death secret. They have forged a decree summoning you to the palace and expect to have their way by eliminating you before declaring Prince Xie emperor." The group had not yet reached a decision when the court's messenger came commanding He Jin's immediate appearance to resolve all pending issues.

"Today before all else we must rectify the succession," cried Cao Cao. "Then we can take care of the traitors." "Who will join me," asked He Jin, "in supporting the legitimate heir, Prince Bian, and bringing the traitors to justice?" "Give me five thousand crack troops," one official spoke up, "and I will march into the palace, enthrone the rightful emperor, destroy the eunuchs, and purge the court, thus restoring peace in the land." He Jin eyed the speaker. It was Yuan Shao (styled Benchu), son of former Minister of the Interior Yuan Feng, nephew of Yuan Wei; at the time Shao was commander of the Capital Districts. He Jin, gratified by the offer, assigned five thousand of his Royal Guard to Yuan Shao's command.

Yuan Shao girded himself for battle. With He Jin in the lead, He Yu, Xun You, Zheng Tai, and some thirty other high officials filed into the palace. There before the coffin of Emperor Ling they placed He Jin's nephew, Prince Bian, on the throne as Ling's successor, Emperor Shao. When shouts of allegiance from the assembled officials died down, Yuan Shao entered the palace to arrest Jian Shuo. Jian Shuo fled to the royal garden and hid himself, but Guo Sheng, one of the Ten, found and killed him, and the Palace Guard, which Jian Shuo had commanded, all surrendered. Yuan Shao said to He Jin, "These eunuchs have organized their own gang. But today the tide runs with us. Let's kill every last one."

Zhang Rang and his group of Ten Eunuchs, realizing that their end was near, rushed to see the Empress He, sister of Regent-Marshal He Jin. "Jian Shuo and Jian Shuo alone," they assured her, "tried to kill your brother the regent. Not one of us was involved. But Yuan Shao has won the regent over and is bent on doing away with all of us. Have pity, Your Majesty." Empress He, whose son, Bian, had just been enthroned, said, "Have no fear. I shall protect you." She ordered He Jin before her

and spoke to him privately: "You and I are humbly born and could not enjoy the wealth and status we have today except for Zhang Rang and the Ten. Jian Shuo has paid for his crime. Don't listen to those who want to kill them all." Thus admonished, He Jin came out and addressed the assembly: "Jian Shuo tried to murder me. Now he is dead, and his clan will be destroyed. There is no need to punish the rest." "If we don't root them out for good," objected Yuan Shao, "we will pay with our lives." "The decision is made," He Jin insisted. "Let no more be said." With that the assembly retired. The following day Empress He ordered He Jin to supervise the work of the Imperial Secretariat, which issues decrees, and the regent-marshal's associates were granted official positions.¹⁰

Now the rival empress, Dong (mother of the late Emperor Ling and guardian of Prince Xie), summoned Zhang Rang of the Ten Eunuchs. "I was the one," she told him, "who first helped Empress He. Now her son reigns over all officialdom, inside and outside the court. Her power is great. What are we to do?" "Your Majesty," replied Rang, "control the court from behind the scene; preside over administration; have the imperial son, Xie, enfeoffed as a prince; have high office conferred on your bother, the imperial uncle; see that he gets real military power; use us in important ways, and we can aim higher soon enough." Immensely pleased with this advice, Empress Dong held court the following day and issued a decree naming Xie as prince of Chenliu and Imperial Uncle Dong Chong as general of the Flying Cavalry. Zhang Rang and the eunuchs were again permitted to participate in court affairs.

Empress He, seeing her rival gather power, arranged a banquet in the palace for her. When the company was well warmed with wine, Empress He lifted her cup and kneeled respectfully as she addressed Empress Dong: "We two women should not concern ourselves with court affairs. In the founding reign of this dynasty Empress Lü wielded great power.¹¹ But in the end her clan, one thousand strong, was extinguished. You and I should seclude ourselves in the palace and leave court business to the great ministers and elder statesmen. The ruling house will benefit. I hope you will give this your consideration."

To this challenge Empress Dong rose angrily. "Your jealousy drove you to poison Beauty Wang," she accused. "Now you have the temerity to say any damned thing you please because your son rules and your brother is in power. But without lifting a finger I can have the general of the Flying Cavalry cut off He Jin's head." "I spoke in good faith," responded Empress He hotly. "What gives you the right to lash out at me?" "A lot you know" retorted Empress Dong, "you offspring of butchers and wine merchants!" The two queens quarreled back and forth until Zhang Rang persuaded them to return to their chambers. That night Empress He summoned her brother and described to him the scene at the banquet.

Regent He Jin then met with the three elder lords (grand commandant, minister of the interior, minister of works). And the following morning, in accordance with their decision, a courtier petitioned the Emperor not to allow Empress Dong to remain in the palace, on the grounds that she was originally a provincial princess, but to return her to Hejian, her original fief, without delay. The He faction assigned escorts for the rival empress and detailed the Palace Guard to surround the home of Flying Cavalry General Dong Chong and demand his insignia. Chong knew he was trapped and cut his throat in a rear chamber. The household raised the cry of mourning and the cordon was lifted. The eunuchs Zhang Rang and Duan Gui, foiled by the destruction of Empress Dong's faction, proceeded to cultivate He Jin's brother Miao and his mother, Lady Wuyang. Plying them with gifts of gold and pearls, the eunuchs had them visit Empress He day and night and gloss their deeds

with fine phrases. In this way the Ten Eunuchs regained the privilege of waiting on the Emperor.

In the sixth month He Jin had Empress Dong poisoned at the government relay station in Hejian. Her coffin was brought to the capital and buried in the tombs at Wen. On the pretext of illness, Regent He Jin was absent from the ceremonies. The commander of the Capital Districts, Yuan Shao, visited He Jin and told him, "Zhang Rang and Duan Gui are spreading the rumor that you poisoned Empress Dong in order to usurp the throne. Unless you eliminate the eunuchs this time, the consequences will be unspeakable. Early in the last reign Dou Wu tried to destroy them, but they discovered his plans and killed him instead. Today you and your brother have the finest commanders and officers in your service. If they are with you, events can be kept in control. Do not let a Heaven-sent opportunity slip your grasp." He Jin responded, "This is a matter that bears further consideration."

Meanwhile, some of He Jin's men were secretly reporting to Zhang Rang, who in turn informed He Miao, Jin's brother, and also bribed him richly. Miao then went before Empress He and said, "The regent, mainstay of the new Emperor, has been guilty of cruel and inhuman conduct. Killing seems to be his sole concern. He has been trying to do away with the Ten Eunuchs for no good reason. It is going to lead to chaos." The Empress agreed, and when He Jin later declared his intention to liquidate the gelded attendants, she replied, "Supervision of palace affairs by these officials of the women's quarters is a long-standing practice of the Han. With the late sovereign so recently departed, your desire to put the old ministers to death does not show proper respect for the ancestral temple of the ruling house."

He Jin, by nature an indecisive man, feebly muttered his agreement as he left his sister's presence. And to Yuan Shao's question, "How fares our cause?" he could only answer, "The queen mother does not concur. What can we do?" "Indeed," said Yuan Shao sharply, "let us summon the gallants of the realm, march into the capital, and wipe out these capons. Now is the critical moment. Forget the queen mother's disapproval!" "A superb idea," He Jin exclaimed and issued a call to various military stations for troops.¹²

But Chen Lin, first secretary to He Jin, objected: "That's not going to work! You know the proverb, 'You can't catch a sparrow with your eyes shut.' Even trivial ends cannot be gained by self-deception; what of affairs of state? Now, General, you have the weight of the throne behind you and military authority in your hands. You can 'prance like a dragon and prowl like a tiger.' Whatever you wish is yours. You can execute the eunuchs as easily as you can burn a hair in a furnace. Act with lightning speed, with decision and expedition, and the whole world will go along. There's no need to call in outside forces and bring a mob of warriors down on the capital, each with his own ambitions. That is like handing someone a weapon pointed toward yourself! You will fail, and worse, you will create an upheaval." With a laugh, He Jin said, "This weak-kneed scholar understands nothing!" Another officer beside He Jin was laughing and applauding. "This really presents no problem," he said. "Why waste so much time discussing it?" The speaker was Cao Cao, and his advice was simple. Indeed:

Wise counsel can undo the harm of vicious ministers—
When and if it is heeded.

What did Cao Cao say?

READ ON.



*In Wenming Garden, Dong Zhuo Denounces Ding Yuan;
With Gold and Pearls, Li Su Plies Lü Bu*

"EUNUCHS," CAO CAO WENT ON, "have been a plague since ancient times. But the founder of the Eastern Han, Emperor Guang Wu, granted them excessive power and favor and sowed the seeds of the crisis that is upon us today. The remedy is to eliminate the ringleaders. A single bailiff could do it. Why involve regional forces? Any attempt to execute the lot of them is bound to get out and likely to fail for that reason." Angered, He Jin shot back, "You have your own view of the matter, Mengde, I see." "He Jin will be the one to undo the empire!" Cao Cao muttered as he left the meeting. Having disposed of his opponent, He Jin dispatched messengers bearing secret decrees to various regional garrisons.

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Dong Zhuo, general of the Forward Army, lord of Aoxiang, and imperial inspector of the westernmost province of Xiliang, had escaped the court's penalties for his losses to the Yellow Scarves by bribing the Ten Eunuchs. After that, through the good offices of certain highly placed courtiers, he secured a notable appointment as the commander of two hundred thousand men farther west in Xizhou. But despite such favors, he had no loyalty to the Emperor.

When He Jin's secret summons came, he prepared to set out for the capital in full force. Zhuo ordered his son-in-law Imperial Corps Commander Niu Fu to remain and defend his western domains and arranged to take with him to Luoyang four commanders—Li Jue, Guo Si, Zhang Ji, and Fan Chou—and their men. Li Ru, another son-in-law and an adviser, said to Dong Zhuo, "The summons we have received contains much that is unclear. Let us present a statement to the throne legitimating our position. Then we can bid for higher stakes." Pleased with this counsel, Zhuo submitted a petition that said in essence:

It is our humble understanding that seditious opposition can no longer be controlled because Zhang Rang and the Constant Attendants of the Inner Bureau have perverted the fundamental order of things. In our view, a raging cauldron is best cooled by removing the fuel. Lancing a pustule, though painful, is preferable to harboring the infection. Your subject makes bold to sound the alarm and enter the capital, with your permission, to destroy Zhang Rang and his gang—for the benefit of the dynasty and the empire.¹

He Jin put Dong Zhuo's request to enter the capital before the principal ministers. Zheng Tai, the court censor, objected: "Dong Zhuo's a jackal. Let him into the capital and he'll devour us." "Your indecisiveness," said He Jin, "renders you unfit to discuss major questions." Lu Zhi² also voiced

opposition: "The Dong Zhuo I have known for many years hides a vicious mind beneath that benign exterior. We're courting disaster. Better keep him out." He Jin ignored all objections. The two critics resigned their offices, and more than half the court followed their example. He Jin had Dong Zhuo greeted at Mianchi.

Dong Zhuo restrained his troops and made no move. Zhang Rang and the eunuchs learned of the arrival of outside forces and said, "A plot of He Jin's. If we don't head it off, our clans will be exterminated." Planting fifty hatchetmen inside the Gate of Praiseworthy Virtue at the Palace of Lasting Happiness,³ Zhang Rang went in and told the Empress, "The regent means to destroy us and has forged a decree summoning outside troops to the capital. We beg Your Majesty, have mercy and save us."⁴ Present yourselves at his headquarters and apologize for your offenses, "was her reply." If we go there, "said Rang," his men will beat us to a pulp. We appeal to Your Majesty to summon him to the palace and stop him. If he refuses, we prefer to die at your feet. " Empress He ordered He Jin to appear.

Chen Lin, He Jin's first secretary, sought to dissuade the regent. "This," he argued, "is a plot of the Ten Eunuchs. Keep away. If you go we are ruined." "It is the Empress's own command," said He Jin. "Nothing can happen." "Our plans," Yuan Shao said, "have been leaked. Our cause is publicly known. Do you still want to enter the palace?" "Have the Ten come out before you go in," suggested Cao Cao. "How silly!" said He Jin with a laugh. "I am the master of the empire. What can those Ten do to me?" "If you insist," Yuan Shao said. "But let us bring an armed guard—just in case."

Yuan Shao and Cao Cao each selected five hundred of their finest and put them under the command of Yuan Shao's brother Shu. Fully armored, Yuan Shu drew his men around the ornate palace entrance. Yuan Shao and Cao Cao strapped on their swords and accompanied He Jin to the gate of the Palace of Lasting Happiness. But the Inner Bureau conveyed the Empress's wish: "The Empress has summoned only the regent. No one else may enter." Yuan Shao and Cao Cao stood barred beyond the outer gate as He Jin marched grandly on, straight into the palace.

Their henchmen in place, Zhang Rang and Duan Gui accosted He Jin from both sides at the Gate of Praiseworthy Virtue. In a stern tone Zhang Rang read out a list of charges to the astounded regent: "For what crime did you poison Empress Dong? How could you miss the services for the nation's mother on the pretext of illness? You came from a family of butchers; your recommendation to the throne came from us; and through us you rose to power and glory. But now you conspire against us, forgetting the duties and the thanks you owe. Who is so pure, tell me, if we are as corrupt as you say?"

He Jin searched frantically for a way to escape, but every gate was shut. The assassins closed in and cut He Jin in two at the waist. A poet of later times lamented his fate:

The Han will fall, its star-told fate fulfilled,
With feckless He Jin counseling the king.
Deaf to honest words, he seals his doom:
Quartered in the queen's receiving room.

Having waited for a long time, Yuan Shao shouted at the gate, "Regent, your carriage is ready!" In response Zhang Rang threw the victim's head down from the wall. "He Jin was executed for plotting to overthrow the dynasty," he cried. "Those who joined him under duress are pardoned, one and all!" "The geldings have murdered a great minister," Shao yelled fiercely. "Those who would destroy this

evil faction—lend us your aid!" One of He Jin's commanders, Wu Kuang, set a fire outside the main gate, and Yuan Shu burst into the palace grounds. Every eunuch they caught, they killed. Yuan Shao and Cao Cao broke into the inner sanctum, drove the four eunuchs, Zhao Zhong, Cheng Kuang, Xia Yun, and Guo Sheng, to the House of Emerald Flowers, and hacked them to pieces. From the palace buildings flames sprang skyward.

Four of the Ten Eunuchs—Zhang Rang, Duan Gui, Cao Jie, and Hou Lan—forced Queen Mother He, the crown prince (Liu Bian, i.e., Emperor Shao), and the prince of Chenliu (Liu Xie) out of the main compound and along a rear path toward the north palace compound. Lu Zhi, though he had quit his office, had remained in the imperial complex. Seeing the coup in progress, he armed himself and stood under a second-story walkway. Catching a glimpse of Duan Gui threatening Empress He, Zhi shouted, "Traitor! To kidnap the queen mother!" Gui turned and ran. The queen mother jumped from a window, and Lu Zhi rushed her to safety. Wu Kuang cut his way into the courtyard, where he found He Miao with sword drawn. "Miao was part of the plot against his brother," shouted Kuang. "He must die!" The crowd around Kuang also demanded Miao's head. He Miao tried to flee but was encircled and hacked down. Yuan Shao ordered his men to spread out and kill the Ten Attendants and their families, regardless of age. Many who had no beard were killed by mistake. Cao Cao managed to quell the fires and appealed to the queen mother to assume temporary authority. At the same time he sent soldiers after Zhang Rang and his gang to find Emperor Shao (Prince Bian).

Earlier, Zhang Rang and Duan Gui had seized the two royal sons, Emperor Shao and the prince of Chenliu (Xie). Braving smoke and fire, the two eunuchs reached the Bei-mang Hills.⁵ During the second watch they heard the clamor of soldiers charging up. In the front ranks was Min Gong, an aide in the Henan district. "Don't move, you traitors," he shouted. Zhang Rang saw he was done for and drowned himself in a nearby stream. Emperor Shao and the prince of Chenliu, unable to tell friend from foe, lay low in the tangled weeds by the water's edge, eluding the wide search.⁶ Though famished, the two brothers stayed out of sight until the fourth watch. A chill early dew settled over them. They huddled together and started to sob but swallowed their cries for fear of discovery. "We can't stay here forever," said the prince, "we have to find a way out." They tied themselves together by their clothes and climbed the bank thick with thorny brambles. It was still too dark to see the path. The boys despaired. Suddenly thousands of fireflies gathered before them, emitting a beam of light as they swirled in front of the Emperor. "Heaven is helping us," said the prince. They followed the glow and soon found a road. By the fifth watch their feet ached, and they lay down beside some hay stacked on a hillside ridge.

Beyond the haystack was a manor whose master had dreamed of two red suns falling to earth behind his farm. Startled from his sleep, he went out and saw two red rays probing the sky. He hurried to the source and discovered the boys. "What family do you belong to?" he asked. The Emperor could not reply. "This is the reigning Emperor," said the prince. "We fled the violence caused by the eunuchs. I am his younger brother, the prince of Chenliu." The astonished lord of the manor saluted them repeatedly. "I am Cui Yi," he said, "brother of the late emperor's minister of the interior, Cui Lie. I retired here when I saw how the eunuchs were corrupting the government." Cui Yi helped the Emperor into his manor and humbly served his guests wine and food.

Meanwhile Min Gong had apprehended Duan Gui. "Where is the Emperor?" he demanded. "We became separated on the road," answered Gui, "and I don't know where he went." Gong killed Gui and tied his severed head around the neck of his horse. Gong's men continued searching in all

directions, and Gong himself continued alone along the road. Chance brought him to the Cui manor. The lord received him and asked for an explanation of the gory trophy. In reply, Gong recounted the night's events. Cui Yi then led Min Gong to the Emperor. Sovereign and subject wept bitterly. "The realm," said Gong, "may not lack its lord, even for a single day. Return to the capital, Your Majesty, I pray." Cui Yi had but one feeble horse, which he gave to the Emperor. Gong shared his mount with the prince of Chenliu.

Some three *li* from the manor an array of hundreds of soldiers drew near, led by Minister of the Interior Wang Yun, Grand Commandant Yang Biao, Commandant of the Left Army Chunyu Qiong, Commandant of the Right Army Zhao Meng, Commandant of the Rear Army Bao Xin, and Commandant of the Central Army Yuan Shao.⁷ The Emperor and his subjects wept together when they met. Duan Gui's severed head was sent to the capital as a warning. Fine horses were provided for the Emperor and the prince, and the whole troop escorted the Emperor to Luoyang. Prior to these events a child's ditty sung in Luoyang had foretold:

A king who isn't a king,
And a prince who is no prince.
Together the prince and the king must fly
To the Beimang graves,
Where their ancestors lie.

Events had fulfilled this prognostication.

The imperial procession had advanced barely a few *li* when a host of banners darkened the sky. Spreading dust everywhere, a mass of soldiers and horsemen came into view. The officials paled. The Emperor panicked. Yuan Shao raced forward and demanded, "Who are you?" From the shadows of spangled pennons a general came forth and cried in a stern voice, "Where is the Emperor?" The Emperor was too frightened to speak, but the prince of Chenliu guided his horse forward and said tearfully, "Who comes here?" "Dong Zhuo, imperial inspector of Xiliang," was the reply. "Are you here to protect the Emperor or to seize him?" asked the prince. "Only to protect him," said Zhuo. "Then get off your horse," said the prince. "The Emperor is here!" The astonished Zhuo dismounted before the Emperor and prostrated himself at the left side of the road.

The prince graciously reassured Dong Zhuo, expressing himself from first to last with discretion and dignity. Dong Zhuo was deeply impressed but did not show it: the idea of deposing Emperor Shao and placing Prince Xie on the throne had already formed in his mind. That day the whole entourage returned to the palace, and the Emperor presented himself before Queen Mother He, as one and all wept freely. But the jade seal, whose possession confirms imperial authority, was not to be found. A search of the palace proved fruitless.

Dong Zhuo stationed his troops outside Luoyang, but his cavalry daily entered the city and ran riot through the streets, striking fear into the hearts of the people. Dong Zhuo himself went in and out of the imperial buildings, showing neither respect nor restraint. Bao Xin, commandant of the Rear Army, told Yuan Shao that Dong Zhuo's disloyalty was manifest and urged his removal. But Shao replied, "With the court but lately stabilized, this is no time for rashness." Bao Xin also raised the matter with Minister of the Interior Wang Yun, who simply said, "This will have to be considered further." Thus rebuffed, Bao Xin led his own unit out of the capital and took refuge in the Mount Tai region.

Dong Zhuo skillfully gained the confidence of the troops of the He brothers, Jin and Miao, and brought them under his authority. Then he spoke privately to his adviser, Li Ru: "I want to depose the Emperor and enthrone the prince. What do you think?" "The court has no ruler," said Ru. "Act now before circumstances change. Tomorrow call the officials to the Garden of Benign Wisdom and inform them of your decision. This is the time to act upon your authority." Li Ru's answer delighted Dong Zhuo.

The next day Dong Zhuo laid a great banquet in the garden for the elder lords and nobles, all of whom he had intimidated into attending. He waited until all the court officials had arrived and then with studied slowness rode to the gate, dismounted, and entered the grounds without removing his sword.⁸ After several rounds of wine he ordered the festivities to cease. "I have only one thing to say," he said, his voice loud and harsh. "Hear it in silence." The assembly was keenly attentive. "The Son of Heaven is sovereign lord of all," Dong Zhuo went on, "but without awe-inspiring dignity he cannot do honor to the ancestral temple or our sacred shrines. The present Emperor is timid and weak. For intellect and learning he cannot match the prince of Chenliu, who deserves to inherit the throne. Hence I shall depose the Emperor and instate the prince. What do the great ministers have to say?"

The assembly was struck speechless, save one man, who pushed forward his setting and stood up. "This is wrong, wrong!" he shouted. "Who are you to dictate such a thing? The Son of Heaven, lawful heir of true descent, is innocent of fault. To propose his removal is madness. Are you trying to overthrow the dynasty?" Dong Zhuo eyed the speaker, Ding Yuan, imperial inspector of Jingzhou.⁹ "Those who obey me," Dong Zhuo rasped, "live; those who do not, die." Grasping his sword, he menaced Ding Yuan. At that moment Li Ru spotted a man standing behind Ding Yuan, a massive presence that inspired a shiver of awe. The man was clenching a figured halberd with two side blades, his eyes filled with anger. "Let us not speak of politics at the banquet," Ru said smoothly, hastening forward. "There will be time some other day for open discussion at the council hall." At the audience's urging, Ding Yuan mounted and left.

Again Dong Zhuo put the question. "Do you see reason in what I have said?" "Not altogether, my wise lord," responded Lu Zhi. "In ancient times Yi Yin, the sage minister of the Shang dynasty, immured Tai Jia, an unfit sovereign, in the Paulownia Palace; and during the Han Prime Minister Huo Guang indicted his sovereign, the prince of Changyi, in the ancestral temple for three thousand misdeeds committed in twenty-seven days after he came to the throne, and then dethroned him. However, in the present situation, although the Emperor has not reached maturity, he has demonstrated his receptive intelligence and humane wisdom. There is no blemish in him. You, my lord, an imperial inspector from the western border districts, have never been a part of court administration. Lacking the remarkable abilities of an Yi Yin or a Huo Guang, how can you arrogate to yourself the authority to alter the succession? As the sage has said, 'For the reasons of an Yi Yin it may be done; otherwise, it is treason.'"

Dong Zhuo, enraged by Lu Zhi's speech, advanced on him with bared sword. But Privy Counselor Cai Yong and Court Counselor Peng Bo voiced objection: "Secretary Lu Zhi is renowned throughout the land. Begin by killing him and the realm will soon succumb to terror." On this advice, Dong Zhuo desisted. "The banquet is no place for such questions," said Minister Wang Yun. "Let us consider them another day." With that, the assembly adjourned.

Standing at the garden gate looking out, Dong Zhuo saw a man leap on his horse, halberd in hand,

and charge back and forth. "Who is that?" he asked Li Ru. "Ding Yuan's adopted son, Lü Bu, styled Fengxian," was the reply. "Avoid him for now, my lord." Dong Zhuo reentered the garden and kept out of sight. The next day word came that Ding Yuan was outside the city with his men spoiling for a fight. Dong Zhuo, joined by Li Ru, led his forces out to meet them. The two armies faced off. There for all to see was Lü Bu, his topknot bound in a golden crown, wearing a millefleurs battle robe, girded with armor and a belt bearing a motif of lions and reptiles.

Giving his horse free rein, his halberd poised, Lü Bu followed Ding Yuan to the front of the lines. Ding Yuan pointed at Dong Zhuo and cried out: "Power-hungry eunuchs, the curse of the dynasty, have thrown the masses of the people into the depths of misery. Now you, without a jot of merit, speak madly of meddling in the succession. Do you want to overthrow the dynasty yourself?" Before Dong Zhuo could reply Lü Bu was charging him; Dong Zhuo fled. Ding Yuan took a heavy toll of his forces, driving them back thirty *li*, where they pitched camp and took counsel. "Lü Bu is extraordinary!" said Zhuo. "If only I could win him to our side, the realm would be ours with little trouble!"

Someone stepped up to Dong Zhuo and said, "Your problem is solved, my lord. I come from Lü Bu's village and know him to be brave but shallow, and forgetful of honor when it's to his advantage. Let me try my powers of persuasion on him; I am sure I can get him to join us with his hands meekly folded." A delighted Dong Zhuo observed the speaker. It was Li Su, a commander of the Imperial Tiger Escort. "How do you plan to do it?" asked Zhuo. "I understand," Li Su replied, "that you, my lord, have a prize horse, called Red Hare, of extraordinary speed and stamina.¹⁰ Let me offer it to him, together with gold and pearls, to engage his interest. I will add some arguments of my own, and I guarantee that Lü Bu will betray Ding Yuan and enter your service." "Is this feasible?" Dong Zhuo asked, turning to Li Ru. "If your ambition," responded Li Ru, "is to take possession of the empire, don't begrudge a single horse, my lord." Contented, Dong Zhuo gave Li Su the horse along with one thousand taels of gold, several dozen lustrous pearls, and a jade belt.

Li Su took the treasures and headed for Lü Bu's camp. When the sentries closed in on him, he said, "Call General Lü at once. An old friend is here." Shortly, Li Su was led into Bu's presence. "Have you been well, worthy brother, since we parted?" said Li Su after being received. "It has been many years," said Lü Bu, bowing with hands clasped. "What is your position now?" "I am presently a commander of the Imperial Tiger Escort," Su answered. "I am proud and pleased to hear that my worthy brother is acting in support of the sacred shrines. I have with me a superb horse. He can travel a thousand *li* a day, ford streams and climb hills as if riding on flat ground. He's called Red Hare. I especially want you to have him to enhance your formidable prestige." Lü Bu had the animal led over to him. True to his name, every hair of his hide was the color of glowing embers. He measured ten spans head to tail, and stood eight spans from hoof to neck. His whinnies and neighs expressed the power to vault up to the sky or plunge into the deep. A poet of later times left this description:

Tearing, lunging a thousand *li*,
 behind, a duststorm starts;
Breasting rivers, scaling hills,
 above, a dark mist parts.
He snaps his reins and shakes
 his jeweled gear,
A fiery dragon diving down

from Heaven's upper tier.

Lü Bu thanked Li Su enthusiastically. "How can I ever repay you for this dragon-steed?" he said. "I have come out of personal respect and look for no thanks," Li Su replied. Lü Bu set out wine. When they had drunk to their heart's content, Li Su continued, "We see each other rarely enough, but your father often visits." "You must be drunk," Lü Bu responded. "My father died years ago. How could he visit you?" "No, no," said Li Su. "I actually meant Imperial Inspector Ding." Lü Bu responded uncertainly, "I have been Ding Yuan's man, it's true. But out of necessity more than choice."

"Worthy brother," Li Su went on, "you have the talent to prop up the heavens, to command the seas. Where in our land are you not looked up to? Success, fame, status, wealth—all yours for the asking. Do not say you are someone's underling 'out of necessity.'" "If only I had the right master," Lü Bu sighed. Li Su replied, "'The wise bird chooses its branch, the wise servant his master.' Later you will regret missing this opportunity." "Tell me, brother," Lü Bu pressed. "You are at court. Whom do you consider a hero of our time?" "Among the Emperor's servants," Li Su replied, "not one compares with Dong Zhuo, a man who instinctively shows respect to the worthy and receives the learned cordially, a man who rewards and punishes with unerring judgment. He will do great things!" "I would follow him," said Lü Bu, "but how?"

Li Su set the gold and pearls together with the jade belt in front of his host. "What are these for?" Lü Bu asked in surprise. Li Su had him dismiss his attendants. "His Excellency Dong Zhuo himself," Li Su began, "commissioned me to offer these to you, tokens of his long-standing admiration for your reputation. The horse is also his gift." "How can I reciprocate such affection?" Lü Bu asked. "If someone as ordinary as myself," Li Su answered, "can rise to commander of the Imperial Tiger Escort, then there will be no bounds to the rewards for someone like you." "Alas," Lü Bu responded, "I haven't a speck of merit to offer as an introduction." "To the contrary," returned Li Su, "it lies in the slightest turn of your hand. But I fear you would be reluctant to ..." Lü Bu mused a long while before saying, "I should like to kill Ding Yuan and take his men with me into Dong Zhuo's service. What do you think?" "Worthy brother," said Li Su, "there could be no greater service. But time is precious. Act without delay." They arranged for Lü Bu to join Dong Zhuo the next day. Then Li Su took his leave.

Late that night during the second watch Lü Bu, armed with a knife, stole into Ding Yuan's tent and found him reading by candlelight. "What brings you here, my son?" asked Ding Yuan. "I am my own man," answered Lü Bu, "and proud of it. I am no 'son' of yours." "Why have you turned against me?" Ding Yuan pleaded. Lü Bu, already moving on him, cut off his head and shouted to the attendants, "Ding Yuan is dead! I have killed him for his inhumanity. Those for me, stay. Those opposed, leave." Most of the troops dispersed.

The next day Lü Bu brought Ding Yuan's head to Li Su, and Li Su brought Lü Bu to Dong Zhuo. With great satisfaction Dong Zhuo ordered wine and invited Lü Bu to drink. He said, kneeling, "To have you here is to me like rain to the parched seedling." Lü Bu then raised Dong Zhuo, urged him to his seat, and prostrated himself in turn. "If you will have me, I beg to honor you as a foster father." Dong Zhuo presented Lü Bu with gleaming metal armor and a richly damasked battle gown. After drinking heartily, the two parted.

Dong Zhuo's authority increased after Lü Bu's arrival. Zhuo took personal command of the Forward Army and conferred on his brother, Dong Min, the title general of the Left and made him lord of Hu. He appointed Lü Bu cavalry commander¹¹ and Imperial Corps commander, and enfeoffed

him with a capital precinct.

Li Ru urged Dong Zhuo to arrange as quickly as possible for the deposing of Emperor Shao and the enthroning of the prince of Chenliu. Dong Zhuo convened a banquet in the imperial quarters for the lords and noblemen and ordered Lü Bu to stand by with one thousand soldiers. That day Imperial Guardian Yuan Wei and the entire official corps were in attendance. After several rounds of wine, Dong Zhuo, hand on sword, spoke: "The present sovereign is inept and feeble, unfit to serve the ancestral temple. I mean to follow the hallowed precedents of Yi Yin and Huo Guang and place the prince of Chenliu upon the throne of Han. The present Emperor will become the prince of Hongnong. Those who resist will be killed."

The officials were too astounded to respond. But Yuan Shao, commandant of the Central Army, rose to his feet and declared, "The present sovereign has held the throne but briefly. There are no defects in his character, no lapses in his conduct. Removing the Empress's son and enthroning a concubine's—what do you call that if not treason?" "This matter of state is mine to decide," Dong Zhuo said angrily. "Who dares defy me? Do you think this sword not sharp enough?" Yuan Shao, too, bared his sword. "This one may prove as sharp," he retorted. The two warriors confronted each other before the guests. Indeed:

Ding Yuan stood for honor and lost his life;
Yuan Shao challenged Dong Zhuo and stood in peril.

And what was Yuan Shao's fate?

READ ON.



***The Installation of the Chenliu Prince; Emperor Shao Is Deposed;
A Plot Against Traitor Dong; Cao Cao Presents a Jeweled Knife***

DONG ZHUO STARTED FOR YUAN SHAO, but Li Ru checked him: "Things are not yet under control. You must not kill rashly." Thus Yuan Shao left, sword still in hand, after bidding the assembled officials farewell. He hung his credentials on the east gate and fled to the province of Ji. "Your nephew has been most uncivil to us," Zhuo said to Imperial Guardian Yuan Wei, "but in deference to you I forgive him. Where do you stand on the succession?" "With you, Grand Commandant," was the reply. "Then let martial law deal with those who defy us!" Dong Zhuo declared. Shaken and fearful, the assembly responded, "We shall obey."

After the banquet Dong Zhuo asked Privy Counselor Zhou Bi and Commandant Wu Qiong how to deal with Yuan Shao. "He left in a terrible rage," said Zhou Bi. "But if you try to arrest him, the situation could turn against you. Don't forget, the Yuan clan has held high office for four generations. The empire abounds with their followers and former subordinates, powerful men who would gather their forces at his call. And then if other gallant heroes rally to his cause, the whole region east of Huashan Mountain will no longer be yours. Pardon Yuan Shao and give him an imperial district. He will be glad to be exonerated, and you will buy security." "Yuan Shao," added Wu Qiong, "loves to contemplate action but lacks resolution. He's not a problem. Do give him a governorship, if only to keep people's confidence." Dong Zhuo agreed and that same day had Shao appointed governor of Bohai.

On the first day of the ninth month the Emperor was invited to ascend the Hall of Praiseworthy Virtue before a grand convocation of civil and military officials. Dong Zhuo drew his sword and addressed them: "The Son of Heaven is too feeble in mind and in body to sustain his reign. I have a statement to make." At Zhuo's order Li Ru read it:

Although the late Majestic Emperor Ling the Filial departed all too soon, there were high expectations in the land when the present Emperor assumed the throne. But Heaven did not endow him with the steady and serious character, the deportment and demeanor to command respect. His inattention and nonchalance during the mourning period exhibit his meagre virtue. All this has been detrimental to the throne itself. Queen Mother He has failed to give proper guidance, leaving government administration untended and disordered. The violent death of Queen Mother Dong has left public opinion confused. The mainstays of our social order, the very bonds between Heaven and earth, have fallen slack.

The prince of Chenliu is rich in sagely virtue and strictly devoted to proper rule. Throughout the mourning he was distraught with grief. His words were unfailingly apt, and all the world

knows his excellent name. It is thus fitting and proper for him to receive the boundless patrimony of the Han as legitimate heir for all time. Thus: the sovereign is hereby deposed and reduced to prince of Hongnong. The queen mother will be relieved of all administrative duties. We enthrone the prince of Chenliu, in response to Heaven, in concurrence with men, and to satisfy the people's expectations.

When Li Ru had finished reading, Dong Zhuo sharply ordered the attendants to lead the Emperor down from the hall and to remove his seal and cord. They told him to face north and on bended knees declare his intention to serve and to obey. The queen mother was ordered to remove her royal costume and await instructions. Mother and son wept bitterly, and the assembly of officials moaned. But from below one official cried out indignantly, "Traitor Dong Zhuo. Dare you abuse Heaven itself? Then let my blood bear witness." He shook his pointed ivory tablet and attacked Dong Zhuo, at whose angry command the guards seized the man, Imperial Secretary Ding Guan. Dong Zhuo ordered him removed and beheaded. To the moment of his death his oaths streamed forth; neither his spirit nor his expression altered. In later times men still sighed for his sacrifice, as these lines attest:

The traitor's plot to change a sovereign
Would soon consign to dust the shrines of Han.
A courtful of courtiers helpless in Dong Zhuo's hand,
And no one but Ding Guan to take a stand!

Dong Zhuo invited the prince of Chenliu to ascend, and the assembly voiced its congratulations. Dong Zhuo ordered Queen Mother He and the former emperor, now prince of Hongnong, together with the imperial consort, Lady Tang, immured in the Palace of Eternal Peace. No access to them was permitted. Alas for the Emperor Shao, enthroned in the fourth month and deposed in the ninth.

The new Emperor, prince of Chenliu, Liu Xie (styled Bohe), second son of Emperor Ling, became known to history as Emperor Xian. He was nine years old, five years younger than his deposed brother. A new reign period, Beginning Peace (Chu Ping, a.d. 190-93), was proclaimed. Dong Zhuo became prime minister.¹ But he did not use his own name when saluting the sovereign nor comport himself reverently by scurrying in his presence, nor did he remove his boots and sword before the throne as required. The prestige and wealth he amassed raised him above all. Li Ru urged Dong Zhuo to broaden his support by elevating a few eminent men, Cai Yong in particular. Accordingly, Dong Zhuo summoned Cai Yong, but he refused to appear until threats of death to himself and his clan forced the scholar to present himself. Dong Zhuo was so pleased that he advanced Cai Yong three times within the month, finally making him privy counselor. Such was the kindness and generosity Cai Yong enjoyed.

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Meanwhile the former Emperor Shao, his mother, and his consort—all imprisoned in the Palace of Eternal Peace—were allotted but meagre shares of food and clothing. Emperor Shao's tears were never dry. One day he happened to notice a pair of swallows flying in the courtyard and intoned these lines:

Fresh vernal grasses tint the morning haze;
Homing swallows lace the sky in pairs;
The River Luo, a stretch of darker green—
People cry in wonder at the scene.

But out beyond the depths of yonder clouds
Stand palaces and courts that once were ours.
Who will stand for loyalty, take honor's part,
And ease the heavy wrongs upon my heart?

A spy, who kept the deposed Emperor under constant surveillance, reported to Dong Zhuo the words he heard sung. "Well, if grievance is his theme, we have our excuse," said Dong Zhuo and commanded Li Ru to take ten armed men and murder the Emperor.

The Emperor, Empress He, and Consort Tang were in an upper story of the palace when Li Ru was announced. The Emperor panicked. Li Ru offered him a cup of poisoned wine.² The Emperor wanted to know the occasion for the toast. "The prime minister drinks your health to greet the spring season," replied Li Ru. "If it is 'our health,'" said the queen mother, "you may drink first." "You won't drink it?" Li Ru said impatiently and ordered his men to show their knives and silken cords. "If the toast is refused, these will have to do," he added. Consort Tang fell to her knees and said, "Let this humble woman drink instead. Only, my lord, preserve the mother and the son." "And who are you to offer yourself in a prince's place?" snarled Li Ru, holding out the wine to the queen mother. "You drink first," he said. She cursed He Jin for having ruined the family by letting traitors into the capital.³ Li Ru pressed the cup on the Emperor. "Allow me to bid my mother good-bye," he said. Then he sang with deep feeling:

Earth tops Heaven; sun and moon change places.
Once I had a kingdom; now, a border town.
Robbed of life; by subjects overthrown.
All is lost; tears in vain flow on.

In turn the consort also sang:

Majestic Heaven falls; mother earth sinks down.
Given in marriage, I follow where he goes.
Two different paths—life and death here part.
So swift the course, and sorrow-filled my heart.

After the song the two embraced and wept. "The prime minister awaits our report," said Li Ru cruelly. "You are delaying things. Who do you think is coming to save you?" At that, the queen mother cried, "The traitor Dong drives us to our doom. But Heaven will never sanction it. Your entire clan will perish for aiding this criminal." Li Ru laid hands on the queen mother and thrust her out of a window. Then he barked the order to strangle the consort and force the wine down Emperor Shao's throat. His work finished, Li Ru reported to Dong Zhuo, who ordered the three buried outside the city

wall.

Dong Zhuo now began to indulge himself freely, debauching the imperial concubines and sleeping in the Emperor's bed. One day he took some troops to the city of Yang, a place outside Luoyang. It was the second month when the villagers, men and women, were celebrating the spring thanksgiving festival in honor of their local god. Dong Zhuo ordered his troops to surround the crowd and behead all the men. He seized the women and the goods that the people had with them and loaded everything onto his carts, tying to the sides the severed heads—more than one thousand. As the train reentered the capital Dong Zhuo announced that he was returning from a great victory over some bandits. The heads were burned at the city gate; the women and valuables were distributed among the army.⁴

The commandant of the Exemplary Cavalry, Wu Fu (styled Deyu), indignant at Dong Zhuo's cruelties, put a vest of armor and a knife under his court dress in order to assassinate him. When Dong Zhuo entered the court, Wu Fu greeted him outside the ministerial chambers and then lunged at him with the knife. Dong Zhuo, a powerful man, caught Wu Fu with both hands, and Lü Bu stepped in at once and forced him to the ground. "Who is behind this treason?" cried Dong Zhuo. Wu Fu stared boldly and shouted: "You are not my sovereign. I am not your subject. What 'treason' are you talking about? Your crimes tower to Heaven, and the whole world longs to see you dead. My one regret is that I cannot have you pulled apart by horses—like any traitor—to satisfy the realm." In a fury Dong Zhuo had Wu Fu dragged out and carved up. The curses streamed from his lips till the moment of death. A verse of later times praised him:

If you must tell of loyalty,
Tell of Wu Fu's to the Han.
His courage mounted to the skies
When down below was none.

He struck at Dong Zhuo in the court;
His fame is with us still.
Forever and ever he's won the name
Of a man of iron will.

Thereafter armed guards constantly attended Dong Zhuo.

At this time Yuan Shao was governor of Bohai. Informed of Dong Zhuo's abuses, he wrote secretly to Minister of the Interior Wang Yun:

This traitor wronged Heaven itself when he dethroned the Emperor, more than one can bear to say. Yet you have indulged his outrageous conduct as if you have heard nothing. Does this befit a subject who owes the dynasty his utmost loyalty? I am calling up and training soldiers to clear the royal house of villains, but I am not yet ready to act. If you share my views, be alert for any opportunity. I stand at your beck and call, awaiting your command.

After reading the letter, Wang Yun racked his brains for a plan. One day he came upon a group of former courtiers awaiting audience and said to them, "Today is my birthday. I should like to invite you to a little gathering at my humble home this evening." "We will come, of course, to wish you long

life," the courtiers replied.

That evening the elder lords and ministers arrived for the banquet Wang Yun had prepared in the rear chamber. The wine had gone round several times when Wang Yun covered his face and burst into tears. "Why this show of sorrow on a day of celebration?" asked the startled guests. "Today is not really my birthday," answered Wang Yun. "I said so only because I had something to tell you and wanted to avoid suspicion. Dong Zhuo has wronged the Emperor and abused his power. The dynastic shrines stand in peril. When I think how the founder of the Han overthrew the Qin, destroyed Chu, and gathered the empire into his hands, I cannot believe that the succession is to die out at the hands of a Dong Zhuo. That is why I cry!" The officials wept with him.

One of the guests, however, was rubbing his hands and laughing loudly. "This courtful of nobles can weep till morning and round to the next evening, too. But can you weep Dong Zhuo to death?" Wang Yun eyed the speaker, Cao Cao, commandant of the Valiant Cavaliers. In a tone of annoyance, Wang Yun said, "Your ancestors also held office under the Han. Why do you laugh when you should be thinking of how to settle the score for the dynasty?" "What makes me laugh," Cao went on, "is simply that not one of you gentlemen seems to have any idea how to get rid of Dong Zhuo. Despite my lack of ability, I would like nothing better than to cut off his head and hang it at the gates to the capital—to redeem ourselves in the eyes of the empire."

Rising from his mat in a gesture of respect, Wang Yun said, "Mengde, what is your worthy plan?" "Recently," Cao replied, "I demeaned myself and entered Dong Zhuo's service only for the chance to move against him. Since he has come to trust me, there are times I can get near him. I believe you have a knife with seven jewels. If you let me borrow it, I will go into his chamber and stab him—for I am prepared to die without regret." "Mengde, if you really mean to do this, the empire will be in your debt," Wang Yun responded. He personally poured out and offered him wine, which Cao Cao drained as his pledge; then Wang Yun gave him the precious dagger. Cao concealed it on his person. When he had finished drinking, Cao took leave his leave. The courtiers adjourned soon afterwards.

The next day Cao Cao, the jeweled knife at his side, arrived at the prime minister's chambers and was shown into his private quarters. Dong Zhuo was seated on a platform, Lü Bu beside him. "You're late today," said Zhuo. "My horse was slow," Cao replied. "We have some fine ones from my district," said Dong Zhuo. "Fengxian will go and bring one in for you." Lü Bu went out and Cao Cao said to himself, "How much this traitor deserves to die!" But he resisted the impulse to stab him then and there, fearing Dong Zhuo's enormous physical strength.

Dong Zhuo, a large, heavy man, could not comfortably sit for long, so he stretched himself out facing the rear wall. Again Cao Cao thought, "This traitor is done for," and was about to strike when Dong Zhuo suddenly looked into the metal reflector sewn on his clothing and saw the weapon drawn. "What are you up to, Mengde?" he asked, turning quickly round again. At that moment Lü Bu returned with the horse, and Cao dropped shakily to his knees, proffering the knife with both hands. "I wanted to offer this treasure in gratitude to Your Excellency," he said.⁵ Dong Zhuo took the knife. It was about a foot long and had seven jewels set in the handle and a finely honed point—truly a priceless gift. Dong Zhuo passed it to Lü Bu, as Cao Cao untied the scabbard and handed it over. Then Dong Zhuo led Cao out to see the horse. "Let me ride," Cao proposed. Dong Zhuo gave him saddle and bridle. Cao guided the horse out of Dong Zhuo's quarters, laid on the whip and headed southeast.

"If you ask me," Lü Bu said to Dong Zhuo, "Cao meant to murder you but got scared and made a show of presenting the knife." "I had the same thought," said Dong Zhuo. As they were speaking Li Ru

came in, and Dong Zhuo described to him what had happened. "Cao has no family in the capital and lives alone. Call him back," Li Ru suggested. "If he comes promptly, it was a gift. If not, your suspicions will be confirmed and you can have him arrested and questioned." On this advice Dong Zhuo sent out four bailiffs. They reported back: "Cao never went home but raced out the eastern gate, claiming to be on urgent business for Your Excellency when the watchmen tried to question him." "So you see," Li Ru concluded, "the hypocritical traitor has slipped away. It was treachery." "And to think I placed such faith in a man who meant to murder me," said Dong Zhuo bitterly. "There have to be others in on it," said Li Ru. "We'll know more when we catch him." Dong Zhuo circulated warrants with a sketch of Cao Cao's face, offering a thousand pieces of gold and a fief of ten thousand households for his arrest; he appended a warning that anyone caught sheltering the fugitive would be punished as severely as Cao Cao himself.

Cao Cao fled the capital and headed for Qiao, his home district. Passing Zhongmou country he was apprehended by guards at the barrier and taken for questioning to the county magistrate. "I am a traveling merchant," said Cao. "My surname is Huangfu." The magistrate, however, recognized the prisoner and, after musing a long while, said, "I knew you as Cao Cao when I was in Luoyang seeking office. Why are you concealing your identity? You are under arrest. Tomorrow I will deliver you to the capital for the reward." The official then gave the guards wine and food and sent them away.

That night the magistrate had Cao secretly brought to his rear court and inquired further: "I have heard that the prime minister was more than generous to you. Why did you bring this on yourself?" "Does the sparrow know of the swan's ambition?" Cao responded. "You have me. Turn me in for the reward. Why bother with questions?" The magistrate sent his attendants away and went on, "Don't despise me. I am no ordinary officeholder. I simply haven't met a worthy master." "My forefathers," Cao said, "enjoyed the bounty of Han for generations. If I fail to honor the debt, I am no better than bird or beast. I demeaned myself to serve Dong Zhuo only for the chance of ridding the dynasty of the scourge, but fate has thwarted me."

"Mengde," the magistrate said, "where were you heading?" "Back to my village," answered Cao. "I mean to rally the lords of the realm in the name of the Emperor for unified military action against Dong Zhuo." After hearing Cao's plan, the magistrate personally removed Cao's bonds and helped him to a seat for honored guests. "You are truly the loyal and honorable man of the day!" he said, saluting Cao. Cao returned the salute and asked the magistrate's name. "My surname is Chen," he replied, "given name, Gong; style, Gongtai. My mother and family are in Dongjun. Your devotion to the Han moves me to abandon my office and follow you." Cao Cao was immensely pleased. Chen Gong put together some money for traveling and gave Cao a change of clothes. Each carrying a sword, they set out for Cao's village.

After three days' riding, they came to a place called Chenggao. The hour was late. Cao pointed with his whip to a deep grove and said, "Somewhere around here lives a man, Lü Boshe, who once swore an oath of brotherhood with my father. Let's go there and get news of my family and a night's rest." Chen Gong gladly agreed, and the two men rode to the farmhouse, where they found Lü Boshe. "They say the court circulated a warrant for your arrest," Lü Boshe said. "They applied so much pressure that your father left the Chenliu area. How did you get here?" Cao Cao related the recent events and continued, "If not for the magistrate, I would have been reduced to mincemeat." Boshe saluted Chen Gong and said, "Your Honor, the Caos would have been exterminated but for you. Here you may relax and sleep in the back cottage. "

Lü Boshe rose and went inside. Eventually he returned and said he was out of wine and had to go to the next village to buy some. Then he hopped on his donkey and was off. Cao Cao and Chen Gong sat a good while. Suddenly behind the farmhouse they heard the sound of knives being whetted. "You know, Lü Boshe is not a close relative," Cao said. "There's something suspicious about his leaving. Let's look into this." The two men stole behind the cottage and overheard someone mumble, "Let's tie'm up an' kill'm." "I thought so," Cao Cao whispered. "If we don't strike first, we'll be caught." Cao Cao and Chen Gong entered at once and killed everyone, women and men, eight in all; only then did they see the trussed pig waiting to be slaughtered.

"You were too suspicious," Chen Gong said. "We've killed good folk." The two men hurried from the farm, but before they had ridden half a mile they met their host on his donkey with two jars of wine suspended from the pommel and fruit and vegetables hanging from one hand. "Dear nephew and honorable sir," he cried, "why are you leaving so suddenly?" "Marked men can't remain anywhere for long," answered Cao Cao. "But I told my family to slaughter a pig for your dinner," Lü Boshe said earnestly. "Don't begrudge us the night, nephew, nor you, good sir. Turn back, I pray." But Cao spurred his horse on. Then he turned and dashed back, his sword drawn, calling to Lü Boshe, "Who's coming over there?" As Boshe looked away Cao Cao cut him down, and he fell from his donkey. Chen Gong was astounded. "What happened at the farm was a mistake—but why this?" "Had he gotten home and seen them he would never have let it lay. He'd have brought a mob after us and we would've been done for." "But you murdered him knowing he was innocent—a great wrong," Chen Gong asserted. "Better to wrong the world than have it wrong me!" Cao Cao retorted. Chen Gong said nothing.⁶

That night, after riding several *li* under a bright moon, they knocked at the door of an inn and found a night's shelter. Cao fed the horses and went to sleep, but Chen Gong lay awake. "I took Cao for a good man," he mused, "and left office to join him. Now I see he's a savage beast at heart. If I let him live, only trouble will come of it." Chen Gong drew his sword. Indeed:

A good man cannot have a bane-filled mind.

Dong Zhuo and Cao Cao proved two of a kind.

Was this the end of Cao Cao?

READ ON.



Cao Cao Rallies the Lords with a Forged Decree; The Three Brothers Engage Lü Bu in Battle

HIS ARM RAISED TO STRIKE, Chen Gong reflected, "I followed Cao Cao for the good of the Emperor. But killing him only adds another wrong. Better simply to leave." Having come to that decision, he put away his sword and, without waiting for daybreak, rode toward Dongjun, his family's home district.¹

Cao Cao awoke to find Chen Gong gone. "He thought me inhumane," Cao reflected, "for that comment I made about wronging the world before it wrongs me, so he left. But I can't stay here, either." Later, home in Chenliu, Cao Cao related the recent events to his father and urged him to contribute the family's property for the purpose of recruiting troops. "Our means can't accomplish such a thing," said his father. "But Wei Hong lives nearby. He was recommended for office as a man of filial devotion and personal integrity. He is generous and supports men of worth. If you can enlist his aid, your plan may succeed.

Accordingly, Cao Cao invited Wei Hong to a banquet at his home and used the occasion to make his appeal. "The dynasty no longer has a rightful ruler," Cao began. "Dong Zhuo wields all power, betrays the sovereign, and plagues the people. Bitter resentment has spread through the realm, but I alone cannot protect the shrines of Han. Therefore, I make bold, my lord, to seek the aid of a man as loyal and honorable as yourself." "I have long felt the way you do," replied Wei Hong, "but regrettably have yet to meet a hero loyal and true. Mengde, since you have such ambition, allow me to put the resources of my house at your disposal." Elated with the response to his appeal, Cao Cao forged a decree in the Emperor's name, and swift messengers carried it to various points. Next, he recruited volunteers for the cause and raised a white standard bearing the words "Loyalty and Honor."² Within days, commitments of support came pouring in.

One day two men came to offer their services: Yue Jin (styled Wenqian) of Wei in Yangping and Li Dian (styled Mancheng) of Julu in Shangyang. Cao Cao took both on as guards in his headquarters. Another who came was Xiahou Dun (styled Yuanrang) from Qiao in the fief at Pei.³ Xiahou Dun was a descendant of Xiahou Ying. Since childhood Dun had trained with spears and clubs and by fourteen was learning martial arts. He was later forced to flee the district for killing someone who had insulted his teacher. Now, hearing that Cao Cao was organizing an army, he and his clansman, Xiahou Yuan, brought a thousand hardy warriors each to Cao's camp. In fact these two men were Cao's own clansmen, as Cao's father, a Xiahou, had been adopted into the Cao family. Cao's cousins from the Cao clan, Ren and Hong, also brought in over a thousand men each. Cao Ren's style was Zixiao, and Hong's was Zilian. Both were past masters of archery and horsemanship as well as other martial arts. Cao Cao was delighted with his gathering army, which he trained in the village. Wei Hong contributed all his wealth to provide clothing, armor, and banners. Countless others sent grain. When Yuan Shao⁴ received Cao's forged decree, he gathered his officials and officers and led a body of

thirty thousand from Bohai to form an alliance with Cao Cao.

At this time Cao Cao sent the following proclamation to the various imperial districts:

Cognizant of their grave responsibility, Cao and his confederates proclaim to the realm their loyalist cause. Dong Zhuo, violator of Heaven and earth, has destroyed the dynasty and murdered the Emperor, dishonored the palace's forbidden quarters, and grievously injured the common folk. The crimes of this ruthless, avaricious man mount high. Now we have in hand a secret decree from the Emperor, on which authority we are summoning soldiers to our cause. We vow to extirpate these evils and preserve the sacred heartland of our civilization. We aim to field a righteous host to satisfy the indignation of the people, support the royal house, and save the suffering millions. Let this proclamation be acted upon immediately when received.

In response to this call the lords of seventeen military townships mustered their forces. The roster read:

1. Yuan Shu, governor of Nanyang and general of the Rear
2. Han Fu, imperial inspector of Jizhou
3. Kong Zhou, imperial inspector of Yuzhou
4. Liu Dai, imperial inspector of Yanzhou
5. Wang Kuang, governor of Henei
6. Zhang Miao, governor of Chenliu
7. Qiao Mao, governor of Dongjun
8. Yuan Yi, governor of Shanyang
9. Bao Xin, lord of Jibei
10. Kong Rong, governor of Beihai
11. Zhang Chao, governor of Guangling
12. Tao Qian, imperial inspector of Xuzhou
13. Ma Teng, governor of Xiliang
14. Gongsun Zan, governor of Beiping
15. Zhang Yang, governor of Shangdang
16. Sun Jian, lord of Wucheng and governor of Changsha
17. Yuan Shao, lord of Qixiang and governor of Bohai

These contingents varied considerably in strength, some numbering as many as thirty thousand, others, ten or twenty thousand. Each leader, together with his civil and military personnel, headed for the capital.

Gongsun Zan, governor of Beiping, was marching fifteen thousand men through Pingyuan county in Dezhou when in a distant mulberry grove he saw a group of horsemen under a yellow banner riding toward him. The leader was Liu Xuande.⁵ "What brings you here, good brother?" asked Gongsun Zan. "Some time ago," replied Xuande, "I had the good fortune to be appointed magistrate of Pingyuan, thanks to your recommendation. I heard you were passing through and came to offer my respects. Please come into the town to rest your horses." Pointing to Lord Guan and Zhang Fei, Gongsun Zan asked who they were. "My oath brothers," Xuande said. "They helped you against the Yellow Scarves?" queried Zan. "They did it all," was the reply. "What posts do they hold?" Zan wanted to

know. "Lord Guan is a mounted archer," answered Xuande, "Zhang Fei a standing archer." "A waste of talent," sighed Zan. "Dong Zhuo has the court in thrall, and the lords of the realm are moving on Luoyang to punish him. Worthy brother, give up this humble post and join me in the campaign to support the house of Han. What do you say?" "I am willing," Xuande responded. "If you had let me kill the traitor that time," Zhang Fei interjected, "we wouldn't have all this trouble." "Deal with the present," Lord Guan urged. "Let's collect our things and be going."

Cao Cao welcomed Gongsun Zan, the three brothers, and the several riders accompanying them. The various lords were arriving one after another, pitching their camps over an area stretching for two hundred *li*. Cao Cao slaughtered cattle and horses, feasted the leaders, and convened a war council to consider the next step. Wang Kuang, governor of Henei, said, "In serving this great cause we must first establish a war-ruler and pledge him our strictest obedience. Only then can we march." In response Cao Cao proposed, "Yuan Shao's family has held highest office for four generations, and many former officers still serve them. As the descendant of distinguished ministers, Shao is most fit to lead our confederacy." This view prevailed among the lords, and Yuan Shao, after initially declining, consented to serve.⁶

The following day a three-tiered platform was built, and the flags of every garrison were planted round it. Above they set a yak-tail pennant, a gilded battle-axe, and the seal and tally of military authority. Then Yuan Shao, at the invitation of the lords, ascended grandly in full regalia, a sword at his side. He burned incense, saluted, and read out the pledge:

Misfortune has struck the Han. The sacred continuity of the royal line is broken. The traitor Dong Zhuo exploits the lapse of rule to loose great evils upon us, sparing not even the sovereign, spreading suffering among the people. We fear for the sacred shrines and have rallied a righteous force to meet the crisis. All members of the covenant dedicate body and soul to the cause as conscientious subjects. Let no man harbor contrary ambitions, or fail his oath and debase our mandate, lest he lose his posterity. O august Heaven above, fruitful Mother Earth, and you sentient spirits of our ancestors, bear true witness to our vow.

After the declaration had been read, the leaders of the confederacy pledged their faith by touching the blood of the sacrifice to their lips. The assembly, inspired by the words spoken to them, shed tears freely. Yuan Shao descended, and the crowd raised him to the place of command in his tent, facing two rows of chieftains seated by age and rank.

Cao Cao sent round the wine. "Now that we have a war-ruler," he said, "all must serve as assigned and cooperate in our task regardless of minor inequities." Then Yuan Shao spoke: "My unworthiness notwithstanding, you have elected me your chief. In that role I shall reward merit and punish offenders. Governmental sanctions shall be strictly applied and military discipline strictly observed. Let there be no violation of either." The assembly shouted its assent: "Command, and we obey." "My younger brother, Shu," Shao continued, "will manage the food and fodder, providing for each camp and ensuring against shortages. We also need one man to lead the van to the Si River pass and challenge the foe to battle. The rest of us will hold the various strategic points and stand ready to reinforce." Sun Jian (styled Wentai), governor of Changsha, offered to take the forward unit.⁷ "Wentai is a man," Yuan Shao said, "who has the fierce courage required for this task." Sun Jian marched to the pass, and the defenders reported the new threat to officials at the prime minister's residence.

After taking power, Dong Zhuo spent his days feasting. It was Li Ru who received word of the emergency. He hurried with the news to Dong Zhuo, who convened his commanders. Lü Bu, lord of Wen, rose to speak: "Father, have no fear. Those lords beyond the pass are so many weak reeds to me. With my stout warriors I'll string up their heads on the capital gates." Dong Zhuo, immensely pleased, said, "With Lü Bu on our side, I sleep easy." But even as he spoke someone stood up behind Lü Bu and cried, "It hardly takes an ox-cleaver to kill a chicken.⁸ Why send Lü Bu when I can take their heads as easily as pulling something from a sack?" Dong Zhuo cast his glance on a man some nine spans tall, molded like a tiger, supple as a wolf, with a pantherine head and apelike arms. It was Hua Xiong of Guanxi. His brave words pleased Dong Zhuo, who appointed him a commandant of the Valiant Cavaliers and sent him off that night with fifty thousand picked foot soldiers and horsemen to meet the enemy at the pass. Three other generals, Li Su, Hu Zhen, and Zhao Cen, went with Hua Xiong.

Among the insurgent lords led by Yuan Shao was the lord of Jibei, Bao Xin. Anxious lest Sun Jian's vanguard win the highest honors, he secretly sent his brother Bao Zhong ahead to the pass. Taking side paths to avoid detection, Bao Zhong arrived with three thousand men and incited the enemy to battle. Hua Xiong responded quickly. Racing to the pass with five hundred armored shock cavalry, he shouted, "Rebel! Stand where you are!" Bao Zhong tried desperately to turn back but fell to a stroke of Hua Xiong's blade. Many of his commanders were taken alive. The victor sent Bao Zhong's head to the prime minister and reported the triumph. Dong Zhuo made Xiong his chief commander.

Unaware of this defeat, Sun Jian was advancing to the pass. He had four commanders: Cheng Pu (Demou) from Tuyin in Youbeiping, wielding a steel-spined spear with snakeheaded blade; Huang Gai (Gongfu) of Lingling, wielding an iron whip; Han Dang (Yi-gong) from Lingzhi in Liaoxi, wielding a great backsword; and Zu Mao (Darong) from Fuchun in Wujun, wielding a pair of swords-of-war.⁹ Sun Jian donned his silver-sheened armor and red hood, and belted on a well-tempered sword. From his crenelle-maned horse he pointed to the pass and shouted directly to Hua Xiong, "Surrender, you wretched slave to villainy."

Hua Xiong's lieutenant commander, Hu Zhen, led five thousand men out of the pass to do battle. Cheng Pu¹⁰ came on with leveled spear and pierced Hu Zhen's throat. Down he went. Sun Jian waved his men on toward the heart of the pass, but they suffered a heavy pelting with stones and arrows and withdrew to Liangdong. Sun Jian sent one messenger to Yuan Shao to report the victory and another to Yuan Shu for grain.

Concerning Sun Jian's request someone advised Yuan Shu: "Sun Jian is the tiger of the east. If he takes the capital and kills Dong Zhuo, we'll be facing a tiger instead of a wolf. Deny the grain and watch his army fall apart." Yuan Shu, persuaded, sent no supplies. Sun Jian's men became uncontrollable, and word of it soon reached the government camp at the pass. Dong Zhuo's adviser, Li Su, plotted the next step with Hua Xiong. "Tonight," said Su, "I'll take a company of men by side paths down from the pass and strike from the rear. You attack their forward positions. Jian can surely be captured." Hua Xiong approved and ordered his men to be fed well in preparation for the action.

The moon was bright and the breeze refreshing when Hua Xiong reached Sun Jian's camp. At midnight his men stormed in, howling and shrieking. Sun Jian donned his armor, leaped to horse, and took on Hua Xiong. As they tangled, Li Su struck from the rear, ordering his men to set fires wherever they could. Sun Jian's army fled, though some commanders skirmished individually. Zu Mao alone

stuck by Sun Jian. The two dashed from the battleground, pursued by Hua Xiong. Xiong dodged two arrows and kept pace. Sun Jian shot a third, but drew so hard his bow split. He threw it aside and rode for his life.

"Your red hood's a perfect target," cried Zu Mao. "I'll wear it." The men switched headgear and took flight by different roads. Xiong's soldiers spotted the bright color in the distance and gave chase. Sun Jian followed a side road and got away. Zu Mao, hard-pressed, hung the hood on a half-burned piece of timber and hid in a nearby copse. Catching the moonlight, the hood attracted Hua Xiong's men, and they circled it. No one dared advance, but after someone shot at it, they discovered the ruse and went for the headdress. At that moment Zu Mao came slashing out of the wood, wielding both his swords. But his object, Hua Xiong, uttering fierce cries, delivered a single fatal swordstroke that dropped Zu Mao from his horse.

The slaughter continued until morning. Then Hua Xiong brought his men back to the pass. Sun Jian's remaining commanders, Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang, found their leader and rounded up their men. Sun Jian grieved over the loss of Zu Mao and sent a messenger to report to Yuan Shao.

Stunned at the defeat of Sun Jian by Hua Xiong, Yuan Shao called the lords into session. Gongsun Zan reached the meeting late, and Yuan Shao invited him to sit among the lords. "The other day," Yuan Shao began, "General Bao Xin's younger brother ignored orders and advanced without authority. He himself was killed, and we lost many men. Now Sun Jian has been beaten. Our edge is blunted, our mettle dulled. What is our next step to be?" Not one of the lords replied.

The war-ruler scanned the audience. Behind Gongsun Zan three extraordinarily-looking strangers stood smiling grimly. Yuan Shao asked who they were. Gongsun Zan had Xuande step forward. "This is Liu Bei," he said, "magistrate at Pingyuan. We were fellow students and like brothers even then." "Not the one who helped break the Yellow Scarves?" asked Cao Cao. "The very one," answered Gongsun Zan. He told Xuande to salute Yuan Shao and Cao Cao and then proceeded to describe his protege's origins and accomplishments. "Since he belongs to a branch of the imperial family," Yuan Shao concluded, "let him come forward and be seated." But Xuande modestly declined.¹¹ "It is not your name or rank I salute," insisted Shao, "but your lineage." With that, Xuande took his place at the end of the line. Lord Guan and Zhang Fei posted themselves behind him, hands folded on their chests.¹²

At this point a spy reported that Hua Xiong had brought his armored cavalry down from the pass, displaying Sun Jian's red headdress on the tip of a pole, and was at the camp's entrance mouthing taunts. "Who will go?" asked Yuan Shao. From behind Yuan Shu, Yu She, a commander known for bravery, stepped forward and volunteered. But Hua Xiong made short work of him. Alarm stirred the assembly. Governor Han Fu recommended his own champion commander, Pan Feng, and Yuan Shao urged him to the field. Pan Feng went forth with a huge axe, but the news came back swiftly of his death too at Hua Xiong's hands. The assembly began to panic. "It's a pity Yan Liang and Wen Chou, my own top generals, are not here," Yuan Shao said. "Either one could end our worries." At that, a voice from the back boomed, "I offer to present Hua Xiong's head to you personally."

The assembled lords turned to the speaker, a man over nine spans, with a great beard flowing from rich ruddy cheeks. His eyes were like those of the crimson-faced phoenix, his brows like nestling silkworms, his voice like a tolling bell. He fixed his eyes directly on the audience. "Who is this man?" demanded Shao. "Guan Yu, sworn brother of Xuande," answered Gongsun Zan. "His position?" asked Shao. "Mounted archer under Xuande," was the reply. At that, the war-ruler's

brother, Yuan Shu, burst out, "Are you trying to insult us? A mere archer! Have we no more commanders? What nonsense! Get him out of here!" But Cao Cao checked Yuan Shu: "Pray, hold your temper. This man has made his boast. He can't be a coward. Now let him make it good. You'll have plenty of time to condemn him if he fails." "But to send out an archer!" Yuan Shao said. "Hua Xiong will laugh in his sleeve!" "He doesn't look like an ordinary soldier," Cao Cao replied. "How is Hua Xiong going to know?" Finally, Lord Guan spoke: "If I fail, my head is yours."

Cao Cao had a draft of wine heated for Lord Guan before he mounted. "Pour it," said the warrior, "and set it aside for me. I'll be back shortly." He leaped to his horse, gripped his weapon, and was gone. The assembly of lords heard the rolling of drums and the clamor of voices outside the pass, and it seemed as if the heavens would split open and the earth buckle, as if the hills were shaking and the mountains moving. The terror-struck assembly was about to make inquiry when the jingling of bridle bells announced Lord Guan's return. He entered the tent and tossed Hua Xiong's head, freshly severed, on the ground. His wine was still warm. A poet of later times sang Lord Guan's praises:

His might sufficed to hold in place
the frames of sky and land.
The painted war drums charged the air
at the chieftains' field command.
The hero put the cup aside
to slake his combat lust:
Before the wine had time to cool,
Hua Xiong lay in the dust.

Cao Cao was elated by Lord Guan's display of prowess.¹³ "My brother has taken Hua Xiong's head," cried Zhang Fei, stepping forward. "What are we waiting for? Let's break through the pass and take Dong Zhuo alive!" But Yuan Shu was enraged. "Even I," he bellowed, "a district governor, do not presume upon my position. How dare this magistrate's underling flaunt his powers before us! Drive the lot of them from our presence!" "The meritorious must be rewarded without regard to status," Cao Cao cautioned Yuan Shu. "Since you are so impressed with a mere magistrate," Shu retorted, "I announce my withdrawal." "Are we going to jeopardize our cause," Cao asked, "on account of a few words?" He ordered Gongsun Zan to take Xuande and his brothers back to camp. The assembly adjourned. Cao quietly sent meat and wine to cheer the three heroes.

Hua Xiong's subordinates reported the defeat, and Li Su sent an emergency appeal to the capital. There an agitated Dong Zhuo consulted Li Ru, Lü Bu, and others. "Their position is now greatly strengthened," Li Ru commented. "Yuan Shao commands the confederates, and his uncle, Yuan Wei, remains imperial guardian. If they coordinate their efforts, we could be in serious trouble. Get rid of Yuan Wei first; then, Your Excellency, lead the army yourself and root out the rebels one by one." Dong Zhuo approved Li Ru's proposal. On the prime minister's order, generals Li Jue and Guo Si surrounded Yuan Wei's home with five hundred men, put every member of the household to death regardless of age, and sent the imperial guardian's head to the pass, where it was exhibited.¹⁴ Then Dong Zhuo led two hundred thousand men in two field armies against the confederate lords. The first army, fifty thousand under Li Jue and Guo Si, was to hold the line at the Si River and not engage in combat. Dong Zhuo himself led the second, a force of one hundred and fifty thousand, to guard Tiger

Trap Pass, located some fifty *li* from Luoyang. Among his chief counselors and commanders were Li Ru, Lü Bu, Fan Chou, and Zhang Ji. Dong Zhuo ordered Lü Bu to place thirty thousand in front of the pass, while he posted himself behind it.

Swift runners brought the news to Yuan Shao, who convened his council. "Dong Zhuo is positioned at Tiger Trap," said Cao Cao, "intersecting our central corps. We should move half our men to engage him." Shao accordingly ordered eight of the lords— Wang Kuang, Qiao Mao, Bao Xin, Yuan Yi, Kong Rong, Zhang Yang, Tao Qian, and Gongsun Zan—to the pass. Cao Cao moved between them in support activity.

The eight lords mustered their men as Yuan Shao had directed. Wang Kuang, governor of Henei, reached the pass first, and Lü Bu rode out with three thousand armored shock cavalry. Wang Kuang deployed horsemen and foot soldiers into line and guided his horse to the bannered front of the formation. He watched Lü Bu emerge from the opposing ranks. A three-pronged headpiece of dark gold held his hair in place. His war-gown was of Xichuan red brocade with a millefleurs design. Armor wrought of interlocking animal heads protected his torso. A lion-and-reptile belt that clinked and sparkled girt his waist and secured his armor.¹⁵ A quiver of arrows at his side, a figured halberd with two side-blades clenched in his hand, Lü Bu sat astride Red Hare as it neighed like the roaring wind. Truly was it said: "Among heroes, Lü Bu; among horses, Red Hare."

Wang Kuang turned to his line and shouted, "Who dares fight him?" From the rear a rider galloped forth, spear held high. It was Fang Yue, a celebrated general from Henei. The warriors clashed; the warriors closed. Lü Bu dropped Yue with a stroke of his halberd and charged ahead. Kuang's army scattered. Bu pressed the slaughter, moving freely as if unopposed. Only when Qiao Mao and Yuan Yi arrived in time to save Wang Kuang did Lü Bu pull back. The forces of the three lords withdrew thirty *li* and made camp. Then the remaining five contingents joined them. Everyone agreed Lü Bu was a hero no one could match.

The eight lords were deliberating their next move when it was reported that Lü Bu had come to provoke them to battle. Moving as one man, the eight lords mounted and with their host divided into eight fighting squadrons rode to high ground. They watched Lü Bu's massed force hurtling toward them under gorgeous multicolored flags rippling in the air. Mu Shun, a brigade leader under Zhang Yang, governor of Shangdang, hoisted his spear and went forth to give battle, only to be slain with a casual pass of Lü Bu's blade. A wave of consternation stirred the lords. Next Wu Anguo, a brigade leader under Kong Rong, governor of Beihai, charged out on horseback swinging an iron mace. Lü Bu flourished his weapon and urged his mount on. After ten bouts Lü Bu cut off Wu Anguo's hand, and the mace fell to the ground. Men from the eight armies saved Wu Anguo as Lü Bu retired to his line.

Regrouped at camp, the lords again took counsel. "Lü Bu has no match," said Cao Cao. "Let us assemble the whole body of eighteen lords to form a sound plan. If we can capture him, Dong Zhuo will be easily defeated." As they conferred, Lü Bu returned to sound the challenge, and the eight lords answered it. Gongsun Zan thrust his spear into the air and took on Lü Bu, only to flee after a brief clash. Lü Bu gave Red Hare free rein and came pounding after Gongsun Zan. The horse's great speed and stamina brought him close behind. Lü Bu leveled his halberd, aiming for the center of Gongsun Zan's back.

To the side of the action stood a single warrior, his eyes rounding, his whiskers bristling. Holding high his eighteen-span snake-headed spear, he flew at Lü Bu, shouting mightily, "Stay! Bastard with three fathers! Know me for Zhang Fei of Yan!" Lü Bu veered from Gongsun Zan to confront the new

challenger. Zhang Fei's fighting spirit flashed at this welcome chance. The two crossed and tangled more than fifty times. Lord Guan, seeing that neither could best the other, urged his horse forward and, flourishing his crescent-moon blade, Green Dragon, attacked from another side. The three horsemen formed a triangle. They fought another thirty bouts, but Lü Bu was unconquerable.

Then Xuande, clenching his matching swords, angled into the field on his tawny-maned horse, and the three brothers circled Lü Bu like the figured shade of a revolving lamp. The warriors of the eight lords stood transfixed. Soon Lü Bu could no longer fend off his enemies. Eyeing Xuande squarely, he fainted at him with the halberd. In dodging the thrust, Xuande opened a corner of the trap, and Lü Bu made good his escape, letting his weapon hang behind him, but the brothers would not let up. They gave chase, and the warriors who were witnessing the spectacle swept after them onto the field with a roar that shook the ground. Lü Bu's army broke and ran for the pass with the three brothers still leading the pursuit. A poet of later times described the contest thus:

The house of Han approached its Heaven-destined end;
Deep in the west its fiery sun had bent.
Dong Zhuo deposed the rightful Emperor
And filled the feeble prince with dreams of fear.¹⁶
So Cao Cao sent his writ to all the lords,
Who summoned up ten thousand righteous swords,
Elected Yuan Shao to their league's command,
And swore to stay the house and calm the land.
Dong Zhuo's man, Lü Bu, warrior without peer,
Far surpassed the champions of his sphere:
In armor clad, a dragon etched in scales,
His headpiece fledged with gallant pheasant tails,
His jagged jade belt scored with lion jaws,
A phoenix spread in flight; his surcoat soars.
His chafing charger stirred a fearsome wind,
In every eye his halberd's piercing glint.
No lord could face his call to brave the field:
Their hearts went faint, their senses reeled.
Then Zhang Fei made his way into the list,
His giant snake-head lance fast in his fist.
His beard stuck out, defiant strands of wire;
The circles of his eyes shot angry fire.
They fought their fill. The contest undecided,
Before his line Lord Guan no more abided:
His dragon blade as dazzling as fresh snow,
His war coat, parrot-hued, aswirl below.
His pounding horse aroused the dead to howl.
Blood would flow before his dreadful scowl.
With double swords Xuande now joins the fight.
The crafty owl will show his zeal and might.

The brothers circle Lü Bu round and round.
He fends, he blocks, too skillful to be downed.
The hue and cry set sky and land ajar;
The bloodlust sent a shudder through the stars.
His power spent, Lü Bu found an out
And rode for safety to his own redoubt,
His mighty weapon trailing at his back,
His gilded five-hued streamers all awrack.
Riding hard, he snapped his horse's rein,
Hurling up to Tiger Trap again.

The brothers chased Lü Bu to the gateway to the pass. There they saw the blue silk command canopy fluttering above. "Dong Zhuo himself!" cried Zhang Fei. "Why bother with Lü Bu now? Let's get the chief traitor and root out the whole faction." The brothers started toward Dong Zhuo. Indeed:

"To catch a thief, you have to catch his chief."
But who, in fact, had the genius to do so?

What was the outcome of the fight?

READ ON.



***In Razing the Capital, Dong Zhuo Commits Heinous Crimes;
By Concealing the Jade Seal, Sun Jian Betrays the Confederation***

ZHANG FEI RACED AHEAD to the pass, but volleys of stones and arrows forced him back. The eight lords hailed the victory of the three brothers and reported it to the war-ruler. Yuan Shao called on Sun Jian to renew the attack.

Before going into battle, Sun Jian, attended by Cheng Pu and Huang Gai, visited Yuan Shu in his camp. In a hostile gesture Jian traced a line on the ground with a stick and said to Yuan Shu, "Between Dong Zhuo and me there is no enmity. I have risked death by stone and arrow in this war, not only in the cause of the Han, but also to avenge your own house.¹ Yet you gave ear to slanders and denied me vital rations, causing me to suffer a grave defeat. Where is your conscience?" Yuan Shu, taken aback, made no reply, but by way of apology he executed the man who had urged him to hold back the supplies. At that point a messenger announced that an enemy commander had come to see Sun Jian.

Sun Jian took leave of Yuan Shu and returned to his quarters, where he received the visitor, Li Jue, one of Dong Zhuo's trusted commanders. "What is your business?" asked Sun Jian. "You are among those the prime minister most admires," began Li Jue. "He has sent me in hopes of forming a new relationship—by joining his daughter and your son, General, in marriage." "The renegade!" Sun Jian cried in outrage. "Violating Heaven's canons, he has wrought havoc on the royal house. I am determined to destroy the nine branches of his clan to satisfy the indignation of the empire. Do you think I would debase myself in such a relationship? I spare you only to speed you with my reply: surrender the pass in time and save your skins. Delay and I'll destroy you all."

Li Jue scurried, shamefaced, off to Dong Zhuo and reported Sun Jian's refusal. Incensed, Dong Zhuo turned to Li Ru, who said, "Lü Bu's recent defeat has demoralized the men. I suggest you recall them to Luoyang and move the Emperor to Chang'an. This would be in keeping with the children's song that has been going around lately:

There once was a Han in the west,
And now there is one in the east.
If only the deer² will flee to Chang'an,
The world will again be at peace.

I take it that the words 'a Han in the west' refer to the founder of our dynasty, the Supreme Ancestor,³ who inaugurated the first of twelve consecutive reigns in Chang'an, the western capital. The words 'a Han in the east,' however, refer to the founder of the Later Han,⁴ who inaugurated another twelve glorious reigns in Luoyang, the eastern capital. Now the spheres of Heaven which hold men's fortunes

have circled back to their starting positions. Thus, Your Excellency, if you transfer the court to Chang'an, all will be well. "Delighted with Li Ru's proposal, Dong Zhuo said," You have shown me the way. " Immediately, he led Lü Bu back to Luoyang to decide how to move the capital.

Dong Zhuo assembled the civil and military officials in the great hall of the palace and declared: "For Luoyang, eastern capital of the Han during the last two hundred years, the allotted span of time now draws to a close. But in Chang'an I can see a reviving spirit and thus shall convey the royal presence to the west. Let each of you make the necessary preparations." Minister of the Interior Yang Biao objected: "The whole Guanzhong region⁵ is devastated. We will throw the common people into panic if we abandon the imperial family temples and mausoleums here for no good reason. It is easy enough to disturb the peace of the realm; nothing is harder than preserving it. I only hope that the prime minister will reflect carefully." Angrily, Dong Zhuo shot back, "Are you going to stand in the way of the dynasty's plan for survival?"

Grand Commandant Huang Wan said, "I agree with Minister of the Interior Yang. At the end of Wang Mang's usurpation, in the reign period Recommencement [Geng Shi, A.D. 23-25], the Red Eyebrow rebels burned Chang'an, reducing the city to rubble. After the exodus, of every hundred inhabitants only one or two remained. So I would question the wisdom of abandoning this city of palaces and dwellings for a wasteland." To this objection Dong Zhuo replied, "Here, east of the land within the passes, rebellion is rife. Anarchy is loose in the land. Chang'an, however, is well protected by the forbidding Yao Mountains and Hangu Pass. What's more, it is close to the region west of the Longyou Hills, where timber, stone, brick, and tile are readily obtainable. A new palace shouldn't take more than a month to construct—so enough of your absurd arguments." At this point Minister of Works⁶ Xun Shuang also protested: "If the capital is moved, the population will be thrown into commotion." "I am planning for an empire!" Zhuo bellowed. "I can't be bothered about the ruck." That day he deprived the three critics of rank, reducing them to commoner status.

As Dong Zhuo left the palace in his carriage, he noticed Zhou Bi, now the imperial secretary, and Wu Qiong, commandant of the City Gates, saluting from the roadside. Dong Zhuo asked their business. "They say," responded Zhou Bi, "that the prime minister plans to move the capital to Chang'an, so we have come to state our objections." Outraged, Dong Zhuo retorted, "Once before I listened to you two, when you advised me to put Yuan Shao in office. Now he has rebelled! And you are part of his faction!" He had the two beheaded outside the city gates. The following day he ordered the transfer of the capital to begin.

Li Ru came to suggest a measure. "We are short of funds and food," he said to Dong Zhuo, "and Luoyang has many rich householders. Any that we can link to Yuan Shao and the other rebels should be executed along with their clans and factions. We'll reap a fortune from the property we confiscate." Dong Zhuo approved, and on his authority five thousand crack troops raided several thousand of the wealthiest houses. The soldiers put signs on the topknot of each captive reading "Traitor and Rebel." Then they executed whole families and seized their goods.

At the same time Li Jue and Guo Si began the forced evacuation of Luoyang's millions. Military squads interspersed among the people drove them, pushing and pulling, on toward Chang'an. Untold numbers fell by the wayside. The soldiers were free to rape and plunder. The cries and outcries of the people resounded between Heaven and earth. Stragglers were pressed forward or killed outright by an army unit of three thousand that followed behind.

When Dong Zhuo was ready to leave the city he ordered all dwellings—in addition to the

ancestral temples and imperial quarters—burned to the ground. The northern and southern palaces went up in flames, and all the chambers of the Palace of Lasting Happiness were reduced to ashes. On Dong Zhuo's orders Lü Bu dug up the crypts of former emperors and empresses and looted their treasures. Dong Zhuo's soldiers despoiled the tombs of officials and civilians alike and loaded the gold and jewels, silks, and other valuables onto several thousand carts; then Zhuo forced the Emperor and his women to leave for Chang'an. (This occurred in April, A.D. 190.)



As soon as Zhao Cen, Zhuo's commander, learned that Luoyang had been abandoned, he surrendered the barrier at the River Si. Sun Jian rushed in to occupy it. Xuande and his brothers cut through Tiger Trap Pass, and the lords followed. Sun Jian rode on ahead to Luoyang. He saw flames in the sky and thick smoke covering the ground—for two or three hundred *li* no fowl, no dogs, no sign of human life. Sun Jian ordered the fires put out and told the lords to pitch their camps in the wasteland.

Meanwhile Cao Cao came to Yuan Shao and said, "The traitors' flight offers a perfect opportunity to attack their rear. Why are you holding back?" "The men are fatigued," Yuan Shao replied, "I doubt it would be to our advantage." "Dong Zhuo has destroyed the imperial dwellings and abducted the Emperor," said Cao. "People everywhere are in shock, uncertain where their allegiances belong. It is the final hour for this criminal. We can gain control in a single battle. Why wait?" But the leaders of the confederation, too, were reluctant to act. "Who can work with such worthless men!" Cao cried angrily. Attended by only his six commanders—Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Cao Ren, Cao Hong, Li Dian, and Yue Jin—he led some ten thousand men in pursuit of Dong Zhuo.

Dong Zhuo reached Yingyang, where Governor Xu Rong received him. Li Ru cautioned Dong Zhuo, "We are hardly out of Luoyang and must guard against pursuit. Have the governor place an ambush by that row of hills that screens the city. If Yuan Shao's men come, let them through. Wait till I strike, then cut them off and surprise them from behind. That way nobody will dare follow them." Dong Zhuo agreed and sent Lü Bu with his best men to cover the rear.

Lü Bu was moving into position when Cao Cao's troops arrived. "Just as Li Ru foresaw," said Lü Bu with a laugh and deployed his forces. Cao Cao rode into the open, shouting, "Traitor! You have violated the Emperor's person and driven the people from their homes. Where do you think you're going?" "Coward turncoat!" swore Lü Bu in reply. "How dare you!" Xiahou Dun raised his spear and charged Lü Bu. As the warriors came to grips, Li Jue swung his contingent in from the left. Cao Cao commanded Xiahou Yuan to counter Li Jue. To the right more yells rang out as Guo Si and his company joined the battle. Cao Cao answered by sending Cao Ren to check Guo Si. But the three armies overpowered Xiahou Dun and drove him back to his lines. Then Lü Bu's crack armored cavalry fell upon Cao Cao's force, inflicting a heavy defeat and beating it back toward Yingyang.

Near the second watch the fleeing soldiers reached a barren hill. The moon rose bright and full. The scattered forces had barely reorganized and begun digging holes in the ground to cook their evening meal when fierce shouts erupted on all sides of them. Governor Xu Rong's ambush was sprung. Cao Cao laid the whip to his horse and fled blindly, only to run into Xu Rong himself. Cao turned sharply away, but Xu Rong shot him in the upper arm. Cao rode for his life over the slopes of the hill, the arrow fixed in his flesh. Two soldiers lying in wait hurled their spears, hitting Cao's

horse. Cao rolled off the stricken beast, and the two men seized him. But at that moment Cao Hong raced over, cut down the two captors, and helped Cao Cao to his feet.

"My fate is sealed," said Cao. "Save yourself, good brother." "Get on my horse," Cao Hong answered. "I can go by foot." "How will you manage when the rebels catch up?" asked Cao Cao. "The world can do without Cao Hong," was the reply, "but not without you, my lord."⁷ "If I survive," said Cao, "it will only be by your sacrifice." So saying, Cao Cao mounted. Hong removed his armor and outer garments and let his sword hang behind him as he hurried after the escaping Cao Cao. Toward the fourth watch they came to a wide river. Hearing the harsh yells of the pursuers, Cao Cao said, "We will die here." Cao Hong helped him down, removed his war gown and helmet and waded across, bearing Cao Cao on his back. As they crawled ashore, Lü Bu's men arrived on the other side and fired arrows across the water.

Cao Cao, drenched, continued his flight. Dawn broke. He traveled another thirty *li* before stopping at the foot of a low hill. Suddenly a party of soldiers charged up. It was Governor Xu Rong again; he had crossed upstream and kept up the chase. Cao Cao was panic-stricken, but Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, and several dozen horsemen arrived at the same moment. "Hands off our lord!" Xiahou Dun cried. Xu Rong started to attack, but Xiahou Dun felled him with a stroke of his blade, and killed or scattered his men. Soon after, Cao Ren, Li Dian, and Yue Jin caught up with Cao Cao, a reunion that brought both joy and dismay. Some five hundred of them regrouped and returned to Henei district. Dong Zhuo's armies proceeded toward Chang'an.

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When the confederacy under Yuan Shao moved into the abandoned capital of Luoyang, Sun Jian, having put out the fires in the imperial grounds, established headquarters inside the city wall on the site of the Hall of Paragons. He ordered the rubble cleared from the palace precincts and all the sacred tombs that had been opened by Dong Zhuo resealed. Where the royal ancestral temple had stood Sun Jian had three crude halls built and then invited the lords to set up the tablets of the deceased emperors and to perform the grand sacrifice of three animals.⁸ After the ceremony all dispersed, and Sun Jian returned to his camp. The moon shone and the stars sparkled as he sat in the open, his hand on his sword, studying the heavenly pattern. He saw a whitish aura enveloping the circumpolar stars. "The imperial star is dim," he sighed. "Traitors have wrecked the dynasty and cast the people into misery. The capital lies in ruin." As he spoke, tears crept from his eyes.

A soldier drew Sun Jian's attention to a rainbow-like light coming out of a well to the south of the Hall of Paragons. Sun Jian told his men to go down with a torch and find the source. They fished up a woman's body, still preserved. She was dressed as a lady of the palace, and round her neck hung a small brocade pouch. Inside the pouch they found a vermilion box with a gold lock, and inside the box a jade seal, three or four inches around. The top was formed of five intertwined dragons. A gold inlay filled a chip on one corner. Eight characters in ancient seal script read: "By Heaven's mandate: long life and everlasting prosperity."

Sun Jian asked his adviser, General Cheng Pu, about the stone treasure.

Cheng Pu replied, "This is the seal of state. It confirms the devolution of authority from ruler to ruler. Long ago Bian He spied a phoenix perched on a rock in the Jing Mountains. He presented the rock to the King of Chu. They broke it open and found this jade. In the twenty-sixth year of the Qin

dynasty⁹ the First Emperor ordered a jade cutter to carve the seal; and Li Si, the First Emperor's prime minister, personally inscribed those eight words in seal script on its bottom surface. Two years later, when the Emperor was touring the Dongting Lake, high waves nearly engulfed his boat. He threw the jade into the water, and the waves subsided. Eight years after the incident, while in Huayin the Emperor came upon someone on the road holding out the seal to the royal attendants. 'I am returning this to His Majesty,' the man said and then disappeared.

"The following year the First Emperor died. Later Ziyang, grandson of the First Emperor, presented the seal to the Supreme Ancestor.¹⁰ Two hundred years later, when Wang Mang usurped the dynasty, the mother of the dethroned ruler struck two of the rebels, Wang Xun and Su Xian, with the seal and chipped the corner. The break was later filled in with gold. Guang Wu¹¹ obtained the jade in Yiyang, and it has been transmitted through succeeding reigns until this day.

"Recently, the deposed Emperor Shao was forcibly taken to the Beimang burial grounds during the upheaval caused by the Ten Eunuchs, and on the way back home he lost the treasured seal. If Heaven has placed it in your hands, it means that the throne is destined to be yours. But now we must not remain in the north too long. Let us return to our homeland southeast of the Yangzi and set our course from there."

"My thinking exactly," responded Sun Jian. "Tomorrow I shall take my leave, pleading ill health." Having reached this decision, Sun Jian imposed a vow of silence on the soldiers who had recovered the seal.

One of those present, however, was a townsman of Yuan Shao's, who, anxious to advance himself, slipped away from Sun Jian's camp and reported what he had seen to the war-ruler. Shao rewarded the informer generously and hid him in the army. The next day, Sun Jian came before Yuan Shao to take his leave and said, "I have an ailment that requires my return to Changsha. I come, my lord, to bid goodbye." With a smile Yuan Shao responded, "I know all about your 'ailment.' A severe case of 'royal seal,' is it not?" Sun Jian turned pale. "What makes you say such a thing?" he said. "We mustered our armies," Yuan Shao went on, "to bring traitors to justice and to rid the ruling house of its scourge. To that house the seal belongs. If it has come into your hands, you should leave it with me as leader of the confederation, here in front of the whole body of lords. After Dong Zhuo has been duly executed, it shall be returned to the court. For what purpose would you want to carry it away?"

"How could the seal have come into my possession?" Sun Jian asked. "Where is the object you found in the well by the Hall of Paragons?" countered Yuan Shao. "I have no such object," Sun Jian insisted. "Why are you harassing me this way?" "Make haste and produce it," Yuan Shao said flatly, "or suffer consequences of your own making." Pointing to Heaven, Sun Jian declared, "If I am concealing this treasure, may I die by sword or arrow." The assembled lords said, "If he gives such an oath, surely he cannot have the seal."

Yuan Shao then had the soldier who witnessed the incident brought forward. "When you pulled the woman from the well," Yuan Shao demanded of Sun Jian, "was this man present?" Sun Jian angrily drew his sword, menacing the soldier. Yuan Shao drew also, saying, "If you kill him, you are deceiving me!" Behind Yuan Shao, generals Yan Liang and Wen Chou had bared their swords, while behind Sun Jian, generals Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang had their weapons out. The lords tried to stop the quarrel, but Sun Jian took to his horse and left Luoyang with his entire army. Still outraged, Yuan Shao dispatched a letter to Liu Biao, imperial inspector in Jingzhou,¹² requesting him to intercept Sun Jian and seize the seal.

The following day Yuan Shao was informed that Cao Cao had pursued Dong Zhuo, engaged his forces at Yingyang, and had returned in defeat. Shao's men met Cao, and Yuan Shao called the lords together and served wine, hoping to hearten Cao Cao. During the repast Cao Cao sighed and said to Yuan Shao, "When I first rose to our great cause, to which these loyal lords have rallied, I intended for Benchu [Yuan Shao's style] to keep watch over the Meng ford with his Henei troops; and for my commanders based at Suanzao to guard Chenggao, hold Aocang Mountain, and close the Huanyuan and Daigu passes, thus securing the entire capital region. I meant for Gonglu [Yuan Shu's style] to post his Nanyang army in Dan and Xi counties, enter the pass at Wu, and let the western capital districts know the might of our arms. My objective was not so much to give battle as to dig in and make a show of force with decoys, demonstrating that the situation was turning in our favor. As fighters in the Emperor's cause, we could have swiftly chastised those who rose against him. But immobilized by hesitation, we have lost the confidence of the realm, and it makes me deeply ashamed." There was no reply Yuan Shao could make, and the assembly adjourned.

The separate and conflicting ambitions of Yuan Shao and the various lords had shown Cao Cao that they would achieve nothing, so he took his troops to Yangzhou. Gongsun Zan, too, said to Xuande and his brothers, "Yuan Shao has no future; the lords will turn against him in the long run. We might as well go home." Gongsun Zan decamped and went north. When he came to Pingyuan, he enjoined Xuande to remain as lord of the fief, and he went on to secure his own territory and replenish his forces.

In Yuan Shao's camp dissension was evident. Qiao Mao, governor of Dongjun, refused Liu Dai, governor of Yanzhou, a loan of grain. In retaliation Liu Dai raided Qiao Mao's camp, killed him, and took over his troops. Yuan Shao, seeing the confederation breaking apart, pulled up his own camps and left the capital to go east.

Riding south to his fief in Changsha, Sun Jian had to pass through Jingzhou, the province under the jurisdiction of Imperial Inspector Liu Biao (Jingsheng), a native of Gaoping in Shanyang and a relative of the imperial family. From his youth, Liu Biao had had a wide circle of friends and was one of a group of outstanding men from the area, the Eight Paragons of Jiangxia. Who were the other seven?

1. Chen Xiang (Zhonglin), from Runan
2. Fan Pang (Mengbo), also from Runan
3. Kong Yu (Shiyuan), from the fief of Lu
4. Fan Kang (Zhongzhen), from Bohai
5. Tan Fu (Wenyou), from Shanyang
6. Zhang Jian (Yuanjie), also from Shanyang
7. Cen Zhi (Gongxiao), from Nanyang

In addition, Liu Biao was assisted by Kuai Liang and Kuai Yue of Yanping as well as Cai Mao of Xiangyang.

On receipt of Yuan Shao's letter, Liu Biao ordered Kuai Yue and Cai Mao to take ten thousand men and intercept Sun Jian. When the two forces met, Sun Jian demanded, "Why do you prevent me from passing?" Kuai Yue responded, "Why are you, a subject of the Han, carrying off the imperial seal? Leave it with me and you may pass." Sun Jian was outraged and ordered Huang Gai into battle.

Cai Mao, brandishing his sword, took to the field. After a few clashes Huang Gai scored a blow with his whip on the armor plate over Cai Mao's chest, forcing him to retreat. Carried by the momentum of the victory, Sun Jian pushed across the line. At that moment Liu Biao himself led his men out as gongs and drums resounded in unison behind a hill.

Sun Jian immediately extended his respects from horseback and said, "Why are you making things difficult for a neighbor merely on Yuan Shao's word?" "You are hiding the seal of state," said Liu Biao. "Are you going to rebel?" "May I die by sword or arrow if I have it," swore Sun Jian. "If you expect me to believe you," replied Liu Biao, "then let me search your gear." "Are you so mighty to demean me this way?" retorted Sun Jian. The two warriors stood there on the verge of blows when Liu Biao backed off. Sun Jian gave his horse free rein and pursued Liu Biao—right into the waiting ambush. Kuai Yue and Cai Mao emerged from behind, trapping Sun Jian on all sides.

Thus the royal seal proved no blessing to its finder;
It proved rather a cause of war.

Would Sun Jian escape with his life?

READ ON.



Yuan Shao Battles Gongsun Zan at the River Pan; Sun Jian Attacks Liu Biao Across the Great River

BY DINT OF THE HEROIC EFFORTS of his three commanders, Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang, Sun Jian broke out of the trap. Half of his men were lost, however, as they struggled to get back to the land south of the Great River. Liu Biao and Sun Jian became mortal enemies.

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Yuan Shao had positioned troops at Henei. Food and fodder were scarce, but Han Fu, provincial protector of Jizhou, provided grain for Shao's men.¹ Yuan Shao's adviser, Peng Ji, proposed attacking Han Fu. "A brave and powerful leader like yourself, who can move where he will," Peng Ji argued, "should not have to depend on another for supplies. Jizhou is a productive and wealthy province. Why not seize it?" "Have you a sound plan?" asked Yuan Shao. "Write to Gongsun Zan," Peng Ji said. "Suggest that he join us in a two-fronted attack on Jizhou. Zan is sure to muster his army. And Han Fu, who lacks the ability to cope with such a challenge, will invite you to take charge of his province. Thus you can pluck the prize with no effort at all." This advice delighted Yuan Shao, and he wrote Gongsun Zan proposing military action against Jizhou.

Zan was pleased with the idea of dividing Jizhou with Yuan Shao and called up his army the day the letter came. Meanwhile, Yuan Shao quietly informed Han Fu of the threat to his province. Han Fu summoned Xun Chan and Xin Ping to counsel. "Gongsun Zan commands hardened troops from the northern border districts of Yan and Dai," said Xun Chan. "They are advancing rapidly and are too strong to oppose directly. If Xuande and his brothers join then, they will be irresistible. Now then, Yuan Shao is a leader of unsurpassed courage and wisdom. He can field a large number of outstanding commanders. Why not invite him to govern the province jointly with you? He will treat you well and we'll have nothing to fear from Gongsun Zan." Accordingly, Han Fu dispatched his deputy Guan Chun to deliver the invitation to Yuan Shao.

However, Geng Wu, a lieutenant to the provincial protector, protested: "Yuan Shao is isolated and hard-pressed. Like a babe in arms he needs us for the very breath he draws. Cut off his milk, and he soon starves. It makes no sense to entrust our province to him. It's like inviting a tiger into a sheepfold." "I used to be an officer under the Yuans," Han Fu argued back, "and Shao's ability is far greater than mine. In olden times princes yielded their rule to worthy men whom they had selected. Why are you all so jealous?" "Jizhou is done for!" sighed Geng Wu. More than thirty officials resigned, but Geng Wu and Guan Chun decided to waylay Yuan Shao outside the city wall. Several days later, when Yuan Shao arrived at Jizhou, the two bared their knives and tried to murder him, but General Yan Liang cut Geng Wu down instantly, and General Wen Chou swiftly beheaded Guan

Chun.

Yuan Shao entered Jizhou,² commissioned Han Fu as General Known for Vigor-in-Arms, and assigned his own men—Tian Feng, Ju Shou, Xu You, and Peng Ji—to take control of the province. Provincial Protector Han Fu, stripped of all power, now knew the futility of regret. He rode alone to Zhang Miao, governor of Chenliu, to seek refuge.

As soon as Gongsun Zan heard that Yuan Shao was master of Jizhou, he sent his brother, Yue, to claim his share of the territory. But Yuan Shao said to Gongsun Yue, "Have your elder brother come to me himself. We have things to discuss." Gongsun Yue took his leave and had traveled some fifty *li* homeward when a group of soldiers set upon him. "We are bodyguards for Prime Minister Dong Zhuo!" they cried. The next moment Gongsun Yue was cut down by a volley of arrows. His attendants, however, survived and reported the murder. The news infuriated Gongsun Zan. "Yuan Shao tricked me into raising an army," he railed, "and plucked the prize from behind. Then he killed my brother and tried to put the blame on Dong Zhuo. This injustice must be avenged!" Zan mustered his entire army and headed for Jizhou.

Yuan Shao learned of Gongsun Zan's approach and led his own army out. The two met at the River Pan, the former on the east, the latter on the west side of a bridge linking the two shores. Gongsun Zan guided his horse onto it and shouted, "Traacherous villain, so to play me false!" Yuan Shao urged his horse toward the bridge and shouted back, "Han Fu knew his limits and turned his province over to me voluntarily. What concern is that of yours?" "There was a time," answered Gongsun Zan, "when I regarded you as loyal and just, and supported you as leader of the confederation. Today I see that you think like a wolf and act like a dog. How can you stand up in the world of men without a shred of self-respect left?" Outraged, Yuan Shao cried, "Who will take him?"

Wen Chou sped forward and leveled his spear. He fought his way to the bridge and crossed points with Zan. After ten passes Zan gave way and retreated and his line broke. Wen Chou pursued headlong, riding on his momentum. Zan entered his own ranks, but Chou rushed the center and wrought havoc, charging back and forth. Four of Gongsun Zan's ablest commanders faced Wen Chou. He killed one with a single thrust, and the other three fled. With Wen Chou in hot pursuit, Zan headed into the hills for safety. Wen Chou, close behind, called out, "Dismount and surrender!" Gongsun Zan had already lost his bow and arrows. His helmet, too, had fallen to the ground. Disheveled, he rode for his life, veering and swerving over the slopes, but his horse slipped and threw him to the bottom of a hill. Wen Chou fingered his spear and moved in for the kill.

Suddenly a young commander, spear in hand, rode into view, racing toward Wen Chou. Gongsun Zan climbed the slope and observed his rescuer: a towering figure of eight spans, with thick eyebrows and enormous eyes, a broad face and heavy jaws. He made an awesome impression. The unfamiliar warrior engaged Wen Chou, and they clashed fifty or sixty times, but neither prevailed. In the meantime, a rescue force under Gongsun Zan's lieutenants arrived, and Wen Chou swung round and departed. The young warrior did not pursue him, and Zan hurried down to ask his name. Bowing low, the youth replied, "I come from Zhending in Changshan. My surname is Zhao; given name, Yun; and my style is Zilong. I was serving under Yuan Shao but soon realized he was neither loyal to the throne nor a savior of the people, so I left him to join your camp. I never expected we would meet here!" Overjoyed, Gongsun Zan took Zhao Zilong back to camp with him and began reordering his forces.³

The following day Gongsun Zan divided his army into two wings. His force was primarily a

mounted one, numbering more than five thousand horses, most of which were white. In his previous campaigns against the Qiang tribesmen Gongsun Zan had put white horses in the vanguard because the Qiang would flee at the sight of one.⁴ Gongsun Zan thus kept a large supply of these animals and was known as the White Horse General. Yuan Shao ordered his generals, Yan Liang and Wen Chou, to take one thousand crossbowmen each and deploy into two wings at the front. Those on the left were to fire on Gongsun Zan's right wing, those on the right on Gongsun Zan's left. In addition, Yuan Shao ordered Qu Yi to deploy eight hundred archers and fifteen thousand foot soldiers between the crossbowmen. Yuan Shao himself brought up the rear with tens of thousands of troops, foot and horse.

Gongsun Zan was still not entirely sure of his rescuer, Zhao Zilong, so he gave him a rear unit to command. General Yan Gang had the van, and Gongsun Zan led the main army up to the bridge. There he reined in. In front of his horse he planted a banner with a large red circle enclosing the words "Commanding General" woven in gold. Through the morning hours the drums rolled incessantly, but Yuan Shao made no move. Qu Yi kept his archers behind their shields with orders not to shoot until the bombards roared. Then amid heavy drumming and the war cries of soldiers Yan Gang began the onslaught. Crouching low, Qu Yi's soldiers watched their attackers draw near. Then a bombard sounded, and eight hundred archers stood up and let fly.

Before Yan Gang could turn, Qu Yi charged and cut him down. Gongsun Zan's contingent was mauled, and his two wings were pinned down by Shao's crossbowmen when they tried to effect a rescue. Yuan Shao's forces advanced en masse and cut their way straight to the bridge separating the adversaries. The bridge once gained, Qu Yi struck down the standard-bearer, and the embroidered banner fell before Gongsun Zan's eyes. He backed off the bridge and fled. Qu Yi kept riding toward Zan's rear line until he met Zhao Zilong, who sprang to the challenge. In moments Zilong had pierced Qu Yi through with his lance and left him dead on the ground. He then ran unaided across Yuan Shao's line, slashing right and thrusting left as if moving through a no-man's-land. Gongsun Zan rejoined the battle, and the two warriors dealt their enemy a nasty defeat.

Yuan Shao was unprepared for the counterattack because his mounted scouts had informed him only of the initial victories—Qu Yi's killing of the standard-bearer, his capture of the standard, and his pursuit of the defeated troops. Yuan Shao was with General Tian Feng, a few hundred lancers, and a few dozen mounted archers, laughing pompously, exclaiming as he observed the scene, "How useless that Gongsun Zan is!" Even as he spoke, Zhao Zilong charged into view. Yuan Shao's archers scrambled for their weapons. Zilong stabbed several soldiers, and the others fled. More of Zan's troops swarmed round. Tian Feng cried anxiously, "My lord, hide inside this hollow wall." But Yuan Shao threw his helmet to the ground and shouted, "A worthy man of war must face death in battle, not seek safety in a wall." Heartened by his words, his men fought fiercely, holding off Zilong's advance. Yuan Shao's main army then arrived on the scene, followed by Yan Liang's troops, and the two units pressed the enemy back. Defeated again, Gongsun Zan, guarded by Zhao Zilong, forced a passage through the encircling soldiers and made his way back to the bridge.

In pursuit of Gongsun Zan, Yuan Shao's army crossed the bridge in full force. Many drowned in the river. Yuan Shao, in the lead, had advanced less than five *li* when he heard a great cry coming from behind a hill. A bank of soldiers flashed into view, led by Xuande, Lord Guan, and Zhang Fei. While in Pingyuan they had learned of the battle and had come to Zan's aid. Accosted by three fresh warriors with their various weapons, Shao took fright. His sword dropped from his hand, so he immediately swung round and rode back across the bridge to safety, with the help of many more who

risked their lives. Gongsun Zan gathered up his men and returned to camp. The three brothers made courteous inquiry after Zan's condition. "If not for Xuande, coming so far to help us," Zan declared, "we would have been battered to pieces." Gongsun Zan introduced the brothers to Zhao Zilong; Xuande took an instant liking to him and secretly hoped the respected warrior would join him.

Though defeated, Yuan Shao clung to his position and did not retire; the two armies stayed locked in place for more than a month. The situation was reported to the court in Chang'an, and Li Ru advised Dong Zhuo: "Yuan Shao and Gongsun Zan, two outstanding men of the present day, are in mortal combat at the River Pan. It might be useful to arrange for an imperial order to settle their quarrel. Both sides will be grateful for your kindness and transfer their loyalties to you, Imperial Preceptor."⁵ "Good!" responded Dong Zhuo and sent the imperial guardian, Ma Midi, and the court steward, Zhao Qi, to deliver the decree.

When the two men reached Hebei, Yuan Shao received them one hundred *li* from his camp and accepted the royal order with deep respect. The next day Dong Zhuo's two representatives entered Gongsun Zan's camp and read out the decree. In response, Gongsun Zan sent a letter to Yuan Shao suggesting peace talks. The officials returned to Chang'an and reported the success of their mission. Gongsun Zan withdrew his forces that same day and recommended to the court that Xuande be appointed governor of Pingyuan fief. For Xuande and Zilong parting was difficult, and they held onto one another tearfully in their reluctance to be separated. "I thought Gongsun Zan was a true hero," Zilong sighed, "but now I see I was wrong. His conduct today befits a Yuan Shao!" "Bear up and serve him well for now," Xuande said. "Time will bring us together again." They shed more tears and went their ways.

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Back in the district of Nanyang, Yuan Shu learned that his brother had taken possession of Jizhou, and sent a messenger there requesting one thousand horses. Yuan Shao refused, and thereafter the brothers were on bad terms. Yuan Shu next tried to borrow a large amount of grain from Liu Biao, imperial inspector of Jingzhou. Biao also said no. Yuan Shu was so galled by these refusals that he wrote Sun Jian urging him to attack Jingzhou.⁶ The note read as follows:

When Liu Biao blocked your way south, he was acting in collusion with my brother Benchu [Yuan Shao], Now the two of them are conspiring to attack your lands south of the Great River. You should raise an army as swiftly as possible and attack Liu Biao while I deal with Benchu for you. Two accounts will be settled. You will gain Jingzhou; I will gain Jizhou. Don't let the opportunity pass.

After reading the letter, Sun Jian said, "Oh, to be rid of Liu Biao! He cut me off that time. I may not get another chance at him." Jian called his generals—Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang—to counsel. "Yuan Shu is full of tricks," Cheng Pu said, "and not to be trusted." "I want revenge, with or without Yuan Shu," said Sun Jian and sent Huang Gai to prepare warships and load them at the Great River, most of them with weapons and provisions, the larger ones with war-horses.

Spies brought word of these preparations to Liu Biao, who hastily conferred with his advisers. Kuai Liang said, "No cause for alarm. Let Huang Zu lead the van with men from Jiangxia. You hold the rear with forces from the Xiangyang area. Once Sun Jian has crossed rivers and lakes to get here, how much strength will he have left for the battle?" Liu Biao approved these steps.

Sun Jian had four sons by Lady Wu. The eldest was Ce (Bofu); the next, Quan (Zhongmou); the

third, Yi (Shubi); and the fourth, Kuang (Jizuo). Sun Jian had a second wife, Lady Wu's younger sister. She bore him a son, Lang (Zaoan), and a daughter, Ren. Sun Jian had also adopted a son—Shao (Gongli)—from the Yu family. Finally, he had a younger brother, Jing (Youtai).

As Sun Jian was about to set out against Liu Biao, his brother Jing led all six sons in front of his horse in an effort to stop him. "Dong Zhuo controls the throne," Jing argued. "The Emperor is powerless; the empire in disorder. Each region is really a separate domain, and ours here, south of the river, is at peace. It makes no sense to raise a major force for the sake of a trifling insult. Please reconsider." "Say no more, brother," Sun Jian answered. "I'll have my way in every part of the empire and will never leave unanswered an enemy like Liu Biao." "Father, if you insist on going," Sun Ce pleaded, "allow me to come." Sun Jian agreed and took his eldest son on board. They set out for the city of Fankou.

Liu Biao's general, Huang Zu, had posted archers and crossbowmen along the river. As Sun Jian's war-boats neared shore, Huang Zu's men shot heavy volleys. Sun Jian ordered his men not to fire back but to huddle down in the holds and let the enemy shoot. Over a three-day period the boats approached shore a dozen times, drawing fresh volleys each time. As Sun Jian had anticipated, Huang Zu's stock of arrows was finally depleted, while he had accumulated a supply of more than one hundred thousand from the enemy. The fourth day the wind favored the shipborne force. Sun Jian ordered his men to shoot. Waves of arrows drove the men on shore into retreat as Sun Jian's warriors landed. Cheng Pu and Huang Gai led their contingents directly to Huang Zu's camp. Han Dang, moving swiftly, joined them. Squeezed from three sides, Huang Zu abandoned Fankou for the town of Deng. Sun Jian had Huang Gai guard the boats while he personally gave chase. Huang Zu led his men into open country and there confronted his pursuer. Sun Jian formed his lines and rode out in front of his banners, accompanied by his son Ce in full military dress, spear at the ready.

With Huang Zu were two generals, Zhang Hu from Jiangxia and Chen Sheng from Xiangyang. Huang Zu raised his whip and shouted, "Vermin from the south! How dare you intrude on the territory of an imperial relative?" He sent Zhang Hu to taunt the opposing line. Han Dang came out to meet him. The two horsemen closed and fought some thirty passages-at-arms. Chen Sheng saw Zhang Hu tiring and rushed to his aid. Observing from a distance, Sun Ce set aside his spear, took up his bow, and let fly. The arrow hit Sheng squarely in the forehead, and he collapsed. Zhang Hu was distracted by the sight of Chen Sheng on the ground, and in that moment Han Dang cleaved his skull with a stroke of his sword. Cheng Pu galloped to the front, hunting for Huang Zu, who got rid of his helmet and his horse and saved himself by mingling with the foot soldiers. Sun Jian pressed the slaughter all the way to the Han River. Then he ordered Huang Gai to move the boats upriver and moor them.

Huang Zu regrouped his shattered force and went to tell Liu Biao that Sun Jian was too powerful to resist. Liu Biao conferred with Kuai Liang, who said, "After a defeat like this, our men will have no fighting spirit. All we can do now is hold our strongpoints, avoid the thrust of their attack, and try to get help from Yuan Shao. Then we can break their siege."⁷ "That's a clumsy plan," said Cai Mao. "With the enemy at our very gates and moat, are we to tie our hands and await our end? However unfit I may be, I beg to take one contingent outside the walls and fight to the finish." With Liu Biao's approval, Cai Mao led more than ten thousand men out of Xiangyang and deployed his line at Xian Hill.

Sun Jian and his victorious troops advanced swiftly to meet the new challenger. Cai Mao rode out before his contingents. "There's the brother of Liu Biao's wife!" cried Sun Jian.⁸ "Who will seize him

for me?" Cheng Pu raised his iron-spined spear and engaged Cai Mao, driving him off in defeat after several encounters. Sun Jian pursued with his main army and did great slaughter. Cai Mao retreated to Xiangyang for safety. Kuai Liang demanded that Cai Mao be executed for ignoring sound strategy and causing a major defeat, but Liu Biao was loath to punish the brother of his new wife.

Meanwhile, Sun Jian had placed men on all sides of Xiangyang and was mounting an attack when a storm sprang up and broke the shaft bearing the banner inscribed "Commanding General." "An ill omen," declared Han Dang. "Let us withdraw for now." "I have fought and won every battle," said Sun Jian. "Xiangyang is about to fall to us. I can't turn back because the wind has broken a flagpole." And so Sun Jian attacked the city all the harder, ignoring Han Dang's warning.

Inside the city Kuai Liang said to Liu Biao, "The other night I saw a 'general's star' that seemed about to fall in that portion of the sky corresponding to Sun Jian's territory. The star must be a sign of his fate. Get a message to Yuan Shao as quickly as you can." Accordingly, Liu Biao wrote the letter and asked for a volunteer to run the blockade and deliver it. Lü Gong, one of his ablest generals, answered the call. Kuai Liang said to him, "Complement your courage with a little strategy. We are giving you five hundred soldiers. Take enough marksmen, and when you penetrate Sun Jian's line head for Xian Hill. They will pursue. Assign one hundred to the hilltop and have them collect plenty of rocks. Post another hundred, archers and crossbowmen, in the woods nearby. When Sun's men give chase, don't flee directly. Wind round the hills and valleys until they follow you into the ambush. Then hit them with stones and arrows all at once. If you get the upper hand, sound the bombards in rapid succession, and we'll know to reinforce you. If they do not pursue, fire no shots but go on to Yuan Shao with our message. The moon will be dim tonight, so you can leave at dusk."

After he had absorbed the plan, Lü Gong tethered the horses he would need. At sunset the east gate was eased open and Gong slipped out. Sun Jian, in his tent, detected the sound and rode out with thirty horsemen to investigate. A scout reported that a group of warriors had left the city in the direction of Xian Hill. Sun Jian did not wait to summon his commanders but gave chase with his thirty riders. Lü Gong had already reached the thicker section of the woods and set his ambush in place. Sun Jian rode fast, pulling away from his cohort, and came up alone. Lü Gong was only a little ahead. "Halt!" Sun Jian shouted. Lü Gong swung around to engage. They came to grips but once, then Lü Gong darted away onto a mountain path. Sun Jian kept close but lost sight of his man. He was starting up the hill when a sudden beating of gongs was followed by a cascade of rocks and volleys of arrows. The missiles found their mark, and the brains were dashed from his head; man and horse perished on Xian Hill. Sun Jian was only thirty-seven years old.

Lü Gong intercepted Sun Jian's thirty followers and slaughtered them to a man. Then he signaled the city with a string of bombards. Huang Zu, Kuai Yue, and Cai Mao came forth to do their deadly work. The army from the south fell into confusion. Huang Gai heard the clamor and joined the fighting with his marines. He quickly captured Huang Zu. At the same time, Cheng Pu, who was guarding Sun Jian's eldest son Ce, encountered Lü Gong. Cheng Pu raced ahead and unhorsed Lü Gong with a fatal blow. The two sides battled on till morning, when each was called back.⁹ Then Liu Biao's men entered the city.

Only when Sun Ce returned to the River Han did he learn that his father had been killed and his body removed to the enemy city. Sun Ce wailed loud and long, and the army mourned. "We cannot leave my father's body in their hands," said Sun Ce. "We took Huang Zu alive," responded Huang Gai. "Have someone go into the city and negotiate a truce and an exchange." "I have a long-standing

relationship with Liu Biao," Huan Jie, an army officer, volunteered. "Let me represent our side." With Sun Ce's agreement, Huan Jie came before Liu Biao with the proposal. Liu Biao said, "Sun Jian's corpse rests in its coffin. Return Huang Zu to us, and we can end our hostilities—as long as you never attempt another invasion." Huan Jie expressed respectful gratitude and was about to leave when Kuai Liang appeared below Liu Biao's platform and cried, "No! No! I have a plan to wipe out the enemy to the last man! But first we have to kill this messenger." Indeed:

Sun Jian lost his life pursuing his foe,
And Huan Jie risked his life in search of peace.

The outcome lay in Liu Biao's hands.¹⁰

READ ON.



Wang Yun Shrewdly Sets a Double Snare; Dong Zhuo Starts a Brawl at Phoenix Pavilion

"SUN JIAN IS DEAD," Kuai Liang continued, "and his sons are still young. The south is vulnerable, and if we strike swiftly it will fall with a roll of the drums! Returning the body and making a truce will only give them time to renew their strength, and it will sacrifice our safety." "That means sacrificing Huang Zu," was Liu Biao's answer, "but I don't have the heart to do it." "Is one muddleheaded Huang Zu worth the whole southern region?" retorted Kuai Liang. "Huang Zu and I are the closest friends," replied Liu Biao. "I cannot break faith and let him die." So Liu Biao sent Huan Jie back to implement the exchange.

After Sun Ce received the coffin, he canceled military operations and went home to bury his father in the plains of Qu'e. Then he led his army to Jiangdu and enlisted the services of the wise and talented men of the region. By humbling himself and treating others generously he gradually attracted many outstanding men to his court.

• • • •

In Chang'an, Dong Zhuo learned of Sun Jian's death and said, "I am well rid of a mortal enemy. But how old is his first son?" "Seventeen," someone said. This answer persuaded Dong Zhuo he need not fear the south.

Dong Zhou's behavior became more arbitrary and arrogant than ever. He had himself addressed as Honorary Father,¹ and in his public appearances usurped the regalia of the Emperor. He appointed his brother, Min, general of the left and lord of Hu, and his nephew, Huang, privy counselor with overall command of the Palace Guard. All members of the Dong clan—whether young or old—were honored with titles. Preceptor Dong put a quarter of a million people to hard labor building a large structure, called Mei, two hundred and fifty *li* from Chang'an. The walls, which enclosed palaces and granaries, were modeled in height and thickness after those of the capital. Twenty years' supply of grain was placed in store. From among the commoners Dong Zhuo chose eight hundred beauties to adorn the palace rooms, where gold and jade, colored silks and rare pearls were hoarded. The Dong family lived amidst this wealth and splendor while Dong Zhuo himself traveled to the capital once or twice a month. Each time he left or returned to Chang'an all ranking court officials saw him off or greeted him outside the city's northwest gate, the Heng. Usually, Dong Zhuo set up tents on the wayside to feast these high officials.

On one such occasion, with all of officialdom present, several hundred enemy troops from the north who had voluntarily surrendered were brought in. Then and there Dong Zhuo ordered his guards to mutilate them: some had their limbs lopped off; some, their eyes gouged out; some, their tongues

cut; some were boiled in vats. The howls of the victims shook the officials so that they could not hold their chopsticks. But Dong Zhuo kept drinking, chatting, and laughing away, utterly unperturbed, as was his wont.²

Another day Dong Zhuo convened the officials in front of the ceremonial platform. The assembly was seated in two long rows according to rank. As the wine was going round, Lü Bu stepped over to Dong Zhuo and whispered a few words. "So that's how it is!" said Dong Zhuo, smiling, and he had Lü Bu haul out the minister of public works, Zhang Wen. The other officials paled. Moments later Zhang Wen's head was carried in on a red platter. Dong Zhuo laughed at the terrified assembly, saying, "Nothing to fear, my lords. My son, Fengxian [Lü Bu], came upon a letter Yuan Shu had written to Zhang Wen. The two were conspiring against me; but no one here was implicated, so don't worry." "Of course not, of course not," the officials chimed in obsequiously. With that the banquet ended.³

Minister of the Interior Wang Yun returned home despondent over the day's events. Late that night, strolling in his garden under a high moon, he stopped by a rose trellis and gazed at the sky. His eyes filled with tears. In the silence he heard moans and sighs near the Peony Pavilion. Stealing over, he discovered the singing girl, Diaochan, a child he had taken in and trained in the arts of dance and song. She was now sixteen and possessed unearthly beauty and skill. Wang Yun regarded her as his own daughter.

After listening a good while, Wang Yun called her to him. "Wretched girl, is there someone you pine for?" he asked sharply. Diaochan dropped to her knees and replied, "Would this humble maid dare?" "Then why," Wang Yun continued, "are you sighing here deep into the night?" "Allow me to open my innermost thoughts to you," the girl replied. "Keep nothing back," Wang Yun said. "Tell me the whole truth." "My lord," Diaochan began, "I am obliged to you for your unstinting care, for having me instructed in the arts of music and dancing, and for treating me with the utmost kindness and generosity. No sacrifice on my part could repay even one ten-thousandth of what I owe you. Recently you have been looking terribly sad, as if burdened by some great affair of state,⁴ but how could I inquire into such matters? This evening again I saw you pacing uneasily, and it brought a sigh to my lips. I never thought my lord would take notice. But if there is any way I can serve you, I would welcome death ten thousand times before declining." At these words Wang Yun struck the ground with his walking stick and cried out, "It never occurred to me that you could be the one to save the Han! Come with me to the gallery of murals." Diaochan followed Wang Yun to the room. Impatiently he dismissed the waiting maids and servants and conducted Diaochan to a seat. Then he touched his head and hands to the floor in front of her. At once Diaochan prostrated herself in astonishment. "My lord," she said, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Have pity," Wang Yun pleaded, weeping openly, "on those who live under the Han!" "I can only repeat what I have just said," the girl replied. "Ten thousand deaths would not deter me from doing whatever it is you wish me to do." "The common folk," Wang Yun went on, still kneeling, "are in dire peril. The sovereign and his officials are balanced on the edge of disaster. You may be the only one who can save us. Here is how matters stand: the traitor Dong Zhuo is preparing to seize the throne, and our civil and military officials have no means to prevent him. Now then, Dong Zhuo has an adopted son, Lü Bu, a man of extraordinary courage and might, but, like his stepfather, a slave to his passions. I would like to catch them in a double snare by first promising you in marriage to Lü Bu and then offering you to Dong Zhuo, thus putting you in a perfect position to turn them against one another. Drive Lü Bu to kill Dong Zhuo, and you will have eliminated a great evil, stabilized the dynastic

shrines, and restored our ruling house. It lies in your power. But are you willing?" "I have already agreed to serve," said Diaochan. "I am eager to be presented to them. Leave all the rest to me." "If this gets out," Wang Yun cautioned her, "my house will be destroyed." "Have no fear, my lord," she said. "If I cannot live up to my duty, may I die by ten thousand cuts." Wang Yun saluted her in gratitude.

The next day Wang Yun had a smith fashion a golden headpiece studded with priceless pearls from his family's treasure chest. When the helmet was finished, he sent a man to present it secretly to Lü Bu. Delighted with the gift, Lü Bu came to Wang Yun's home to express his appreciation. The minister received him outside the main gate and ushered him into his private apartment, where he prepared a feast of choice delicacies. Then Wang Yun led Lü Bu to the seat of honor. "I am merely one of the prime minister's generals," the guest said, "but you are a great minister. I am not worthy of such courtesy." "In this day and age," Wang Yun replied, "the world has no heroes save you, General. It is not your office but your great ability to which I pay homage." These words gave Lü Bu immense pleasure. Wang Yun toasted him with solicitous hospitality, never ceasing to extol the virtue of Imperial Preceptor Dong Zhuo⁵ and General Lü Bu. Lü Bu laughed broadly and imbibed freely.

Wang Yun dismissed the attendants, keeping a few serving girls to pour the wine. Both men were well warmed when Yun called for his "daughter." Two maids led out Diaochan, dressed most alluringly. Lü Bu, startled, asked who she was. "My daughter, Diaochan," was the reply. "You have favored me, General, with more kindness than I could possibly deserve, as if we were closely related. That's why I would like to present her to you." He ordered Diaochan to offer a cup to Lü Bu. As she held out the wine with both hands a subtle interest crept into their glances. Wang Yun, feigning intoxication, said, "My child, invite the general to drink deeply. He is the mainstay of our household."

Lü Bu offered Diaochan a seat, but she feigned a move to withdraw. "The general is my closest friend," Wang Yun admonished her, "there is no reason not to sit with him." Diaochan seated herself beside Yun. Lü Bu's eyes never left her.⁶ A few more cups and Wang Yun said, "I would like to offer my daughter to you—if you would be willing to have her as your concubine." Lü Bu rose to express his appreciation: "For that I would be bound to you in loyalty even as a horse or a dog." "Then," said Yun, "we will select an auspicious day to deliver her." Lü Bu's delight knew no bounds. His glance clung to her, and she reciprocated with her own suggestive signs. The party came to an end. "I would have asked you to stay the night," said Wang Yun, "but was afraid the imperial preceptor would become suspicious." Lü Bu saluted his host repeatedly and departed.

Several days later at court, choosing a time when Lü Bu was out of sight, Wang Yun knelt before Dong Zhuo, hands touching the floor, and said, "Would the imperial preceptor deign to dine at my humble home?" "The invitation from the minister of the interior is accepted with pleasure," was the response. Wang Yun expressed his thanks and returned home.

Delicacies of land and sea furnished Wang Yun's feast. The setting was placed at the center of the main hall. Exquisitely embroidered cloths were spread over the ground, and drapes hung inside and outside the dining chamber.

Toward noon Dong Zhuo arrived by carriage. Dressed in court attire, bowing and tendering his respects, Wang Yun received his guest as he descended. One hundred halberdiers escorted him into the room and ranged themselves at either side. At the dais Wang Yun prostrated himself again. Dong Zhuo ordered his men to help his host to a seat beside him. "Imperial Preceptor," Wang Yun said, "your magnificent virtue towers above us. The greatest sages of antiquity—Preceptor Yi Yin and

Regent Zhougong⁷—cannot approach you in virtue." These words pleased Zhuo enormously. The wine was served and the entertainment began. Wang Yun continued to shower his guest with gracious compliments.

The day waned. The wine warmed them well. Wang Yun invited Dong Zhuo to his private apartment. Zhuo dismissed his guard. Yun proffered a goblet and congratulated the preceptor. "Since my youth," said Wang Yun, "I have been studying the patterns of the heavens. The signs I see at night say that the Han has completed its allotted span. The whole realm is moved by your achievements and virtue. The wish of Heaven and the hopes of men would be well fulfilled if you followed the example of the ancient worthies Shun and Yu, who accepted their sovereigns' abdication on the strength of their own merit."

"That," Dong Zhuo exclaimed, "is more than I dare hope for." Wang Yun continued, "Since earliest times those who would govern rightly have taken action against those who govern ill, and those without virtue have yielded power to those with virtue. In the present circumstances there would not be the slightest question of your exceeding your proper place."⁸ Dong Zhuo smiled and said, "If the Mandate of Heaven should actually settle upon me, you would be honored as a founder of the house." Wang Yun bowed deeply to show his gratitude.

In the chamber decorated candles were lit. Only the serving maids stayed behind, tendering wine and food. "Our regular musicians," Wang Yun said, "are too ordinary for such an occasion as this. But there happens to be a performer here whom I beg leave to have appear before you." "A wonderful and ingenious thought!" exclaimed Dong Zhuo. Wang Yun ordered the curtain lowered and outside it, encircled by an ensemble of pipe and reed, Diaochan began her dance. Admiration of her art is expressed in this lyric:

Like Flying-Swallow of Zhaoyang Palace,
The swan-sprite turns in an opened palm—
Is she fresh from Dongting's vernal lake?⁹

Her graceful step keeps the Liangzhou air:
As the tender scent a flowering branch exhales
Fills the paneled room with springtime warmth.

Another poem describes her performance:

To the quickening beat the swallow now takes wing,
Reaching the gorgeous room still trailing mist:
Those black brows caused the rover's heart to ache,
Those looks have pierced the souls of all who sued.¹⁰

No elmseed coin could buy those golden smiles;
No gem or jewel need gild her willow waist.
Now done and screened again, she glances to discover
Who next will play the goddess's royal lover.¹¹

Dong Zhuo ordered the dancer to approach him. Diaochan entered from behind the curtain, making profound salutations. Dong Zhuo took in the expressive beauty of her face and asked, "Who is this girl?" "The songstress Diaochan," answered Wang Yun. "Then she can sing as well?" Dong Zhuo inquired. Wang Yun had Diaochan take up the sandalwood blocks and tap the rhythm as she sang. This poem describes the moment well:

Her parting lips were like the cherry bud.
Across two rows of jade an air of spring flowed forth.
But her clove-sweet tongue proved a steely sword
That put to death a base, betraying lord.

Dong Zhuo could not stop marveling at her voice. Wang Yun ordered Diaochan to serve more wine. Dong Zhuo lifted his cup and asked, "How many springs have you passed?" "Your servant is just sixteen," she replied. "You must have come from a land of fairies," Dong Zhuo said. At that moment Wang Yun rose from his mat and declared, "I would like to present this girl to the imperial preceptor, if it would be agreeable." "I would be at a loss to repay such a boon," Dong Zhuo responded. "To serve the imperial preceptor would be splendid luck for her," Wang Yun added. Again Dong Zhuo voiced his thanks. Wang Yun immediately ordered a felt-lined closed carriage to carry Diaochan ahead to the prime minister's residence. Then Dong Zhuo rose and bade his host goodbye. Wang Yun escorted his guest home before taking his leave.

Wang Yun was halfway home again when he saw two lines of red lanterns on the road ahead; in their light stood Lü Bu, armed and mounted. Lü Bu reined in and reached over, taking hold of Yun's upper garment. "You promised Diaochan to me," he snarled. "Now you give her to the imperial preceptor. What kind of game are you trying to play?" "This is not the place to talk," Wang Yun responded. "Come to my house. Please." Lü Bu accompanied Wang Yun home. They dismounted and went to the private apartment. After the amenities Wang Yun asked, "What grounds do you have for such an accusation, General?" "It was reported to me," Lü Bu answered, "that you delivered Diaochan to the prime minister's residence in a felt-lined closed carriage. What is the meaning of this?"

"Then you really do not know! Yesterday," Wang Yun explained, "the preceptor said to me at court, 'There is something I wish to discuss. I will visit you tomorrow.' So I prepared a small banquet. As we were dining, he said, 'I understand you have a daughter, Diaochan, whom you have promised to my son, Fengxian. Lest the agreement seem less than official, I have come especially to confirm it and to meet your daughter as well.' I could hardly disobey, so I led her out to pay her respects to her future father-in-law. The preceptor said, 'Today is an auspicious day. I shall take Diaochan back with me for my son.' A moment's reflection, General, and you will realize that I could hardly refuse the preceptor's personal request." "Then you must forgive me, Your Honor," Lü Bu said. "I was mistaken and will come another time to apologize properly." "My daughter," Wang Yun added, "has a sizable trousseau. I will deliver it as soon as she joins you at your residence." The general thanked the minister and left.

The next day Lü Bu made inquiries at Dong Zhuo's residence but was unable to learn anything. He went directly into the ministerial quarters and questioned the serving maids. "Last night," they informed him, "the imperial preceptor had a new girl with him. They have not yet arisen." Lü Bu felt

great anger swell within him. He stole close to the outside of Dong Zhuo's bedroom and peered in. Diaochan was combing her hair by the window. Suddenly she saw a reflection in the pool outside, that of a huge man with a headpiece that caught his hair in a knot. Assuming it was Lü Bu, she puckered her brows, feigning sorrow and dabbing at her eyes with a filmy scarf. Lü Bu observed her a good while before moving away. Moments later he reentered the main hall where Dong Zhuo was seated.

Dong Zhuo saw Lü Bu come in and asked, "Is everything all right outside?" "No problems," answered Lü Bu and stood in attendance beside the preceptor. Dong Zhuo was eating. Lü Bu glanced around. He spotted a young woman moving back and forth behind a damask curtain, peeking out now and then and letting a corner of her face show. Her eyes bespoke her affection. Lü Bu knew her to be Diaochan, and the soul within him fluttered. Dong Zhuo noticed Lü Bu's distraction and, pricked by jealousy and suspicion, said, "If there is nothing else, you may go." Sullenly, Lü Bu left.

Enthralled by Diaochan's charms, Dong Zhuo let official business lapse for more than a month. Once he fell ill, and Diaochan stayed up every night catering to his needs and wishes. On one occasion Lü Bu entered the private apartments to see him. Dong Zhuo was sleeping. Behind the bed Diaochan tilted her shoulders toward Lü Bu and pointed first to her heart and then to Dong Zhuo. Her cheeks were moist. Lü Bu felt his own heart crumble within him. Dong Zhuo opened his eyes and slowly focused on Lü Bu, who was staring at the rear of the bed. Dong Zhuo swung around and spied Diaochan behind him. "Have you been flirting with my favorite concubine?" he screamed and ordered Lü Bu thrust from the room. "Never enter here again!" he shouted.

Rage and hatred struck deep in Lü Bu. On the way home he met Li Ru and told him what had happened in the bedroom. Li Ru rushed to see Dong Zhuo. "Imperial Preceptor," he pleaded, "if you hope to make the realm your own, there's no point in blaming Lü Bu for so trifling an offense. Our cause is lost if he turns against us." "What shall I do?" asked Dong Zhuo. "Summon him tomorrow morning," Li Ru counseled, "and honor him with presents of gold and silk. Mollify him with gentle phrases. There should be no further problems." Dong Zhuo agreed and the next day had Lü Bu called before him. "Yesterday," Dong Zhuo began, "I was unwell and not at all myself. I said the wrong thing and did you injury. Do not hold it against me." Dong Zhuo conferred on his general a bounty of ten catties of gold and twenty rolls of silk. Lü Bu thanked him and went home. But from then on, though his body remained with Dong Zhuo, his mind dwelled on Diaochan.

After Dong Zhuo got over his illness, he held court once again. Lü Bu, armed as always, attended him. One day he saw the preceptor in conference with Emperor Xian and slipped away to Dong Zhuo's residence. He tied his horse at the front entrance and went into the rear chambers, halberd in hand, where he found Diaochan. "Wait for me," she said, "in the back garden by the Phoenix Pavilion." Lü Bu went where he was told and stood by the curved railing that surrounded the little belvedere. After a long while he saw her coming, parting the flowers and brushing aside the willows—truly, to any mortal eye, a celestial being from the Palace on the Moon. Weeping, she joined him and said, "Though I am not his real daughter, Minister Wang Yun treats me as his own flesh and blood. The moment he presented me to you, my lifelong prayers were answered. I can't believe that the preceptor's conscience could permit him to stain my purity, so that I now despair of life itself. I have borne my shame and prolonged my worthless existence only for the chance to say good-bye to you. Our fortunate meeting today answers my wish. But never again, disgraced as I am now, could I serve a hero such as you. I shall die before your eyes to show my earnest heart." With that, she

grasped the curved railing and started into the lotus pool.

Lü Bu lunged forward and caught her. Through his tears he said, "I have long known your real feelings, but alas, we could never speak." Diaochan reached out and clutched Lü Bu's clothing. "Since I can never be your wife in this world," she said, "I want to arrange to meet you in the next." "If I cannot have you as my wife in this world," answered Lü Bu, "then I am no hero worthy of the name." "I count my days as years. Pity me, my lord, and save me," the girl implored. "I had to slip away or else the old villain would suspect something," Lü Bu said. "Now I must go back." Diaochan would not let go of him. "If you are so afraid of the 'old villain,'" she cried, "then I will never see the light of day again, for I am lost." Lü Bu stood still. "Give me time to think," he said finally, as he took his halberd and turned to leave. "Oh, General!" cried Diaochan, "even in the seclusion of my boudoir your name resounded like thunder. I thought you the foremost man of the age and never imagined another could subjugate you." Her tears rained down. Shame covered Lü Bu's face as he leaned on his halberd, listening. Then he turned and embraced Diaochan, comforting her with tender words. The pair clung together fondly.

Dong Zhuo, who was still at court, began to wonder where Lü Bu had gone. He bid the Emperor a hasty good-bye and returned home in his carriage. Seeing Lü Bu's horse tied at his front gate, he questioned the gateman and was told that the general was in the rear chamber. Dong Zhuo dismissed his servants roughly and went looking for Lü Bu. Not finding him in the rear chamber, he called for Diaochan. She too was not to be found. "She is in the back garden viewing the blossoms," the maidservants told him. Dong Zhuo rushed there and saw the amorous pair tete-a-tete at the Phoenix Pavilion. The halberd had been set aside. Dong Zhuo's anger flared and he let out a dreadful shout. Lü Bu spotted him, panicked, and fled. Dong Zhuo picked up the great halberd and gave chase. Lü Bu was swift. Dong Zhuo, too fat to catch up, heaved the weapon. Lü Bu knocked it aside. Dong Zhuo retrieved it and continued running, but Lü Bu was already out of range. Dong Zhuo dashed out the garden gate, collided head on with another man running in, and fell to the ground. Indeed:

His fury mounted to the sky,
But his heavy frame sprawled upon the ground.

Who had knocked him down?

READ ON.



***Lü Bu Kills the Tyrant for Wang Yun;
Li Jue Invades the Capital on Jia Xu's Advice***

THE MAN WHO PLOWED INTO DONG ZHUO was none other than his most trusted adviser, Li Ru. Horrified, Li Ru scrambled to help Dong Zhuo into the library, where the preceptor sat down and composed himself. "Whatever brought *you* here?" gasped Dong Zhuo. "I came in through the main gate," Li Ru replied. "They told me you'd charged off into the rear garden looking for Lü Bu. I rushed over, too, and saw him bounding away, crying, 'The preceptor's after me!' So I headed into the garden to try and smooth things over, but I have only offended Your Worship and made things worse. I deserve to die." "Oh, to be rid of that scoundrel!" Dong Zhuo said fiercely. "He was flirting with my darling. I'll have his head for it." "That would be most unwise, Your Worship," Li Ru responded. "In ancient times at the famous banquet where all guests were told to tear the tassels from their hats, King Zhuang of Chu overlooked an amorous gesture toward his queen from Jiang Xiong, the very man who later saved the king from Qin soldiers.¹ Now, this Diaochan is just another woman; but Lü Bu is a fierce and trusted general. Give her to him now, and he will risk life and limb to requite your generosity. I entreat you, consider it carefully." After absorbing this advice, Dong Zhuo said, "You have a point. I shall think it over." Li Ru thanked him and left.

Dong Zhuo returned to his private apartments and asked Diaochan, "Are you having an affair with Lü Bu?" Diaochan burst into tears before replying, "I was enjoying the flowers in the back garden when he accosted me. I was frightened and tried to slip away. He said, 'I am the imperial preceptor's son. You don't have to avoid *me*.' Then he chased me with that halberd of his over to the Phoenix Pavilion. I could see he meant no good. What if he forced himself on me? I tried to throw myself into the pool, but the brute wrapped his arms around me. My life was hanging there in the balance when you came—just in time to save me."

"I have made a decision," Dong Zhuo declared. "I am going to give you into Lü Bu's service. What do you think of that?" Panicked, Diaochan pleaded through tears:² "Having had the honor of serving Your Worship, I could not bear the shame of being handed down to an underling." She took hold of a sword hanging against the wall and pressed it to her throat. Dong Zhuo snatched it away and embraced her. "I spoke in jest," he said. Diaochan collapsed in his arms. "I know this is Li Ru's doing," she murmured as she hid her face and sobbed. "He and Lü Bu are fast friends and must have worked this out between them without giving the slightest consideration to the dignity of the Imperial Preceptor or to my own life. Oh, I could eat him alive!" "I will never give you up," said Dong Zhuo, comforting her. "Though I enjoy the favor of your attention," Diaochan went on, "I don't think I should remain here too long. Lü Bu will find a way to ruin me." "Tomorrow," said Dong Zhuo, "you and I shall repair to the new palace at Mei and take our pleasure there together. Try not to worry." Diaochan mastered her fears and thanked Dong Zhuo.

The following day Li Ru appeared before Dong Zhuo and said, "Today is an auspicious day for presenting Diaochan to Lü Bu." "Lü Bu and I," Dong Zhuo replied, "are father and son. It would be unseemly for me to present her to him. Despite his offense, however, I will take no action against him. Convey my wishes—and speak gently to comfort him." "Preceptor," Li Ru urged, "you should not let a woman beguile you." Dong Zhuo's expression turned ugly. "Would you care," he asked, "to give your wife to Lü Bu? Let us hear no more of this, or the sword will speak for me." Li Ru left Dong Zhuo's presence and, raising his eyes to Heaven, sighed, "We are all doomed, and at a woman's hands." A reader of later times was moved to write this verse:

Wang Yun staked the empire's fate
on a gentle maiden's charm.
Spear and shield were set aside,
no soldier came to harm.
In the fray at Tiger Pass
three heroes fought in vain.
Instead the victory song was sung
at Phoenix Pavilion.

That same day Dong Zhuo prepared to return to Mei. The whole assembly of officials came to see him off. From her carriage Diaochan picked out Lü Bu in the throng, staring at her. She covered her face as if weeping. The carriage began to move. Lü Bu led his horse to a knoll and watched the dust rising behind the wheels. A sigh of remorse escaped from his lips. "Why are you staring into the distance and sighing?" someone asked from behind. "Why aren't you with the preceptor?" It was Minister of the Interior Wang Yun.

After they had exchanged greetings, Wang Yun said, "A slight indisposition has kept me indoors the past few days—that's why we haven't seen each other—but I felt I had to get myself out for the preceptor's departure. And now I have the added pleasure of meeting you. Forgive my question, General, but is something the matter?" "Your daughter, that's all," was the reply. "You mean, he's kept her all this time?" Wang Yun asked, affecting surprise. "That old villain made her his favorite long ago," answered Lü Bu. "I don't believe it!" Wang Yun exclaimed. Lü Bu then related what had happened to Diaochan as Wang Yun looked skyward and stamped his feet. Finally he spoke: "It amazes me that the preceptor could do such a beastly thing." He took Lü Bu's hand and said, "Why don't we discuss this further at my home?"

Lü Bu returned with Wang Yun, who ushered him into a private room. Given wine and treated cordially, Lü Bu narrated in full his confrontation with Dong Zhuo at the pavilion. "Then the preceptor has violated my daughter!" responded Wang Yun, "and snatched your wife. We stand shamed and mocked before the world. *He* is not mocked—only you and I. I am nothing but a useless old man, and I suppose I will have to swallow the insult. What a pity, though, for you, General—for a hero, head and shoulders above them all, to suffer such disgrace!"

Lü Bu's anger could have lifted him to the heavens. He struck the table and roared. "I should never have said what I did," Wang Yun said immediately. "Please compose yourself." "The villain's life will clear my name," Lü Bu shouted. "Do not say so, General," Wang Yun admonished, hastily touching Lü Bu's mouth. "I'm afraid I shall be implicated." "As a man of honor standing before

Heaven and earth," Lü Bu went on, "I will not be his underling forever." "A man with your abilities," Wang Yun agreed, "should not be subject to the authority of someone like Preceptor Dong." "I would love to be rid of the old villain," confided Lü Bu, "but history would brand me an unfilial son." Smiling faintly, Wang Yun said, "You are a Lu. He is a Dong. Where was his fatherly feeling when he threw that halberd?" Lü Bu's temper flared again. "I nearly overlooked that!" he cried. "Thank you for reminding me."

As his suggestions took hold, Wang Yun continued working on Lü Bu: "Your service to the Han will secure your reputation for loyalty, and historians will preserve your good name for posterity. But support for Dong Zhuo is disloyal and will earn you an eternity of condemnation." Lü Bu shifted off his seat and bowed to the ground to show his respect. "My mind is made up," said Lü Bu. "Do not doubt it." "But failure means disaster," Wang Yun cautioned. With his knife Bu pricked blood from his arm to seal his pledge. In response Wang Yun dropped to his knees and said, "Your gracious favor enables the temple services of the Han to continue.³ But you must disclose nothing. A plan of action will be ready in due time, and you will be informed." Lü Bu assented and took his leave.⁴

Next, Wang Yun summoned Shisun Rui, a supervisor in the Secretariat, and Huang Wan, commander of the Capital Districts, to try to work out a plan. "The Emperor," Rui began, "has recently recovered from an illness. Send a smooth talker to the new palace in Mei requesting Dong Zhuo's presence in the capital. At the same time have the Emperor secretly authorize Lü Bu to place an ambush at the court gates. Escort Dong Zhuo in and kill him there. That's the best way." "Who will take the message?" asked Huang Wan. "Cavalry Commander Li Su," suggested Rui, "comes from Lü Bu's own district. He has resented Dong Zhuo ever since he was passed over for promotion, but Dong Zhuo is unlikely to suspect him." "A good choice," said Wang Yun.

Wang Yun presented the plan to Lü Bu, who said, "Li Su! He talked me into killing Ding Yuan! He'll go all right, or I'll have his head." Li Su was secretly brought in, and Lü Bu confronted him: "Once you convinced me to kill my benefactor and stepfather Ding Yuan and go over to Dong Zhuo. Now he has wronged the Emperor and caused the people to suffer. His foul crimes have roused the indignation of men and gods alike. We want you to carry the Emperor's edict to Mei, commanding Dong Zhuo to appear at court, where soldiers in hiding will be ready to kill him. We must work for the house of Han as loyal subjects. Do we have your consent?" "I, too," replied Li Su, "have longed to be rid of him, but I despaired of finding allies. If *you*, General, are so minded, then Heaven itself favors our cause. I am with you, heart and soul." He broke an arrow to confirm his oath. "If your mission succeeds," said Wang Yun, "a handsome commission awaits you."

Li Su and a dozen riders went to Mei the following day. The arrival of the imperial edict was announced, and Dong Zhuo received the bearer. Li Su paid his respects. "What edict from the Emperor?" asked Dong Zhuo. "His Majesty," began Li Su, "has recovered from his illness and desires to call together the full assembly in the Weiyang Hall. This edict was issued in connection with a decision to yield the throne to the preceptor." "What is Wang Yun's view?" asked Dong Zhuo. "The minister of the interior," Li Su replied, "has already arranged for the construction of a platform for the ceremony of abdication. Only your presence is awaited, my lord." Delighted, Dong Zhuo said, "Last night I dreamed that a dragon was encircling me; today these auspicious tidings arrive. My time has come. I must not miss it." Dong Zhuo ordered four trusted generals—Li Jue, Guo Si, Zhang Ji, and Fan Chou—to guard Mei with three thousand men from his Flying Bear Corps.⁵ Then he made ready to return to Chang'an. "When I am emperor," he said, turning to Li Su, "you will bear the gilded mace

as chief of the Capital Guard." Li Su gave thanks, speaking as a subject addressing his sovereign.

Dong Zhuo went to take leave of his mother, a woman more than ninety years old. "Where are you going, son?" she asked. "I am going to accept the succession from the Han," he replied. "Shortly you will be made Queen Mother." "These few days," she said, "I have been feeling unsteady, and my heart won't quiet down. Could it be an ill omen?" "Mother," Dong Zhuo answered, "you are going to be Mother of the Realm. That's what these little premonitions mean." He took his leave. Before departing, he told Diaochan, "When I am emperor, you will be made Precious Consort." Diaochan, who realized he was falling into the trap, feigned great pleasure and expressed profound gratitude.

Surrounded by his adherents, Dong Zhuo ascended his carriage and set out for Chang'an. He had traveled less than thirty *li* when a wheel broke. Dong Zhuo switched to horseback. After another ten *li* the horse began snorting wildly and snapped its reins. Dong Zhuo said to Li Su, "First the wheel, now the horse—what do these signs mean?" "Simply," Li Su answered smoothly, "that the preceptor will be replacing the Han, discarding the old for the new, and should soon be riding in the imperial carriage with its jewels and golden gear!" Dong Zhuo found this answer delightful and convincing.

The next day the journey continued. A fierce storm sprang up, and a dark mist spread over the heavens. "What does *this* signify?" Dong Zhuo asked. "When you ascend the dragon throne," answered Li Su, "there will be red streaks of light through purple mists demonstrating the heavenly power of Your Majesty." Dong Zhuo's doubts were again satisfied by this interpretation.

Dong Zhuo's carriage reached the capital gate. The assembly of officials welcomed him. Only Li Ru had absented himself for reasons of health. Dong Zhuo entered his official residence, followed by Lü Bu, who extended his congratulations. "I shall be ascending the imperial throne," Dong Zhuo said, "and you will become the head of all military forces." Lü Bu thanked his patron and spent the night outside his sleeping quarters. That night a dozen boys were singing in the outskirts of the city, and the wind carried their melancholy voices into the bed chamber:

A thousand *li* of green, green grass
Beyond the tenth day, one can't last.

"What is the meaning of the rhyme?" asked Zhuo.⁶ "It only means," Li Su replied, "that the house of Liu will fall, and the house of Dong will rise."

At dawn the following day Dong Zhuo arrayed his honor guard. As his sedan chair reached court, he was surprised to see a Taoist priest in a dark gown and white headdress, holding a long staff. Tied to the top was a strip of cloth about ten feet long with the word "mouth" written on either end.⁷ "What is this priest trying to say?" asked Dong Zhuo. "He is deranged," Li Su replied and had him chased away.

Dong Zhuo went into the main court area. The assembled officials, splendid in their formal robes and caps, greeted him from the sides. Sword in hand, Li Su followed the carriage. They came to a side gate on the north. Only twenty of Dong Zhuo's charioteers were let through. Further ahead at the entrance to the main hall Dong Zhuo could see a group with drawn swords standing around Wang Yun. Perturbed, Dong Zhuo asked, "What is the meaning of these swords?" Li Su made no reply as he helped push the carriage straight on in.

"The traitor is here!" shouted Wang Yun. "Where are my men?" On either side a hundred weapons

appeared. Halberd and lance were thrust against Dong Zhuo, but his armor prevented injury. Then, wounded in the arm, he fell from the carriage. "Where is my son?" he screamed. Lü Bu stepped out from behind the carriage. "Here is the edict to punish the traitor!" he cried and cut Dong Zhuo's throat with his halberd. Li Su severed the head and held it aloft.⁸ Lü Bu produced the edict, shouting, "This is the Emperor's writ. Only the traitor Dong Zhuo is to answer for his crime."⁹ Officers and men hailed the Emperor. Dong Zhuo's fate moved someone to write these lines:

Success would have placed him on the throne itself;
Failing that, he meant to have an easy life of wealth.
What he forgot is that the gods ordain a path so strict:
His palace newly done, his enterprise lay wrecked.

At once Lü Bu said, "Li Ru abetted Dong Zhuo in all his brutal crimes. Who will seize him?" Li Su volunteered to go. Suddenly there was a commotion at the gate. Li Ru's household servants had already tied him up and brought him in. Wang Yun ordered Li Ru executed in the marketplace. Dong Zhuo's corpse was displayed on the main thoroughfare. There was so much fat in his body that the guards lit a fire in his navel; as it burned, grease from the corpse ran over the ground. Passing commoners knocked Dong Zhuo's severed head with their fists and trampled his body. Wang Yun ordered Lü Bu, Huangfu Song, and Li Su to march fifty thousand men to the new palace complex at Mei and take custody of all property and residents.¹⁰

Meanwhile the four generals Dong Zhuo left in charge of Mei—Li Jue, Guo Si, Zhang Ji, and Fan Chou—hearing that their master was dead and that Lü Bu was on his way, led their Flying Bears west to Liangzhou by rapid night marches. At Mei, Lü Bu first took Diaochan into his charge, while Huangfu Song freed the sons and daughters of the good Chang'an families. All members of Dong Zhuo's family, including his aged mother,¹¹ were put to death. The heads of Dong Zhuo's brother Min and his nephew Huang were publicly displayed. The entire wealth of the new complex was confiscated: several hundred thousand taels of gold, millions of silver coins, fine sheer silks, pearls, precious implements, grain stores—a vast treasure.¹² When the results were reported back to Wang Yun, he feasted the troops and held a grand celebration at the Office of the Secretariat.

The festivities were interrupted by a report that someone had knelt and wept beside Dong Zhuo's body. "Everyone cheered his execution. Who dares mourn?" Wang Yun said angrily and ordered the man arrested. Brought before the astonished officials was none other than Privy Counselor Cai Yong. Wang Yun denounced the offender: "For what reason do you, a subject of the Han, mourn a traitor whose death benefits the dynasty, instead of joining our celebration?" Cai Yong acknowledged his offense: "Despite my meagre abilities," he said, "I can tell right from wrong and would never honor Dong Zhuo instead of the Han. Yet I could not help shedding a tear out of gratitude for the favor he has shown me. I know I should not have done it. I only pray that if my face is branded and my feet cut off, I may nonetheless be permitted to continue my work on the history of the Han as a form of atonement. I seek no other mercy."¹³

The court officials, who esteemed Cai Yong's ability, pleaded for him strenuously. Imperial Guardian Ma Midi also urged Wang Yun privately, "It would be a boon to let so unique a talent complete the history. Moreover, his filial devotion is widely respected. If you condemn him without due consideration, we may forfeit people's confidence." "Centuries ago," responded Wang Yun,

"Emperor Wu spared Sima Qian and let him write his history, with the result that we have a slanderous account whose ill effects are felt to this day. At a time when our destiny is uncertain and court administration faltering, how can we permit a toady like Cai Yong to wield the pen by the side of a junior emperor? He will defame us."¹⁴ To these words the imperial guardian made no reply; but privately he told officials, "May Wang Yun leave no posterity. Able men of character are the mainstay of the ruling house, institutions its legal basis. Destroy the mainstay, discard the basis, and the Han cannot long endure." Wang Yun rejected Ma Midi's appeal and had Cai Yong taken to prison and strangled. The news moved many scholars to tears. Later, many held that Cai Yong was wrong to mourn Dong Zhuo but that Wang Yun went too far when he had him killed. A poet voiced these feelings:

Power was Dong Zhuo's means to tyranny;
And Cai Yong's death, his own ignominy.
Kongming lay low in Longzhong and every hero weighed.¹⁵
Would *he* waste his talents on a renegade?¹⁶

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The four generals Dong Zhuo left guarding Mei—Li Jue, Guo Si, Zhang Ji, and Fan Chou—had fled west to Shanxi; from there they sent to Chang'an a petition for clemency. "Those four abetted the tyranny of Dong Zhuo," Wang Yun said. "Our general amnesty will exclude them."¹⁷ Learning of this decision, Li Jue said, "We are denied. Let each man fend for himself." But their adviser, Jia Xu, recommended a different course: "If you abandon your armies and go it alone, a single constable will be enough to arrest you. Shouldn't we recruit local people, march back into Chang'an, and avenge Dong Zhuo? If we prevail, we can set the realm to rights in the name of the court. If we fail, we'll have time enough to escape."

Li Jue approved this plan and spread rumors throughout Liangzhou to the effect that Wang Yun was plotting a massacre in this locality. When he had sufficiently terrified the population, he issued the call, "Why die for nothing? Follow me and rebel!" Many volunteered, and the four generals divided more than one hundred thousand men into four field armies and descended on the capital. On the way they met Dong Zhuo's son-in-law, Niu Fu, an Imperial Corps commander leading a force of five thousand. Niu Fu was thirsty for vengeance, and Li Jue put him in the vanguard. The four generals continued their advance.

Wang Yun learned of the new invasion by Liangzhou troops and conferred with Lü Bu. "Have no fear, Minister," Lü Bu assured him, "of that contemptible pack of scoundrels." Lü Bu sent Li Su to engage the invaders. Li Su and Niu Fu clashed, and a period of bloodshed ensued. Niu Fu fell back in defeat, then rallied and counterattacked that night at the second watch. He caught Li Su by surprise and sacked his camp. Li Su's army fled in all directions, sustaining major losses. The defeat so enraged Lü Bu that he shrieked at Li Su, "You have ruined our fighting spirit!" and had him executed. Li Su's head was impaled at the entrance to the camp.

The following day Lü Bu himself went forth to confront Niu Fu and overwhelmed him. That night the badly defeated Niu Fu said to his most trusted man, Hu Chi'er: "Lü Bu is more than a match for us. We might as well run off with some treasure and quit, taking a few lackeys along without letting Li

Jue and the others know." Hu Chi'er concurred. The conspirators scooped up the spoils and quit camp, accompanied by three or four men. As they were preparing to cross a river, Hu Chi'er turned on Niu Fu and killed him. He stashed away the stolen treasure and presented Niu Fu's head to Lü Bu. Lü Bu soon learned the truth from the accomplices, however, and executed Hu Chi'er.¹⁸

Lü Bu advanced and engaged Li Jue. Before Jue could organize his line, Lü Bu—spear couched, steed rearing—waved his soldiers on. From this frontal assault Li Jue fell back fifty *li* and camped by a hillside, where he conferred with his three partners. "Lü Bu is brave, to be sure," Li Jue said, "but not smart enough to pose any real problem. I will take a detachment to the mouth of the gorge and provoke him to fight. When he does, General Guo Si can harry his rear, using the reverse signaling tactics Peng Yue used to harass Chu,¹⁹ advancing at the gong and retreating at the drum. At the same time I want you two, Zhang Ji and Fan Chou, to attack Chang'an directly with your two armies. A two-fronted assault like this will keep Lü Bu and Wang Yun from coming to each other's aid, and we can defeat them." All agreed with Li Jue's plan.

Lü Bu's army halted near the hillside camp. Li Jue emerged to draw him into combat. Lü Bu's temper took control and he charged headlong. Li Jue retreated up the hill, blocking pursuit with a shower of boulders and arrows. Suddenly Guo Si attacked Lü Bu from the rear, forcing him to turn around. Lü Bu attempted to come to grips with Guo Si's force, but Guo Si also retreated when the drum sounded. Lü Bu was preparing to draw back, when gongs rang out on the other end, and Li Jue resumed the offensive. As Lü Bu turned to meet this new threat, Guo Si struck again and withdrew immediately.

For several days the two generals worked Lü Bu's army back and forth until he was too exasperated to fight or rest. To add to Lü Bu's great vexation, word came that the other two enemy generals, Zhang Ji and Fan Chou, had advanced on the capital and that its fall was imminent. Frantically, Lü Bu wheeled his army round toward Chang'an as Li Jue and Guo Si together savaged his rear ranks. Rushing to the capital, Lü Bu abandoned the struggle; he had suffered heavy losses. At Chang'an he found a living sea of warriors surrounding the walls and moat. With defeat following defeat, many of his men, dreading his tyrannical temper, deserted. Lü Bu sank into despair.

Several days later two adherents of Dong Zhuo's who had remained in the capital, Li Meng and Wang Fang, stealthily opened the city gates to the invaders, who poured in from all directions. Lü Bu fought hard but could not hold them off. He led several hundred horsemen to the palace gate. "It's all over," he called to Wang Yun. "Ride with me. We'll find a better way out." But Wang Yun refused, saying, "If the spirits dwelling in the sacred shrines of Han favor me, I will restore peace for the ruling family. If I fail, I die. But I cannot steal away in the heat of the crisis. Give this message to the lords beyond the pass: 'Strive to keep the Han foremost in your thoughts.'" Lü Bu could not change Wang Yun's mind. The city gates were on fire. Leaving his own family behind, Lü Bu dashed away with one hundred horsemen to seek refuge with Yuan Shu.

Li Jue and Guo Si let their soldiers plunder Chang'an at will. Minister of Ritual Chong Fu, Court Steward Lu Kui, Minister of Protocol Zhou Huan, Commandant of the Capital Gates Cui Lie, and Commandant of the Exemplary Cavalry Wang Qi all perished in the fighting. The rebels drew a tight ring around the court, and the courtiers pleaded with the Emperor to appear above the Declaring Peace Gate and calm the tumult. The Emperor came forth. When Li Jue and the others saw the yellow canopy sheltering the imperial person, they instantly called on their armies to desist and cried out, "Long live the

Emperor! "Emperor Xian, speaking from the gate tower, demanded," Why have you generals entered the capital without my permission? "Li Jue and Guo Si raised their faces toward their sovereign and appealed to him:" Imperial Preceptor Dong Zhuo, the guardian of your royal shrines, was wrongly slain by Wang Yun. We have come to avenge him and have no disloyal thoughts. We will withdraw once we have seen the murderer. "

Wang Yun, standing beside the Emperor, heard the accusation. "I acted only for the sake of the royal shrines," he said to the Emperor. "Under present conditions Your Majesty must think only of the safety of the imperial house. Permit me to go down to see the two traitors." The Emperor hesitated, but Wang Yun leaped to the ground and shouted, "Here stands Wang Yun!" Li Jue and Guo Si drew their swords and denounced him: "For what crime did the imperial preceptor deserve to die?" "Dong Zhuo's unspeakable crimes," Wang Yun responded, "filled Heaven and earth. On the day of his execution all Chang'an rejoiced, though you may not know it." "Even so," replied the two generals, "what was our crime that you excluded us from the amnesty?" In response Wang Yun swore: "Hold your tongues, treasonous villains! Wang Yun has come to die and that is all." The two outlaws cut him down in front of the gate tower. A historian has left this remembrance:

Wang Yun spun an artful scheme
That ended Dong Zhuo's evil dream.
His heart ached for the ruling line,
His brow was knitted for its shrine.
His noble spirit reached the skies,
His heart has joined the guiding stars.
Down below his souls remain
And haunt the Phoenix Pavilion.

The rebels put Wang Yun's entire clan to the sword. The people of the city mourned. In fact, Li Jue and Guo Si had further ambitions. "Now that we are here, what better opportunity will we have to kill the Emperor and create a new dynasty?" they shouted. Swords bared, they charged into the palace. Indeed:

The execution of Dong Zhuo had barely eased the crisis,
When rebels running amok brought fresh woes.

The life of the Emperor was now at stake.

READ ON.



***Ma Teng Takes Up Arms to Save the Throne;
Cao Cao Musters an Army to Avenge His Father***

LI JUE AND GUO SI WOULD HAVE TAKEN the sovereign's life, but the other two generals, Zhang Ji and Fan Chou, demurred: "The people will never accept the authority of regicides. Rather, uphold the Emperor and lure the lords of the realm into the region Chang'an controls. That way we can pare down the Emperor's support and prepare to take over at the proper time." On this counsel Li Jue and Guo Si refrained from acting.

The Emperor, meanwhile, speaking from the palace tower, issued a statement to those below: "Wang Yun has been executed. On what grounds have you not withdrawn your forces?" Li Jue and Guo Si responded, "Our service to the royal house has not yet been requited by titles from Your Majesty. That is what we are waiting for." The Emperor said, "Which titles do you want?" Each of the four generals wrote on a piece of paper the offices and fiefs he required and submitted it to the Emperor; having no choice, he made the following awards:

Li Jue, appointed general of Chariots and Cavalry and enfeoffed as lord of Chiyang; also named commandant of the Capital Districts and granted insignia and battle-axe confirming military authority

Guo Si, appointed general of the Rear and lord of Meiyang and granted insignia and battle-axe; both generals to control court administration

Fan Chou, appointed general of the Right and lord of Wannian

Zhang Ji, appointed Flying Cavalry general and lord of Pingyan, with his garrison stationed at Hongnong

Li Meng and Wang Fang (who had opened the city gates to the rebels) were assigned commands.

Generals Li Jue and Guo Si thanked the Emperor and led their armies out of the city. Then they ordered Dong Zhuo's corpse recovered. Since only bits of skin and bone could be found, they ordered a sculptor to make a statue of their fallen leader out of fragrant wood. When the work was done, they dressed the statue in royal robes and placed it in a royal coffin. They chose an auspicious day and led a funeral procession to Mei. At the burial, however, a tremendous cloudburst flooded the area, and the force of the thunder shook the coffin open, knocking the statue out. Li Jue waited for the skies to clear, but the storm raged on and interment had to be postponed again and again until the fragments of Dong Zhuo's corpse had been consumed by lightning. Great indeed was Heaven's wrath.

Now that they dominated the government, Li Jue and Guo Si terrorized the capital. Their henchmen infiltrated the palace staff and kept the Emperor under close watch, a virtual prisoner. Officials were promoted and demoted as the two villains saw fit. To restore some degree of public

confidence, they made the gesture of appointing Zhu Jun to be court steward and invited him to participate in court affairs.¹

One day it was reported that Ma Teng, governor of Xiliang, and Han Sui, imperial inspector of Bingzhou, were advancing on the capital with an army of one hundred thousand, proclaiming their intention to punish the rebels in the name of the Emperor. In preparation for this mission, Ma Teng and Han Sui had secured the collaboration of three important men inside Chang'an: Privy Counselor Ma Yu, Court Counselor Chong Shao, and Left Imperial Corps Commander Liu Fan. These three had secretly persuaded the Emperor to appoint Ma Teng and Han Sui to the rank of general—the former, Conqueror of the West, the latter, Queller of the West—and to authorize them to unite against the party of traitors.

In response to these developments Li Jue and the other three generals put their heads together to work out a plan of resistance. Their adviser, Jia Xu, said, "Ma Teng and Han Sui are coming a great distance. All we need do is to dig in and defend ourselves resolutely. Their food will be gone in a few months; they'll have to withdraw. Then we can pursue and capture them easily." The two commanders Li Meng and Wang Fang objected. "A poor idea!" they said. "Give us ten thousand men, and we will deliver the heads of Ma Teng and Han Sui in short order." "If you engage them now," Jia Xu warned, "you will lose." "If we fail, we will offer our own heads," Li Meng and Wang Fang said, "and if we succeed, we'll demand yours!" So Jia Xu made a suggestion to Li Jue and Guo Si: "Let generals Zhang Ji and Fan Chou guard the Zhouzhi Hills two hundred *li* west of Chang'an. The terrain there is quite difficult. Then Li Meng and Wang Fang may go forth." Li Jue and Guo Si followed his advice, placing fifteen thousand men under the two volunteers. They set out in high spirits and camped two hundred and eighty *li* west of the capital.

The two commanders confronted the loyalist troops from the west. Ma Teng and Han Sui rode out together in front of their lines and roadblocks. Pointing to Li Meng and Wang Fang, they cried, "There are the rebels. Who will seize them?" Before they had finished speaking, a young general was already in the field. His face was like flawless jade; his eyes gleamed like shooting stars. He had a powerful torso, brawny arms, a lusty stomach, and a supple waist. On a splendid charger he sped forward, gripping a long spear. It was Ma Chao (Mengqi), the seventeen-year-old son of Ma Teng, a lad of supreme courage.

Wang Fang scorned the youthful challenger and engaged him proudly. But Ma Chao slew Wang Fang handily and wheeled his horse about. Li Meng galloped after the victor. Ma Chao kept riding for his line seemingly unaware of the danger. Ma Teng shouted a warning, but his son already had Li Meng prisoner. Ma Chao had allowed Li Meng to pull close enough to attempt a thrust, and then artfully dodged so that Li Meng speared thin air as his horse carried him abreast of Ma Chao's. At that moment Ma Chao scooped Li Meng up with a supple sweep of his brawny arm. Now leaderless, the troops from the capital broke formation. Ma Teng and Han Sui pursued them hotly and turned their advantage into a great victory. The western army pitched camp at one of the passes outside the capital. Li Meng was beheaded and his severed head publicly displayed.

Li Jue and Guo Si had new respect for Jia Xu's foresight after hearing of the death of Li Meng and Wang Fang. They reverted to his original strategy, keeping the passes tightly guarded and refusing all challenges. As Jia Xu had predicted, within two months the western army had to retreat for lack of supplies. At the same time Ma Teng and Han Sui's three collaborators within Chang'an were betrayed by a household servant. Li Jue and Guo Si executed the three and set their heads on the front gate of

the capital. Then they extinguished the plotters' entire clans, young and old, noble and commoner. With all hope gone of ousting the clique of four generals, the Xiliang force withdrew. Li Jue and Guo Si ordered Zhang Ji to pursue Ma Teng, and Fan Chou to pursue Han Sui. Though the western forces were in disarray, Ma Chao managed to drive off Zhang Ji. But near Chencang, Fan Chou caught up with Han Sui, who turned and faced his enemy. "You and I are townsmen," he cried. "How can you hunt me down like this?" "I act in the service of the Emperor," said Fan Chou. "I too fight for the ruling house," Sui protested, "why press me so hard?" Without another word, Fan Chou swung his horse round and led his men back to camp, allowing Han Sui to escape.

Fan Chou's act of mercy did not go unnoticed. A nephew of Li Jue's reported it to the general, who wanted to send out the army to punish Fan Chou. But Jia Xu restrained him: "When the people are so unsettled, there is nothing to be gained by constant resort to war. It would be much simpler to hold a celebration for the two generals, seize Fan Chou, and execute him then and there." This advice satisfied Li Jue. He invited the victorious generals to a banquet, and they attended with pleasure. Midway through the toasts Li Jue suddenly dropped his cordiality and demanded, "Why was Fan Chou plotting with Han Sui? Is he going to rebel?" Fan Chou panicked; before he could defend himself, swords and axes hemmed him in, and his head was quickly taken. Zhang Ji prostrated himself in terror. But Li Jue lifted him up, saying, "Fan Chou conspired against me—that is why I killed him. In you I have complete trust. Have no fear." Fan Chou's forces were then placed under Zhang Ji, who returned to his base in Hongnong.

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After Li Jue and Guo Si had defeated the Xiliang army, no other leaders dared challenge them. At Jia Xu's insistence, they took measures to benefit the population and attract worthy and outstanding men. As a result, the court began to reassert its authority. Unexpectedly, the Yellow Scarves in Qingzhou staged another uprising.² Hundreds of thousands of rebels under numerous chieftains ravaged the region. The recently appointed court steward Zhu Jun recommended to Li Jue someone who he was sure could put down the Scarves. The man he named was Cao Cao. "Where is Mengde [Cao Cao] now?" asked Li Jue. "At present he is governor of Dongjun," replied Zhu Jun, "and he has a massive army. If we authorize him to act, the rebellion will be crushed swiftly." Li Jue accepted the suggestion and penned an edict authorizing Cao Cao to join forces with Bao Xin, lord of Jibei, for that purpose.

Cao Cao accepted the commission and joined forces with Bao Xin. They attacked the Yellow Scarves at Shouyang. Bao Xin forced his way into a strongpoint and was killed. Cao pursued the rebels to Jibei, where tens of thousands surrendered to him. Cao placed these former rebels in his vanguard. Wherever he went, the rebels transferred their allegiance to him. In one hundred days Cao Cao had induced the surrender of over three hundred thousand troops and one million noncombatants. He picked the finest of the Yellow Scarves troops and organized them into the Qingzhou army. The remainder he sent back to their farms. In consequence, Cao Cao's prestige rose steadily, and the court recognized his triumphs by naming him General Garrisoning the East.

Back in Yanzhou, Cao Cao summoned worthy and capable men to build his administration. First came the Xun family of Yingyin in Yingchuan, uncle and nephew. Xun Yu (Wenruo), the son of Xun Gun, had once served Yuan Shao but had shifted his allegiance to Cao Cao. Cao took great delight in

Xun Wenruo's opinions and referred to him as "my Zifang."³ He was appointed military counselor. Wenruo's nephew, Xun You (Gongda), a renowned scholar and an attendant in the Inner Bureau when the court was still in Luoyang, had left his office and retired to his village. Cao made him a military instructional supervisor. Xun Wenruo recommended to Cao Cao the scholar Cheng Yu (Zhongde), who came from Dong'e in Dongjun. "A name long known to me," Cao commented and sent an emissary, who found Cheng Yu studying in a mountain retreat and persuaded him to enter Cao's service. Cheng Yu said to his patron Xun Wenruo, "I am a foolish, poorly informed man, of little note, undeserving of the honor of your recommendation. But your fellow townsman, Guo Jia (Fengxiao), is a true and worthy scholar of our day. Why not recruit him?" "He nearly escaped my mind!" exclaimed Xun Wenruo, and he urged Cao to invite Guo Jia to Yanzhou to consult with him on the state of the realm. Guo Jia arrived and in turn recommended Liu Ye (Ziyang) from Chengde in Huainan, a descendant of the principal branch of the first imperial family of the Eastern Han. Liu Ye recommended two more notables: Man Chong (Boning) of Changyi in Shanyang, and Lü Qian (Zike) of Wucheng. These two men were also known to Cao Cao, and he gave them positions as military aides. Man Chong and Lü Qian recommended Mao Jie (Xiaoxian) of Pingqiu in Chenliu, and Cao also appointed him military aide.

Cao Cao made further additions to his newly formed staff: Yu Jin (Wenze) from Ju-ping in Taishan arrived with several hundred troops and was accepted. Cao Cao saw that Yu Jin was a seasoned mounted archer and outstanding in the martial arts. He appointed him captain of the roll. One day Xiahou Dun brought in Dian Wei of Chenliu, a big fellow of almost supernatural strength. Dun introduced him to Cao Cao: "Dian Wei previously served with Zhang Miao. During a quarrel with Zhang Miao's other followers, Dian Wei killed several dozen men with his own hands and then fled into the hills. Some time later while hunting, I spotted Dian Wei chasing a tiger across a stream. It was then that I recruited him, and now I present him to you." "The man is a colossus," said Cao Cao. "He must be extremely powerful." "Once he killed a man to avenge a friend," said Xiahou Dun, "then he marched off with the victim's head. Out of a crowd of hundreds of witnesses, not one dared approach him. He has two steel spears, each weighing eighty catties, and on horseback he wields them like the wind." Cao Cao ordered Dian Wei to demonstrate his skill. Dian Wei grasped his weapons and was dashing back and forth when he noticed that the main pennant above Cao Cao's headquarters was about to blow over despite the attempt of many soldiers to steady it. Dian Wei shouted the soldiers out of his way and held the pole with one hand, immobile against the wind, a tower of strength. Cao Cao exclaimed: "He's certainly another Elai!" and assigned him to guard his headquarters.⁴ He also presented him with the brocade shortcoat he was wearing, as well as a fine horse and a tooled saddle.

Thus Cao Cao, aided by wise counselors and fierce fighters, made his prestige felt east of the pass. He now wanted to be reunited with his father, Cao Song, and so sent Ying Shao, governor of Taishan, to Langye to fetch him.⁵ Song had been living there quietly since leaving Chenliu, the Cao clan's home area, when Cao Cao became a fugitive.⁶ As soon as Cao Song received his son's message, he and his younger brother Cao De loaded the entire clan—more than forty relatives and one hundred attendants—onto one hundred carts and headed for Yanzhou.

En route the Cao clan passed through Xuzhou, whose imperial inspector was Tao Qian (Gongzu), a warm and sincere man who had always wanted to be associated with Cao Cao. Now, learning that Cao Cao's father was passing through his province, Tao Qian meant to treat him royally. He received

the procession at the border, paid his highest respects, and led it to the capital where he spread forth a splendid banquet that lasted two days. When Cao Song insisted on resuming the journey, Tao Qian personally escorted him out of the city. He then assigned Commander Zhang Kai and five hundred men to escort the family.

The procession reached the area around Hua and Fei counties. It was late summer, and a sudden storm blew up. The travelers sought shelter in an ancient temple, where the resident monk received them. Cao Song settled the family in and told Zhang Kai to quarter his men in the corridors. The soldiers, drenched from the storm, began grumbling. Zhang Kai called some of his lieutenants to a private conference at which he said, "We were once Yellow Scarves and surrendered to Tao Qian out of compulsion. What good has it done us? The Caos' freight and wagons are enough to make us all rich. We strike at the third watch, kill the whole family, and go into hiding with the goods. What do you say?" The lieutenants agreed.

That night as the storm raged, Cao Song heard the clamor of voices; his brother, Cao De, took his sword and went out to find the cause. He was cut down immediately. Cao Song tried to help one of his concubines over the wall behind the abbot's quarters, but she was too heavy to climb it. Cao Song hid with her in a toilet, where the guards found them and slew them. Ying Shao, the man Cao Cao had originally sent to fetch his father, escaped and fled to the camp of Yuan Shao. His bloody work completed, Zhang Kai burned down the temple and fled south to Huainan with his five hundred followers. A poet of later times wrote:

Cao Cao in all his vaunted cunning,
Slew his hosts and kept on running.
Now that *his* whole clan's been slain,
The scales of Heaven are level again.

One of Ying Shao's soldiers got away and reported the massacre to Cao Cao, who fell to the ground weeping. As his attendants helped him up, Cao Cao gnashed his teeth and swore: "Tao Qian allowed his men to kill my father! The two of us cannot share the same sky. First I will put his city⁷ to the sword to quench my wrath." Cao ordered a full-scale invasion of Xuzhou, leaving only Xun Wenruo and Cheng Yu with thirty thousand men to guard the three counties of Juancheng, Fanxian, and Dong'e. Xiahou Dun, Yu Jin, and Dian Wei led the invasion—under orders to slaughter the inhabitants as soon as the capital was taken—to avenge Cao Cao's father.

Governor of Jiujiang Bian Rang, a close friend of Tao Qian's, learned of the trouble and brought five thousand troops to aid Xuzhou. Angered by this move, Cao sent Xiahou Dun to intercept Bian Rang and kill him. Another friend of Tao Qian's was Chen Gong,⁸ who held a position in Cao's district, Dongjun. When Chen Gong learned that Cao Cao intended to exterminate the populace of Xuzhou in his thirst for vengeance, he sought an audience. At first Cao Cao refused to see any man coming to plead for Tao Qian, but sentiment prompted him to hear out his former benefactor. Chen Gong appealed to Cao Cao: "They are saying that you are about to invade Xuzhou and avenge your father's murder by wholesale bloodshed. Let me attempt to dissuade you. Tao Qian is a humane and honorable gentleman and would never seek improper gain. Your father's death was Zhang Kai's crime, not Tao Qian's. Moreover, what enmity is there between the people of Xuzhou and yourself? Taking their lives would augur ill for your larger ambitions. I pray you, reflect on this." "Didn't you

once abandon me?" Cao asked angrily. "How can you face me again? Tao Qian slew my whole family, and I mean to pluck out his entrails to satisfy my hatred. What you say in his behalf will not sway me." Taking his leave, Chen Gong thought sadly, "Then I cannot face Tao Qian again myself," and he went to Chenliu to serve Governor Zhang Miao.⁹

Cao's army invaded Xuzhou. Wherever it struck, multitudes were slaughtered and graves were despoiled. When Tao Qian learned of the toll taken by Cao's army of vengeance, he lifted his eyes and cried bitterly, "I have offended Heaven and brought this on my people." He called his advisers to counsel. One of them, Cao Bao, said, "Let us not meekly turn ourselves over to them. I would like to help you defeat them, my lord." Reluctantly, Tao Qian led his army forth to battle. In the distance he could see Cao Cao's forces spread out over the earth like a vast blanket of snow. Above the central force two huge white banners read "Vengeance and Satisfaction."

The invaders began assuming battle formations as Cao Cao himself—dressed in mourning white—rode out from the lines, cursing at the enemy as he gestured with his whip. Tao Qian rode forward, bowed low, and tendered his respects. "At first, my lord, I sought your friendship," he said, "and that is why I sent Zhang Kai to guarantee your father's safety. Little did I realize the rebel's criminal nature had never changed. That is the cause of this misfortune. I had nothing to do with it. I pray you, examine the facts." "Despised wretch," Cao swore. "You slew my father and dare to lie about it! Who will take this old scoundrel for me?" Xiahou Dun answered the call. Tao Qian fled back to his lines, and his commander, Cao Bao, came out. The two warriors grappled with one another. Suddenly a violent storm blew up and sent sand and stones flying about, throwing both armies into disorderly retreat.

Tao Qian reentered his city and addressed his followers: "Considering the size of Cao Cao's army, I have decided to put myself at his mercy and spare the population further suffering." But someone made a countersuggestion: "Xuzhou has long benefited from your protection. The enemy may be numerous, but they cannot take this city quite so easily. Let us dig in and defend it. Though I possess little talent, I beg to try something that should cause Cao Cao to die without hope of decent burial." This boast astonished one and all. What was his plan? Indeed:

In Cao Cao, Tao Qian sought a friend and found a foe;
Now in his extremity, would destiny surprise him again?

Who had spoken up?

READ ON.



Liu Xuande Rescues Kong Rong at Beihai; Lü Bu Defeats Cao Cao near Puyang

THE MAN WHO PROPOSED TO RESIST Cao Cao's siege was Mi Zhu (Zizhong), from an old and wealthy family in the county of Qu in the district of Donghai. Mi Zhu had once had an extraordinary experience. On the way home after doing business in Luoyang, he met a beautiful woman who requested a ride. Mi Zhu offered the woman his seat and proceeded on foot, but the woman insisted that they share the carriage. So Zhu climbed back up, but he sat stiffly, holding his gaze away from the passenger. Several *li* farther on the woman said good-bye, adding, "I am the deity of solar fire, sent by the Supreme God to destroy your household. Your commendable gentility has moved me to give you this warning: rush home and remove your valuables. I am due tonight." With that she disappeared. Mi Zhu raced home in shock and cleared out his goods. True to the prediction, a fire broke out in the kitchen that night and burned down his house. Thereafter Mi Zhu became known for showing generosity and concern to those in need. Thus, Tao Qian, imperial inspector of Xuzhou, invited him to serve as an aide to the inspector's lieutenant.

Mi Zhu now submitted a plan to hold off Cao Cao: "I will go to Beihai and apply to Governor Kong Rong for help. Someone else should make a similar appeal to Tian Kai in Qingzhou. If both send troops, we can drive Cao Cao away." Tao Qian approved and prepared two letters. Chen Deng (Yuanlong) of Guangling volunteered to carry the second to Qingzhou. After Mi Zhu and Chen Deng had left, Tao Qian organized the city's defenses.

Kong Rong (Wenju), governor of Beihai, was originally from Qufu in the fief of Lu, Confucius' native place,¹ and was a descendant twenty generations removed from the great master. Kong Rong was the son of the military commander of Taishan and had been a precocious child. At age ten he presented himself at the gate of Li Ying, governor of Henan. Challenged by the guard, he asserted that he was a family friend of the governor's. The guard allowed him to see the governor, who asked, "What relationship do your ancestors have with mine?" "In ancient times," the boy replied, "Confucius is said to have questioned the Taoist sage Laozi² about the rites. How could our two lineages not be connected?" Li Ying was impressed by this unexpected response. Presently one of the governor's advisers, Chen Wei, came into the room. The governor, pointing to Kong Rong, said, "This is an extraordinary lad." "Not all clever youths," Chen Wei responded, "stay clever when they are grown." "I take it," Kong Rong quipped promptly, "you were quite brilliant as a child." Chen Wei and the governor laughed. "When this child grows up," they agreed, "he will do great things." Kong Rong's rise to fame began at that time. Later named an Imperial Corps commander, he rose to be governor of Beihai. Kong Rong loved to receive guests and often said, "How I like to see my house full of friends and the cups full of wine!" During his six-year tenure as governor he had enjoyed the people's love and respect.

Governor Kong Rong was in the company of some guests the day Mi Zhu arrived. He asked him in to find out the purpose of his visit. Mi Zhu produced Tao Qian's letter and said, "Cao Cao is laying siege to Xuzhou. We need your help." "I have long been a friend of Imperial Inspector Tao," Kong Rong said. "And with your personal endorsement of his request, how could I refuse? The problem is, I bear Cao Cao no grudge, so I would rather try first to mediate an end to the quarrel. If that fails, I will levy troops." Mi Zhu replied, "Cao Cao is too confident of his power to agree to a settlement." Kong Rong began military preparations and sent out his letter.

Kong Rong was still deliberating the matter when he received an emergency report that tens of thousands of Yellow Scarves, led by Guan Hai, were rapidly approaching, killing everyone in their path. Kong Rong mobilized his forces at once and met the rebels outside of his city. Guan Hai rode forth and shouted, "We know how much grain you have in there. Give us ten thousand piculs, or we'll sack the city and kill you all, young and old alike." "I am a servant of the Han!" Kong Rong answered defiantly, "and I govern this territory for the Han. We give no grain to outlaws." Stung to fury, Guan Hai slapped his horse and, carving the air with his sword, lunged for Kong Rong. General Zong Bao, his spear leveled, rushed to intervene but was struck down swiftly. Kong Rong's troops panicked and stampeded back inside the gates. Guan Hai sealed all four sides of the city. Kong Rong expected the worst, and Mi Zhu despaired of securing aid for Tao Qian.

From the city wall the next day Kong Rong surveyed the Scarves' overwhelming advantage with a growing sense of futility. Suddenly, an armed rider plunged through the enemy ranks, striking left and thrusting right—as if unopposed—until he reached the base of the wall. "Open up," he shouted. Not recognizing the man, Kong Rong hesitated. Throngs of rebels overtook the rider at the moat. He turned and dispatched a dozen with his spear. The rebels pulled back. At last Kong Rong ordered the gate opened. The stranger entered, dismounted, and set aside his weapon. Then he climbed the wall to pay his respects to Kong Rong. "I have the double surname Taishi," he said. "My given name is Ci, my style Ziyi. I come from Huang county in Donglai. My mother has often benefited from your generosity. When I came home yesterday from Liaodong to see her, I heard the city was besieged. She told me to offer my assistance to show our gratitude to you. That's why I've come."³

Kong Rong had never met Taishi Ci, but he knew his reputation as a warrior. The governor, while Taishi Ci was away, had often sent grain and cloth to his mother, who lived a mere twenty *li* from the city. To show her gratitude she now sent her son to him. Kong Rong received the young warrior handsomely and presented him with armor, horse, and saddle. "I need one thousand picked men," Taishi Ci said, "to tackle the rebels." "Brave as you are," responded Kong Rong, "I would caution against it in view of their numbers." "My mother is indebted to you," Taishi Ci insisted. "She sent me here, and I will have failed her if I cannot break the siege. I would rather fight to the death here." "People tell me Liu Xuande is one of the heroes of our time," said Kong Rong. "If we could get his help, the siege could be lifted. But I have no one to send." "Compose the letter, Your Honor," said Taishi Ci, "and I will deliver it posthaste."⁴

Kong Rong wrote to Liu Xuande and entrusted the letter to Taishi Ci, who strapped on his armor and mounted his horse, bow and arrow at his waist, iron spear in hand. Having eaten heartily and armed himself to the hilt, he burst out of the city gate. A rebel captain spotted him by the moat and led his forces toward him, but Taishi Ci speared several of the captain's squad and broke through. Guan Hai realized Taishi Ci was going for help and pursued him with a few hundred men. Guan Hai tried to hedge Taishi Ci in, but putting by his spear, Taishi Ci felled pursuers on all sides with arrows shot

in quick succession. The rebels gave up the chase.

Taishi Ci rode on to Pingyuan, where he extended his formal respects to Liu Xuande. He then explained Kong Rong's plight and presented the governor's appeal. Liu Xuande read it through and asked, "And who are you, sir?" "Taishi Ci," replied the envoy, "from an out-of-the-way place in Donghai. Though Kong Rong and I have no common ties of blood or birth, our thoughts are congenial, and I feel obliged to share his burden out of personal loyalty.⁵ Just now, Guan Hai has Beihai surrounded, and his rebellion is roiling the region. Tao Qian has no one to turn to and may succumb at any moment. He knows of your reputation for humanity and honor, and of your willingness to aid people in distress. He has therefore sent me to brave the rebels' spears in hopes of gaining your help." Looking serious but apparently pleased, Xuande replied, "So the governor of Beihai knows there's a Liu Bei in this world?" and set out for Beihai with Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, and three thousand select fighters.

Guan Hai chose to deal with Xuande's relief force himself, hardly concerned by the little army. The three brothers and Taishi Ci halted in front of their line as a snarling Guan Hai came straight for them. Taishi Ci was riding out to engage him, but Lord Guan was already in the field, tangling with him as the troops clamored. Guan Hai was no match for Lord Guan.⁶ After a few dozen clashes the dragon blade found its mark. Then Taishi Ci and Zhang Fei came out together and, working their spears in coordination, tore into the enemy line. At this point Xuande sent his soldiers in for the kill. Atop the wall Kong Rong watched the rebels run like sheep before tigers. The brothers overbore all opposition. The governor now fielded his own troops, and the rebels, hit from all sides, broke. Many surrendered and the horde was scattered.

Kong Rong welcomed Xuande into the city. After the formalities, the governor spread a banquet to celebrate the victory. He also introduced Mi Zhu to Liu Xuande. Zhu told him how Cao Cao's father had died at the hands of Zhang Kai. "Cao Cao," said Mi Zhu, "has let his armies run wild in the province, and the city is under siege. I am here in Beihai to seek aid for Imperial Inspector Tao Qian." "Tao Qian," replied Xuande, "is a kind and honorable man. It's hard to believe an innocent man is being wronged in this way." "Xuande," said Kong Rong, "you are connected to the royal house. Cao Cao's bullying is causing the people terrible suffering. Why don't we both go to Tao Qian's aid?" "I would not shirk the task," answered Xuande, "but my forces are small and my commanders few. I don't think I am ready for such an action."⁷ "My desire to save Tao Qian," replied Kong Rong, "is based on justice as well as friendship. I doubt that you, of all people, could be indifferent to such a cause." "In that case," Xuande responded, "you set out first while I approach my patron Gongsun Zan for another three or five thousand men. I'll follow you directly to Xuzhou." "Whatever you do, do not fail us!" Kong Rong said. "What kind of a man do you take me for?" Xuande asked. "As the sage has said, 'Death comes to all men; but one who does not keep his word will fall.' Whether or not I succeed in borrowing troops, I will come myself."⁸

Kong Rong, persuaded, sent Mi Zhu back to Tao Qian with the news; then Kong Rong made his own preparations and marched south. At this point Taishi Ci took his leave, saying, "I came to your assistance at my mother's behest. Now, fortunately, the danger has passed. Imperial Inspector Liu Yao of Yangzhou, originally from my district, has called for me. I feel I must go, but hope that we may meet again." The governor offered Taishi Ci generous gifts of gold and silk, but Ci declined them and went home. His mother was delighted to see him back and said, "I'm glad you have done something to repay the governor of Beihai's kindness," and sent him off to Yangzhou.

Liu Xuande put before Gongsun Zan his proposal for rescuing Tao Qian. "There is no hatred between you and Cao Cao," said Gongsun Zan. "Why trouble yourself for another man's cause?" "I have given my word," Xuande replied. "How can I go back on it?" "I can let you have two thousand foot and horse," Gongsun Zan said. "One other thing," Xuande continued. "I would like to have Zhao Zilong with me." Gongsun Zan granted this request. So Xuande, with his brothers and his own three thousand men, left for Xuzhou as the advance party, backed by Zhao Zilong and two thousand more.

Meanwhile, Mi Zhu reported to Tao Qian that Kong Rong had asked Liu Xuande to reinforce him. And Chen Deng returned from Qingzhou with news that Tian Kai too was coming to the defense of Xuzhou, so the hopes of the imperial inspector were raised. Both Kong Rong and Tian Kai, however, wary of the power and ferocity of Cao Cao's army, camped in the shelter of hills a comfortable distance from the city. Cao Cao divided his forces to meet the two relief armies and refrained from attacking the city.

Liu Xuande arrived soon after and went directly to Kong Rong. "Cao Cao's army is immense," said Kong Rong, "and he is an expert strategist. We must consider carefully before giving battle. Let us see how things develop before we advance." "What worries me," Xuande said, "is the food situation. The city may not be able to hold out. I am going to place Lord Guan and Zhao Zilong, with four thousand men, under your command while Zhang Fei and I attack Cao Cao's base camp. Then I will cut over to Xuzhou to consult with Tao Qian." Kong Rong happily agreed and worked out a strategy with Tian Kai for a two-pronged attack, which Lord Guan and Zhao Zilong stood ready to support.

Xuande and Zhang Fei were leading one thousand warriors to break through Cao Cao's perimeter, when drums rolled within and soldiers and horsemen, led by General Yu Jin, poured out. Jin reined in his horse and shouted, "Fools! Where do you think you're going?" Zhang Fei wasted no words but took on Yu Jin headlong. The two riders came to grips and fought several bouts. Then Xuande, wielding his twin swords, signaled for a general advance. Yu Jin broke off and ran. Zhang Fei, in the lead, pursued Yu Jin's men to the wall of Xuzhou city. The fighting was heavy. Tao Qian, seeing a red banner inscribed "Liu Xuande of Pingyuan" in white, ordered the gates opened and received Xuande in his headquarters.

After the formalities the host feasted Xuande and his men. Tao Qian secretly rejoiced at finding in Liu Xuande a man of dignified bearing and high-minded speech, and instructed Mi Zhu to hand him the provincial seal and other tokens of authority. "What is the meaning of this?" Xuande exclaimed. "With the world in turmoil," replied the inspector, "the mainstays of kingly rule have weakened. But as a kinsman of the royal house of Han, you will serve its shrines devotedly. This worthless old man would prefer to entrust the province to your governance. Please do not refuse me. I will personally petition for the throne's approval."

Xuande rose from his seat, making the ritual gesture of respect and gratitude. "It is true," he said, "that I am descended from the royal house. But my merit has little weight, my virtue little substance. I fear myself unworthy even of the fief of Pingyuan that I now hold. I am here today only for the sake of a principle. Your proposal suggests suspicion of my motives. If I have any designs on your province, may Heaven disown me forever." "I have spoken my sincere and heartfelt wish," responded Tao

Qian. But Liu Xuande was steadfast in his refusal.⁹ At this point Mi Zhu offered a suggestion: "The enemy is virtually upon us. Let's concentrate on driving them back before we consider this other matter." "I am going to write to Cao Cao," said Xuande, "to urge him to settle this peacefully. If he says no, there'll be time enough for battle." Xuande confined all units to their camps while his messenger went to Cao Cao.

Cao Cao was conferring with his generals when the letter from Xuzhou arrived. He opened it and saw that it was from Xuande. The text read in part:

Since I came to know you in our campaign outside the pass, destiny has carried us to different corners of the realm, and I have had no opportunity to pay my respects. Recently your esteemed father met his death at the ruthless hands of Zhang Kai. Tao Qian had nothing to do with this crime. At present subversive remnants of the Scarves are disturbing the realm, while Dong Zhuo's adherents hold the court at their mercy. I would urge, my lord, that you place the exigencies of the dynasty before your private feud and withdraw from Xuzhou in order to address the emergency in the empire. This would be a great blessing for the realm as well as for this province.

On reading the letter, Cao exploded in rage. "Who is Liu Bei to teach me lessons?" he roared. "And with such sarcasm in the lines!" He ordered the messenger executed and the city attacked with full force. But Guo Jia remonstrated with him: "Liu Bei has come from afar to rescue Tao Qian. He has tried peaceful means before resorting to force. A civil answer, my lord, will allay his suspicions; then we may advance and take the city." Cao Cao accepted Guo Jia's advice and treated the messenger handsomely. But even as they were formulating the reply, a fast courier brought word that Lü Bu had taken Yanzhou and was holding Puyang. Cao Cao's own province was about to fall.

. . . .

After fleeing Chang'an during the invasion of Dong Zhuo's two generals, Li Jue and Guo Si, Lü Bu had turned to Yuan Shu. But Yuan Shu mistrusted the turncoat warrior and refused his service; however, Yuan Shu's brother Shao welcomed Lü Bu, and together they defeated Zhang Yan in Changshan. Impressed with his own success, Lü Bu snubbed Yuan Shao's officers and men, and Yuan Shao tried to kill him. Thereupon, Lü Bu took refuge with Zhang Yang. At that time one Pang Shu, who had been hiding Lü Bu's family in Chang'an, sent the members on to rejoin him. In Chang'an Li Jue and Guo Si learned of this and put Pang Shu to death. They also asked Zhang Yang to kill Lü Bu. Lü Bu had to move on; he left Zhang Yang and found another protector in Zhang Miao.

By coincidence Chen Gong had already been introduced to Zhang Miao by his brother Zhang Chao. Having failed to talk Cao Cao out of invading Xuzhou, Chen Gong urged Zhang Miao to invade Cao Cao's territory. "The empire is breaking apart," he said, "and heroes are rising all over. It is demeaning for someone with the territory and population you have here to be subject to another's control. Cao Cao's province of Yanzhou is vulnerable while he is occupied with his eastern campaign against Tao Qian. Lü Bu, who has just applied for your protection, is a renowned warrior. If you and he could conquer Yanzhou, you would be in a position to establish independent rule."

Chen Gong's proposal excited Zhang Miao. He ordered Lü Bu to attack Yanzhou and to occupy Puyang. As a result, all of Cao Cao's territory was seized, except the three counties of Juancheng,

Dong'e, and Fanxian—saved by the concerted and spirited defense put up by Xun Wenruo and Cheng Yu. Cao Cao's cousin, Cao Ren, shaken by these repeated defeats, now reported the emergency.

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"If I lose Yanzhou," said Cao Cao, "I lose my home. We must act." "This," suggested Guo Jia, "is the perfect time for a friendly turn. Accept Xuande's offer of peace so we can recover Yanzhou." Cao Cao wrote Xuande at once, agreeing to lift the siege, then he left the field.¹⁰ Tao Qian rejoiced at Cao Cao's concession. He invited Kong Rong, Tian Kai, Lord Guan, and Zhao Zilong to a grand assembly in the city.

After banqueting, Tao Qian led Liu Xuande to the seat of honor and, saluting the audience with clasped hands, said, "I am advanced in years now, and my two sons are unfit for the heavy responsibility of governing Xuzhou for the dynasty. Lord Liu, a scion of the royal house, a man of broad virtue and high ability, is fit to govern. It is therefore my wish to retire as imperial inspector and to care for my declining health." "Governor Kong Rong brought me here," responded Xuande, "to relieve Xuzhou as a matter of honor. There can be no justification for my taking possession of this land, and the world will call me dishonorable if I do so."

Mi Zhu pressed the issue. "The house of Han is faltering," he said. "The world we know is turning upside down. It is a time to stake one's claim to fame and fortune. Xuzhou is a prosperous province of one million souls. You must not refuse the rule of such a place." "I cannot give you an affirmative reply," Xuande insisted. "Inspector Tao," Chen Deng added, "is in poor health and cannot attend to official business. Please do not decline, my lord." "Yuan Shu," Xuande suggested, "comes from a family that has held the highest office for the last four generations. The world esteems him. He is nearby in Shouchun. Why not offer the province to him?" "Yuan Shu is like a buried skeleton," burst out Kong Rong, "not worth a second thought. You will regret declining this Heaven-sent opportunity when it's too late." None of these arguments and appeals changed Xuande's mind.

"If you abandon me like this," Tao Qian pleaded in tears, "I will lie unquiet in my grave with eyes unclosed." "Why not accept the inspector's offer on a trial basis, brother?" Lord Guan suggested. And Zhang Fei added, "It's not as if we were demanding his territory. He makes the offer of his own free will. What's the point of this stubborn refusal?" "Shall I dishonor myself for you?" Xuande asked adamantly.¹¹ Tao Qian, seeing that no amount of persuasion would soften Xuande's determination, said, "Since you are set against my proposal, would you consider stationing your army nearby in Xiaopei? The place should suffice for your army's needs, and you can protect the province from there."¹² Urged by the whole assembly, Xuande consented.

The feasting ended. Zhao Zilong took his leave, and Xuande held the warrior's hands as he tearfully said good-bye. Governor Kong Rong and Tian Kai also left. Xuande and his brothers went to Xiaopei, where they repaired the fortifications and reassured the inhabitants.

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Returning from the siege of Xuzhou, Cao Cao was welcomed by Cao Ren, who told him that Lü Bu had grown powerful; that, assisted by Chen Gong, he had seized every strongpoint; that Juanzhou and Puyang were both lost; and that only Xun Wenruo and Cheng Yu's fierce and concerted resistance had saved the three counties, Juancheng, Dong'e, and Fanxian. "Lü Bu is all valor and no brain,"

remarked Cao. "I fear him not." He pitched camp and planned his counterattack.

Lü Bu learned that Cao Cao and his troops had passed Tengxian on their way back; he discussed tactics with his two captains, Xue Lan and Li Feng. "I have been hoping to put your talents to use," said Lü Bu. "Now I want you to stay and defend Yanzhou with ten thousand men. I will go ahead and destroy Cao Cao myself." The two captains accepted the assignment, but Chen Gong tried to dissuade Lü Bu: "General, if you leave Yanzhou, where will you go?" "I will place my army at Puyang," replied Lü Bu, "to give us control of two legs of the tripod." "A serious error," Chen Gong argued. "Xue Lan will never hold Yanzhou. One hundred eighty *li* due south, in the treacherous roads of the Taishan district, we can set an ambush with as many as ten thousand troops. Now, Cao Cao knows Yanzhou is lost and will redouble his efforts to get here. If we wait until half his troops have passed, we can spring the ambush and capture him in one strike." But Lü Bu ignored Chen Gong's advice, saying, "I have a better plan for moving the army to Puyang. What do you know about it?" And he set out, leaving Xue Lan in charge of Yanzhou.

When Cao Cao came to the Taishan district, Guo Jia warned him not to advance in case of ambush. Cao Cao smiled. "Lü Bu hasn't a plan in his head. Didn't he leave Xue Lan in Yanzhou and head for Puyang? He wouldn't think of setting an ambush," he said and sent Cao Ren ahead to surround Yanzhou city while he himself marched to Puyang to attack Lü Bu. In Puyang, Chen Gong, hearing of the approach of Cao Cao's troops, advised Lü Bu: "Cao Cao has come a long way; his men must be exhausted. Attack at once, before they regain their strength." "On this horse," retorted Lü Bu, "I have covered the length and breadth of the land. I'm not about to start worrying about Cao Cao! Let them pitch their camp—then I'll take care of him myself."

Cao Cao camped near Puyang. The following day he arrayed his forces in the open field and surveyed those of Lü Bu. As the opposing lines filled out their positions, Lü Bu emerged, flanked by eight of his ablest generals: Zhang Liao (Wenyuan), a native of Mayi in Yanmen, backed by Hao Meng, Cao Xing, and Cheng Lian; and Zang Ba (Xuangao), a native of Huayin in the district of Taishan, backed by Wei Xu, Song Xian, and Hou Cheng. Above the troops, fifty thousand strong, drumbeats charged the air. Cao Cao shouted across to Lü Bu, "We have never been enemies. Why have you taken my land?" "The walled towns of Han," Lü Bu replied, "belong to all. Why to you alone?"¹³ Then he sent Zang Ba to give battle.

From Cao Cao's side Yue Jin came forth. The riders tangled; their spears rose and locked. The warriors had reached the thirtieth bout when Xiahou Dun sped out to assist Yue Jin. Zhang Liao, eager for the kill, intercepted Dun. Lü Bu himself, in the heat of anger, galloped into the fray, his halberd poised. Cao Cao's generals, Xiahou Dun and Yue Jin, fled. Lü Bu pressed the slaughter, forcing Cao Cao's army to retreat some thirty to forty *li*. Lü Bu regathered his men, and Cao Cao returned to his camp to confer with his generals. "Today," said Yu Jin, "I noticed while surveying from a hilltop that their position west of Puyang is lightly guarded. Their leaders should be unprepared tonight after our defeat. If we can take that camp, Lü Bu's army will lose courage. This is our best chance." Cao Cao approved and led six generals—Cao Hong, Li Dian, Mao Jie, Lü Qian, Yu Jin, and Dian Wei—with twenty thousand picked cavalry and foot soldiers toward Lü Bu's camp.

Under cover of night Cao Cao approached by side roads. Lü Bu was feasting his troops when Chen Gong said to him, "The west camp is a key position; what if Cao Cao attacks there?" "We taught him a lesson today," Lü Bu replied. "He won't be back that soon." "Cao Cao knows something of the art of war," Chen Gong answered. "We must guard against surprises." Convinced by Chen Gong's

argument, Lü Bu selected Gao Shun, Wei Xu, and Hou Cheng to defend the western camp.

At dusk, before the reinforcements from Lü Bu arrived, Cao Cao hit the camp from all sides and overran it. The defenders fled and Cao Cao occupied it. Toward the fourth watch Gao Shun's relief force fought its way in, and the two armies fell upon one another in a melee. Toward dawn drums rolled in the west as Lü Bu joined the fight, forcing Cao Cao to flee the camp. Gao Shun, Wei Xu, and Hou Cheng pursued him. From the front Lü Bu was closing in; Yu Jin and Yue Jin could not stop him. Cao Cao turned and headed north. Suddenly, generals Zhang Liao and Zang Ba emerged from behind a hill and attacked. Cao Cao had generals Lü Qian and Cao Hong offer battle, but they were defeated. Cao Cao changed course and fled west, but he was checked by four more of Lü Bu's commanders, Hao Meng, Cao Xing, Cheng Lian, and Song Xian. Cao Cao's commanders fought desperately. Cao Cao took the lead and charged the line as arrows, following a signal of beating sticks, pelted down around him. He could neither advance nor escape. "Who will save me?" he cried.

From the body of his attendants Dian Wei rode up, an iron halberd in each hand. "Have no fear, master!" he shouted. Dian Wei dismounted and after putting away the two giant weapons, took a dozen small battle-axes and told his followers to warn him when the enemy was at ten paces. Then he strode ahead, braving the arrows. A score of Lü Bu's horsemen started after him. "Ten paces!" someone cried. "At five," said Dian Wei. "Five paces!" came the reply. Hurling his battle-axes rhythmically, Dian Wei brought down rider after rider. The pursuers scattered. Dian Wei remounted and slashed away with his halberds, and Lü Bu's generals broke before his charge. Dian Wei dispersed the enemy troops and rescued Cao Cao.¹⁴ The rest of Cao Cao's commanders, catching up, accompanied him back to camp. Suddenly, from behind, Lü Bu's shout rent the evening air; "Cao! You villain! Stop!" Cao Cao's men, completely exhausted, looked at one another helplessly, each hoping to run and save his neck. Indeed:

No sooner had Cao Cao broken through the enemy lines,
Than he was pursued again by a powerful foe.

Had Cao Cao escaped only to be hunted down in flight?

READ ON.



Tao Qian Yields Xuzhou Three Times; Cao Cao Overwhelms Lü Bu in Battle

THE PANICKED CAO CAO WAS SAVED by Xiahou Dun, who had rushed to the southern front, intercepted Lü Bu, and engaged him. As night fell, a rainstorm finally forced them apart. Later, at camp, Cao Cao rewarded Dian Wei amply and gave him a command.

Lü Bu returned to his base. "Here in Puyang," said his adviser Chen Gong, "lives the wealthy householder Tian. He heads the district's most influential house and has hundreds of servants. Have him write something like this to Cao: 'Lü Bu's cruelty has outraged our people. He will be moving the army to Liyang, leaving only Gao Shun behind. Waste no time getting here, and I shall work with you from within.' If Cao Cao takes the bait and enters the city, burn the gates. With an ambush outside, even if Cao Cao were strategist enough to plot the course of Heaven and earth, he couldn't escape us." Lü Bu approved and set the plan in motion, telling Tian to send a man to Cao Cao's camp.

Cao Cao was recovering from the defeat and pondering his next step when Lord Tian's message arrived:

Lü Bu has gone to Liyang. The city is defenseless. We pray you, come as quickly as possible. We will be working from within. Look on the wall for a white flag bearing the word "Honor."

"Heaven delivers Puyang into our hands," Cao Cao exclaimed. He rewarded the messenger and readied his army. Liu Ye, however, urged caution: "Lü Bu is foolish, all right. But Chen Gong is full of tricks. We must prepare for a trap. If you go, my lord, leave two-thirds of your men hidden outside the city and take the other third along. Otherwise ..." Following this advice, Cao Cao divided his forces into three and made his way to the wall around Puyang.¹

Cao was glad to see the white flag flying over the west gate among the other pennants. The gate opened at midday, and two generals, Hou Cheng of the rear army and Gao Shun of the forward army, came out to fight. Cao Cao sent Dian Wei against Hou Cheng, who, unable to resist, fled back toward the city. Dian Wei pursued him to the drawbridge. Gao Shun, too, fell back before Dian Wei and followed Hou Cheng into the city. In the confusion someone from Lü Bu's side slipped through to present Cao Cao a letter from the householder Tian. "At the first watch tonight," it read, "when gongs sound from the wall, advance. I will surrender the gate."

Cao Cao directed Xiahou Dun to advance to the left and Cao Hong to the right, while he led Xiahou Yuan, Li Dian, Yue Jin, and Dian Wei into the city. "Let *us* go in first," said Li Dian. "I have to go myself," Cao Cao shouted, "or no one will advance." He led the army forward. It was near the first watch; the moon had not risen. Above the gate a conch began to blow amid a swelling clamor. Torches appeared on top of the gate as it opened, and the bridge was lowered over the moat. Cao galloped across and headed for the *yamen*. The streets were deserted. Cao sensed a trap and wheeled round, shouting to his men, "Pull out!" From the government building² the bombards boomed as

flames shot up by the four gates to the city. Gongs banged and drums sounded, and voices roared like a raging river or a storm-tossed sea.

Lü Bu's generals—Zhang Liao from the east, Zang Ba from the west—caught Cao Cao in a deadly vise. With his men Cao made for the north gate, harassed on the way by more of Bu's commanders, Hao Meng and Cao Xing. Cao Cao turned and tried for the south gate, but Gao Shun and Hou Cheng blocked him. Cao Cao's faithful commander Dian Wei, gaze fixed and jaw set, pushed Gao Shun and Hou Cheng back through the south gate to the bridge but lost sight of Cao Cao. Dian Wei then turned and fought his way to the wall, where he discovered Li Dian. "Where is our lord?" asked Dian Wei. "I can't find him either," Li Dian answered. "Go out and rally a rescue force," Dian Wei said, "while I search further." Li Dian left. Bearing up against fierce opposition, Dian Wei looked on either side of the city wall. He came upon Yue Jin, who said, "Where is our master?" "I've looked all over," Dian Wei said. "Let's go in again," Yue Jin replied. The two men approached the gate. From the wall fiery missiles rained down. Yue Jin's horse balked, but Dian Wei, braving smoke and fire, forced his way in again and continued the search.

Cao Cao, in fact, had seen Dian Wei battling through the south gate. Cut off by converging enemies, however, Cao Cao could not go out by the south gate and headed north once more. Through the blaze he saw Lü Bu riding from the opposite direction, his halberd pointed outward. Cao raised his hand to cover his face and laid on the whip. The horses passed each other closely. Lü Bu swung around and knocked his halberd against Cao's helmet. "Have you seen Cao Cao?" Lü Bu shouted. Cao pointed behind him. "There he goes. On the bay." And Lü Bu dashed in the direction Cao had indicated. Cao Cao turned round and fled east, finally meeting up with Dian Wei, who protected his lord and slashed a bloody path toward the east gate.

By the gate the flames were intense. Lü Bu's men were throwing down clumps of bramble and straw, which were burning everywhere. Dian Wei used his halberd to sweep aside the burning piles as he plowed through the smoke and flame, followed by Cao Cao. But when they reached the gate, a fiery beam fell and struck the haunch of Cao's horse, causing the horse to fall. Cao pushed the beam away, singeing his arm, hair, and beard. Dian Wei rushed to the rescue, and Xiahou Yuan came on the scene. Together they lifted Cao up and got him through the gate. Dian Wei hacked out a route for their flight, Cao Cao rode behind Xiahou Yuan, and after heavy fighting the three made it back to camp by dawn.

The generals at the base prostrated themselves before Cao Cao, solicitously expressing their concern, but Cao Cao only threw back his head and laughed. "I fell for that low-down trick!" he said. "But I'll make Lü Bu pay for it!" "The sooner the better," Guo Jia urged. "Let's give him a taste of his own medicine," Cao Cao said. "Spread the rumor that I died of my burns. Lü Bu will attack immediately. We'll ambush him in the Maling Hills when his troops are halfway across, and capture him then and there." "An excellent plan," Guo Jia replied.

Accordingly, the troops put on mourning and made funeral preparations as if Cao Cao had died, and Lü Bu was duly informed that Cao Cao had perished in his camp of burns sustained during the battle at Puyang. Lü Bu lost no time assembling a force. He marched to the Maling Hills and near Cao Cao's camp was ambushed from all sides as the rolling drums echoed in the valleys. Lü Bu struggled free but lost many men. After this defeat he shut himself up in Puyang. Food was scarce: the harvest had been devoured by locusts, and throughout the northeast the price of grain rose to five thousand strings of cash per bushel.³ People were reduced to eating human flesh. Cao Cao removed to

Juancheng to find food, and Lü Bu withdrew to Shanyang for the same reason. Both sides suspended hostilities.



During the truce between Cao Cao and Lü Bu, Tao Qian, the sixty-two-year-old imperial inspector of Xuzhou, fell gravely ill. He summoned Mi Zhu and Chen Deng to discuss the province's future. "Cao Cao left us in peace," Mi Zhu said, "only because Lü Bu attacked his home base at Yanzhou. The fighting has died down with the famine, but Cao Cao will be back after the winter. Your Lordship twice offered Xuzhou to Liu Xuande, but he did not accept because you were still in good health. Under the present circumstances I doubt he will refuse again." On this advice Tao Qian called Xuande from Xiaopei to discuss the military situation. Xuande and his two brothers arrived and were shown into the inspector's bedchamber.

Xuande expressed concern for the inspector's health. "I asked for you," Tao Qian began, "for only one reason. My condition is critical. I remain hopeful that you will demonstrate your concern for the districts of the Han by accepting the position of inspector here so that I may die in peace." "My lord," responded Xuande, "you have two sons. Shouldn't you hand on your office to them?" "Neither the elder, Shang, nor the younger, Ying," replied Tao Qian, "has the ability to assume the responsibility; they would require your guidance after my death in any event. Please do not leave the affairs of the province to them." "How could I alone," Xuande said, "undertake such a task?" "Sun Qian, styled Gongyou, from Beihai can serve as your lieutenant," Tao Qian answered. "And Mi Zhu," the inspector continued, turning to him, "you must serve Lord Liu well. He is an eminent man." Even after this appeal Xuande would not agree, but Tao Qian passed away before his eyes, his finger to his heart.

After the mourning rituals, the seal and other tokens of authority were presented to Liu Xuande, but he declined them. The next day the common folk of Xuzhou crowded around the entrance to the inspector's residence and pleaded, "Lord Liu, unless you take charge, we can't live in peace." Xuande's brothers added their own exhortations. Finally Xuande consented to serve temporarily. He appointed Sun Qian and Mi Zhu his lieutenants and made Chen Deng a member of his staff. Xuande moved his army from Xiaopei to Xuzhou and issued a proclamation to calm the populace. Then he and his men donned mourning garb and completed the rituals for Tao Qian, who was interred somewhere on the plains of the Yellow River. His testament was forwarded to the court in Chang'an.



In Juancheng, Cao Cao learned that Tao Qian had died and that Liu Xuande had succeeded him as inspector. "My father's death not answered for," he cried bitterly, "and he takes Xuzhou without effort, without spending half an arrow! I will kill the undeserving Liu Xuande first and then avenge my father by scourging Tao Qian's corpse." He ordered a date set for the invasion of Xuzhou, but his adviser, Xun Wenruo, remonstrated with him: "The Supreme Ancestor, founder of the Han, controlled the region within the passes. Guang Wu⁴ based himself in the region within the rivers. Both emperors struck deep roots in their respective base regions before expanding their rule over the realm so that when they advanced they could overpower their enemy and when they retreated they could defend themselves. Thus they eventually came to power. My lord, your original base was Yanzhou, by the Yellow and Ji rivers, a strategic part of the empire. This is your 'region within the passes,' your

'region within the rivers.' If you try to take Xuzhou, you will have to divide your forces. Leave too many behind and your attack must fail. Take too many along and Lü Bu will attack here. How will we ever get Yanzhou back? And where will you go, my lord, if you fail to capture Xuzhou? Tao Qian is dead, and Xuande holds Xuzhou. The people have accepted him and will fight for him. To risk Yanzhou for Xuzhou is to sacrifice what is important for what is not, the fundamental for the peripheral, something sure for something uncertain. Please reconsider."⁵

"We can't have the army idling here," said Cao, "in a year of dearth." "Why not raid the Chen area to the east?" suggested Xun Wenruo. "The army can find food in Yingchuan and Runan, where those remnants of the Yellow Scarves, He Yi and Huang Shao, have stuffed their sacks with gold, silk, and grain. Those rebels are easy prey. If we can seize their grain to feed our army, the court will approve, the people will cheer, and Heaven will be served." Cao Cao took Wenruo's advice. He left Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren in Juancheng, first attacked the Chen area, and then went on to Runan and Yingchuan.⁶ The rebel leaders, He Yi and Huang Shao, confronted Cao's army at Goat Hill. The Scarves, though numerous, had no more discipline than a pack of dogs. Cao Cao ordered his archers and crossbowmen to shoot and Dian Wei to ride forth. He Yi sent his second-in-command to oppose, but Dian Wei did away with him in a brief skirmish. On the momentum of the victory Cao stormed past Goat Hill and pitched camp.

On the second day Huang Shao took command of the rebels. From the front line a solitary general strode out, a yellow scarf wound around his head. He wore a green jacket and held an iron staff. "I am He Man," he cried, "the devil who defies Heaven! Who dares test me?" Cao Hong, blade in hand, dismounted and raced out shouting hotly. After forty or fifty fierce exchanges Cao Hong feigned defeat and fled, drawing He Man after him. Cao Hong let his sword hang behind, then swung around, surprising his pursuer with one stroke and dispatching him with another. Li Dian galloped at once into the rebel line, seized Huang Shao and brought him back to camp. Cao's army overwhelmed the horde and seized their wealth and grain.

Isolated, the rebel He Yi fled toward Kudzu Hill with a few hundred riders, but their escape was cut off by a mighty warrior, a powerfully built man well over eight spans tall. Wielding a large sword, he handily captured He Yi and penned up the surrendering rebels near Kudzu Hill. The warrior then confronted Dian Wei, who had been leading the pursuit. "Are you one of the Scarves?" Dian Wei demanded. "I have just taken several hundred of them prisoner," replied the man. "Then hand them over," Dian Wei ordered. "That I'll do," answered the man, "if you can take this sword from me." In a fury Dian Wei charged, his two halberds raised. The warriors grappled from morning until noon, neither overcoming the other, before separating to recover their strength. Soon the stranger returned to taunt Dian Wei. The fight resumed and lasted until nightfall. Then they stopped again to rest their horses. Meanwhile, someone had informed Cao Cao, who rushed to the scene.

The following day the warrior came forth for combat. Cao Cao observed his presence with a secret delight and ordered Dian Wei to feign defeat. After some thirty exchanges on the field, Dian Wei ran for his line as instructed. The warrior gave chase but was driven off by archers. Cao retreated five *li*, where he had a pit dug and men armed with hooks placed nearby. The next day Dian Wei, leading a hundred riders, sought out the stranger. "The loser returns," the warrior taunted as he rode up. Dian Wei fought a few rounds, then turned and ran. The warrior pursued recklessly and unescorted, and plunged—man and horse—into the pit. He was tied up and taken to Cao Cao.

Cao Cao dismissed his attendants and personally untied the man's bonds, gave him clothes, and

bade him sit down. "What is your name and native place?" Cao asked. "I am Xu Chu, styled Zhongkang, from the county of Qiao in the fief of Qiao," was the stranger's reply. "When some outlaws came, we organized our clan of several hundred and sealed ourselves up in defense. We were ready for their attack. I myself brought down a good many of them with well-aimed stones. When they next appeared, our fortress was out of grain, and we agreed to trade our oxen for some of their grain. They delivered the food and took our oxen away, but the beasts bolted and ran for home. I myself grabbed two by the tail and dragged them backward, perhaps a hundred feet. But the outlaws got scared and ran off without the oxen. Since then, things have been quiet around here." "I have long heard of you," Cao said. "Are you willing to come over to us?" "That's really what I want," Xu Chu said. Thus his whole clan joined Cao Cao, who made Xu Chu a commander and rewarded him bountifully. The rebel leaders, He Yi and Huang Shao, were executed, and the Runan-Yingchuan area returned to normal.

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Cao Cao, back in Juancheng, met with his commanders, Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren. They told Cao that Lü Bu's generals, Xue Lan and Li Feng, had let their troops scavenge the area, leaving Yanzhou virtually unguarded—an easy target. Cao Cao marched straight to the city, surprising Xue Lan and Li Feng, who had to come out and fight. Xu Chu said to Cao Cao, "Let me take on those two for you as my 'presentation' gift." Cao sent him forward. Li Feng came out, wielding his figured halberd. The two horsemen crossed, and Li Feng fell. Xue Lan raced back to his line, but Li Dian was already at the drawbridge, barring his entrance. Xue Lan tried to take his men toward Juye, but Lü Qian, pursuing like the wind, finished him off with an arrow. His troops scattered.

Having recovered Yanzhou, Cheng Yu proposed retaking Puyang.⁷ Cao Cao mobilized his forces at once. He put Dian Wei and Xu Chu in the vanguard, Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan on the left flank, and Li Dian and Yue Jin on the right flank. Cao Cao himself took the center. Yu Jin and Lü Qian brought up the rear.

In Puyang, Lü Bu wanted to oppose Cao Cao personally, but Chen Gong advised him to wait until all his commanders had gathered. "I fear no man," Lü Bu said and led his men out of the city to confront the attackers. Resting his giant halberd across his horse, Lü Bu reviled Cao Cao. Xu Chu rode forth and fought twenty passes with Bu, but neither prevailed. "No man can defeat Lü Bu alone," Cao Cao said and ordered Dian Wei to assist Xu Chu by attacking Bu from another side. Next, Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan arrived on the left, and Li Dian and Yue Jin arrived on the right. Lü Bu, unable to withstand the combined attack of Cao's six commanders, retreated to Puyang. But the head of the Tian family (who had previously helped Lü Bu by luring Cao Cao into the city) now ordered the drawbridge raised. "Let me in!" Lü Bu demanded. "I have already surrendered Puyang to Cao Cao," cried Tian.⁸ Enraged, Lü Bu raced to Dingtao as Chen Gong rushed Lü Bu's family out through Puyang's east gate.⁹

Cao Cao took possession of Puyang and forgave Tian for his deception. "Lü Bu is a wild beast," Liu Ye advised Cao Cao. "Don't let up on him in his hour of difficulty." Cao ordered Liu Ye to guard Puyang while he pursued Lü Bu to Dingtao.

Lü Bu, Zhang Miao, and Zhang Chao were all in Dingtao; Gao Shun and the other generals—Zhang Liao, Zang Ba, and Hou Cheng—were patrolling the seacoast or gathering crops. Cao Cao

reached Dingtao but did not offer battle, camping instead forty *li* away. He told his soldiers to cut for themselves the wheat ripening just then in the area. A spy described these movements to Lü Bu, who rushed to the scene with troops; but, reaching a wood near Cao's camp, he turned back, fearing ambush. Informed of Bu's movements, Cao said, "He suspected an ambush in the woods. Plant banners in there to strengthen his suspicions, and hide our troops west of the camp, behind that dike above the dry streambed. He'll come back tomorrow to burn the woods; we can cut him off then and capture him." Cao placed his best men in ambush, leaving only fifty behind to beat the drums and get the captive villagers shouting at the right moment.

Lü Bu told what he had found to Chen Gong, who said, "Cao Cao is full of tricks. Don't take chances." "I am going to burn out his ambush," said Lü Bu. He left Chen Gong and Gao Shun guarding the city and approached Cao's camp the next day. He saw the pennants in the woods and set fires on all sides. But the woods were empty, and no one came out. As Lü Bu started for the camp, loud drums broke the silence. He wavered. Suddenly a body of troops flashed into view. Lü Bu charged. To the peals of bombards, Cao's six generals—Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Xu Chu, Dian Wei, Li Dian, and Yue Jin—attacked and drove Lü Bu from the field in confusion. His general Cheng Lian was shot to death by Yue Jin. Two-thirds of Lü Bu's men were lost.

The survivors reported to Chen Gong, who said, "An empty city is difficult to defend. We must leave at once." Chen Gong and Gao Shun gathered Lü Bu's family together and left. Cao Cao took the city as easily as a knife splits bamboo. Zhang Chao slit his own throat; Zhang Miao went over to Yuan Shu; and the entire northeast came under Cao Cao's control. He immediately set to work calming the populace and improving the defenses.

Lü Bu met up with his generals, and Chen Gong also caught up with them. "Despite my losses," Lü Bu said, "I can still defeat Cao Cao." He started turning his troops back. Indeed:

To the military man defeat is commonplace.

Who knows when the loser will rise to fight again?

Would Lü Bu emerge the victor?

READ ON.



*Li Jue and Guo Si Cross Swords;
Yang Feng and Dong Cheng Rescue the Emperor*

BADLY BEATEN AT DINGTAO BY CAO CAO, LÜ BU collected his battered units at points near the coast; his commanders rallied, eager for a showdown with Cao Cao. "Cao Cao has the upper hand now," objected Chen Gong. "This is no time to take him on. Once we have a base of our own, there will be time enough for another battle." "What about turning to Yuan Shao as we did before?" Lü Bu suggested. "Send someone to Jizhou to sound him out," replied Chen Gong, and Lü Bu did so.

Informed of the standoff between Cao Cao and Lü Bu, Yuan Shao considered his options. "Lü Bu is a ravenous beast," Shen Pei advised Yuan Shao. "If he takes Yanzhou, our Jizhou will be next. It's safer to help Cao." Thus Yuan Shao sent Yan Liang, commanding some fifty thousand, to aid Cao Cao. The news astounded Lü Bu, and he turned to Chen Gong for advice. Chen Gong said, "I hear that Liu Xuande has recently taken over Xuzhou. Let's try him." Lü Bu agreed and headed for Xuzhou. On hearing of his approach, Xuande said, "Lü Bu is a hero of our time. Let us receive him." But Mi Zhu objected: "He is a beast, a brute. We will suffer for it in the end." "Don't forget," Xuande replied, "that we owe our present position to his attack on Yanzhou: that caused Cao to lift the siege of Xuzhou. He comes to us now in desperation. I can see no other motive." "Eldest brother is too kindhearted," Zhang Fei put in. "Under the circumstances we had better be on guard."

Liu Xuande and others received Lü Bu with full honors thirty *li* from the city wall, and the two rode in side by side. They came to the provincial headquarters and, after the formalities, conferred together. "After Minister of the Interior Wang Yun and I had Dong Zhuo killed," Lü Bu began, "his generals Li Jue and Guo Si staged a coup against me. Since then I have been moving from place to place, but none of the lords in the region east of Huashan will have me. Recently that scoundrel Cao Cao, whose ruthless ambition is all too well known, invaded Xuzhou. Imperial Inspector Tao Qian was fortunate indeed to have had Your Lordship's help, and I, for my part, attacked Cao's base in Yanzhou in order to divide his forces. But Cao Cao trapped me and killed my officers and men. Now I turn to Your Lordship that we may plan for the dynasty together. What is your esteemed view?"

"Imperial Inspector Tao Qian," Xuande responded, "died only recently. He had no one to manage the province, and so I agreed, at his behest, to take charge for the time being. Your arrival suits me well as it is only proper for me to stand down and let you fill the office." Xuande moved to hand over the seal and tokens of authority. Lü Bu was reaching out for them when, behind his host, he saw wrath written on the faces of Lord Guan and Zhang Fei. Lü Bu forced a laugh and said, "I am but a warrior, hardly capable of serving as the inspector of an entire province." Xuande repeated his offer, but Chen Gong interjected, "A stronger guest should not coerce his host," as they say. I pray, Lord Liu, do not doubt us." At that Xuande dropped the matter. He spread a banquet for Lü Bu and had quarters prepared for him and his men.

The next day Lü Bu hosted a return banquet for Xuande and his brothers. When all were warmed with wine, Lü Bu invited Xuande to his private chambers. Followed by his brothers, Xuande accompanied his host. Lü Bu called for his wife and daughter to pay their respects to the guest, but Xuande politely declined the honor. "Worthy younger brother," Lü Bu said, "*do* accept their compliments." The moment Zhang Fei heard this, his eyes widened and he shouted, "Our eldest brother is a prince of the blood, a jade leaf on the golden branch. Who are you to call him 'younger brother'? Come out now and fight three hundred rounds with me." Xuande cut Zhang Fei short with a word, and Lord Guan hustled him out of the room.

"My unruly brother," Xuande said apologetically, "says the wrong thing when he's had a drop too much. Do not take offense, elder brother." Lü Bu remained silent, and the banquet soon ended. When Lü Bu saw Xuande to the gate, Zhang Fei was there on his prancing steed, his spear couched for action. "Three hundred rounds, Lü Bu!" he cried. "You and me!" Again Xuande had Lord Guan take Zhang Fei away.

The next day Lü Bu came to take leave of Xuande. "I am grateful that you have not rejected me, Your Lordship," he said, "but I fear your brother has. I shall find refuge elsewhere." "If you leave, General," replied Xuande, "I must bear the blame. My unruly brother has offended you. Let me have him make it up. Previously I stationed my army at Xiaopei. I know it is small; but if you can overlook its limitations, please use it as a place to rest and recover. What do you say? We shall see to all the provisions for your men." Lü Bu thanked Xuande and settled down in Xiaopei. And Xuande went to Zhang Fei to express his displeasure.

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Cao Cao advised the court in Chang'an that he had brought major sections of the northeast under control. The government appointed him General Who Establishes Virtue and lord of Feiting. At this time the court was in the hands of Li Jue, who had made himself regent-general, and Guo Si, the self-styled regent.¹ These two generals rode roughshod over everyone. Who at court could protest? Grand Commandant Yang Biao and Treasurer Zhu Jun secretly petitioned Emperor Xian: "Cao Cao now has command of two hundred thousand troops and scores of able advisers and generals. If he would uphold the dynasty and clean out this faction of traitors, the whole realm would benefit."

Weeping, the Emperor said, "How long those two traitors have mistreated me! What a blessing it would be if they could be done away with!" Yang Biao then addressed the sovereign: "Your humble servant has a plan to turn the two traitors against each other and then summon Cao Cao to purge their faction and secure the court." "What kind of plan?" the Emperor asked. "Your servant has heard," Biao continued, "that Guo Si has a jealous wife. We can use her to sow dissension between Li Jue and her husband." The Emperor secretly authorized Yang Biao to put his plan into action.

Availing himself of some pretext, Yang Biao arranged for his wife to visit Guo Si's home. There Lady Yang found occasion to say to Lady Guo, "I have heard that your husband is involved in an intimate relationship with the wife of Regent-General Li Jue. If General Li finds out, he will murder your husband. Madame would be well advised to prevent him from meeting Lady Li again." "That explains why he's been away nights," Guo Si's wife, taken aback, exclaimed. "He has actually been engaged in a scandal! If not for you, Lady Yang, I would never have found out. But I shall surely put an end to it." Lady Yang rose to take her leave, and Lady Guo again expressed her thanks.

A few days later as Guo Si was preparing to go to Li Jue's home for his usual evening visit, Lady Guo said to him, "There's no telling about Li Jue, you know. Now, especially, there may not be room for two ambitious men in one court. If he were to poison you, what would become of me?" Guo Si dismissed his wife's objections; but she persisted, and he remained at home. Li Jue had the banquet delivered to Guo's home instead. Lady Guo slipped some poison into the food before it was served. As Guo Si began to eat, his wife stopped him, saying, "One cannot simply take what comes in from outside." She gave a little to their dog, who fell over dead. After that incident Guo Si never trusted Li Jue.

Another day, Li Jue persuaded Guo Si to come home with him after court. They ate and drank until late. Guo Si went home drunk and coincidentally was seized with stomach cramps. "You've been poisoned!" cried Lady Guo, and she forced an emetic on him. He felt better after vomiting. "I collaborated with Li Jue in the takeover; what cause has he to do me in? If I don't act first, however, I'll be the loser," Guo Si said and quietly readied his army for an attack on Li Jue. Li Jue, informed of Guo Si's moves, said, "How dare he!" and sent his own forces against his collaborator. The two armies, tens of thousands in all, fought in a free-for-all just outside the capital, at the same time availing themselves of the opportunity to plunder the populace.

Li Jue's nephew, Li Xian, surrounded the palace with his men. He put the sovereign in one carriage, the Empress in another, and assigned Jia Xu and Zuo Ling to escort them out of the capital. The rest of the palace staff and the women followed on foot. As they crowded through the rear gate of the ministerial house, Guo Si's soldiers accosted them and killed many with volleys of arrows. At that moment Li Jue rode up and forced Guo Si's men to give way. The imperial party thus got out of the city, but then Li Jue without explanation hustled them into his camp.

Guo Si and his men entered the palace and removed all the female attendants to his own camp. Then he put the palace halls to the torch. On the morrow Guo Si learned that Li Jue had abducted the Emperor, so he marched straight to Li Jue's base camp to do battle. The royal couple feared for their lives.² A poet of later times lamented their plight:

The Later Han revived the line of Liu:
Twelve sovereigns in succession ruled the realm.
But Huan and Ling—the downfall of their shrines—
Let their eunuchs rule and doomed the house.
Feckless He Jin, raised to guide the state,
Called tigers into court to clear the rats.
Vicious vermin out! Savage killers in!
Then Zhuo, the western rebel, spread new bane.
But loyal Wang Yun deployed a subtle maid,
Who turned Lü Bu against his master Zhuo.
Dong Zhuo cut down, the realm again knew peace,
Till Li Jue and Guo Si avenged their lord
And plunged our hallowed realm in misery.
Their civil strife brought king and queen to grief.
Allegiance broken, Heaven's Mandate failed:
Ambitious heroes carved our hills and streams.

Let every future king keep vigil keen
For our nation's precious harmony,
Lest living souls be ground into the earth
And stain our soil with blood unjustly shed.
To read these pages must break every heart,
As men once sighed for great Zhou's glory gone.
They warn the prince to stabilize his rule,
And watch who holds the sword that guards the laws.

Li Jue fought off Guo Si's attack and moved the royal pair to the palace at Mei, placing them in the custody of his nephew Li Xian. Li Xian dismissed the imperial staff and reduced the provisions for the attendants, who went wan from hunger. The Emperor sent someone to beg five bushels of grain and some ox bones for his servants, but Li Jue said angrily, "We send up food morning and night. What else does he want?" Finally he delivered some spoiled meat and moldy grain. The Emperor said, reproachfully, "How these traitors bully us!" "Your Majesty," Privy Counselor Yang Qi urged, "Li Jue is a cruel and violent man. Try to bear things as they are and not cross him." The Emperor lowered his head and kept silent. Tears soaked his sleeves.

Suddenly a new message came: "A band of soldiers, spears and swords gleaming in the sun, gongs and drums shaking the heavens, is coming to save the Emperor." But when the Emperor learned it was Guo Si, he despaired again. Outside the wall at Mei fearful shouts rang out as Li Jue confronted Guo Si. "I have treated you most generously," swore Li Jue, pointing his whip at Guo Si. "How could you plot to kill me?" "Traitor!" cried Si, "I have every reason to kill you." "I am guarding the Emperor," retorted Li Jue. "Is that treason?" "You are abducting the Emperor," countered Guo Si, "not protecting him." "Let's not waste words," Li Jue said, "or men. Let's settle it between ourselves. The winner takes the Emperor."

In front of their lines the two generals went at each other. Ten passages-at-arms produced no victor. Grand Commandant Yang Biao rode up and parted the combatants. "I have invited the court to settle your quarrel," he announced. Generals Li Jue and Guo Si withdrew to their respective camps.

Yang Biao and Zhu Jun convened more than sixty courtiers and officials. The body first presented themselves at Guo Si's camp to urge compromise, but Guo Si took them all captive. "We came," they protested, "in a spirit of good will. Why treat us like this?" "If Li Jue can seize the Emperor," Guo Si replied, "why can't I seize you?" "One holds the Emperor, the other the court. What do you want?" cried Yang Biao. Guo Si threatened Yang Biao with his sword. An Imperial Corps commander, Yang Mi, pleaded with Guo Si, who released Yang Biao and Zhu Jun but detained the senior lords and ministers. Yang Biao turned to Zhu Jun and said, "We two servants of the court can neither protect nor rescue our liege. We have lived in vain." The two high ministers wrapped their arms around each other and wept until they fell faint upon the ground. Zhu Jun took ill and soon passed away.³ For two more months the killing continued day after day as Li Jue and Guo Si fought on. The loss of life was beyond reckoning.

Now Regent-General Li Jue, having a penchant for the occult, often summoned sorceresses to his camp. These women communicated with the gods by beating a drum and going into a trance. Jia Xu had often protested the practice, but in vain. Mindful of Jia Xu's attitude, Privy Counselor Yang Qi secretly appealed to the Emperor: "Your servant has observed that Jia Xu, though enjoying Li Jue's

confidence, has not forgotten his duty to his liege. Your Majesty should consult with him." As Yang Qi was speaking, Jia Xu himself arrived. The Emperor dismissed his attendants and, weeping, addressed the man: "My lord, can you feel pity for the Han court and protect our safety?" Jia Xu prostrated himself. "Such has ever been my desire," he responded. "Let Your Majesty say no more. I shall devise a plan." The Emperor mastered his tears and thanked Jia Xu.

Shortly after, Li Jue entered the royal presence, a sword buckled to his waist. The Emperor paled. "Guo Si has proved disloyal," Jue said. "He has detained the senior lords and ministers and meant to abduct Your Majesty. But for me, you would have been their captive." The Emperor raised his folded hands to his forehead in salute and thanked him. Li Jue left, and Huangfu Li entered. The Emperor received him in audience.

The Emperor knew that Huangfu Li was a skillful talker and a townsman of Jue's, so he instructed him to arrange a truce between the two generals. Huangfu Li took his mandate to Guo Si's camp. "If Li Jue will deliver the sovereign," Guo Si said, "I will release the court." Huangfu Li then went to see Li Jue and said, "His Majesty has directed me to settle your quarrel with Guo Si because I am from Xiliang and also your townsman. Guo Si has already complied. What do you say?" "I was responsible for defeating Lü Bu," said Li Jue. "And I have upheld the court for four years, a signal service which the world recognizes. Guo Si is no more than a horse thief who takes it upon himself to defy me by holding the court captive. For this I am sworn to execute him. Observe our ample forces, my lord, and tell me if I can't defeat him."

"I cannot agree," replied Huangfu Li. "Let me remind you of the legend of Hou Yi of the Youqiong.⁴ He relied only on his marksmanship to govern and ignored all else. As a result he was wiped out. More recently we have had the example of Imperial Preceptor Dong Zhuo, whose power you yourself witnessed. Lü Bu was well loved by Dong Zhuo, yet he turned against him, and in no time Dong Zhuo's head was on display at the capital gate. Thus power alone counts for little. Now you hold the highest military office as well as the seals of authority. Your kinsmen and descendants occupy illustrious positions. The dynasty has not been stingy with its favor. Guo Si has detained the court, but you have detained the Most Honored. Whose offense is graver?" Li Jue angrily drew his sword and said, "Has the Son of Heaven sent you here to slander me? I'll have your head to begin with!" Cavalry Commander Yang Feng pleaded, "If you kill the Emperor's messenger, Guo Si will have good cause to mobilize against us, and the lords of the realm will support him." Jia Xu added his own admonition, and Li Jue relented.

Jia Xu next urged the messenger, Huangfu Li, to depart. But the moment he was out of Li Jue's presence, the messenger began screaming, "Li Jue refuses the decree. He wants to kill the Emperor and take the throne!" "How can you say such things?" cried Privy Counselor Hu Miao. "You will suffer for it." Huangfu Li retorted, "Hu Miao, are you not a servant of the Han as well as I? You have fallen in with traitors. 'When the liege is wronged, the vassal dies'—that's the code we live by. If Li Jue kills me, it is only my due." Huangfu Li continued to revile Li Jue. When the Emperor learned of it, he sent the messenger back to Xiliang.

Li Jue's army was composed largely of Xiliang men, with the support of the Qiang tribesmen.⁵ When Huangfu Li returned to Xiliang, he spread the rumor that anyone aiding Li Jue's rebellion would suffer the consequences. As a result, many soldiers became disaffected, and Li Jue began to lose control of his army. Li Jue sent Wang Chang of the Imperial Tiger Escort to bring Huangfu Li back, but Wang Chang regarded Huangfu Li as a loyal and honorable man and simply reported that he could

not be found. At this time Jia Xu secretly informed the Qiang: "The Son of Heaven is aware of your loyal devotion and of your sufferings through these long wars. He authorizes you to return to your home districts. Rewards will follow." The Qiang, who had resented Li Jue's refusal to confer rank and reward, took this opportunity and defected.

Jia Xu next appealed to the Emperor: "Li Jue is greedy and reckless. His army is falling apart, and he is losing heart. It is time to tempt him with an important post." The Emperor issued a decree appointing him regent-general. Li Jue exclaimed in delight, "This is due to the prayers of the sorceresses," and rewarded them—but not his soldiers. Li Jue's cavalry commander Yang Feng complained to Song Guo, "We face death every day from arrow and missile. Are those witches' services greater than ours?" "Why not kill the traitor and save the sovereign?" Song Guo suggested. "Set a fire in the main army base as a signal," said Yang Feng. "I will be ready outside." The two men agreed to act on the second watch. However, someone informed Li Jue of the conspiracy, and he executed Song Guo; so when Yang Feng arrived at Li Jue's camp, no signal was given. Instead, he was met by Li Jue himself. The two armies fell upon each other and battled wildly until the fourth watch. Unable to defeat Li Jue, Yang Feng took off with his troops to Xi'an.

Li Jue's position was crumbling under Guo Si's continuing attacks when the report of a new intervention startled all parties: Zhang Ji⁶ had arrived from Shanxi with a large army to conciliate the two generals, vowing to strike down whichever one refused. Li Jue tried to impress Zhang Ji with his good will by agreeing at once to a settlement. Guo Si could only do the same. Zhang Ji then petitioned the Emperor to move to Hongnong.⁷ Delighted, the Emperor said, "We have long been thinking of our eastern capital. This opportunity to return is a boundless blessing." He appointed Zhang Ji general of the Flying Cavalry, and Zhang Ji provided grain, wine, and meat for the entire court. Guo Si released the elder lords and ministers he was holding. Li Jue organized the imperial entourage, sending a few hundred of the original Royal Guard to escort the Emperor.

The imperial procession passed Xinfeng and reached the Baling bridge. It was autumn, and a sharp west wind was blowing. Hundreds of troops clattered onto the bridge, blocking the carriages. "Who wants to pass?" a harsh voice demanded. Privy Counselor Yang Qi rode onto the bridge and answered, "The Emperor. Who dares prevent us?" Two generals stepped up to Yang Qi. "We are here," they said, "at the order of General Guo Si, to guard against spies. We will have to verify your claim." Yang Qi lifted the bead curtain and revealed the sovereign, who said, "We are here. You may retire." "Long live the Emperor!" the soldiers cried and made way for his party.

The two generals reported the incident to Guo Si, who said, "I meant to fool Zhang Ji and take the Emperor back to Mei myself. Who gave you the authority to release him?" He promptly executed the two and pursued the Emperor with his own men. As the procession reached Huayin county, Guo Si overtook it. "Halt the train!" someone shouted. The Emperor was distraught. "Out of the wolf's lair," he lamented, "and into the tiger's mouth. What can we do?" His whole entourage trembled. Guo Si's rebels edged closer. Then, to the blast of drums another general appeared from behind a hill, unfurling a giant banner reading "Yang Feng of the Great Han." He had one thousand soldiers ready for combat.

After fleeing from Li Jue, Yang Feng had moved his army to the foothills of the Zhongnan Mountains and, hearing that the Emperor was passing, had come to offer his services. Now his army stood opposite Guo Si's. Guo Si's general, Cui Yong, rode before the two lines and denounced Yang Feng. Feng turned to his line and called for Xu Huang, who charged out, battle-axe in hand, on a

superb steed. Huang went straight for Cui Yong and cut him down in a quick exchange. Yang Feng then overpowered Guo Si's forces and drove them off some twenty *li*.

The Emperor received the victor and said in a tone of solicitous appreciation, "You performed no small service in saving us." Yang Feng knocked his head on the ground and expressed his gratitude. The Emperor spoke again: "Which of your commanders has distinguished himself?" Yang Feng introduced the warrior. "This is Xu Huang, styled Gongming," he said, "from Yangjun in Hedong." The Emperor indicated his recognition of the achievement. Yang Feng then escorted the procession while runners cleared the roadway. Thus the Emperor reached Huayin, where the party rested for the night. General Duan Wei provided food and clothing, and the Emperor was quartered in Yang Feng's camp.

Undaunted by defeat, Guo Si returned in force the following day. Xu Huang rushed out for combat, but Guo Si's men, coming from all directions, encircled the Emperor and Yang Feng. Moments later, another general emerged from the southeast and, in a riotous assault, dispersed the rebels. Xu Huang seized his advantage and rode down Guo Si's men once again. The rescuer was Dong Cheng, an imperial in-law.⁸ The Emperor described the recent events to him in bitter tones. "Your Majesty need worry no more," Dong Cheng said. "General Yang Feng and I have sworn to execute both Guo Si and Li Jue to restore calm in the realm." The Emperor ordered the procession to hurry toward the eastern capital, and that very night the imperial party set out for Hongnong.

Meanwhile, Guo Si, returning in defeat, met up with Li Jue and said, "Yang Feng and Dong Cheng have escorted the Emperor to Hongnong. If the court is reestablished in the east, they will broadcast their cause to the realm and rally the lords against us. Our clans will perish." "Zhang Ji holds Chang'an now," replied Li Jue. "We must proceed with care. But what's to stop us from joining forces, killing the Emperor in Hongnong, and taking the realm for ourselves?" Guo Si agreed. The two generals, reconciled again, combined their armies and looted their way to Hongnong, leaving devastation wherever they passed.

Yang Feng and Dong Cheng, the Emperor's new protectors, now had to meet the threat from the two generals. They turned back and confronted the rebels at Dongjian. Li Jue and Guo Si, with a much larger force, led a wild assault on both flanks of the Emperor's guard, intent on overwhelming it. Yang Feng and Dong Cheng mounted a desperate defense and managed to get the royal carriage safely out of the city, but the courtiers and palace women as well as the records of appointment, the archives, and the Emperor's household goods had to be abandoned. Guo Si entered Hongnong and looted it. The Emperor fled to Shanbei with Li Jue and Guo Si in hot pursuit.

To keep the Emperor from harm, Yang Feng and Dong Cheng adopted a twofold strategy: they sent men to arrange a truce with Li Jue and Guo Si and at the same time secretly enlisted the three leaders of the White Wave rebels (an offshoot of the Yellow Scarves), Han Xian, Li Yue, and Hu Cai, in the imperial cause. This urgent call unavoidably included Li Yue, who had inspired rebels from hill and wood. The prospect of amnesty and awards induced the rebels to rouse themselves from their camps and join Dong Cheng in a counterattack on Hongnong. Li Jue and Guo Si had already begun to attack the city. They killed the old and feeble and put the strong into the army, forcing their new conscripts into the front ranks as suicide squads. The augmented forces of the two rebel generals were overwhelming.

Led by Li Yue, the White Wave troops gathered at Weiyang. Guo Si responded by ordering that clothing and other articles be scattered on the roads, so that the White Waves broke ranks to scramble

for them. The armies of Li Jue and Guo Si then fell upon them, inflicting heavy casualties. Yang Feng and Dong Cheng had to flee north with the Emperor, the rebels close behind. "The situation is desperate," Li Yue, the White Wave leader warned. "Have His Majesty mount and go on." "No," the Emperor responded. "I cannot leave my courtiers." His weeping retinue struggled after him. The pursuers drew closer. One White Wave leader, Hu Cai, was killed. The sovereign abandoned his carriage, and Yang Feng and Dong Cheng escorted him on foot to the south bank of the Yellow River.

Li Yue found a small boat to take the Emperor and Empress across. The cold was fierce. The royal couple struggled to the bank but found it too high to board the boat. The pursuers were almost upon them. Yang Feng said, "Tie the reins together and with them lower the Emperor down by the waist." Fu De, the Empress's brother, stepped forward, proffering ten bolts of plain silk. "I picked these up from the rampaging soldiers," he said. "Tie them together to use as a sling instead." A military aide wound the silk around the royal pair. The Emperor was lowered into the boat, followed by the Empress, whom Fu De carried aboard. Those at the water's edge who could not get on clutched at the rope anchoring the boat. Li Yue slashed away at them, and many dropped into the river. The boat came back for the courtiers after the imperial pair was ferried to the north shore. As the courtiers fought to get on, their fingers were severed. Cries of pain filled the air.

The Emperor was left with barely a dozen of his adherents. Yang Feng found an ox cart to carry the royal couple into Dayang, but there was no food. They stopped for the night in a tile-roofed hut, where some elderly folk from the open country offered them millet, but it was too coarse for them to swallow. The next day the Emperor appointed the White Wave leaders as generals—Li Yue, Conqueror of the North, and Han Xian, Conqueror of the East. The procession resumed.

Two ministers—Grand Commandant Yang Biao and Court Steward Han Rong—came and prostrated themselves before the carriage, weeping profusely. The Emperor and Empress wept too. Han Rong said, "The rebel generals have some confidence in me. I am willing to risk my life to get them to desist. I pray for Your Majesty's well-being." Han Rong then left. Li Yue asked the Emperor to rest in Yang Feng's camp, but Yang Biao urged him to proceed to Anyi and establish his capital there. The procession entered Anyi, but finding no building with an upper story, the royal couple had to stay beneath the thatched roof of a simple farmhouse without a gate. A screen of brambles on all sides took the place of an outer wall. In the farmhouse the Emperor conferred with his ministers while the generals stood guard outside.

Li Yue controlled the court and played the tyrant, beating the courtiers and denouncing them before the throne for the slightest opposition. He purposely presented to the Emperor unpalatable wine and food, which he knew better than to decline. Together with the other White Wave leader, Han Xian, Li Yue handed the Emperor a list of nominees for high civil and military positions that included outcasts, common soldiers, sorcerers, and errand-runners—some two hundred all told. These new appointments of commandants, censors, and others were so hurried that there was no time to engrave seals; fresh ones were simply cut with chisels. Never had the decencies of court procedure been so scanted.

Meanwhile, Han Rong's mission of conciliation to Li Jue and Guo Si bore fruit. After strenuous arguments he persuaded them to release the courtiers and the palace women. But it was a year of dearth. People were reduced to eating the leaves of jujube trees. Corpses were seen everywhere in the countryside. Zhang Yang, governor of Henei, presented grain and meat to the Emperor. Wang Yi, governor of Hedong, submitted silk and cloth. As a result, the Emperor's distress was eased.

Yang Feng and Dong Cheng decided to have the Luoyang palace grounds restored in preparation for the Emperor's return, but Li Yue opposed them. "Luoyang," Dong Cheng argued, "is the original capital. Anyi is too small for his needs. The Emperor must be delivered to Luoyang." "Then you do it," Li Yue retorted, "I'm staying here." Dong Cheng and Yang Feng set out for Luoyang with the Emperor. But Li Yue now decided to join the rebels and sent someone to Li Jue and Guo Si with a plan for seizing the Emperor. Dong Cheng, Yang Feng, and Han Xian had been warned, however, and deployed troops to speed the Emperor to the pass in the Winnow Basket Hills. Li Yue did not wait for the rebel generals. Alone, he overtook the Emperor in the Winnow Basket Hills slightly before the fourth watch. "Go no further!" he shouted. "This is Li Jue and Guo Si!" The Emperor trembled with fear; his entrails quivered. The surrounding hills lit up with torches. Indeed:

What was begun with two rebels falling out
Was ending with three rebels joining forces,

placing the Emperor in greater peril than ever.⁹ What was his fate?

READ ON.



*Cao Cao Moves the Emperor to Xuchang;
Lü Bu Attacks Xuzhou by Night*

FEAR OVERCAME THE EMPEROR at the thought that Li Yue now had Li Jue and Guo Si's backing. But Yang Feng said, "It's only Li Yue!" and sent out Xu Huang, who cut the rebel down in a single exchange. The White Wave gang dispersed, and Yang Feng guided the Emperor safely through Winnow Basket Pass. Zhang Yang, governor of Henei, provided grain and silk as he welcomed the sovereign at Zhidao. The Emperor elevated the governor to regent-general, and Yang Feng moved his troops to Yewang, northeast of Luoyang.

The Emperor entered Luoyang and saw the ruin of his former capital—the palace buildings burned out, the streets and markets desolate. Everything was overgrown with weeds. The walls of the palaces were crumbling.¹ Emperor Xian ordered Yang Feng to build a small dwelling to serve as a provisional palace. In the meantime court was held in the open woods.

The Emperor mandated that the reign year be changed from Stability Restored (Xing Ping) to Reestablished Peace (Jian An), year 1.² But it was another year of famine. The few hundred families remaining in Luoyang survived on tree bark and grass roots foraged outside the city. Even members of the Secretariat had to gather their own fuel there too, and many simply perished beside falling walls or within crumbling houses. Never was the dynasty at lower ebb, as these lines lament:

Slain by Liu in the Mang-Dang Hills,
The white snake bled;³
The fire-red flag triumphant
Toured the realm of Han.
They chased and downed the deer of Qin
To raise a newer shrine;
They brought Chu's warrior steed to earth
To mark the limes of Han.

If the Son of Heaven has no power,
Vice and error rise.
Once his prime is past,
Crime and treason thrive.
Two cities lie in ruin,
Luoyang and Chang'an:
Even tearless men of iron
Cannot but despond.

Grand Commandant Yang Biao appealed to the Emperor: "The decree with which you honored me has yet to be dispatched. At present Cao Cao has the most powerful army in the northeast. He should be summoned to support the royal house." "I have so ordered," said the Emperor. "A second petition is not necessary. Send someone and be done with it." In accordance with the imperial will, an envoy was sent.⁴

Cao Cao, on learning of the Emperor's return to Luoyang, called together his advisers. "More than eight hundred years ago," Xun Wenruo said, "Lord-Patriarch Wen of the state of Jin protected King Xiang of the failing Zhou dynasty, and the lords of the realm accepted Wen's leadership. The founder of the Han conducted the mourning services for Chu's Emperor Yi, and the realm tendered it allegiance.⁵ Today the Son of Heaven, evicted from his capitals, roams the land, an exile. This is the moment, General, to answer the expectations of all by calling for loyalist forces to uphold the imperial honor. It is a stroke to define the age. But if you delay, someone else may act first." Cao Cao reacted with enthusiasm to Xun Wenruo's advice and was preparing to muster his army when the imperial summons arrived. On the appointed day Cao Cao was ready to march.

In Luoyang the Emperor found all in ruin. Even the walls were beyond repair. Moreover, reports of new threats from Li Jue and Guo Si alarmed him. To Yang Feng the Emperor said, "Our messenger has not returned. Our enemies could come at any time. What can we do?" Yang Feng and Han Xian replied, "We will fight to the death to protect Your Majesty." But Dong Cheng said, "Look at our walls and how few soldiers we have! What if we fail? I recommend that Your Majesty proceed to Cao Cao's camp." The Emperor approved, and that day the court set out for the region east of Huashan. Horses were so scarce that the officials followed the Emperor's carriage on foot.

The procession was hardly under way when clouds of dust darkened the sky ahead, and the air throbbed with drums and gongs. Masses of troops loomed in the distance. Emperor and Empress were too frightened to speak. A single rider approached. It was the imperial envoy. "General Cao Cao," he reported, "has called up every soldier in the northeast and is coming in response to your decree. He has sent Xiahou Dun on ahead with ten top generals and fifty thousand picked men to deal with the threat to Luoyang from Li Jue and Guo Si." At last the Emperor felt safe.

Xiahou Dun, flanked by Xu Chu and Dian Wei, presented himself before the Emperor with due military etiquette. As the sovereign was making his will known to the three generals, Cao Cao's infantry arrived and commanders Cao Hong, Li Dian, and Yue Jin were also granted audience. Cao Hong petitioned the Emperor: "Your Majesty, my brother, Cao Cao, has sent us by rapid marches to assist Xiahou Dun against Li Jue and Guo Si." "General Cao is a true servant of our shrines," the Emperor replied. Cao Hong escorted the sovereign forward.

Mounted scouts reported the approach of Li Jue and Guo Si at a forced march. The Emperor ordered Xiahou Dun to divide his force and meet the enemy. Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong deployed their men in two wings. The cavalry went out first; the infantry followed behind. They attacked in full force, and the army of Li Jue and Guo Si was severely defeated, losing more than ten thousand.

At the suggestion of Cao's generals, the Emperor returned to his former palace in Luoyang. Xiahou Dun stationed his army outside the city. The next day Cao Cao arrived with the main force, established camp, and was received. Prostrating himself below the stairs to the imperial dais, Cao Cao acknowledged his sovereign. The Emperor bade him stand and commended him for his service. "My debt to the dynasty," Cao said, "is foremost in my thoughts. The crimes of the two traitors, Li and

Guo, have exceeded all bounds. My army of more than two hundred thousand stands ready to crush the renegades in Your Majesty's behalf. Guard well Your Dragon-self for the sake of the sacred shrines." The Emperor appointed Cao Cao commander of the Capital Districts, granted him the insignia and battle-axe empowering him to conduct all military operations, and gave him control of the Secretariat, where decrees originated.

When Li Jue and Guo Si heard of Cao Cao's arrival, they wanted to fight at once. But Jia Xu objected: "You will fail. His men are too good, and his leaders too brave. Better to surrender and beg amnesty." "Are you trying to thwart us?" Li Jue demanded, drawing his sword. But all who were present stopped him. That night Jia Xu slipped away to his home village.

On the morrow Li and Guo engaged the forces of Cao Cao. Cao sent forth Xu Chu, Cao Ren, and Dian Wei at the head of three hundred armored cavalry. The three commanders made three quick strikes through the enemy lines before positioning their own soldiers. Li Jue's nephews, Xian and Bie, sallied forth in the semicircle of their line. Before taunts could be exchanged, Xu Chu raced out and felled Li Xian with one stroke. Li Bie panicked and lurched out of his saddle. Xu Chu killed him too and took both men's heads back to his line. "My own Fan Kuai!" exclaimed Cao, patting Xu Chu's back.⁶ Then Cao Cao sent Xiahou Dun with a force to the left and Cao Ren with a force to the right, while he led the assault through the center. Signaled by drums, the three corps advanced. The traitors broke and fled. Wielding his sword, Cao Cao bore down on the enemy line, pressing the slaughter through the night. Thousands were flushed out and killed. Countless more surrendered.

Desperate as homeless dogs, Li and Guo headed west for the mountains to live as bandits—for who would receive them now? Cao Cao returned to Luoyang and stationed his army outside the city.⁷ Yang Feng and Han Xian,⁸ who had seen the Emperor all the way from Chang'an to Luoyang, realized that Cao Cao had no place for them and arranged for the Emperor to authorize them to pursue Li and Guo. Thus they were able to move their troops to Daliang.

One day the Emperor summoned Cao Cao to the palace. Receiving the messenger, Cao noticed that his eye was clear and his manner energetic. "After a year of dearth," mused Cao, "even the officials and the army, not to mention the people, look faint from hunger. How come this fellow is looking so well fed?" Cao said to him, "You at least are plump enough. How do you take care of yourself?" "No special method," replied the man. "I have fared hard and simply for thirty years." Cao nodded and continued, "And what office do you hold?" "I was recommended for filial devotion and honesty," the messenger replied, "and have served Yuan Shao, as well as Zhang Yang. When I heard the Emperor was back in the eastern capital, I came to pay my respects and was appointed court counselor. I am Dong Zhao (styled Gongren), a native of Dingtao in Jiyin."

Cao Cao raised himself from his mat and said, "A name long known to me. How fortunate to meet with you here." Cao Cao called for wine and introduced his chief adviser Xun Wenruo. Suddenly the passage of a contingent of troops headed east was announced. Cao Cao sent someone to investigate, but Dong Zhao said, "It's only Yang Feng and Han Xian leaving to take refuge in Daliang now that you're here." "Do you mean they mistrust me?" asked Cao. "Let's say they are too inept to be of concern," responded the Emperor's envoy. "What about Li Jue and Guo Si?" Cao pressed. "Tigers with no claws," answered Dong Zhao. "Birds with no wings. They'll be your prisoners soon enough."

Cao Cao admired the aptness of Dong Zhao's replies and proceeded to ask him about the condition of the royal house. "My lord," he answered, "the loyal army you command has saved the court from chaos and rescued the Son of Heaven. For this you rank with the Five Protectors of

antiquity, who safeguarded the sovereigns of the Zhou dynasty. In the present instance, however, we have many generals with many ambitions; they may not always obey you. Therefore it might be more advantageous to move the Emperor from Luoyang to Xuchang.⁹ On the other hand, the court is newly installed here in the former capital after a period of shuttling about, and men near and far yearn for stability. Another move will be widely resented. Still and all, extraordinary acts win extraordinary merit. The choice is yours."

Cao Cao took Dong Zhao's hand and smiled. "I really want to move the court," he said, "but with Yang Feng loose in Daliang and the high ministers opposed, things could turn against me." "That's easy," responded Dong Zhao. "Write Yang Feng and put his mind at rest. Next, tell the high ministers that the food shortage in and around Luoyang imposes the necessity of moving the Emperor to Xuchang, where regular grain shipments from nearby Luyang can be virtually guaranteed. The ministers should be only too glad to cooperate." Cao Cao was delighted with Dong Zhao's advice. The envoy excused himself, but Cao took his hand again and said, "Let me benefit from your advice whenever an important decision is pending." Dong Zhao thanked the general and left. That day Cao Cao conferred with his counselors on the question of transferring the capital.¹⁰

Privy Counselor and Historian-Astrologer Wang Li said privately to Liu Ai, director of the Imperial Clan, "Since last spring Venus, associated with metal, had stood opposed to Saturn, associated with earth, at the same degree in the first two sectors of the northern sky, Ox and Dipper. Venus then crossed the star cluster Ford of Heaven in the adjacent sector, Woman, as Mars, associated with fire,¹¹ that flickering, disobedient planet, again reversed course to rendezvous with Venus in the Pass of Heaven cluster of the sector called Net. This conjunction of metal and fire means that a new sovereign will ascend. The sum of Han is told. In the central regions, the area of ancient Jin and Wei, another house will arise."¹²

After speaking to Liu Ai, Wang Li petitioned the Emperor: "The Mandate of Heaven does not permanently empower any dynasty, nor does any one of the five agents—water, fire, earth, wood, metal—remain ascendant forever. Fire, symbol of the Han, will be replaced by earth, symbol of the Wei." Apprised of this petition, Cao Cao sent a message to Wang Li: "I know you speak out of devotion to the Han. But the ways of Heaven are too profound for man to follow. I would rather you said less about them." Cao Cao also discussed the matter with Xun Wenruo, who said, "Han reigns by the strength of the element fire. You, my lord, are under the mandate of earth, with which the city of Xuchang is associated. If you move there, your fortunes should prosper, for fire yields ash, which is earth, and earth produces vegetation, which is wood: exactly as Dong Zhao and Wang Li have said, the future will see a new power arise."

These arguments persuaded Cao Cao to petition the Emperor: "Luoyang is ruined and cannot be restored. The grain shortage has caused severe hardship. Xuchang, close to Luyang's grain, has walls, buildings, riches, and resources more than sufficient for our needs. I propose removing there if it is acceptable to Your Majesty." The Emperor could only agree, for none of his officials dared oppose Cao Cao. On a chosen day Cao led the imperial escort, and the courtiers followed their sovereign to the new capital.

The procession had traveled but a few stages when it was stopped at a high hill by Yang Feng and Han Xian, backed by a noisy multitude. "Where are you taking the Emperor?" Xu Huang demanded. Cao Cao quietly admired Xu Huang's commanding appearance. Then he sent Xu Chu to engage him. Sword met battle-axe in a struggle of more than fifty exchanges that produced no victor. Cao Cao

sounded the gong, and the soldiers retreated. "Yang Feng and Han Xian are not worth our breath," Cao told his advisers, "but Xu Huang is a fine general. It hurts me to have to take him by force. Couldn't we win him over?" Acting Military Aide Man Chong said, "My lord, perhaps I can be of use. I was once acquainted with Xu Huang. Let me slip into his camp tonight dressed as an ordinary soldier and persuade him that he can do no better than to join with us." Cao Cao gladly sent Man Chong to try his plan.

That night Man Chong slipped undetected into Xu Huang's tent. The warrior was sitting in full armor in the candlelight when Man Chong stepped suddenly before him, saluted, and said, "Have you been well since we parted, honored friend?" Startled, Xu Huang squinted and replied, "Is that Man Chong of Shanyang there? What brings you?" "I am now in the service of General Cao," was the response. "Today we had a glimpse of your prowess in the field and hope to put a suggestion before you. That is why I risked my life coming here." Xu Huang offered him a seat. "Your bravery and strategic sense," Man Chong continued, "are all too rare. Why lower yourself serving the likes of Yang Feng and Han Xian? General Cao is a true hero of our age; his respect for the worthy, his courtesy toward the able are widely known. Today because of his deep admiration for your ability, he refrained from sending his best generals to finish the fight and sent me instead to extend this invitation. Why not abandon a lost cause for a part in our promising enterprise?"

After pondering this offer, Xu Huang said with a heartfelt sigh, "I know full well these two men will accomplish nothing, but I can't bear to abandon them after serving them so long." "You must know the saying, 'The wise bird chooses its branch, the wise servant his master.' To let this chance to serve a worthy lord slip away shows lack of mettle." Thus Man Chong responded. Xu Huang rose and said gratefully, "I would like to accept your proposal." "Then," suggested Man Chong, "why not kill Yang Feng and Han Xian outright as your 'presentation' gift?" "I cannot do something so dishonorable as murder the lords I have served," was the reply. "Truly, you are a man of honor," Man Chong said. Taking a few dozen comrades, Xu Huang rode nightlong for Cao Cao's camp.

The next morning Yang Feng discovered the defection and pursued Xu Huang furiously with one thousand horsemen. Drawing close, he called out, "Xu Huang, you turncoat. Go no further!" But as he spoke, bombards resounded and torches appeared on a nearby hill, high and low, signaling an ambush that took Yang Feng from four directions. "Finally he's come!" Cao Cao cried out, leading the charge. "Don't let him escape." Panicked, Yang Feng tried to maneuver a retreat, but Cao's troops walled him in—until Han Xian rode up and broke through, enabling Yang Feng to escape in the ensuing melee. The battle, however, was not over. Cao overwhelmed both armies, taking more than half the troops prisoner; and Yang Feng and Han Xian, stripped of military force, found refuge with Yuan Shu.¹³

Back at camp Man Chong introduced Xu Huang to Cao Cao, who received the warrior warmly and generously. Cao then escorted the imperial procession to Xuchang. Royal dwellings and temples were erected; the ancestral sanctum and soil shrine established; the court, administrative departments, and garrisons set up; and the city walls and storehouses built. Dong Cheng and thirteen others were awarded lordships of the first rank. Cao Cao assumed complete authority over all benefits and penalties and had himself appointed regent-marshal and honored as lord of Wuping.¹⁴ His chief adviser, Xun Wenruo, was named privy counselor and executor of the Secretariat. Xun You was made military director; Guo Jia, chief of sacrifices; Liu Ye, chief of the Ministry of Public Works; and Mao Jie and Ren Jun, Imperial Corps commanders for the farmer-soldier colonies,¹⁵ supervising taxes in money and kind. Cheng Yu became lord of the fief of Dongping; Fan Cheng and Dong Zhao

became prefects of Luoyang; Man Chong, prefect of Xuchang, the new capital. Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Cao Ren, and Cao Hong were appointed generals; Lü Qian, Li Dian, Yue Jin, Yu Jin, and Xu Huang, commandants; Xu Chu and Dian Wei, district military commanders. The other captains and officers were given minor positions. Power was concentrated in Cao Cao's hands to such a degree that all important issues at court were first proposed by petition to him and then presented to the Son of Heaven.

Having established the new government, Cao Cao invited all his advisers to a banquet in his private quarters. There he announced:¹⁶ "Liu Bei has posted his army in Xuzhou and controls the province. Recently Lü Bu went over to him after suffering a major defeat at Chang'an, and Bei has installed him in Xiaopei. What can we do to prevent them from combining against us? That would be a dire threat indeed!" Xu Chu responded promptly, "Give me fifty thousand of our finest, Your Excellency,¹⁷ and I'll deliver their heads!" But Xun Wenruo took a different approach. "No one," he said to Xu Chu, "questions your bravery. But the possibilities of intrigue must also be considered. We cannot rush headlong into war, having hardly settled into Xuchang. I have an idea, though, which I'll call 'Two Tigers Fight for Food.' Now, Liu Bei's position is still unofficial. Why not petition the Emperor to confirm Liu Bei as protector of Xuzhou, and secretly instruct him to get rid of Lü Bu? If Bei succeeds, he should be manageable enough without that fierce warrior—when the time comes. And if he fails, Lü Bu will kill him. This is my 'two tigers trick.'" Cao Cao approved the plan and petitioned the Emperor, who accordingly sent his envoy to Xuzhou to appoint Liu Xuande as General Who Brings Justice to the East, to honor him with a fief as lord of Yicheng precinct, and to empower him as protector of Xuzhou. The envoy also carried the secret instructions.

In Xuzhou, Liu Xuande was preparing to felicitate the Emperor on his move to Xuchang when the envoy arrived. Xuande received him outside the city walls, accepted the imperial honors, and hosted the envoy at a grand banquet. "My lord," the envoy began, "we grant this gracious decree by virtue of General Cao's earnest recommendation to the throne." Xuande expressed thanks, and the envoy delivered the special communication. Xuande read it and said, "This requires further deliberation." The banquet adjourned, and the envoy was entertained in the guesthouse.

Xuande spent the night conferring over the Emperor's instructions.¹⁸ "Lü Bu," Zhang Fei said, "is a faithless and unscrupulous fellow. There's no reason not to kill him." "He came to us in desperation," Xuande replied. "It would dishonor us to kill him." "He'll only bite the hand," Zhang Fei said. But Xuande would not give his consent.

The next day Lü Bu visited his host and said, "I hear you have received an imperial appointment, and I have come to congratulate you." Xuande thanked him modestly. At that moment Zhang Fei entered with drawn sword, but Xuande swiftly blocked him. "Why does he always want my life?" Bu cried. "Cao Cao says you have no honor and told my brother to kill you!" Zhang Fei said grimly, but Xuande shouted Zhang Fei out of the room. Then he led Lü Bu to his private chambers and showed him Cao Cao's confidential letter. "So," said Lü Bu after reading it, "the villain would like to turn us against each other." "Have no fear," Xuande assured him, "I will never do so dishonorable a deed." Lü Bu thanked his host repeatedly, and the two continued drinking for some time.

Later, Lord Guan and Zhang Fei demanded, "Why did you spare him?" "Because," replied Xuande, "Cao Cao expects Lü Bu and me to combine forces and attack him— unless he can get us to devour each other. I can't let him use me like that!" Lord Guan saw the point, but Zhang Fei said, "I wanted to kill him and prevent trouble, that's all." "That would not be an honorable act," responded

Xuande.

The next day Xuande sent the envoy back to the capital to thank the Emperor and to inform Cao Cao that his special instructions would require time to plan and execute. The envoy told Cao Cao that Xuande had not killed Lü Bu. Cao Cao consulted Xun Wenruo. "Your plan didn't work," Cao said. "What next?" "I have another," Wenruo answered, "called 'Drive the Tiger to Swallow the Wolf.' Have Yuan Shu notified that Liu Bei has secretly petitioned the throne for authority to take control of his district Nanjun. Yuan Shu should attack Bei. When that happens, openly mandate Liu Bei to subdue Yuan Shu. With Shu and Bei locked in struggle, Lü Bu will waver." Cao Cao agreed to the plan and sent a man to Yuan Shu as well as a forged decree to Xuande.

Xuande received this second envoy with the fullest courtesies and accepted the command to march against Yuan Shu. "Another of Cao Cao's tricks," warned Mi Zhu. "I know," Xuande said, "but the Emperor must be obeyed." Xuande readied his forces for the appointed day. Sun Qian advised, "Before we leave, let's assign someone to defend the city." "Which of my brothers will take that responsibility?" Xuande asked. Lord Guan volunteered. "No," said Xuande, "I need you with me at all times." Zhang Fei then offered to do it. "You cannot protect Xuzhou properly," chided Xuande. "First of all, you lose your judgment after drinking and start beating the soldiers. Second, you are careless about responsibility and ignore sound advice. I would never breathe easy." "I will neither drink nor beat the men from now on," Zhang Fei vowed humbly. "And I will take advice to heart." "If you mean what you say," said Mi Zhu caustically. "In all these years I have never broken a promise to elder brother," Zhang Fei retorted. "Do I really deserve such scorn?" "I appreciate your pledge," responded Xuande. "But I could not help expressing my misgivings. Let us leave Xuzhou in Chen Deng's hands. He can see to it that our younger brother moderate his drinking in the interest of security." Chen Deng accepted the assignment. Xuande gave final instructions and set out for Nanyang with thirty thousand men.

Yuan Shu¹⁹ reacted hotly when informed that Liu Xuande had sought imperial sanction for an invasion of his region. "That miserable mat-weaver and sandal-maker!" he cried. "An upstart who took over a province and thrust himself into the ranks of the lords of the realm! I'm going to attack him! Let him scheme all he wants! I'll show that vile schemer!" So saying, Yuan Shu sent his top general, Ji Ling, and one hundred thousand men against Xuzhou. The two armies met at Xuyi.

Xuande, with far fewer troops, camped close to water and hills. Ji Ling, wielding a trident of some fifty pounds, paraded before his ranks cursing Xuande. "You country bumpkin," he shouted. "How dare you trespass on my territory?" "I hold an imperial decree," Xuande retorted, "to punish your insubordination. To resist me is a crime that not even your life could pay for." Striking his horse and brandishing his weapon, Ji Ling made for Xuande. Lord Guan dashed out first, shouting, "Save your show of strength, bastard!" After thirty bouts Ji Ling called it off, and Lord Guan rejoined his line. Ji Ling then sent Xun Zheng into the fight, but Lord Guan cried, "Let's have Ji Ling alone out here so we can all tell the cock from the chicken." To this Xun Zheng retorted, "You are an underling, known to no one—no match for General Ji!" Lord Guan closed with Xun Zheng and cut him down. Following up, Xuande sent his men in for the kill. Yuan Shu's army sustained a heavy defeat and retreated to the mouth of the river at Huaiyin. Ji Ling refused to fight again but sent soldiers to harass Xuande's camp. These were slain, and the two armies were at a standoff.

After seeing his elder brother off, Zhang Fei left Xuzhou's administrative responsibilities to Chen Deng and concerned himself only with military matters. One day he held a banquet for the various officials, at which he declared, "When my brother set out, he warned me to limit my drinking for fear of trouble. Today is our last revel: drink your fill, for starting tomorrow wine is forbidden. I need your help in guarding this city." So saying, he rose and began to toast the guests.

When Zheng Fei reached Cao Bao, Bao said, "I have always abstained." "What man of war refrains from drink!" cried Zheng Fei. "Down your wine!" Cowed, Cao Bao took the cup. Zhang Fei continued his tour, quaffing great goblets as he toasted each official. Full drunk after scores of drafts, Zhang Fei nonetheless rose to repeat the round. For the second time he stood before Cao Bao, who said, "I really cannot." "You did before," Zhang Fei urged. "Why refuse now?" But Bao stood his ground, and Fei, drunk beyond all reasoning, exploded, "You disobey my command? One hundred lashes!" The guards came for Cao Bao.

"Isn't this what Lord Xuande cautioned you against?" objected Chen Deng. "Civil officials," Zhang Fei replied, "need concern themselves only with civic affairs—and not with mine." Cao Bao made a last appeal to the drunken general: "Lord Yide—Zhang Fei—for the sake of my son-in-law, I beg forgiveness this once." "And who might your 'son-in-law' be?" inquired Zhang Fei. "Lü Bu," was the reply. "I was going to spare you," Zhang Fei cried, "but if you think dragging Lü Bu into this is going to scare me, I will beat you, and in so doing I am beating him as well." The guests could not calm Zhang Fei down. He gave Cao Bao fifty lashes, stopping only after agonized protests from his guests.

After the banquet Cao Bao went home with pent-up hatred for Zhang Fei. That night he sent a message to Lü Bu in Xiaopei describing Zhang Fei's barbarous behavior and adding, "Xuande has left for Huainan with his army to fight Yuan Shu; Zhang Fei is dead drunk: Xuzhou can be taken. Don't let the moment pass." Lü Bu showed the letter to Chen Gong, who said, "Our stay in Xiaopei was not meant to be permanent. A chance like this won't come again." Lü Bu agreed. Armed and mounted, he took five hundred horsemen to Xuzhou. Chen Gong and Gao Shun followed with the main army. From Xiaopei to Xuzhou was barely forty *li*. Lü Bu reached the city in the fourth watch. The moon was bright; the sentries on the wall suspected nothing. "I come on a secret mission for Protector Liu," Lü Bu shouted up, and a guard who was in on the conspiracy rushed word to Cao Bao, who ordered the gate opened. Lü Bu gave the signal, and his five hundred riders crashed into the city.

Zhang Fei's frantic attendants tried to shake their master out of his stupor. "Lü Bu has tricked us into opening the gate," they shouted, "and there's fighting in the city." Zhang Fei shouldered his armor, took up his eighteen-span snake-headed spear, and had scarcely mounted when Lü Bu confronted him. Zhang Fei was still unsteady, but Lü Bu feared his power and failed to press him. Eighteen cavalry commanders from Fei's home district, Yan, formed a guard around their lord and got him out of the city. But in the fighting there was no time to see to Xuande's family, and they were left behind in their quarters.

Cao Bao saw that Zhang Fei was lightly guarded and gave chase, but Zhang Fei turned on his pursuer, drove him back to the river's edge, and speared him in the back. Man and horse tumbled into the water. Zhang Fei then scraped together what soldiers he could find and headed south for Huainan. Lü Bu entered Xuzhou and calmed the populace. He kept Xuande's family secluded under guard, allowing no one to see them without permission.

Zhang Fei overtook Xuande in Xuyi and recounted his sorry tale to an appalled audience. "Is gain worth celebrating, or loss worth mourning?" Xuande responded with a sigh. "Where are our sisters-in-law?" Lord Guan demanded.²⁰ "In Xuzhou city," Zhang Fei replied. Xuande held his peace, but Lord Guan could not suppress his accusing questions: "What did you say when we gave you the city to protect? What did elder brother caution you about? Now the city and our sisters as well are lost. What are we going to do?" In the clutches of anxiety and despair, Zhang Fei set his sword to his throat, for indeed:

Drink had driven him to acts
Which his very life could no longer redeem.

Would he take his life?

READ ON.



*Taishi Ci and Sun Ce Fight Their Hearts Out;
Sun Ce Plants His Kingdom South of the River*

ZHANG FEI WAS ABOUT TO SLIT HIS OWN THROAT when Xuande seized the weapon and flung it down. Then he admonished Zhang Fei: "There's an old saying, 'Brothers are like arms and legs; wives and children are merely garments that can always be mended. But who can mend a broken limb?' We three swore in the peach garden to die together however fate might keep us apart in life. Now despite the loss of city and family, do you think I could let death part us midway in our course? In any event, the city was not mine to begin with, and Lü Bu is unlikely to harm my family. They can still be rescued. I will not let you throw your life away, good brother, for this momentary slip." So saying, Liu Xuande cried bitterly, and his two brothers, moved as well, wept with him.

Meanwhile, Yuan Shu (the object of Xuande's southern expedition) had learned of Lü Bu's coup in Xuzhou and promised him fifty thousand bushels of grain, five hundred horses, ten thousand ounces of gold and silver, and one thousand rolls of varicolored silk.¹ Lü Bu, encouraged by this offer, eagerly sent General Gao Shun and fifty thousand men to attack Xuande from the rear. Xuande, however, was informed in time and under cover of foul weather managed to flee east to Guangling. Gao Shun, arriving too late, demanded the promised gifts. "You may withdraw now," was General Ji Ling's reply, "while I arrange it with my lord." Gao Shun reported the conversation to Lü Bu, who also received a letter from Yuan Shu saying, "Your general, Gao Shun, reached Xuyi, but Xuande is still at large. When he is taken, I will deliver all I promised." Lü Bu cursed Yuan Shu for bad faith and intended to attack him, but Chen Gong objected: "Yuan Shu holds Shouchun. His army is large, his supplies ample. Do not take him lightly. Instead, invite Xuande back to Xiaopei to enter our service.² Soon we can put him in the vanguard and defeat not only Yuan Shu to the south but Yuan Shao to the north. That would give us the run of the realm." Lü Bu agreed and sent a messenger to Xuande.

Yuan Shu had raided Guangling, Xuande's refuge, and killed half the defenders, so Lü Bu's offer of Xiaopei was most welcome to Xuande, but not to his brothers. "A man so dishonorable cannot be trusted," they protested. Xuande replied, "He makes us a fair offer in good will. Why question his motives?" And so they returned to Xuzhou. To dispel Xuande's doubts, Lü Bu sent his wives ahead to meet him. Lady Gan and Lady Mi told Xuande how Lü Bu had protected their home and provided for their needs. "You see," Xuande said to his brothers, "no harm has come to them." But Zhang Fei's hatred for Lü Bu was unabated. He refused to go with Xuande to thank Lü Bu and instead escorted Lady Gan and Lady Mi to Xiaopei.

Xuande expressed his appreciation to Lü Bu. "I did not intend to take over your city," Lü Bu said, "but because your brother went into a drunken rage, I had to take charge or risk losing the province." "I had intended to yield it to you all along," replied Xuande. Lü Bu then offered to step aside, but Xuande strenuously refused and took his men to Xiaopei, where they entrenched themselves. His

brothers were not reconciled to the turnabout. "Bending when one must," Xuande said to them, "and accepting one's lot makes it possible to await a more favorable time. Who can contest fate?" Lü Bu had foodstuffs and cloth sent to Liu Xuande, and amity was restored between the two.

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Now at Shouchun, Yuan Shu was feasting his officers when a report came in on the triumphant return of Sun Ce after his conquest of Lujiang district, which was under Governor Lu Kang. Yuan Shu summoned Sun Ce, who saluted him in the hall. After commending Sun Ce for his success in battle, Yuan Shu invited him to join the banquet.³

(Since his father's death, Sun Ce had withdrawn to the region below the Great River, gathering around him men of ability.⁴ Later, because Tao Qian, imperial inspector of Xuzhou, and his uncle Wu Jing, governor of Danyang, had a falling out, Sun Ce moved his mother and the whole family to Qu'e and entered Yuan Shu's service.⁵ Yuan Shu greatly admired Sun Ce and often exclaimed, "If I had such a son, I could die without regret." Yuan Shu appointed him Commandant Who Cherishes Loyalty. In this capacity Sun Ce had made his mark by defeating Zu Lang, governor of Jingxian, after which Yuan Shu sent him to attack Lujiang. Sun Ce was coming back fresh from his victory there.)

After the banquet Sun Ce returned to his camp feeling that Yuan Shu had been condescending to him during the festivities. He spent the moonlit night pacing the inner courtyard, brooding over the memory of his heroic father and the insignificance of his own accomplishments. A heartfelt cry broke from his lips. "What is troubling you?" asked a man who entered the yard. "When your honored father was alive, he often turned to me. If there's something on your mind, you can tell me instead of crying your heart out." The speaker was Zhu Zhi (Junli), a native of Guzhang in Danyang, who had served Sun Jian.

Mastering himself, Sun Ce offered Zhu Zhi a seat and said, "I despair of fulfilling my father's ambition." "Why not ask Yuan Shu for troops to rescue Wu Jing?" Zhu Zhi suggested. "That will give you a chance to bring the Danyang region under your control, instead of remaining cooped up here under Yuan Shu."⁶ At that moment another man unexpectedly entered the courtyard. "I am sympathetic to your plan," he said, "and I would like to contribute one hundred able-bodied men." The speaker was Lü Fan (Ziheng) from Xiyang in Runan, an adviser to Yuan Shu. The three men talked on. "But I fear only that Yuan Shu will deny you the troops," Lü Fan said. "I still have the royal seal passed on to me by my late father," Sun Ce pointed out, "to offer as my pledge." "How long Yuan Shu has wanted that!" exclaimed Lü Fan. "He will supply you the troops without doubt." Thus the three men settled their plan.

The next day in audience with Yuan Shu, Sun Ce said, "My father's death remains unavenged. Liu Yao, inspector of Yangzhou, threatens my uncle Wu Jing, and I fear for the lives of my mother and family in Qu'e. I come, therefore, to beg a few thousand soldiers to take across the river in order to save my family and visit with them again. I have here the imperial seal left me by my father; I offer it to you as security." Yuan Shu had long known of this treasure. Examining it with great interest, he said, "I have no wish for your seal; however, you may leave it with me temporarily, and I will lend you three thousand men and five hundred horses. After you have pacified the region, hurry back. As your rank is still too low to wield authority, I shall propose that the court appoint you General Who Annihilates Outlaws and Commandant Who Breaks the Enemy. Set out on the designated day."

Sun Ce thanked Yuan Shu and took command of his men. With him were Zhu Zhi and Lü Fan as well as generals Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, Han Dang, and others who had served his father.⁷ They marched first to Liyang, where they were met by another army whose commander—a man of gallant bearing and striking appearance—dismounted and saluted Sun Ce. It was Zhou Yu, from Shucheng in Lujiang.

When Ce's father, Sun Jian, was a member of Yuan Shao's alliance against Dong Zhuo, he moved his family to Shucheng. Zhou Yu and Sun Ce, born in the same year, had become close friends and bound themselves in brotherhood. Zhou Yu, two months junior, looked upon Sun Ce as an elder brother. Now on his way to visit his uncle Zhou Shang, governor of Danyang, Zhou Yu found himself face-to-face with his dear friend. Sun Ce was delighted and proceeded to share his innermost ambitions with Zhou Yu, who said, "If I could serve you, I would toil loyally and unremittingly so that together we might reach our goal." "If you are with me, success is assured," exclaimed Sun Ce and introduced Zhou Yu to Zhu Zhi, Lü Fan, and the other leaders.

"Elder brother," Zhou Yu said, "to further your plans you should meet the two Zhangs, Zhang Zhao (styled Zibu) of Pengcheng and Zhang Hong (styled Ziwang) of Guangling. Both men have the talent to chart the course of Heaven and earth. They live here in obscurity, avoiding the chaos around them. I suggest you invite them to serve you." Pleased with this recommendation, Sun Ce sent for them, but they politely declined. Sun Ce then visited them personally and found their views inspiring. They consented to serve after much persuading on Sun Ce's part. Sun Ce appointed Zhang Zhao his senior adviser with the title Imperial Corps Commander Who Cheers the Army, and he made Zhang Hong his counselor with the title Commandant of Sound Judgment. Together they began to plan the attack on Liu Yao.

Liu Yao (Zhengli) from Mouping in Donglai was an imperial relation and the nephew of Grand Commandant Liu Chong. His elder brother, Liu Dai, was imperial inspector of Yanzhou. Previously, Liu Yao had been imperial inspector of Yangzhou, stationed at Shouchun. After Yuan Shu drove him southeast across the Great River, he came to Qu'e, where he eventually threatened Sun Ce's mother and her brother Wu Jing. On hearing that Sun Ce was coming to rescue his relatives, Liu Yao met with his advisers. A brigade leader, Zhang Ying, volunteered, "Let me take a company to Ox Landing, and he won't get through—not even with a million men!" Another seconded Zhang Ying. "I will take the van!" he cried. It was Taishi Ci from Huangxian in Donglai.

After rescuing Kong Rong, Taishi Ci had entered the service of Liu Yao.⁸ "You are too young for a command," Liu Yao had said, "stay by me and await orders." Taishi Ci retired discontented.⁹

Liu Yao sent Zhang Ying to defend Ox Landing where one hundred thousand bushels of grain were stored. Sun Ce arrived, and the two armies met at the water's edge. Sun Ce took personal command of his force. His general Huang Gai engaged Zhang Ying, but before the battle was fully under way, a fire in Zhang Ying's camp forced him to retreat. Sun Ce pressed his advantage, killing many. Zhang Ying fled toward the hills.

The fire had been set by Jiang Qin (Gongyi) of Shouchun and Zhou Tai (Youping) of Xiagai—two counties in Jiujiang district. Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai, who lived by brigandage in these times of turmoil, had heard that Sun Ce was a powerful warrior receptive to the able and talented. They therefore brought three hundred of their adherents into Sun Ce's service and were made vanguard commanders for their contribution. After the fire had routed Zhang Ying, Sun Ce gathered up the stores and weapons at Ox Landing, reorganized thousands more who had surrendered, and advanced

to Shenting.¹⁰

Liu Yao wanted to execute Zhang Ying for losing Ox Landing, but his advisers dissuaded him. He then ordered Zhang Ying to garrison the city of Lingling and hold back Sun Ce's advance. Liu Yao himself occupied the ground south of the Shenting Hills. Sun Ce stationed his army north of the hills. He asked one of the local people, "Is there a temple to the founder of the Later Han near here?" "On a hilltop to the south," was the reply. Later Sun Ce told his followers: "Last night I dreamed that the founder was calling me to audience. I wish to pray to him." But Zhang Zhao opposed the trip, arguing, "Liu Yao is camped on the southern side. What if there is an ambush?" "The gods will protect me," Sun Ce replied.

Fully armed, he rode with a dozen men to the shrine where, kneeling, he prayed, "If it be granted me to establish our patrimony in this land below the Great River, building on the foundation my late father set down, I shall restore this shrine and offer service here every season." Then Sun Ce rose and told his commanders he wanted to scan Liu Yao's positions. They objected, but Sun Ce insisted, so they climbed a high ridge and surveyed the groves and villages below.

Sentries had already reported Sun Ce's moves to Liu Yao. "He is only trying to lure us into the open," said Liu Yao. "Do not pursue." But Taishi Ci, spoiling for a fight, argued, "If we don't catch him now, when will we?" And without receiving an order, he rode out of the camp, shouting, "Those who dare, follow me!" But only one minor leader joined him, saying, "Taishi Ci has real courage!" The rest laughed and did not move.

Having observed the enemy, Sun Ce was starting back north over the ridge when he saw two horsemen racing down toward him. Sun Ce and his commanders, thirteen all told, formed a line, and he prepared to do battle. "Which one is Sun Ce?" Taishi Ci shouted. "Who are you?" Sun Ce demanded back. "I am Taishi Ci of Donglai, here to arrest Sun Ce." "Here I am!" Sun Ce retorted. "Two of you cannot scare one of me! If I feared you, I would not be Sun Ce!" Taishi Ci responded, "Nor do I fear you! Not even if all of you come!" He galloped out with leveled spear straight toward Sun Ce, who raised his own spear and met the attack. On horseback the two heroes fought mightily, exchanging some fifty blows, but neither could prevail. Sun Ce's general Cheng Pu marveled quietly at Taishi Ci's skill.

Taishi Ci, seeing that Sun Ce's spear work was flawless, feigned defeat and ran, luring his opponent to follow. Taishi Ci took an unexpected route up the hill and then turned behind it. Sun Ce, striving to overtake him, shouted, "The coward flees!" Taishi Ci reckoned, "This bastard has a dozen men with him. I have one. Even if I capture him, his men will free him. But if I can take him another stretch to where he can't be found, I'll do him in." So Taishi Ci kept on, occasionally turning back to fight.

Since Sun Ce was hardly the sort to abandon a chase, he pursued Taishi Ci to level ground. There Taishi Ci swung his horse around and the two champions exchanged another fifty blows. Taishi Ci dodged each thrust of Sun Ce's spear and caught the shaft under his arm; Sun Ce likewise snatched each thrust of Taishi Ci's spear. The two men closed and grappled, pulling each other down from their saddles. The horses ran off. The warriors threw down their spears and wrestled wildly, tearing each other's battle dress to shreds. With a lightning grab Sun Ce ripped away the short halberd on Taishi Ci's back; and Taishi Ci tore off Sun Ce's helmet. Sun Ce thrust with Taishi Ci's weapon; Taishi Ci blocked with Sun Ce's helmet. Suddenly, new voices filled the air. Liu Yao had arrived with a thousand men to aid Taishi Ci, and Cheng Pu and the other twelve commanders also

charged up. The combatants finally parted.

Taishi Ci, freshly armed and mounted, returned to the field. Cheng Pu had found Sun Ce's runaway horse, so Sun Ce, too, took his spear and remounted. Liu Yao's force and Cheng Pu's twelve cavalry joined in a bloody free-for-all that worked its way back to the Shenting Hills. There another outburst of shouting accompanied the entry of Zhou Yu's men into the fray. The day ended with a thunderstorm lashing the field, and each side recalling its troops.

The next day Sun Ce rode to the front of Liu Yao's camp with Taishi Ci's short halberd held high on the tip of his spear. "Only quick feet saved Taishi Ci!" Sun Ce's men shouted. Taishi Ci appeared and displayed the helmet he had seized. His men shouted, "And Sun Ce's head would have been here!" Amid noisy boasts and taunts from both lines Taishi Ci sallied forth, but Sun Ce's general Cheng Pu said, "No need for you, my lord, to bother with him. I will take him." Cheng Pu rode to the front of the camp. "You're not my man!" cried Taishi Ci. "Let's have Sun Ce!" Cheng Pu went for Taishi Ci with leveled spear. Their horses crossed and they fought thirty exchanges, after which Liu Yao recalled Taishi Ci. "I was about to capture the bastard," he complained. "Why did you sound the gong?" "Zhou Yu has surprised Qu'e with the support of Chen Wu (styled Zilie) of Lujiang," Liu Yao answered. "Our home base is lost, and we cannot remain here. I must go at once to Moling and get Xue Li and Ze Rong's men to rescue Qu'e." Taishi Ci withdrew with Liu Yao, and Sun Ce recalled his troops.

Zhang Zhao, Sun Ce's senior adviser, said, "Zhou Yu has taken Qu'e, and Liu Yao has no heart for battle. Sack their camp tonight." Accordingly, Sun Ce divided his forces into five units and overran Liu Yao's positions. Taishi Ci could not thwart this attack alone and fled for his life with a score of riders to Jingxian county.

In Chen Wu, Sun Ce had a new ally. He was a man seven spans tall, with a sallow complexion and reddish eyes. His general appearance was somewhat peculiar. But Sun Ce admired him, appointed him commandant, and put him in the vanguard of the attack against Xue Li. Chen Wu, accompanied by a dozen or so cavalry, charged into Xue Li's ranks and took more than fifty heads. In response Xue Li shut the gates of Moling and refused to come out. Sun Ce continued the siege until informed that Liu Yao and Ze Rong had joined forces to attack Ox Landing. In great anger Sun Ce led the bulk of his force there, and Liu Yao and Ze Rong rode forth to meet him.

Sun Ce said, "Surrender to me now!" From behind Liu Yao, Lieutenant Commander Yu Mi galloped out, spear held high. They clashed briefly; Sun Ce captured him alive and dashed back to his line. Another of Liu Yao's commanders, Fan Neng, seeing Yu Mi's capture, gave chase. He was about to deliver a fatal spearthrust when Ce's men shouted, "Ambush behind you!" Sun Ce turned on Fan Neng and bellowed thunderously; the pursuer lost control and was thrown from his mount and killed. Reaching the entrance to his position, Sun Ce threw down Yu Mi's body; he had been squeezed to death. For these feats of strength Sun Ce was given the nickname the Young Hegemon.¹¹ It was a day of defeat for Liu Yao. More than half his force surrendered to Sun Ce; over ten thousand were beheaded. Liu Yao and Ze Rong took refuge in Yuzhang with Liu Biao.

Sun Ce, returning to the siege at Moling, rode to the foot of the city wall to demand surrender, but he was shot in the left thigh. He fell from his horse and had to be carried back to camp, where the arrowhead was removed and the wound treated. Sun Ce ordered his men to spread the rumor that he had died. His army went into mourning and decamped. The news lured Xue Li, Liu Yao's general, out of the city. Together with the general of the Valiant Chargers, Zhang Ying, and Chen Heng, Xue Li

rode forth to give chase. Suddenly, they found themselves in an ambush. Sun Ce, in the lead, shouted, "Master Sun has come!" The soldiers panicked, flung down their weapons, and prostrated themselves. Sun Ce ordered them spared. Zhang Ying, however, had tried to escape and was speared by Chen Wu; Chen Heng fell to Jiang Qin's arrow; and Xue Li died in the turmoil of battle. Sun Ce entered Moling and calmed the inhabitants. Then he moved his army to Jingxian to capture Taishi Ci.

Taishi Ci had recruited some two thousand hardy warriors into his army in order to avenge Liu Yao. Sun Ce and Zhou Yu laid plans for taking Taishi Ci alive. Zhou Yu ordered Jingxian attacked on three sides, leaving the east gate free for the enemy to escape. On the east, twenty-five *li* from the town, Zhou Yu placed in ambush one detachment from each of the three attacking forces. He expected that Taishi Ci, his men fatigued and his horses spent, would be easy to capture there.

Now Taishi Ci's raw recruits were mostly mountain folk who knew nothing about discipline. And the Jingxian wall was not especially high. That night Sun Ce ordered Chen Wu, wearing a short jacket and carrying a dagger, to climb up and start a fire. When Taishi Ci saw the flames, he rode through the east gate, and Sun Ce sped after him. He pursued Ci for thirty *li* and then broke off. After fleeing for fifty *li*, Taishi Ci's men were exhausted. Suddenly from the reeds shouts rang out. Before Ci could get away, his horse was snared from both sides and pulled down. Taishi Ci was taken alive and delivered to Sun Ce's headquarters. Sun Ce came out from his tent, dismissed the escort, and personally untied the prisoner's bonds. Then he placed his own brocade surcoat over him and invited him to enter the camp. "I know you for a man of true fighting spirit," Sun Ce said to Taishi Ci. "You were defeated only because that useless fool Liu Yao did not give you a high command." Moved by Sun Ce's generosity, Taishi Ci begged to surrender.

Sun Ce took Taishi Ci's hand and said, "If you had captured me at Shenting, would you have killed me?" "It is hard to say," Taishi Ci replied. Sun Ce laughed, invited him into the headquarters, and bade him be seated in the place of honor at a sumptuous dinner. Taishi Ci said, "Liu Yao's defeated troops have no unity now. I would like to go myself and recruit them for Your Lordship. Are you willing to trust me?" "It's exactly what I was hoping for," said Sun Ce, rising to express his thanks. "I will expect your return by noon tomorrow." Taishi Ci agreed and left. Sun Ce's commanders expressed doubt that the warrior would ever return, but Sun Ce answered them, "He is a trustworthy and honorable warrior and would never betray me." The commanders were unconvinced.

The next day Sun Ce had a gnomon set in the ground in front of the camp to measure the shadow cast by the sun. Just before noon Taishi Ci returned with more than one thousand soldiers. Sun Ce was delighted, and his commanders praised him as a fine judge of character. After these events Sun Ce gathered tens of thousands more. When he crossed the river into the Southland to encourage the population, another wave of followers joined him. The people of the Southland hailed Sun Ce as Young Master Sun. The moment his armies approached, his foes lost heart and fled. But when his armies arrived, they were forbidden to abduct anyone or even disturb the livestock. Thus they enjoyed great popularity, and the common people brought meat and wine to their camps. Sun Ce always responded with gifts of gold and silk, and the rejoicing of the people spread wide. As for Liu Yao's former troops, those who wanted to join him were welcome; those who did not were rewarded and sent home to their farms. Sun Ce was universally acclaimed, and his military power grew great. Sun Ce settled his uncle and cousins in Qu'e, leaving his younger brother Sun Quan and Zhou Tai guarding the walled town of Xuan. Next, Sun Ce led his troops south to capture Wujun.

Wujun was a district controlled by Yan Baihu, who called himself the Virtuous King of Eastern Wu. His lieutenants were guarding Wucheng and Jiaxing. On learning that Sun Ce's army was coming, Yan Baihu ordered his younger brother Yan Yu to check Sun Ce at Maple Bridge. The news made Sun Ce eager to fight, but Zhang Hong objected: "My lord, the entire army depends on you for direction. Why risk your life fighting a minor enemy? Take yourself more seriously, General." "Your view is a worthy one," Sun Ce replied, "but unless I myself take the forefront in battle, braving arrow and stone, I will lose authority over my officers and men." Nevertheless, he sent Han Dang out first.

By the time Han Dang reached the bridge, Jiang Qin and Chen Wu had already crossed the river in a small boat to support him. They sprayed the bank with arrows, taking a heavy toll, and then leaped ashore swinging their swords. Yan Yu retreated before Han Dang, who advanced to the west gate, driving the enemy into the city. Sun Ce now moved up by land and water and laid siege to the city of Wu. For three days no one came out to fight. Sun Ce led his men to the west gate to induce Yan Baihu to submit. A minor commander was on the wall, his left hand braced against a beam, his right pointing downward as he shouted taunts. Taishi Ci took up his bow and set an arrow in place. Turning to the men around him, he said, "Watch me hit that bastard's left hand!" No sooner said than done! At the twang of the bowstring the arrow found its mark, piercing the commander's left hand and fixing it to the beam—a shot hailed by all who saw it. The injured commander was helped down by his men.

Amazed, Yan Baihu said, "How can we resist such warriors?" He decided to sue for peace and the next day sent his brother Yan Yu to negotiate with Sun Ce. Sun Ce invited Yan Yu into his tent; wine was poured. After they had drunk well, Sun Ce asked, "What does your honorable brother have in mind?" "He wants to share the rule of the Southland with you, General," was the reply. "That skulking rat rates himself my equal?" Sun Ce cried angrily and ordered Yan Yu executed. Yan Yu drew his sword, but Sun Ce made short work of him, severed his head, and sent it back into the city. Yan Baihu understood the futility of further resistance and fled the city of Wujun.

Sun Ce set out in pursuit. Huang Gai stormed Jiaxing, and Taishi Ci captured Wucheng. Several other cities fell into Sun Ce's hands. Yan Baihu, on his way to Yuhang, looted the places he passed through, and so a native called Ling Cao led the local people to attack him. Consequently, Yan Baihu turned in the direction of Kuaiji. Ling Cao and his son meanwhile welcomed Sun Ce, who appointed them commandants of the march. Together they led their forces across the Great River. Yan Baihu mustered his forces and deployed them around a ford. Cheng Pu engaged him and routed him again, so he hastened on toward Kuaiji.

Wang Lang, governor of Kuaiji, was minded to go to Yan Baihu's rescue. A district official from Yuyao in Kuaiji named Yu Fan (Zhongxiang) stopped him, saying, "Sun Ce wages war for principles humane and honorable; Yan Baihu represents brute force. You would be better advised to deliver the latter to the former." Wang Lang angrily dismissed this counsel, and Yu Fan left deeply saddened. Wang Lang joined forces with Yan Baihu, and the two deployed their men in the fields near Shanyin. Both sides assumed battle formation. Sun Ce then rode forth and said to Wang Lang, "My army is dedicated to humanity and justice and will bring peace to this region. Why aid the traitor Yan Baihu?" Wang Lang denounced Sun Ce: "Are you so greedy that even Wujun is not enough for you? Do you have to take our district as well? Today I avenge Yan Baihu!"

In great anger Sun Ce was preparing to engage Wang Lang when Taishi Ci came forth. Wang Lang urged his horse forward and swung out his sword. He battled Taishi Ci briefly, then his commander Zhou Xin joined the fray. From Sun Ce's side Huang Gai raced out and met Zhou Xin. A mutual slaughter ensued; drums and shouts echoed and reechoed. Suddenly, Wang Lang's rear ranks began to break as a band of soldiers struck them from behind. Wang Lang turned in alarm to confront this threat: it was Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu, who had led their force in from the side, catching the enemy in a two-front struggle. Wang Lang had too few men to resist. With Yan Baihu and Zhou Xin he cut a bloody path into the city, pulled up the drawbridge, and sealed the gates.

Sun Ce's main force arrived and circled the city, laying siege to the four gates. Wang Lang realized the situation was critical and wanted a showdown battle, but Yan Baihu said, "Sun Ce has a powerful force. All you need do is dig in and fortify the walls. Inside of a month they will run out of grain and withdraw; then we can surprise them and defeat them without a major battle." On this advice Wang Lang defended Kuaiji and refused to come out. After several days of fruitless assault, Sun Ce consulted his commanders. His uncle Sun Jing said, "Wang Lang has the city too well defended for a quick victory. But most of Kuaiji's coin and grain are stored in Chadu, only a few dozen *li* from here. Our best chance is to occupy Chadu in accordance with the maxim 'Attack where they are least prepared; do what is least expected.'"

Delighted with this plan, Sun Ce said, "Uncle, this brilliant plan will destroy the foe." Immediately he ordered fires set at each gate, flags and banners ostentatiously displayed, and decoy troops positioned to cover his withdrawal south. Zhou Yu made a proposal: "My lord, the moment we decamp, Wang Lang will come out and pursue us. A surprise attack should suffice to defeat him." Sun Ce replied, "Everything is ready. The city falls tonight." He then ordered the army to begin moving out.

On learning of the retreat of Sun Ce's army, Wang Lang climbed the watchtower with his companions to observe. Below he saw the usual fires and smoke, the flags and banners in proper order, and became suspicious. His chief aide, Zhou Xin, said "Sun Ce is gone. He left this display to confuse us. We should strike!" But Yan Baihu cautioned, "Sun Ce's next move may well be Chadu! I'll have my own troops and General Zhou Xin pursue them." Wang Lang responded, "Chadu is where I store my grain. It needs to be well guarded. You and your men go first, and I will follow." Yan Baihu and Zhou Xin led five thousand soldiers in pursuit of Sun Ce's army.

Close to the first watch, when the pursuers were some twenty *li* from the city, drums and voices rang out from a dense wood, and torches turned dusk to daylight. Panicked, Yan Baihu turned his mount to flee, but a single general barred his way; in the glare of the fires he recognized Sun Ce himself! Zhou Xin brandished his blade and sallied forth, but Sun Ce killed him with a single spear thrust. Zhou Xin's men surrendered. Yan Baihu fought his way out of the fray and fled toward Yuhang. Wang Lang, learning of the defeat of the advance force, did not dare return to the city. He and his force hurried on to a remote point on the coast.

Sun Ce and his army then turned back, captured the city, and restored order. A day later someone came to Sun Ce's camp with Yan Baihu's head. Sun Ce studied the man. He was eight spans tall with a square face and broad mouth and answered to the name of Dong Xi (Yuandai) of Yuyao in Kuaiji. Sun Ce was pleased and appointed him auxiliary commanding officer. Thereafter the eastern region was pacified; Sun Ce left his uncle Sun Jing to garrison it and had Zhu Zhi serve as governor of Wujun. He then returned in triumph to the region below the Great River.



Now Sun Quan, Sun Ce's brother, and Zhou Tai were defending Xuancheng when they were set upon from all sides by mountain bandits. It was late at night; resistance was impossible. Zhou Tai helped Sun Quan to a horse as scores of bandits descended on the two with swords swinging. Proceeding on foot, Zhou Tai, stark naked, killed ten or more bandits. From behind, a mounted bandit attacked him, but Zhou Tai seized his spear and yanked the rider to the ground. He mounted the attacker's horse and, cutting his way through the confusion, rescued Sun Quan. The remaining bandits fled.

Zhou Tai had more than twelve major wounds. They were festering, and his life hung in the balance. Sun Ce was alarmed. Dong Xi said, "Once I received many spear wounds while fighting the coastal bandits. In Kuaiji a rather capable official, Yu Fan, recommended a surgeon who cured me in a fortnight." "Yu Fan is none other than Yu Zhong-xiang, I take it?" Sun Ce asked. "Yes," Dong Xi replied. "He is a worthy scholar. I should employ him." Accordingly, Sun Ce had Zhang Zhao and Dong Xi go to solicit the services of Yu Fan.

Yu Fan came, and Sun Ce treated him handsomely, appointing him to the Bureau of Merit. Then he mentioned his interest in finding a physician. Yu Fan replied, "The man you want is a native of the Qiao district in the fief at Pei, Hua Tuo (styled Yuanhua), perhaps the most marvelous physician of our time. You should invite him here." That day the invitation went out, and the doctor arrived. Sun Ce observed the man: young of face with hair like the feathers of a crane. He had the light and easy manner of one who no longer belongs to this world. He was treated as an honored guest and ushered in to see the patient. "Not a difficult case," Hua Tuo pronounced. He applied certain medicines, and the wounds healed in a month. Sun Ce was delighted and rewarded the doctor richly.

Next he eliminated the mountain bandits, and the region returned to normal. Sun Ce then took four steps: he dispatched men and officers to the several strongpoints; he presented a memorial to the court detailing his victories; he established relations with Cao Cao; and he sent a messenger to Yuan Shu to demand the return of the imperial seal.

Yuan Shu had been biding his time until he could declare himself emperor, so he made excuses to Sun Ce and did not return the seal. He then gathered his council of more than thirty. Among them were: Senior Adviser Yang Dajiang, field commanders Zhang Xun, Ji Ling, and Qiao Rui, and the ranking generals Lei Bo and Chen Lan. Yuan Shu said to them, "Sun Ce started his campaigns with forces borrowed from me. Today he is master of the Southland. He seems to have no thought of repaying us but simply demands the return of the royal seal. His conduct is outrageous. How shall we deal with him?" Senior Adviser Yang Dajiang said, "Sun Ce controls the strategic points along the river. His troops are excellent and his supplies ample. We can do nothing now. Rather, we should first attack Liu Xuande for his treacherous invasion. Victory there would put us in a better position to take on Sun Ce, and I have a scheme that should made Xuande ours immediately." Thus:

Instead of tackling the young tiger to the south,
Yuan Shu moved to fight the dragon in the north.¹²

What plan was presented to Yuan Shu?

READ ON.



Lü Bu Demonstrates His Marksmanship Before His Camp; Cao Cao Suffers Defeat at the River Yu

SENIOR ADVISER YANG DAJIANG had a plan for attacking Liu Bei. "How will it work?" Yuan Shu asked. Yang Dajiang replied, "Liu Bei, stationed in Xiaopei, is easily taken; but Lü Bu has firm control of Xuzhou. We held back the goods we promised Lü Bu—gold, silk, grain, and horses—so he could not aid Liu Bei. Now is the time to send the grain—though not the gold and silk—to win back his good will and to keep him from going to Liu Bei's aid when we attack. Once we take Liu Bei, we can attack Lü Bu and the province is ours." Yuan Shu approved and sent Lü Bu two hundred thousand bushels of grain and a secret letter describing the plan.¹ Lü Bu accepted the proposal and the gifts and treated the envoy, Han Yin, royally. Han Yin reported the success of his mission back to Yuan Shu, who commanded Ji Ling, with Lei Bo and Chen Lan as deputies, to lead tens of thousands of troops against Xiaopei.

Liu Xuande summoned his advisers and commanders to discuss the emergency. Zhang Fei was for giving battle, but Sun Qian said, "We have neither the manpower nor the wherewithal to defend ourselves.² We'd better write Lü Bu at once." "Is that bastard going to help us?" Zhang Fei cried. But Xuande approved Sun Qian's suggestions and wrote as follows:

My thanks for your kind concern and boundless favor in granting us refuge in Xiaopei. Yuan Shu now seeks private revenge and has sent Ji Ling with an army. My fate hangs in the balance. Only you can save me. I entreat you to relieve our plight. I will be eternally grateful.

Lü Bu read the letter and conferred with Chen Gong. Lü Bu reasoned, "Yuan Shu has sent grain to keep us from aiding Xuande. Now Xuande seeks our help. In my view Xuande at Xiaopei is no threat to us; but if Yuan Shu swallowed him up and then allied with the Mount Tai commanders to the north, our position could become untenable. We'd better give Xuande what he needs."³ Lü Bu led a force to Xiaopei.

Ji Ling, Yuan Shu's general, had already pitched camp southeast of Xiaopei. By day his banners spangled the hills. By night his camp fires lit the sky and his drums shook the earth. Xuande's five thousand could hardly maintain a defense line around the town. Ji Ling was soon informed that Lü Bu was camped to the southwest only a *li* away and intended to rescue Xuande. Ji Ling wrote Lü Bu accusing him of bad faith. The letter only made Lü Bu laugh. "I think I have a way to satisfy both sides," he said and summoned the two antagonists—Ji Ling and Xuande—to a banquet. Xuande was willing to attend despite his brothers' fear of Lü Bu's treachery. "I have treated him fairly and doubt he would harm me," he said and went on horseback, accompanied by Lord Guan and Zhang Fei.

Receiving Xuande, Lü Bu said, "Today I act solely to help you through this crisis. If someday you

gain power or high position, please do not forget it." Xuande gave thanks and, at Lü Bu's invitation, was seated. Lord Guan and Zhang Fei remained standing behind their brother, hands on their swords. At that moment Ji Ling was announced.

Xuande rose to leave, but Lü Bu checked him. "I have made a point," he explained, "of bringing you two together. Trust me in this." Xuande remained puzzled and ill at ease.

Ji Ling entered the tent, saw Xuande in his seat, and pulled back in fright, breaking free of Lü Bu's attendants. Lü Bu stepped forward and dragged him back as if he were lifting a child. "You're going to kill me?" asked Ji Ling. "Of course not," Lü Bu replied. "Then you must be going to kill the big-eared one?"⁴ Ji Ling responded. "Wrong again," said Lü Bu. "What is all this for?" Ji Ling asked. "Xuande and I are brothers," Bu explained. "You threatened him, and I have come to save him." "So you will kill me!" Ji Ling exclaimed. "Certainly not!" said Lü Bu. "I have always preferred resolving conflicts to fighting, and that's what I intend doing now." "By what method, may I ask?" Ji Ling said. "We shall let Heaven decide your quarrel!" Lü Bu declared as he hauled Ji Ling back into the tent. He placed Ji Ling on his left, Xuande on his right, and proceeded to call for wine and food. The two warriors kept a wary eye on one another.

After several rounds of wine Lü Bu said, "For goodness' sake call this off." Xuande sat silent. Ji Ling responded, "I have a mandate from my lord Yuan Shu, who gave me an army of one hundred thousand to capture Liu Bei. This cannot be 'called off.'" Zhang Fei drew his sword and said grimly, "Our men are fewer, but you look like child's play compared to a million Yellow Scarves! Just try and do something to my elder brother!" Lord Guan restrained Zhang Fei, saying, "Let's see what General Lü Bu has in mind before we start the bloodletting."

"I called you here," Lü Bu continued, "to settle things. I cannot allow you to slaughter one another." But Ji Ling expressed discontent; and Zhang Fei welcomed war. Letting his anger show, Lü Bu shouted, "Bring me my halberd!" Ji Ling and Xuande paled as he wrapped his huge hands around the shaft. "I insist you cease this quarrel," Lü Bu cried. "It is in Heaven's hands." He handed his weapon to his attendants and had it planted in the ground, well in front of the entrance to his camp. Then, turning to his guests, he said, "The entrance is one hundred fifty paces away. If I hit the small side blade with one shot, you will call off your war. If I miss, you are free to return to your camps and prepare for battle. If either of you refuses these terms, I will join the other against him." Ji Ling reckoned to himself, "A shot like that is impossible. I might as well agree and complete my mission when he fails." He gave his consent, and Xuande was pleased to concur.

Lü Bu bade them remain seated for a last round of wine. Then he called for his bow. Xuande secretly prayed for his success. Lü Bu threw back his sleeve, fitted an arrow to the string, and drew the bow full stretch. "Hit!" he cried as he shot. From a bow drawn wide as the full-orbed moon an arrow sped like a shooting star. A perfect hit! Round the camp the commanders cheered. A poet has left these lines of admiration:

With an immortal shot, one rarely seen on earth,
Lü Bu saved the day at the war camp gates:
A marksman to shame Hou Yi, downer of nine suns,
And bidding fair to outclass Yang Youji.
Tiger-thewed, he drew till the bowstring groaned.
Hawk-feathered, the flying dart struck home.

The leopard-tail quivered on the halberd haft:
One hundred thousand men untied their gear.⁵

Lü Bu laughed heartily, threw his bow aside, and took his guests by the hand. "Thus Heaven commands you to desist!" he said, calling for more wine. Each man quaffed a great flagonful. Xuande was thankful for a lucky escape, and Ji Ling held his peace. Presently he said, "General, I dare not disobey. But my master will never believe this!" "I'll write him," said Lü Bu. More wine was passed round. After Ji Ling departed with the letter, Lü Bu reminded Xuande, "If not for me, you would have been done for." Xuande thanked Lü Bu and left with his brothers. The next day the war camps were disbanded.

Ji Ling returned to Huainan, presented Lü Bu's letter to Yuan Shu, and described the outcome of his campaign. "Is that how Lü Bu repays me for the grain I sent," Yuan Shu ranted, "saving Liu Bei with a child's trick? I am going to march on the two of them!" "Do not be so impetuous, my lord," Ji Ling urged. "Lü Bu is a powerful warrior, and he controls Xuzhou. He and Liu Bei may prove too strong for us. I hear, though, that Lü Bu's wife, Lady Yan, has a daughter ready for marriage; and you have a son who has come of age—that's a way to ally your two houses. If Lü Bu agrees, he'll have to kill Xuande because 'Strangers never come before relatives.'" Yuan Shu agreed and sent Han Yin with appropriate gifts to arrange it.

Han Yin presented himself to Lü Bu, saying, "My master, long your admirer, seeks your treasured daughter's hand in behalf of his son in order to bind the two houses in marriage as the states of Qin and Jin did in ancient times."⁶ Lü Bu took up the proposal with Lady Yan, the girl's mother.

Lü Bu had three wives. His principal wife was Lady Yan; Diaochan was his concubine; and later he had married a daughter of Cao Bao's when he was Xuande's guest in Xiaopei. His second wife died young and without issue; Diaochan had never borne a child. Lady Yan's daughter was Lü Bu's only child and the dearest object of his affections. In response to Han Yin's offer Lady Yan said to Lü Bu, "Yuan Shu has dominated the region below the River Huai for a long time. From such a powerful base he should become emperor sooner or later. Our daughter could be empress. But how many sons does he have?" "Only the one," Lü Bu replied. "Then give your consent at once!" she said. "Empress or no empress, our hold on Xuzhou will be strengthened." His course decided, Lü Bu treated Han Yin royally and agreed to the marriage. Han Yin reported to Yuan Shu, who sent the envoy back to Xuzhou with betrothal gifts. Lü Bu accepted them with pleasure. He feasted Han Yin and lodged him in the guesthouse.

The next day Lü Bu's chief adviser, Chen Gong, paid call on Han Yin. The formalities concluded, Chen Gong dismissed the attendants and asked, "Who proposed this marriage alliance? Is the purpose to take Xuande's head?" Han Yin shuddered. He then rose and said, "I beg you, do not breathe a word of it." "Of course not," Chen Gong assured him. "Only, if things are delayed, someone else may see the point and interfere." "What can be done?" asked Han Yin. "I'll try to get Lü Bu to send his daughter off today," said Chen Gong. "That will seal the marriage." "Then Lord Yuan will be all the more deeply in your debt," Han Yin said appreciatively.

Chen Gong went directly to Lü Bu and said, "I was delighted to hear that your daughter is promised to Yuan Shu. When is the wedding?" "The arrangements will be made in due course with due deliberation," was the reply. "In ancient times," Chen Gong went on, "the time interval between the engagement and the nuptial ceremony was strictly defined: for the emperor, one year; for the fief-

lords, six months; for the noble houses, one season; for commoners, one month." "Heaven," said Lü Bu, "has bestowed the royal seal on Yuan Shu, and in time he is bound to become emperor. Doesn't it seem right to observe the one-year waiting period?" "No," answered Chen Gong. "Six months, then?" asked Lü Bu. "Not that long either," Chen Gong said. "Then it will have to be one season," said Lü Bu, "as stipulated for a noble house." "I'm afraid not," was Chen Gong's answer. "Do you really expect me to follow the precedent set for commoners?" Lü Bu demanded. "By no means," said Chen Gong. "Well then," Lü Bu rejoined, "what do you have in mind?"

"The lords of the realm," Chen Gong explained, "are striving for supremacy. Won't an alliance with Yuan Shu arouse jealousy? Selecting an auspicious day in the remote future will only give someone the opportunity to ambush the bridal procession. Where would that leave us? If you had not already consented, the matter could be dropped. But since you have, we must act before the lords hear of it. That is my advice. Send your daughter to Shouchun and sequester her; then select the day and conclude the marriage. Nothing can go wrong."

Lü Bu took this advice gladly. He informed his wife of the change in plan, prepared the trousseau, put horses and carriage in order, and sent the girl off the same night. Han Yin, together with Lü Bu's generals Song Xian and Wei Xu, rode escort. Gongs and drums sounded as the marchers left the city. Chen Deng's (i.e., Yuanlong's) father, Gui, an elderly gentleman living at home in retirement, heard the noise of the procession and, learning the reason, said, "The 'family before strangers' scheme! Liu Xuande is done for!"

Despite his ailment, the old man took himself to see Lü Bu.⁷ "What brings you, venerable sir?" asked Lü Bu. "I hear your death is imminent, General," answered Chen Gui, "and I have come to condole." "What are you talking about?" Lü Bu snapped. "Some time ago," replied Chen Gui, "Yuan Shu sent presents, hoping you would kill Xuande. But your marksmanship got Xuande out of that. Now he's back again seeking an alliance through marriage. He must want your daughter as a hostage so he can attack Xuande. Once Xiaopei falls to him, Xuzhou is no longer safe. After the marriage they will come to borrow food or soldiers. If you meet their demands, you will be wearing yourself out for nothing and making enemies into the bargain. If you refuse, you will lose your daughter and find yourself at war with Yuan Shu. Or else, since Yuan Shu has seditious intentions and may declare himself emperor, you could be treated as a relative of the traitor, guilty of high treason, and have to face the world's wrath."

Realizing the sense of Chen Gui's argument, Lü Bu panicked. "So Chen Gong has led me astray!" he cried and ordered Zhang Liao to overtake the bridal carriage—it was already thirty *li* away—force it to return, and seize Han Yin. At the same time he told Yuan Shu to expect his daughter when her trousseau was ready. Chen Gui also wanted Lü Bu to deliver the prisoner, Han Yin, to Cao Cao in the capital at Xuchang, but Lü Bu delayed deciding.⁸

At this point Lü Bu was informed that Liu Xuande was recruiting troops and buying horses for undetermined reasons. "Isn't that what a general normally does?" Lü Bu responded. Then two of his officers, Song Xian and Wei Xu, reported, "At your command we went east of the mountains and bought three hundred splendid mounts, but near Xiaopei thieves took half of them. We found out later their chief was Zhang Fei claiming to be an outlaw." Lü Bu marched at once to Xiaopei. Xuande, bewildered by this turn of events, mustered a force to meet him.

As the opposing lines formed, Xuande rode out. "Elder brother," he said to Lü Bu, "what is the cause of this?" Lü Bu replied angrily, "My bowshot saved you from grave danger. Why are you

stealing my horses?" "We're short here," Xuande answered. "I sent all over to buy some. My men would never steal from you." "Can you deny," Lu Bu cried, "that Zhang Fei has stolen one hundred and fifty of my best?" "Yes, I stole them! So what?" Zhang Fei cried, dashing out with spear poised. "Round-eyed rogue," Lü Bu retorted, "this is the final insult!" "You mind my stealing your horses?" Zhang Fei taunted him. "What about your stealing Xuzhou from my brother?" The two warriors said no more. They fought on the field like madmen, exchanging more than one hundred blows. But there was no victor. Xuande, fearful that Zhang Fei might slip, rang the gong recalling all men to Xiaopei. Lü Bu laid siege to the town.

Back inside, Xuande was furious at Zhang Fei. "This is your doing," he said. "Where are their horses?" "At various Buddhist temples," Fei replied. Xuande sent a man to Lü Bu offering to return the horses and make peace. Lü Bu was inclined to accept the offer, but Chen Gong argued, "Liu Bei is your nemesis. Kill him now." Lü Bu accordingly attacked Xiaopei with renewed ferocity.

Xuande consulted Mi Zhu and Sun Qian. "Cao Cao's worst enemy is Lü Bu," Sun Qian said. "Let's flee to the capital and place our fate in Cao's hands. Perhaps he'll even give us some troops to fight Bu. This is our best chance." "Who can take us through the blockade?" Xuande asked. "Let me try," answered Zhang Fei.

Under a bright moon, with Zhang Fei in the lead, Lord Guan bringing up the rear, and Xuande in between, they left Xiaopei by the north gate in the dead of night. Song Xian and Wei Xu accosted them, but Zhang Fei swept Lü Bu's two officers aside in a brief and bloody exchange. Thus the brothers broke through the encirclement. Zhang Liao tried to attack the rear, but Lord Guan checked him. Lü Bu, instead of pursuing, entered Xiaopei, calmed the populace, and then returned to Xuzhou, leaving General Gao Shun in command of the conquered town.⁹

Xuande pitched camp outside the capital and sent Sun Qian ahead to appeal to Cao Cao for refuge. "Xuande and I are brothers," Cao Cao said and declared him welcome. The following day Xuande left his two brothers outside the walls and, accompanied by Mi Zhu and Sun Qian, presented himself to Cao Cao, who received him as an honored guest. To Xuande's account of Lü Bu's conduct Cao Cao responded, "Lü Bu is no man of honor. Let's work together to get rid of him, worthy brother." Xuande expressed thanks. Cao Cao feasted his guest until a late hour and then saw him off.

Afterward Xun Wenruo said, "Liu Bei is someone who should be dealt with now, before he becomes a threat." Cao Cao said nothing. Xun Wenruo left and Guo Jia entered. "Wenruo advised me to kill Xuande," Cao said to him. "What should I do?" "I oppose it," Guo Jia replied. "Your Lordship has raised an army to uphold the house of Han and rid the people of oppression. Your reputation for good faith has attracted many outstanding men. Still, we worry that more may not come and lend their support. To kill a renowned hero like Liu Bei in his moment of distress will earn us a reputation for harming the worthy, and many capable men throughout the realm will choose not to join us. Who will help you restore order in the empire then? Eliminating this one threat will alienate many. In this situation you must weigh the pros and cons." "Your advice suits me well," said Cao Cao, pleased.¹⁰

The next day Cao Cao prepared a memorial to the Emperor recommending Xuande as protector of Yuzhou. But Cheng Yu advised, "Liu Bei will not remain long under anybody. You'd better deal with him before it is too late." "At a time," Cao Cao replied, "when we are calling for outstanding men to serve us, we cannot afford to lose the world by killing one person. Guo Jia agrees with me on this." Thus Cao Cao rejected Cheng Yu's advice. He gave Xuande three thousand men and ten thousand bushels of grain and sent him off to his new post with instructions to round up any soldiers near

Xiaopei and continue the war against Lü Bu. After arriving in Yuzhou, Xuande maintained liaison with Cao Cao.

Cao Cao himself had mustered a force to march against Lü Bu when an urgent message came: "Zhang Ji marched east through the pass to attack Nanyang and was killed by a stray arrow; his nephew Zhang Xiu assumed command of his army and has Jia Xu for an adviser; Zhang Xiu has allied with Liu Biao and occupied Wancheng in order to enter the capital and seize the Emperor." Cao Cao wanted to take action against the invader from the west but feared Lü Bu would attack his capital. Xun Wenruo said, "The problem is not difficult. Lü Bu is no strategist and lives only for gain. Appoint him to high office and send gifts, ordering him at the same time to settle his differences with Liu Bei. Lü Bu will be content and stay put. He has no larger ambitions." "Well said," replied Cao Cao and sent Imperial Envoy Wang Ze to Xuzhou to carry out the plan.

Free of danger from the south, Cao Cao fielded an army of one hundred and fifty thousand to chastise Zhang Xiu in the name of the Emperor. The force consisted of three field armies; Xiahou Dun had the vanguard. They camped at the River Yu.¹¹ Jia Xu advised Zhang Xiu: "We are outnumbered. Surrender and deliver your soldiers to Cao Cao." Zhang Xiu saw the wisdom of the suggestion and sent Jia Xu to make the offer.

Cao Cao admired Jia Xu and was struck by his apt answer to every question. He offered to employ him as a counselor, but Jia Xu declined. "In the past," Jia Xu answered, "I committed a grave mistake by serving Li Jue, who rebelled against His Majesty. Now I am in the service of Zhang Xiu. He considers my views and follows my plans. I cannot cast him aside." The next day Jia Xu introduced Zhang Xiu to Cao Cao, who treated him generously. Cao Cao allowed Xiu to station some of his troops in Wancheng itself and the remainder outside the city. The encampments with their palisades stretched for more than ten *li*.

During this time Zhang Xiu feasted Cao Cao in Wancheng every day. Once Cao Cao retired drunk and discreetly asked his chamber attendants if there were any courtesans in the town. Cao Cao's nephew Anmin whispered obligingly, "I noticed a rare beauty yesterday near the local inn, the widow of Zhang Ji, Xiu's uncle." On Cao Cao's orders Anmin took fifty armed guards and brought her back. She proved as attractive as Cao Cao had anticipated. He asked her name. "Your servant," she replied, "is from the Zou family and was married to the late Zhang Ji." "Do you know who I am, my lady?" Cao Cao inquired. "Your prestigious name, Your Excellency, has been long known to me," she responded, "and I am honored this evening to be able to pay my respects in person." "It was in your behalf," Cao Cao said, "that I accepted Zhang Xiu's surrender. Otherwise, the entire clan would have been executed." Prostrating herself, Lady Zou replied, "I am truly grateful for your gracious reprieve." "To have met you today," Cao Cao went on, "is a blessing from Heaven. I would like you to share my mat and pillow this evening and then accompany me back to the capital where you will enjoy luxury in tranquility. What is your answer?"

Lady Zou accepted gladly and spent the night in Cao Cao's quarters. "I must not stay too long in town," she said. "My nephew Zhang Xiu will suspect something and others will talk." "Tomorrow, then," said Cao, "we will go to my camp." The next day Cao Cao moved his quarters to the central army camp and had Dian Wei stand guard. No one was allowed to enter unless summoned. Thus protected, Cao Cao took his pleasure day after day and gave no thought to returning to Xuchang.

The romance was reported to Zhang Xiu. "The scoundrel!" he cried in anger. "His insolence is unbearable!" He turned to Jia Xu for counsel. "Keep it absolutely secret," Jia Xu cautioned. "When

Cao Cao shows up for talks, then . . ." And he whispered in Zhang Xiu's ear.

The following day Zhang Xiu went to Cao Cao's tent and said, "Many of the newly surrendered troops have run away. I request permission to station my men inside your camp lest more flee." Cao approved, and Xiu moved into the encampment, divided his forces into four groups, and bided his time. But the fierce courage of Dian Wei, Cao's personal guard, daunted Zhang Xiu. Seeing no easy way to get near him, Zhang Xiu spoke to Hu Juer, one of the four group commanders.

Hu Juer was a man with the physical strength to lift a weight of five hundred *jin* or to ride seven hundred *li* in a single day. He offered the following plan: "Dian Wei is to be feared only for his two iron halberds. My lord, invite him to dine tomorrow and send him home drunk. I will slip in among his men and find a way to remove the weapons. That should draw his sting." Zhang Xiu approved and prepared his archers and armored men. The other three groups were alerted. Zhang Xiu then hosted Dian Wei at the banquet, entertained him attentively, and sent him home late and drunk. Meanwhile, Hu Juer had slipped into the camp where Cao Cao and Lady Zou were carousing.

Cao Cao was the first to hear voices and the sound of restless horses. He sent a guard outside who reported that Zhang Xiu's men were making night rounds. Cao Cao suspected nothing. Toward the second watch there was an outcry: a cartload of hay had caught fire. "It's only an accident!" Cao Cao shouted. "Don't panic!" Moments later fire broke out on all sides. Cao Cao called for Dian Wei, but the mighty warrior was in a drunken stupor. Wakening to the clamor, he leaped to his feet groping for the halberds.

Zhang Xiu's men were at the front gate, mounted and brandishing lances. Grabbing a sword from a nearby soldier as the enemy poured in, Dian Wei advanced and cut down twenty men. The horsemen drew back, but the foot soldiers came forward. On either side spears poked up like reeds. Armorless, Dian Wei fought on valiantly, taking scores of cuts. Then his sword cracked and he threw it aside. He picked up two of the enemy bodily and wielded them as weapons, felling eight or nine. Zhang Xiu's rebels kept their distance and shot at him, but Dian Wei held the gate despite the pelting arrows. Another group of soldiers burst in from behind and speared him through the back. Three or four howls broke from Dian Wei's lips. Then he expired, his blood soaking the ground where he fell. Even after he was dead, no one dared pass through the front gate.

Dian Wei's heroic defense had enabled Cao Cao to ride out by the rear gate. Cao An-min followed on foot. Cao Cao had an arrow in his right shoulder; his horse was also wounded. Luckily the powerful Fergana steed could run despite great pain and carried Cao Cao to the edge of the River Yu. But the pursuers overtook Cao Anmin and cut him to pieces. Cao Cao urged his mount through the waves; it was climbing the far shore when an arrow pierced its eye. The horse collapsed under its rider. Cao's eldest son, Ang, gave his horse to his father, and Cao Cao escaped; but Cao Ang fell in a fresh hail of arrows.¹² On the road Cao Cao met up with his commanders and they regrouped.

Taking advantage of the confusion, some Qingzhou soldiers under Xiahou Dun began raiding nearby villages.¹³ Commandant Yu Jin, Queller of Bandits, tried to protect the villagers, leading his own men in wiping out the plunderers. The Qingzhou troops then ran back to Cao Cao, flung themselves to the ground, and tearfully reported the "rebellion." Indignant at Yu Jin's "betrayal," Cao Cao ordered generals Xiahou Dun, Xu Chu, Li Dian, and Yue Jin to prepare to fight the "traitor."¹⁴

In the distance, Yu Jin saw Cao Cao and his followers approaching and entrenched himself behind a moat. Someone said, "The Qingzhou troops told Cao you rebelled. Now that he's coming, why are you digging in instead of going to him to clear yourself?" "Those thugs could get here at any

moment. I have to be ready. Preparedness counts for much more than explanations." No sooner were Yu Jin's defenses in place than Zhang Xiu attacked. Yu Jin met the enemy personally in front of his fortifications and drove them back. Inspired by his courage, Yu Jin's commanders dealt Zhang Xiu such a devastating defeat that he fled and threw himself on the mercy of Liu Biao.¹⁵

After the battle Yu Jin came before Cao Cao and explained that he had attacked the Qingzhou troops for despoiling the peasants. "Then why," Cao asked him, "did you fortify before coming to me?" Yu Jin explained his reasons, and Cao Cao concluded, "A commander who can array his men and construct his defenses in the heat of battle, unmoved by slander, undaunted by toil, and then carry the day—even the great generals of old hardly surpass that!" Cao Cao rewarded Yu Jin with a pair of gold vessels and appointed him lord of Yishou precinct. And he criticized Xiahou Dun for not disciplining his men. Then he performed sacrifice for his fallen comrade, Dian Wei, personally leading the lamentations and presenting the wine. At the ceremony he turned to his commanders and said, "I have lost my eldest son and my dear nephew. But the loss of Dian Wei hurts most." The assembly was deeply moved. The next day Cao Cao gave the order to return to the capital.¹⁶

. . . .

Meanwhile Wang Ze, bearing Cao Cao's gifts, reached Xuzhou. Lü Bu received him, unsealed the edict appointing him General Who Calms the East, and accepted the seal and cord of office. Wang Ze also handed him Cao Cao's own letter instructing him to settle his differences with Xuande. Lü Bu listened with relish as the envoy described Cao Cao's profound regard for him. At that moment a messenger from Yuan Shu told Lü Bu, "Yuan Shu will eventually become emperor and establish his heir apparent. He expects the consort of the crown prince to proceed at once to her destination." "How dare that traitor!" Lü Bu cried. He killed Yuan Shu's envoy and clapped Han Yin, Yuan Shu's representative, into a cangue. He then dispatched Chen Deng with a letter to the Emperor acknowledging his appointment; he also sent the prisoner under guard along with Wang Ze to the capital as an indication of his gratitude. At the same time he wrote to Cao Cao expressing his interest in being advanced to protector of Xuzhou.

Cao Cao was delighted to learn that the planned marriage between Lü Bu's daughter and Yuan Shu's son had been canceled. He publicly put Han Yin to death. Chen Deng confided to Cao Cao, "Lü Bu is a jackal, fierce but foolhardy, and fickle in his loyalties. Do not wait too long to deal with him." "I am well aware," Cao Cao replied, "of his wolfish ambition. No one can keep his support for long. But only you and your father really understand the situation. I shall need your help against him." "Should you choose to act, Your Excellency," Chen Deng responded, "I shall work with you from within." To show his appreciation Cao Cao appointed Chen Deng governor of Guangling and awarded Chen Gui, Deng's father, a sinecure that paid a governor's salary of two thousand piculs of grain annually. As Chen Deng took his leave, Cao Cao touched his arm and said, "The situation in the east is now in your hands." Chen Deng nodded, confirming his intention to serve Cao Cao.

Chen Deng returned to Xuzhou, and Lü Bu questioned him on the outcome of his visit. "My father was given a free income," Chen Deng said, "and I was made governor of Guangling." Lü Bu was infuriated. "You solicited rank and emolument for yourself without mentioning my confirmation as protector of Xuzhou? It was your own father who convinced me to make peace with Cao Cao and break off the nuptials with Yuan Shu's son. You have achieved eminence, all right, but what have I got

out of it? You've sold me out!"

Lü Bu drew his sword, but Chen Deng only laughed as he said, "How foolish can you be, General?" "What do you mean?" asked Lü Bu. "When I saw Cao Cao," Chen Deng said, "I told him to provide for you as for a tiger that needs his fill of meat lest hunger drive him to bite someone. 'No, my friend,' Cao answered me, smiling. 'We'll provide for Lü Bu as if he were a hunting hawk that must be kept hungry when hares and foxes are running about. Well fed, he'll just soar off contented.' 'Who are the hares and foxes?' I asked, and he replied, 'Yuan Shu of Huainan, Sun Ce of the Southland, Yuan Shao of Jizhou, Liu Biao of Jingzhou, Liu Zhang of Yizhou, and Zhang Lu of Hanzhong—every one of them fair game.'" Tossing his sword aside, Lü Bu laughed and said, "Cao Cao knows me well!" As they spoke, news of Yuan Shu's invading army was brought in. Lü Bu was alarmed. Indeed:

The alliance fell through and war followed;
Marriage plans had brought not peace but another trial by arms.

Lü Bu was facing many dangers. Could he survive them?

READ ON.



Yuan Shu Fields Seven Armies; Cao Cao joins Forces with Three Generals

YUAN SHU, POSSESSOR OF HUAINAN'S EXTENSIVE DOMINIONS and ample wealth as well as the royal seal Sun Ce had left as a pledge, now wanted to usurp the throne of Han. To his followers he declared: "The Supreme Ancestor of the Han, Gao Zu, started as a precinct head; yet the realm came into his hands. Now, four hundred years later, the allotted span of the dynasty is ending and the world seethes with rebellion. We Yuans, holders of highest office for four generations, enjoy the people's confidence. It would accord with the will of Heaven and satisfy the hopes of men for me to assume the dragon throne."

First Secretary Yan Xiang said, "That cannot be done! Hou Ji, high ancestor of the Zhou house, had great virtue and merit. Yet even in the last years of the Shang dynasty the Zhou remained loyal to the ruling house—though King Wen had the allegiance of two-thirds of the realm and could have overthrown the Shang. Your Lordship, the Yuan family, though noble for many generations, lacks the distinction of the Zhou ruling family; while the house of Han, however feeble, is guilty of no tyranny resembling the Shang's when the Zhou finally overthrew it. Your elevation is therefore unthinkable."

Yuan Shu, profoundly angered, replied, "The Yuan line springs from the Chen; the Chen descends from Shun.¹ The sequence of the elements dictates that the earth sign of the Chen will supplant the fire sign of the Han. Moreover, it has been predicted that whoever follows the Han will 'take the high road': my style, Gonglu, or Lord's Way, fits the prognostication. Finally, we hold the imperial seal. Thus for me to decline the leadership of the realm would be to turn against Heaven. My decision stands. Whoever says more, dies."

Yuan Shu then established the reign period Zhong Shi² and created a secretariat and other state offices. Borne in a dragon-and-phoenix carriage, he performed the imperial rituals at the northern and southern limits of the city.³ He made Feng Fang's daughter his empress, his son crown prince, and sent an envoy to Xuzhou to speed the wedding with Lü Bu's daughter. At that point he learned that Lü Bu had already delivered the go-between, Han Yin, to the capital, where Cao Cao had had him executed.

In great anger Yuan Shu organized an army of over two hundred thousand under the leadership of Regent-Marshal Zhang Xun: his object, to conquer Xuzhou. There were seven field armies: the first, led by Zhang Xun, in the center; the second, led by Senior General Qiao Rui, on the left flank; the third, under Senior General Chen Ji, on the right; the fourth, under Deputy General Lei Bo, on the left; the fifth, under Deputy General Chen Lan, on the right; the sixth, led by Han Xian, a general who had surrendered, on the left; and the seventh, led by another general who had surrendered, Yang Feng, on the right.⁴ Able commanders served each leader.

The army began marching north on the appointed day. Yuan Shu elevated Jin Shang, imperial inspector of Yanzhou, to the position of grand commandant so that he could supervise the supply of

the seven field armies; but Jin Shang refused the promotion, and Yuan Shu had him executed. Ji Ling was put in charge of support for the army. Yuan Shu himself took command of thirty thousand men and assigned Li Feng, Liang Gang, and Yue Jiu to drive the lines forward and to direct reinforcement operations.

Lü Bu's scouts brought word that Zhang Xun was advancing on the main road to Xuzhou; Qiao Rui, toward Xiaopei; Chen Ji, toward Yidu; Lei Bo, toward Langye; Chen Lan, toward Jieshi; Han Xian, toward Xiapi; and Yang Feng, toward Junshan. The seven field armies made some fifty *li* per day and plundered the towns and villages along the way. Lü Bu called upon his counselors. Chen Gui and his son, Deng (now in league with Cao Cao), were present. Chen Gong, Lü Bu's chief adviser, said, "Chen Gui and Chen Deng are responsible for Xuzhou's present troubles, currying favor with the court for their own ends and leaving you to face the consequences, General. Deliver their heads to Yuan Shu, and his armies should retreat." Lü Bu agreed and ordered father and son, Chen Gui and Chen Deng, arrested.

Chen Deng scoffed aloud. "What are you afraid of?" he cried. "Those seven armies look like seven piles of rotten straw to me—beneath contempt!" "If you think you can defeat them," Lü Bu responded, "I will spare you." "General," Chen Deng asserted, "I have a plan to preserve Xuzhou and guarantee its future." "We are listening," Lü Bu said. "Yuan Shu's army," Chen Deng went on, "though large, is a motley mass with no bonds of mutual trust. If we defend the city straightforwardly while conducting surprise raids, we can defeat them easily. And I have something else up my sleeve which will keep Xuzhou safe and even allow us to capture Yuan Shu himself."

"How will you proceed?" Lü Bu asked. "Two of the generals, Yang Feng and Han Xian," Chen Deng replied, "who had long been faithful to the Han, went over to Yuan Shu only from fear of Cao Cao. They had no choice. Yuan Shu shows them no respect, and they are unhappy in his service. A letter should be enough to secure their collaboration. If you arrange for Liu Bei's support as well, Yuan Shu is yours!" "You will have to take the letter yourself," Lü Bu said, and Chen Deng agreed. After petitioning the Emperor and communicating with Liu Bei in Xuzhou, Lü Bu sent Chen Deng to Xiapi.

Han Xian arrived and camped. Chen Deng went to see him. Han Xian asked, "You are Lü Bu's man, are you not? What brings you here?" "I am a courtier in the service of the mighty Han," Deng replied with a smile. "How can you call me 'Lü Bu's man'? You yourself, General, once served the Han but now serve a rebel, wiping out the devotion to the Emperor you once showed when you helped him escape from Chang'an.⁵ I should choose a different course if I were you, General. Besides, in Yuan Shu you will find a most mistrustful master, and he will do you in—unless you act first." Han Xian sighed. "I want to be loyal to the Han, but there's no way back." Chen Deng then produced Lü Bu's letter soliciting his cooperation. "I am not surprised," Han Xian said. "You return first. Yang Feng and I will move on Yuan Shu together. Look for a signal fire. Lü Bu should then attack in force." Chen Deng took leave of Han Xian and reported to Lü Bu.

Lü Bu deployed his troops in five field armies. Gao Shun marched to Xiaopei against Qiao Rui; Chen Gong to Yidu against Chen Ji; Zhang Liao and Zang Ba to Langye against Lei Bo; Song Xian and Wei Xu to Jieshi against Chen Lan. Lü Bu himself led a force on to the main road to confront Zhang Xun. Each army comprised ten thousand men. Other troops were left guarding the city.

Lü Bu advanced and camped thirty *li* from the city. Zhang Xun saw he could not prevail and camped twenty *li* away to await reinforcements. It was night. As the second watch began, Han Xian

and Yang Feng had their men set fires and guide Lü Bu's soldiers into the camp. Zhang Xun's army quickly became disorganized. Lü Bu attacked in full force, and Zhang Xun fled. Lü Bu chased him until daybreak. He then met up with Ji Ling's reinforcements, and the two armies prepared to engage. But Han Xian and Yang Feng attacked and drove off Ji Ling's army. Lü Bu in pursuit took a heavy toll of the fleeing enemy.

At that moment Lü Bu saw a band of warriors approaching from behind a hill, marking out with flags and banners a detachment of horsemen holding high the imperial regalia. There were streamers showing the dragon and phoenix, and the sun and moon; feathered standards with the key stars of the four quadrants as well as the five directions of earth; and there were the gold mace and the silver battle-axe, the gilded axe and the white yak-tail command banner. Beneath a golden parasol draped with thin buff silk Yuan Shu rode in imperial yellow armor, a knife swinging from each wrist.⁶

Yuan Shu came before his battle line and swore, "Lü Bu! Traitor and slave!" Lü Bu raised his halberd and advanced. Yuan Shu's commander Li Feng engaged him. In a brief clash Lü Bu speared Li Feng's hand; he dropped his weapon and fled. Lü Bu's army, in a massive onslaught, dealt Yuan Shu a devastating defeat, capturing countless horses and pieces of armor. Yuan Shu had fled several *li* when a fresh detachment led by Lord Guan came from behind a hill and intercepted him. "Renegade!" Guan shouted defiantly. "Prepare to die!" Yuan Shu panicked. His remaining ranks broke under Guan's assault. Finally Yuan Shu escaped to his home region below the River Huai, accompanied by a remnant of his army.⁷

To celebrate the victory Lü Bu invited Lord Guan, Han Xian, Yang Feng, and a number of other leaders to a feast in Xuzhou. He also rewarded the soldiers of his five armies. The next day Lord Guan took leave. Lü Bu recommended Han Xian as protector of Yidu, and Yang Feng as protector of Langye. Lü Bu had wanted to keep the two generals in Xuzhou, but Chen Gui opposed it, arguing, "Establishing them east of the mountains will make all the towns there acknowledge your authority." Convinced, Lü Bu dispatched the two generals. But Chen Deng was puzzled by his father's maneuver. "Why didn't you want them here to support us against Lü Bu?" he asked. "If they sided with him," Chen Gui replied, "we would only be sharpening the tiger's claws." Chen Deng bowed to his father's wisdom.

Back in Huainan, Yuan Shu asked Sun Ce for troops to avenge his defeat. Sun Ce refused the request outright. "With *my* royal seal," he ranted, "Yuan Shu has arrogated the name of emperor, breaking his allegiance to the ruling house. It is high treason! And I mean to wage war and bring him to justice. Does the traitor expect my help?" Yuan Shu exploded with rage on receiving Sun Ce's rejection. "That milksop!" he cried. "How dare he! I will strike first!" Only Senior Adviser Yang Dajiang's strenuous opposition persuaded Shu to desist.

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After sending his reply to Yuan Shu, Sun Ce defended the strategic points on the Great River as a precaution. At this juncture Cao Cao's envoy arrived in the Southland appointing Sun Ce governor of Kuaiji and authorizing him to chastise Yuan Shu by force of arms. Sun Ce and his advisers were eager for action, but Senior Adviser Zhang Zhao argued, "Despite his recent defeat, Yuan Shu has too many men and supplies for us to risk attack. Why not write back to Cao Cao urging *him* to march south against Yuan Shu, while we coordinate from the rear? Between the two armies Yuan Shu will be

crushed; if we miscalculate, we can look to Cao for help." Sun Ce put this proposition in his reply to Cao Cao.

Back in the capital after being routed by Zhang Xiu, Cao Cao built a shrine to honor the memory of the late lamented warrior Dian Wei. He appointed Dian Wei's son Man to the Imperial Corps and took the lad into his own home. Cao Cao received Sun Ce's letter at the same time as a report that Yuan Shu, pressed by shortages, was plundering Chenliu, Cao's home district. Cao mustered an army and marched south, hoping to profit from Yuan Shu's difficulties. Cao Ren stayed behind to protect the capital; all other generals joined the campaign. Cao Cao's force came to one hundred and seventy thousand, and he had over one thousand wagons loaded with grain and supplies. As he set out, he informed Sun Ce, Liu Xuande, and Lü Bu of his intentions.⁸

Protector Liu Xuande greeted Cao Cao at the boundary of his province, Yuzhou, and was invited into the prime minister's camp. After the amenities, Xuande presented Cao Cao with two severed heads. "Who were these men?" Cao asked in astonishment. "Han Xian and Yang Feng," Xuande answered. "Why did you kill them?" Cao asked. "Lü Bu's orders," was the reply. "They let their soldiers run riot in the villages of Yidu and Langye, counties they were sent to govern, so I invited them to a banquet to discuss matters. While the wine was circulating, I dropped my cup as a signal, and Lord Guan and Zhang Fei killed them. We have accepted the surrender of their men. Today I come to beg forgiveness."

"You have rid the dynasty of a great evil," Cao Cao said, "and thus rendered a great service. There is no offense to forgive." He rewarded Xuande richly, and both armies proceeded to the boundary of Xuzhou, where Lü Bu met them. Cao Cao consoled Lü Bu and appointed him general of the Left, promising to send the seal of office after returning to Xuchang. Lü Bu was gratified. Cao Cao then assigned Lü Bu to the left and Xuande to the right, while he directed the center. Xiahou Dun and Yu Jin formed the vanguard.

On learning of Cao Cao's arrival, Yuan Shu sent his senior general, Qiao Rui, with fifty thousand men to counter the invaders. The two armies met near Shouchun.⁹ Qiao Rui rode out first but was speared and killed by Xiahou Dun; Yuan Shu's army retreated to Shouchun. Sun Ce's boats attacked from the west bank of the river, and Lü Bu struck from the east. Xuande attacked from the south, and Cao Cao, at the head of one hundred and seventy thousand, from the north. Yang Dajiang advised Yuan Shu, "The Shouchun region has suffered flood and drought for the past several years. Food is short everywhere. The people will not tolerate another call to arms, and so the enemy cannot easily be thrown back. We had better stay inside the city and refuse battle. When the enemy's food runs out, they will revolt. In the interim, Your Majesty, take your Royal Guard across the Huai to familiar terrain, and you can avoid their thrust."

On this advice Yuan Shu took the rest of his army and the entire contents of his treasury across the Huai, leaving Li Feng, Yue Jiu, Liang Gang, and Chen Ji defending Shouchun with one hundred thousand troops. Meanwhile, maintaining the siege was proving a heavy burden for Cao Cao's army; it required vast stores of grain, but the surrounding districts, stricken by dearth, could offer no aid. Cao pressed for battle, but General Li Feng kept within the walls. After another month Cao Cao, faced with dwindling supplies, borrowed one hundred thousand bushels of grain from Sun Ce. But he did not distribute it.

During the emergency Granary Officer Wang Hou, who served under Ren Jun, administrator of rations, petitioned Cao Cao: "There is too little to feed so many. What shall we do?" "Distribute short

rations," Cao Cao commanded him, "to tide us over." "And if they complain?" asked Wang Hou. "I have provided for that," Cao assured him. The officer gave out reduced rations as ordered. Meanwhile, Cao Cao sent his men around to the camps. From them he learned that soldiers were accusing him of cheating them. Cao Cao then summoned Wang Hou and said, "You have something I would like to borrow to quiet the soldiers. I hope you will not begrudge it." "What do I have," Wang Hou answered, "of use to Your Excellency?" "Your head," Cao replied, "to show the men." "But I have committed no fault!" the officer cried in fright. "I know that," Cao said. "I must act, or the army will revolt. I will see after your family personally, so have no concern on their account." Before Wang Hou could say more, the executioners were already pushing him out. They cut off his head and hung it from a pole with a signboard reading, "Wang Hou: Duly Punished by Military Law for Purposefully Assigning Short Rations and Stealing from the Granary." This measure improved the troops' morale.¹⁰

The next day Cao Cao ordered all camp commanders, "Work together and destroy the city in three days' time, or I will have you all put to death." Cao Cao went personally to the wall of Shouchun and supervised the filling of the moat with earth and stones. Rocks and arrows rained down from the walls. Two lieutenants tried to get away, but Cao cut them down himself. He then dismounted and joined in the earth-moving work, stirring officers and men to greater efforts. The moat got filled; the troops advanced, overcoming Shouchun's defenders, and gained the wall. Once inside, they killed the guards and opened the gates. Troops swarmed into Shouchun. Yuan Shu's generals were executed publicly. Every building fashioned in the imperial style and all prohibited fascimilies of the royal regalia were burned. The city was then stripped bare.

Cao Cao wanted to pursue Yuan Shu across the Huai, but Xun Wenruo objected: "It's not in our interest to impoverish the farmers and soldiers with further marches when food is as scarce as it has been these past years. I suggest returning to Xuchang until the winter wheat is ripe. We can try again in spring when rations should be dependable." The sudden appearance of a messenger dissuaded Cao Cao from chasing Yuan Shu: "Zhang Xiu has thrown in with Liu Biao and is mounting new attacks. Nanyang and Jiangling are again in revolt. Cao Hong, after losing several battles, cannot control the situation and has begged me to report the emergency." Cao Cao ordered Sun Ce to deploy his troops across the Great River to keep Liu Biao off balance while he hurried back to the capital to plan the battle against Zhang Xiu.

Before leaving, Cao gave Xuande special instructions: he had him station troops in Xiaopei and reestablish fraternal ties and cooperative relations with Lü Bu. After Lü Bu had departed for Xuzhou, Cao took Xuande aside. "I ordered you to Xiaopei," he said, "to 'dig the tiger's pit.' Keep in touch with Chen Gui and Chen Deng, and things should proceed smoothly. I will assist from without."¹¹

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Back in Xuchang, Cao Cao learned that Duan Wei had killed Li Jue and that Wu Xi had killed Guo Si, bringing the severed heads to the capital. In addition, Duan Wei was holding two hundred members of Li Jue's household. Cao Cao ordered the whole clan executed in groups at each of the gates and the severed heads posted as a warning. The people cheered the punishment of the two generals who had attacked the western capital and forced Emperor Xian to flee.

The restoration of order and tranquility was celebrated at a grand court banquet. Emperor Xian

ascended the ceremonial hall and presided. Duan Wei was made General Who Purges Sedition and Wu Xi was made General Who Destroys Villainy. Both thanked Cao Cao for his favor and were sent to secure Chang'an. In a memorial to the throne Cao Cao reported Zhang Xiu's rebellion and declared his intent to suppress it. The Son of Heaven personally saw Cao Cao off with the army in a grand procession to the outskirts of the capital. It was the fourth month of the third year of Jian An (A.D. 198).

Leaving Xun Wenruo in the capital to supervise military operations, Cao Cao directed the main army's advance. The wheat was ripe along the way, but the peasants, frightened by the soldiers, would not work in the fields. Cao Cao circulated a formal letter of assurance to the village elders and local officials: "I hold the Emperor's decree to chastise the rebels and protect the people; for reasons beyond our control we have to march in a harvest season. We shall execute any officer high or low who tramples crops while crossing a field, enforcing military law without mercy or exception. Let no one fear or doubt us." The peasants welcomed the order with open praise and crowded round the approaching armies to pay their respects. Passing through the fields, the officers dismounted and carefully held aside the wheat stalks with their hands.

One day a turtledove flew up and caught the eye of Cao Cao's horse. The horse bolted onto a field and ruined a swath of crop. Cao Cao summoned his first secretary and proposed that his crime be punished. The officer said, "How can we condemn Your Excellency?" "If I violate a law I myself made," Cao Cao declared, "how can I hold my men to it?" He raised his sword to his throat. Soldiers and officers stopped him. Guo Jia said, "According to Confucius' *Spring and Autumn Annals*, 'the law shall not apply to those in the highest positions.'" Cao Cao brooded silently; then he said, "Since the *Spring and Autumn* so specifies, we may waive the death penalty. Let this stand for my head." He cut off his hair with his sword and threw it down for all to see. "The prime minister," messengers explained, displaying Cao's hair, "deserved to die as an example to all for destroying the wheat. In this case his hair has been cut off instead." The entire army was stricken with fear, and regulations were meticulously observed. A poet of later times wrote:

Ten myriad silver wolves, ten myriad warrior hearts—¹²
Can one man's voiced command rule this vast army?
He sheared his locks in lieu of his own head.
The depths of Cao Man's craft are plain to see.

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Zhang Xiu learned that Cao Cao was advancing west and requested Liu Biao's support on the southern front. He then went forth to meet Cao Cao, aided by two generals, Lei Xu and Zhang Xian. The opposing battle lines consolidated their ranks as Zhang Xiu rode forth and reviled Cao Cao: "False in virtue, false in loyalty; man of no shame, no integrity! Are you anything more than a beast?" Enraged, Cao Cao sent Xu Chu into battle, and Zhang Xiu sent Zhang Xian to meet him.

In a brief exchange Xu Chu thrust Zhang Xian from his horse and killed him. Zhang Xiu's army went quickly down to defeat, and Cao Cao chased him to the walls of Nanyang. Zhang Xiu entered and sealed the city. Cao Cao laid siege, but the wide moat kept him from approaching. He ordered it filled and then used sacks of soil mixed with straw, sticks, and twigs to make a crude ramp against the wall. He also erected a scaling ladder for spying into the city. Cao Cao himself rode around the wall

for three days overseeing the preparations. Finally he ordered earth and brambles piled up at a corner near the west gate, assembled his commanders, and ordered them to climb up. Inside Nanyang, Jia Xu told Zhang Xiu: "I can see what Cao Cao is up to. Let's match his tricks with some of our own." Indeed:

The strongest to the strong shall yield;
And schemers to counter-schemers shall fall prey!

Would Jia Xu outsmart Cao Cao a second time?

READ ON.



***Jia Xu Outwits the Enemy and Carries the Day;
Xiahou Dun Plucks Out and Swallows His Wounded Eye***

JIA XU SAW THROUGH CAO CAO'S PLAN and prepared countermeasures. "For three days I have been watching Cao Cao circling and examining the wall," he told Zhang Xiu. "I'm sure he noted those crudely built sections of rammed earth at the southeast corner, as well as the half-wrecked 'antler' barrier of spikes and branches. He knows the southeast corner is vulnerable and has conspicuously piled up wood and grass on the northwest, hoping we'll move our men there so that he can get in over the southeast corner at night." "What do we do?" Zhang Xiu asked. "That's easy enough," Jia Xu replied. "Call up your best men tomorrow. Feed them well, equip them lightly, and hide them in the dwellings near the southeast. Then on the northwest, station civilians disguised as soldiers. Come nightfall, let Cao Cao climb the southeast corner. When his men are all inside, sound the bombard and spring the ambush. Cao Cao will be captured." The plan pleased Zhang Xiu.

The next morning scouts told Cao Cao that Zhang Xiu had rallied his men to defend the northwest, leaving the southeast open. "So they've fallen for it," Cao Cao said. He ordered equipment for digging and climbing readied under cover. During the day he maintained pressure on the northwest, but as night deepened he brought his best troops to the southeast, got across the moat, and broke down the "antler" barrier.

The city was still when Cao Cao's men poured in. The bombard sounded and the ambush commenced. The invaders struggled to retreat, but Zhang Xiu's stalwarts took a bloody toll. Cao Cao's army, shattered, fled dozens of *li*. Zhang Xiu pressed the slaughter until dawn; then he pulled back into the city. Cao Cao's army had lost over fifty thousand men and vast quantities of supplies. Moreover, Lü Qian and Yu Jin were wounded.

The victorious Zhang Xiu, at Jia Xu's insistence, urged Liu Biao by letter to cut off Cao Cao's retreat. Liu Biao wanted to meet the request at once, but scouts informed him that Sun Ce had moved troops into Hukou. Kuai Liang advised Liu Biao: "Sun Ce's deployment around the river is part of Cao Cao's plan. If we don't follow up Zhang Xiu's victory, we will pay for it later." Liu Biao agreed. He assigned Huang Zu to secure Jing-zhou's points of entry while he marched to Anzhong to intercept Cao Cao. Zhang Xiu, on getting word that Liu Biao was joining the fight, began harassing Cao Cao's rear.

Cao Cao's army moved slowly. At the River Yu beyond Xiangyang, Cao Cao groaned impulsively. "I couldn't help crying out," he explained to his startled followers. "It was here that I lost General Dian Wei last year." He called a halt and spread a sacrificial feast to mourn the soul of Dian Wei. Cao Cao personally offered incense, weeping as he paid homage. The entire army was profoundly stirred. After the memorial service Cao Cao made offerings for his nephew Cao Anmin and for his son Cao Ang as well as for the soldiers who had fallen in the battle. Even the gallant

Fergana horse, shot dead from under Cao, was ritually honored.

The following day Xun Wenruo sent a messenger to inform Cao Cao that Liu Biao, aiding Zhang Xiu, had taken Anzhong to block the retreat. Cao Cao replied in a letter, "We are making only a few *li* each day, and I know Zhang Xiu is close behind. But I have not overlooked him, as you shall see. I will destroy him at Anzhong, rest assured." Then, quickening his pace, Cao Cao came to the outskirts of Anzhong county.

Liu Biao already controlled the strategic points around the city, and Zhang Xiu was closing in rapidly. Cao Cao ordered his men to work all night cutting passages through the strongpoints and placing ambushes there. As dawn broke, Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu linked up. By the small number of Cao Cao's troops they deduced that he had run away; so they rushed into the newly fortified positions, springing Cao's ambushes. Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu suffered a severe defeat. Cao Cao's men now broke through Anzhong's points of access and made camp as Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu strove to reorganize their ranks. "Who expected so treacherous a trap?" said Liu Biao. "We'll have another chance at him," Zhang Xiu answered. They regrouped at Anzhong.

At this point Xun Wenruo relayed an urgent report concerning Yuan Shao's impending attack on the capital, forcing Cao Cao to rush his army home. Zhang Xiu wanted to pursue Cao, but Jia Xu said, "If you do, you will fail." Liu Biao also favored pursuit, arguing, "This is an opportunity not to be lost" ; and so the two generals took after Cao Cao with ten thousand men. They overtook Cao's rear guard some ten *li* from Anzhong, where Cao's soldiers dealt them a resounding defeat. After returning, Zhang Xiu said to Jia Xu, "I should have listened to you." "Now," responded Jia Xu, "you can regroup and pursue." "We've just been badly beaten," the two generals said. "How can we go and chase him again?" "This time you will win," was the adviser's reply. "If I prove wrong, my head is yours." Zhang Xiu was persuaded; Liu Biao remained behind. Zhang Xiu defeated Cao's troops and dispersed his supply train, but he could not exploit his advantage: a group of soldiers swarmed out from behind a hill and blocked his advance. Zhang Xiu returned to Anzhong.

Liu Biao questioned Jia Xu: "The first time we lost with our best troops, as you predicted. The second time we sent defeated troops against victorious ones and, as you predicted, won the battle. You proved right twice in opposite circumstances. What was your reasoning?" "It was simple," replied Jia Xu. "You are a fine strategist, but no match for Cao Cao. Though defeated, he would make sure to have crack troops in the rear in case of pursuit: our troops, however excellent, had no chance. I knew we would lose. Cao Cao's sudden retreat, however, must have been caused by a threat to the capital; so, after spoiling our attack, he would have had to get back as quickly as possible and not bother any longer with the rear defense. That's why the second attack succeeded." Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu acknowledged Jia Xu's wisdom. Jia Xu persuaded Liu Biao to return to Jingzhou and Xiu to defend Xiangyang, so that the two could reinforce each other. Thus the two armies parted (it was the summer of A.D. 198).

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As Cao Cao was racing to Xuchang to head off Yuan Shao's invasion, he heard of Zhang Xiu's second pursuit. He dashed to the rear only to find that Zhang Xiu's army had already withdrawn. Harried survivors told Cao, "We were saved when some troops came from behind the hill and blocked the enemy's advance." Cao Cao wanted to meet the rescuer. Spear in hand, the man

dismounted, saluting Cao Cao and kneeling. It was Imperial Corps Commander Li Tong (Wenda) from Pingchun in Jiangxia. "I was guarding Runan," Li Tong explained to Cao Cao, "when I heard you were battling Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu; so I've come to help." The grateful Cao Cao awarded him the title Lord of Proven Merit and ordered him to defend the western side of Runan against Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu. Li Tong thanked Cao Cao and went to carry out his mission.

Cao Cao returned to Xuchang, where he apprised the Emperor of Sun Ce's service; the Emperor honored him as General Who Brings Renegades to Justice and awarded him the rank of lord of Wu. Cao Cao sent the imperial decree bestowing these honors to the Southland and directed Sun Ce to harass Liu Biao's positions. Cao Cao returned to his ministerial residence and received all the officials. Afterward Xun Wenruo asked, "Your Excellency went to Anzhong with deliberate slowness. How did you know you would defeat the enemy?" "They had no avenue of retreat," Cao Cao replied, "and were sure to fight to the death, so I took my time and lured them into my traps. The outcome was no surprise." Xun Wenruo saluted Cao's ingenuity.

At this point Guo Jia entered. "Why are you late?" Cao Cao asked. Guo Jia handed him a letter conveying Yuan Shao's request for food and men for his campaign against Gongsun Zan. "I thought Yuan Shao was going to attack us!" Cao Cao exclaimed. "He's come up with another scheme now that I've returned." The arrogant tone of the letter outraged Cao Cao. "I'd love to teach him a lesson," he went on. "But do you think we're strong enough?"

Guo Jia replied, "As you know, Liu Bang, founder of the Han, and his archrival, Xiang Yu, were hardly an even match. But the Supreme Ancestor, Liu Bang, prevailed through superior intelligence, and Xiang Yu, though the stronger, was eventually hunted down. Now then, Yuan Shao has ten weak points, and you have ten advantages. The size of his forces should not intimidate us. Consider. First, Yuan Shao governs with a profusion of rules and regulations; your order is simple and not constraining. Thus, you excel in principles of government. Second, Yuan Shao acts without legitimacy; you lead with the imperial sanction. Thus, your cause is true and honorable. Third, since the reigns of Huan and Ling, court rule has suffered from laxity, and Yuan Shao, too, has the same habit; you require strict discipline. Thus, you excel in administration. Fourth, Yuan Shao is ostensibly tolerant but inwardly envious and awards appointments mainly to his relatives; you are outwardly direct and inwardly understanding and employ men according to their ability. Thus, you excel in judgment. Fifth, Yuan Shao makes many plans but rarely a decision; you formulate a plan and act on it. Thus, you excel in strategy. Sixth, Yuan Shao seeks only to enhance his reputation; you treat others with utter sincerity. Thus, you excel in morality. Seventh, Yuan Shao is solicitous of those close to him, indifferent to those farther away; you have an all-embracing concern. Thus, you excel in humanity. Eighth, Yuan Shao is often misled by petty slander; you are impervious to gossip. Thus, you excel in discretion. Ninth, Yuan Shao does not distinguish right and wrong; you have rules and regulations that are strict and clear. Thus, you excel in civil administration. Tenth, Yuan Shao is inclined to take empty stances but is ignorant of the essentials of warfare; you have won battles even when outnumbered, waging war with uncanny skill. Thus, you excel in arms. You will prevail over Yuan Shao by virtue of these ten points of excellence."

Cao Cao smiled appreciatively. "I don't think," he said, "I am adequate to live up to such a description." "I fully agree with Guo Jia's evaluation," said Xun Wenruo. "Though Yuan Shao has many troops, need we fear them?" "The most immediate threat," Guo Jia went on, "is Lü Bu, so Yuan Shao's present campaign in the northeast against Gongsun Zan frees us to take care of Lü Bu and clean

up the southeast. This done, we can turn our attention to Yuan Shao. That makes the most sense. Otherwise, the minute we attack Yuan Shao, Lü Bu will move against us, creating serious trouble." Cao Cao accepted his advice and began making plans. At Xun Wenruo's suggestion he alerted Liu Xuande. At the same time he sent Yuan Shao's envoy back, granting in the name of the Emperor the highest titles for Yuan Shao: regent, grand commandant, and concurrently chief commander of the four northeastern provinces, Jizhou, Qingzhou, Youzhou, and Bingzhou. Cao Cao also secretly informed Yuan Shao that he would assist him in the campaign against Gongsun Zan. Delighted with Cao Cao's response, Yuan Shao commenced operations.

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Meanwhile in Xuzhou, Chen Gui and his son Deng, Cao Cao's allies in Lü Bu's camp, praised Lü Bu's virtues fulsomely at every ceremonial occasion. Lü Bu's chief adviser, Chen Gong, disturbed by their blatant flattery, cautioned, "Chen Gui and Chen Deng have been fawning on you, General. Who knows what they're really up to? Be on your guard." "You slander good men for no reason," Lü Bu retorted. Chen Gong left Lü Bu's presence. "If loyal counsel is refused," he said with a sigh, "we're all doomed." It occurred to Chen Gong to seek a new master, but fearing ridicule, he simply marked time in silent discontent.

One day, hunting in the Xiaopei area to dispel his depression, Chen Gong spotted a courier speeding down the main road. His curiosity piqued, Chen Gong and a few of his attendants chased him down. "Whose message do you carry?" he shouted. The man, recognizing Chen Gong, fumbled for an answer, so Chen Gong ordered him searched. He discovered Liu Xuande's reply to Cao Cao's letter. Chen Gong brought message and messenger to Lü Bu, who demanded an explanation. "His Excellency, Cao Cao," the courier said, "had me carry a letter to Inspector Liu of Yuzhou, and this is his answer. I have no idea what it says." Lü Bu unsealed it and read.¹

I have your order to prepare to attack Lü Bu, and have wasted no time. But with so few troops and a bare handful of commanders, what I can do is limited. If you field a large force, I will gladly serve as the vanguard. I am diligently training my men and preparing equipment as I await your command.

"How could that swine Cao Cao do this to me?" swore Lü Bu. He had the courier executed and then mobilized for war. First, he sent Chen Gong and Zang Ba to link up with the Mount Tai rebels—Sun Guan, Wu Dun, Yin Li, and Chang Xi—in order to secure the districts of Yanzhou and the region east of the mountains. Second, he ordered Gao Shun and Zhang Liao² to capture Xiaopei from Liu Xuande. Third, he dispatched Song Xian and Wei Xu to seize Runan and Yingchuan to the west. Lü Bu himself commanded the main army, which would reinforce the three expeditions.

Gao Shun's approach was reported to Xuande, who quickly called a meeting. Sun Qian advised an emergency appeal to Cao Cao. Jian Yong (Xianhe), a man from Xuande's home region who was serving as his personal assistant, volunteered to go to the capital with a letter. Xuande saw to the city's defenses, taking command of the south gate himself, assigning Sun Qian to the north, Lord Guan to the west, and Zhang Fei to the east. Mi Zhu and his younger brother Mi Fang were dispatched to command the troops in the center. (Mi Zhu's sister had become Xuande's new wife,³ making Xuande brother-in-law to both. That is why he could leave the command of the center and the care of his

family in the hands of Mi Zhu and Mi Fang.)⁴

Gao Shun's army arrived. Xuande climbed the watchtower and shouted to him, "Lü Bu and I have no quarrel. Why have you brought troops here?" "You and Cao Cao conspired to kill my lord—the whole thing has come out. You can turn yourself in," Gao Shun shouted back and signaled the attack. Xuande sealed the city. The next day Zhang Liao attacked the west gate. Lord Guan hailed him from the wall: "Why should a man of distinction waste himself on a traitor?" Zhang Liao lowered his head and made no reply. Lord Guan knew Zhang Liao for a man of devotion and loyalty and refrained from defaming him; nor did he come out and fight.

Zhang Liao shifted his men to the east gate. Zhang Fei met him in the field. Zhang Liao was already pulling back when Lord Guan reached the scene. Zhang Fei wanted to give chase, but Lord Guan recalled him to Xiaopei. "He was on the run," Fei said. "Why not pursue him?" "He's our equal in arms," Lord Guan answered, "and backed off only because I had urged him to repent." Satisfied with this explanation, Zhang Fei held the gate and did not seek battle.⁵

Meanwhile Jian Yong, Xuande's envoy, informed Cao Cao of Lü Bu's attack. Cao Cao took counsel with his advisers. "I want to move on Lü Bu," he told them. "Yuan Shao can't hamper us now, but Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu threaten the rear." Xun You, nephew of Xun Wenruo, said, "Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu are unlikely to act after their recent defeats. But Lü Bu has to be reckoned with. How will we deal with him if he links up with Yuan Shu and the two of them overrun the Huai and Si River region?" "Lü Bu's revolt against the throne," Guo Jia said, "has yet to win popular support. We should strike swiftly." Cao Cao approved a campaign against Lü Bu and sent Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Lü Qian, and Li Dian ahead with fifty thousand soldiers. The main units, under Cao Cao himself, set out in succession. Jian Yong accompanied him.

Spies reported Cao Cao's moves to Gao Shun, who in turn informed Lü Bu. Lü Bu first sent Hou Cheng, He Meng, and Cao Xing to reinforce Gao Shun with two hundred cavalry; this enabled Gao Shun to move his forces thirty *li* from Xiaopei and meet the invaders. Lü Bu himself followed with the main army. Gao Shun's withdrawal told Xuande that Cao Cao would be coming. Leaving Sun Qian guarding the city and the Mi brothers guarding his household, Xuande and his brothers camped outside the wall, ready to aid Cao Cao.

Cao Cao's general Xiahou Dun spotted Gao Shun, raised his spear, and rode out to challenge him. The two horsemen tangled, closing and breaking some forty or fifty times. Then Gao Shun yielded and made for his line; Xiahou Dun galloped after. Gao Shun began circling round his formation; Xiahou Dun would not let up. From a point of vantage, Cao Xing drew his bow and, sighting true, shot Xiahou Dun in his left eye. Bellowing in pain, Xiahou Dun plucked out the arrow; the eyeball had stuck fast to the point. "The essence of my parents cannot be thrown away," he cried, and swallowed the eye. Then he went for Cao Xing and speared him in the face before he could defend himself. Cao Xing fell dead from his horse. The spectacle left both sides aghast.

Xiahou Dun rode back to his men. Now Gao Shun gave chase, waving his troops on. Cao Cao's army was defeated. Xiahou Yuan covered his brother as they fled the field. Lu Qian and Li Dian led the retreat to Jibei, where they camped. The victorious Gao Shun then turned to attack Xuande as Lü Bu arrived with the main army. Lü Bu, Zhang Liao, and Gao Shun split their forces into three to destroy the brothers' three camps.

Indeed:

Swallowing his eye, the valiant Xiahou Dun fought on;
But Cao Cao's vanguard, its commander wounded, could not hold out for long.

And Xuande's fate—what would that be?⁶

READ ON.



Cao Cao Battles Fiercely at Xiapi; Lü Bu Falls at White Gate Tower

GAO SHUN LED ZHANG LIAO to attack Lord Guan's camp; Lü Bu attacked Zhang Fei's. The brothers met the enemy, and Xuande formed two columns to back them up. Lü Bu split his force into squads that hit Lord Guan and Zhang Fei from behind and shattered their companies. Xuande and a few dozen riders dashed back to Xiaopei, Lü Bu close behind. Urgently, Xuande called down the drawbridge, but Lü Bu rode up as it descended. The defenders could not shoot for fear of hitting Xuande, and Lü Bu crashed through the gate, scattering the guard. Behind him more troops stormed into the city. Xuande was desperate. Alone on horseback, he fled by the west gate, abandoning his family.¹

When Lü Bu approached Xuande's house, Mi Zhu met him and said, "A true hero will not destroy a man's family. It is Cao Cao and Cao Cao alone who contends with you for the empire. Xuande will never forget how you saved his life when your arrow hit your halberd's side blade. He is a true friend and has joined Cao Cao because he had to. If only you could sympathize with his position." "Xuande and I have been friends many years. I will do no harm to his family," Lü Bu replied and told Mi Zhu to find a safe place for Xuande's wives in Xuzhou. Lü Bu then headed for Yanzhou and the districts east of the mountains, leaving Gao Shun and Zhang Liao to guard Xiaopei. Xuande's adviser Sun Qian had already left the city; Lord Guan and Zhang Fei had made for the hills with some horsemen.²

On the road outside the town of Xiaopei, Sun Qian overtook Xuande riding alone. "I do not know what has happened to my brothers, and my family is lost, too."³ What am I to do?" Xuande asked. "Go to Cao Cao," Sun Qian replied, "then plan further." Xuande agreed and headed for the capital. Peasants in the villages Xuande entered looking for food along the way outdid one another in serving him as soon as they learned he was Inspector Liu of Yuzhou.⁴

Once he asked for lodging at a household, and a young man came to pay his respects. The lad turned out to be a hunter named Liu An. He wanted to offer the inspector fresh game but, unable to find any, butchered his wife.⁵ At dinner Xuande asked, "What kind of meat is this?" "Wolf," replied Liu An. Suspecting nothing, Xuande ate his fill and retired. Toward dawn he went to the rear to fetch his horse and noticed a woman's corpse in the kitchen. Her arms had been carved away. Then Xuande realized what he had eaten and tears of gratitude streamed from his eyes. As Xuande mounted, Liu An said, "I wish I could accompany you, Inspector, but with my elderly mother to care for, I cannot travel." Xuande expressed his thanks and rode out of the district.⁶

Suddenly, the road ahead was darkened by dust. In the distance Xuande recognized Cao Cao's men. Xuande and Sun Qian rode to the central command, where Cao Cao received them. Xuande told him of the fall of Xiaopei, his separation from his brothers, and the capture of his family. Cao Cao shed tears of sympathy. Xuande also related how Liu An had slaughtered his wife to feed him. Cao

Cao ordered Sun Qian to reward the hunter with one hundred taels of silver.⁷

Cao Cao marched to Jibei, where Xiahou Yuan greeted him and explained that his brother was still recovering from the loss of his eye. Cao Cao went to see Xiahou Dun and subsequently sent him to the capital to recuperate. He also ordered a search made for Lü Bu. The report came back: "Lü Bu, Chen Gong, and Zang Ba have joined with the Mount Tai bandits in attacks on the districts around Yanzhou." Cao Cao dispatched Cao Ren with three thousand soldiers to take Xiaopei, while he and Xuande marched to fight Lü Bu. They advanced east of the Mang-Dang Hills near Xiao Pass. There they were confronted by a force of thirty thousand bandits led by Sun Guan, Wu Dun, Yin Li, and Chang Xi. Cao Cao ordered Xu Chu into battle. The four bandit leaders fell back as Xu Chu threw himself into the combat. Cao Cao pressed the slaughter all the way to the pass.

Lü Bu waited in Xuzhou and kept himself informed. He decided to leave Chen Gui guarding the city and proceed to Xiaopei with Chen Deng to relieve the siege. Before the departure, Chen Gui told his son, "You remember Cao Cao's saying that the situation in the east is in your hands? Lü Bu is on the verge of ruin. The time to act has come." "I can handle things outside," Chen Deng replied. "If Lü Bu returns here defeated, Mi Zhu will help you hold the city. Do not let him in. I will see to my own safety." "But," countered Chen Gui, "Lü Bu's whole family is here and plenty of his followers." "I have provided for that, too," Chen Deng said.

Chen Deng advised Lü Bu, "Xuzhou is beset by enemies; Cao Cao will soon attack in force. We must have a fallback position. Let's move food and money to Xiapi. If Xuzhou is besieged, Xiapi can still supply it. My lord, we must plan ahead." "That makes sense," Lü Bu said. "I will move my wives and daughter there, too."⁸ Lü Bu had Song Xian and Wei Xu transfer his family, grain stores, and cash to Xiapi; then he and Chen Deng started out for Xiao Pass to help his confederates withstand Cao Cao's assault.

Halfway there, Chen Deng said, "Let me go ahead and probe Cao's positions." Lü Bu agreed, and Chen Deng went to the pass, where Chen Gong met him. "Lü Bu is deeply disturbed at your reluctance to advance," Chen Deng said, "and is coming to reprove you." "Cao Cao's forces are overwhelming," Chen Gong argued. "We cannot risk doing more. The entry points are secure. Urge our lord to protect Xiaopei at all costs—that is the best plan."⁹ "Yes, yes, of course," responded Chen Deng.

That night Chen Deng climbed the pass and surveyed Cao Cao's army, which was bearing down on the strongpoint. Unseen in the dark, he shot three arrows—carrying notes he had prepared—into the area below the pass. The next day he took leave of Chen Gong and raced back to Lü Bu. "Sun Guan and the other bandits," he reported, "are ready to surrender the pass to Cao Cao. Chen Gong was still holding this vital point when I left, but you must reinforce him after sundown." "You have saved the pass," Lü Bu replied gratefully and sent Deng hurrying back to Chen Gong with instructions to signal by fire when he wanted Lü Bu to attack.

Next, Deng informed Gong, "Cao's men have already taken the small roads and penetrated our side of the pass. Xuzhou may fall. You must get back there as quickly as you can." Chen Gong abandoned Xiao Pass to rescue Xuzhou. Chen Deng then set the signal fire atop the pass calling for Lü Bu to strike. Thinking himself protected by the night, Lü Bu commenced a fierce attack. Chen Gong met the attack in the darkness; the soldiers cut each other to pieces. Cao Cao, responding to the same signal, made a coordinated strike under the most favorable circumstances. Sun Guan and the other bandits fled in every direction. Lü Bu battled on until morning before he saw through the trick Chen Deng had played. Finally, he met up with Gong and they hurried back to Xuzhou.

A shower of crossbow bolts greeted Lü Bu and Chen Gong at the city gate. Mi Zhu cried to them from the watchtower, "You stole Xuande's city. Now it returns to my lord. You may not enter again." "Give me Chen Gui!" Lü Bu ranted. "I've killed him," Mi Zhu answered. Lü Bu turned to Chen Gong and asked, "Where is Chen Deng?" "Are you still so bound to illusions, General," he asked, "as to call for this depraved traitor?" Lü Bu ordered a general search, but Chen Deng was not to be found.

Chen Gong persuaded Lü Bu to go to Xiaopei. En route they met up with their generals, Gao Shun and Zhang Liao. Lü Bu asked what had happened. "Chen Deng told us," the generals explained, "you were surrounded and had to be rescued." "Another of the traitor's tricks," Gong observed. "I will kill the villain," Lü Bu cried. When he arrived at Xiaopei he found the city already in Cao Ren's hands and Cao Cao's colors flying on the wall.

Standing below, Lü Bu reviled Chen Deng, who appeared above and shouted back, "I am loyal to the Han. I would never serve a traitor like you!" Lü Bu was about to attack when Zhang Fei appeared at the head of an armed contingent. Gao Shun rode forth but fell back before Zhang Fei's assault. Then Lü Bu himself took the field, and the two warriors fought fiercely as another roar of voices announced the arrival of Cao Cao's main army. Overpowered, Lü Bu fled east. Cao's men gave chase. Lü Bu felt himself and his horse failing. More soldiers darted out and blocked his way. Mounted, sword leveled, the commander shouted, "Stand your ground, Lü Bu! I am Lord Guan." Lü Bu made a confused attempt to engage him, but Zhang Fei was too close behind. Unwilling to go on, Lü Bu abandoned the field and fled to Xiapi with Chen Gong. General Hou Cheng came forth with troops and received them.

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Reunited after the rout at Xiaopei, Lord Guan and Zhang Fei shed tears as they spoke of their separation. "I was camping on the Haizhou Road when I got word and rushed here," Lord Guan said. "I stayed around the Mang-Dang Hills. What a stroke of fortune to meet like this!" After exchanging tales, they went to Xuande, before whom they kneeled and touched their hands to the ground. Torn between grief and joy, Xuande led his brothers before Cao Cao. Then all followed the victorious Cao Cao back to Xuzhou, where Mi Zhu received them and reported that Xuande's family was safe. Chen Deng and Chen Gui came to pay their respects.

Cao Cao feasted the commanders. At the banquet he sat in the center, Chen Gui to his right, Xuande to his left, other leaders according to rank. After the festivities Cao Cao showed his appreciation for the contribution made by Chen Gui and his son, Deng, by awarding them a fief of ten counties and appointing Chen Deng General Who Tames the Deep.

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The acquisition of Xuzhou was a great satisfaction to Cao Cao. He began at once to plan the attack on Xiapi. Cheng Yu advised him: "Lü Bu holds this one town and will fight to the death to keep it; he might join Yuan Shu below the River Huai—an alliance that would present quite a problem. For now, have some capable person contain Lü Bu and keep Yuan Shu in check by covering the roads running south. Remember that we still have Zang Ba and Sun Guan and their Mount Tai bandits—that's another danger." "I'll take care of the mountain region," Cao Cao said. "Let Xuande cover the area between Lü Bu and Yuan Shu." "Your Excellency's command is mine to obey," Xuande

answered.

The next day Xuande left Mi Zhu and Jian Yong in Xuzhou and took Sun Qian and his brothers to guard the roads leading south. Cao Cao attacked Xiapi, where Lü Bu, with his reserves of grain and the protection of the River Si, was content to remain on the defensive. His chief adviser, Chen Gong, urged, "Cao Cao's troops have just come. Before they build their camps, let's attack while they are still exhausted and we are rested. We can overcome them." "I've been beaten too often to risk another battle now," Lü Bu replied. "Let them attack. We'll drown them in the Si!"

In a few days Cao Cao's camps were ready. He marched to the city wall and called, "Lü Bu! Answer for yourself!" Lü Bu appeared, standing on the wall. "They say," Cao Cao shouted, "you are trying again to marry into Yuan Shu's family. That's what brings me here. Yuan Shu is a notorious imposter, while you have the elimination of Dong Zhuo to your credit. Why forsake your previous service to the Han to follow a traitor like Yuan Shu? Once this town falls, it will be too late to repent. If, however, you choose to surrender and join with me in supporting the royal house, your present rank and status can be preserved." "Your Excellency," Lü Bu replied, "please hold off while I consider." But Chen Gong shouted, "Traitor!" and released an arrow that pierced the parasol above Cao Cao's head. "I'll have your life, then," Cao Cao swore, and commenced the attack.¹⁰

Chen Gong advised Lü Bu: "Cao Cao has come too far to mount a sustained assault. Station cavalry and soldiers outside, General, while I hole up inside. If he attacks you, I will strike from behind. If he attacks the city, you rescue me from his rear. In ten days their food should be gone, and we can catch them between us." "Absolutely right!" Lü Bu said and prepared his armor. It was the coldest time of year; Lü Bu warned his men to take plenty of padding.

Lady Yan, Lü Bu's principal wife, asked, "Where are you going, my lord?" Lü Bu explained the plan. "You are entrusting the city wholly to Chen Gong," she said, "abandoning your wife to venture out alone? What if he seizes power? How could I remain true to my marriage vow?" Lü Bu, torn by indecision, remained in the city three days more.

"General," Chen Gong urged, "we are surrounded. The enemy will box us in if you don't move outside." "I prefer a tight defense," Lü Bu countered. "The latest news," Gong pressed, "is that Cao Cao has sent to Xuchang for more food. Sooner or later he'll have to be resupplied. Take our best troops and intercept the delivery."

Lü Bu, convinced by Chen Gong's argument, again went to Lady Yan to explain. But she wept and pleaded, "Once you go, how will Chen Gong and General Gao Shun hold the city? If anything goes wrong, what use will there be for regrets? You abandoned me once before in Chang'an. Luckily, we were reunited—only because Pang Shu hid me. I never thought you would do it again. But you must not give your wife a second thought. You have a great future before you." She cried more bitterly.

Lü Bu despaired of reaching a decision and took the dilemma to his concubine Diaochan, who said, "My life depends on yours. Do not risk it." "You need not worry," Lü Bu assured her. "With my halberd and my fleet Red Hare, who dares approach me?" But to Chen Gong he said, "That story about Cao's running out of food is typical of his tricks. I'm not budging." Chen Gong left Lü Bu and sighed, "We're done for! And there will be no decent burial for us, either!" After this, Lü Bu stayed indoors all day drinking with Lady Yan and Diaochan to dispel his sorrows.

Counselors Xu Si and Wang Kai came before Lü Bu and presented a plan: "Yuan Shu is in Huainan; his influence is great. Why not renew the attempt to form an alliance by marriage with him, General? If he sends troops to relieve us, we will be able to defeat Cao Cao with a two-sided

attack." Lü Bu approved the plan and ordered the two to take a letter to Yuan Shu. Xu Si said, "We will need a company of troops to clear a way for us." Lü Bu accordingly ordered Zhang Liao and He Meng to take one thousand men and conduct the envoys through the enemy checkpoint.

At the second watch Zhang Liao and He Meng, the one in the van and the other in the rearguard, fought their way out from Xiapi. In their two charges, they skirted Xuande's vast stockade, outracing some commanders who tried to pursue them, and made it through the checkpoint. He Meng, in command of five hundred men, continued on with Xu Si and Wang Kai; Zhang Liao led the other five hundred back. Approaching the checkpoint, however, Liao found Lord Guan blocking his way. A skirmish was avoided when Gao Shun rode out from the city and escorted Zhang Liao back into Xiapi.

Lü Bu's envoys, Xu Si and Wang Kai, reached Shouchun; there Yuan Shu received them in audience, and they delivered Lü Bu's letter. Yuan Shu said, "The last time, Lü Bu killed my envoy and reneged on the marriage. What is this inquiry about?" Xu Si replied, "He was duped by Cao Cao's treacherous scheme. I beseech Your Majesty to consider this with great care."¹¹ "If your master were not at Cao Cao's mercy," Yuan Shu said, "he would never be offering his daughter to us." "If you do not save him, Your Majesty," Wang Kai responded, "the protection you afford one another will be gone—to Your Majesty's own disadvantage." "How fickle and faithless Lü Bu is," Yuan Shu said; but he added, "Send the girl first; then I'll send troops." The two envoys departed with due ceremony and started back to Xiapi guarded by He Meng.

As they reached the perimeter of Xuande's encampment, Xu Si said, "We cannot pass in daylight. When night falls, Wang Kai and I will go first; He Meng can guard the rear." The three agreed to this plan. That night Xu Si and Wang Kai managed to get by the encampment, but as He Meng started to follow them, he was stopped by Zhang Fei. After a brief clash, Zhang Fei captured He Meng and put his guard to bloody flight. The prisoner was first brought to Xuande, who then had him delivered to Cao Cao in the main camp. He Meng related in detail the nature of his mission for Lü Bu. Enraged, Cao Cao had him beheaded at the entrance to the camp and had messengers warn all stations to maintain vigilance. He ordered the maximum punishment for anyone letting Lü Bu or his men slip through. A shiver of fear ran through the army.

Xuande returned to his position and instructed his brothers: "We sit squarely on the key route in Huainan. You must take the greatest care not to permit the least violation of Cao Cao's command." "Didn't we just capture one of Lü Bu's rebel commanders?" Zhang Fei demanded. "I don't see any reward coming from Cao Cao—only an attempt to scare us. What for?" "That's not so," Xuande replied. "He commands the entire army. Is there a better way to ensure obedience? Do not violate his order." The brothers assented and withdrew.¹²

Meanwhile, Xu Si and Wang Kai returned from their mission and conveyed Yuan Shu's agreement to send troops after the delivery of Lü Bu's daughter. "And how am I to send her?" Lü Bu asked. "They've captured He Meng," Xu Si responded, "so Cao Cao knows our plan and will try to thwart it. You are the only one, General, who can get her safely through their lines." "What about today?" Lü Bu said. "An inauspicious day," Xu Si replied. "Tomorrow should be favorable, but only between sundown and midnight." Lü Bu told Gao Shun and Zhang Liao, "Take three thousand men and ready a small carriage. I will go the first two hundred *li*; you finish the journey without me."

The next night, during the second watch, Lü Bu wrapped his daughter in cotton wadding, outfitted her in armor, and set her on his back. Weapon in hand, he mounted and slipped out of the city,

attended by Gao Shun and Zhang Liao. They were headed toward Xuande's camps when the drums rolled: Lord Guan and Zhang Fei barred the way, shouting, "Halt!" Lü Bu had little heart for combat but wanted to force his way out; just then Xuande arrived ready for the kill. The two companies battled hotly. Lü Bu, though a warrior of boundless courage, would not rush the enemy lines lest the girl come to harm. But Xu Huang and Xu Chu were menacing him from the rear, and all around men were shouting, "Don't let Lü Bu get away." Finally he was forced back into Xiapi, and Xuande recalled his fighters. Xu Huang and the others returned to Cao Cao's camp. Not one of Lü Bu's men had succeeded in getting through Xuande's blockade. In despair Lü Bu drank heavily.

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Cao Cao's offensive against Xiapi, after two months, had stalled. Besides, he had news requiring his return to the capital: "Governor of Henei, Zhang Yang, had wanted to send Lü Bu troops, but his lieutenant Yang Chou killed him. Yang Chou had wanted to present the governor's head to Your Excellency but was killed in turn by one of the governor's henchmen. Their relief force is now moving toward Quan city." Cao Cao sent Shi Huan to kill the henchmen. He then assembled his commanders and said, "Governor Zhang Yang is fortunately out of the way; but we still have Yuan Shao in the north to worry about, not to mention Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu. This siege has gone on too long without results. I want to call a truce and return to the capital. What do you say?"

Xun You was swift to oppose: "Lü Bu's fighting spirit is low after many defeats. An army is only as good as its leader: when the leader fails, the men flag. His adviser Chen Gong is shrewd enough but sluggish. Now—before Lü Bu's morale revives and before Gong can decide on a plan—strike and take him." "I have a plan for taking the city," Guo Jia added, "a plan far more effective than an army of two hundred thousand." "Don't tell me," Xun Wenruo broke in, "that you want to divert water from the rivers Yi and Si into the city?" "Exactly," replied Guo Jia. Cao Cao was delighted and ordered his men to carry out the project.

Cao Cao's army watched from high ground as the waters flooded Xiapi. Only the area near the east gate remained dry. Soldiers raced to Lü Bu with the news. "I have a champion horse," Lü Bu said, "that crosses water as if it were land, flat and dry. We have nothing to fear." Joined by his wives, Lü Bu went on sating himself with choice wines. His face grew wasted from his excesses. Once he stared into the mirror and exclaimed, "How wine and lust have ruined me! Starting today I shall ban them." Lü Bu sent an order around the city that anyone caught drinking would be executed.

The prohibition was broken by Hou Cheng, one of Lü Bu's top generals. The general's stableman had stolen fifteen horses, meaning to deliver them to Xuande. Hou Cheng pursued and killed the thief and brought back the horses. When his commanders came to congratulate him, Hou Cheng fermented five or six vats of wine to celebrate the recovery of the horses. At the same time, lest Lü Bu take the celebration amiss, Hou Cheng took five jars to Lü Bu's residence, saying, "It was thanks to your awesome prestige that we recovered our horses. All the commanders are celebrating, and we have brewed this wine, which we offer first to you for your permission to drink." But Lü Bu retorted, "You brew wine for a party on the heels of my ban? You must be planning to attack me!" He ordered Hou Cheng removed and executed. Song Xian and Wei Xu pleaded for him, but Lü Bu said, "Purposeful violation of my order will be met with the most severe penalty. However, in consideration of the commanders, I will let him go with one hundred lashes." The appeals continued,

and so Lü Bu dismissed Hou Cheng with fifty cuts. The commanders were deeply disheartened.

Song Xian and Wei Xu comforted Hou Cheng, who said tearfully, "You saved my life." "Lü Bu loves only his family," Xian said. "We are chaff to him," added Wei Xu. "The city is besieged; the towers are flooded round—we are done for." "He has no humanity, no honor. Why not leave him to his fate?" suggested Xian. "That's not a hero's part," replied Wei Xu. "Let's deliver him to Cao Cao instead." At this point Hou Cheng spoke up: "I suffered for recapturing the horses, yet it is Red Hare that he depends on. If you two seize Lü Bu and deliver the city, I will steal his horse and present it to Cao Cao myself." Thus the three men set their course.

That night Hou Cheng entered the stable, removed the renowned horse, and fled the city. Wei Xu let him through the gate, then feigned pursuit. When Hou Cheng reached Cao Cao's camp, he presented the horse to his lieutenants. He told them a white flag on the city wall would be their signal to attack Xiapi. Accordingly, Cao Cao ordered copies of the following proclamation tied to arrows and shot over the wall:

Regent-Marshal Cao Cao, empowered by the sovereign's illustrious mandate, has taken up arms against Lü Bu. Whoever opposes himself to this great undertaking will fall to the sword, together with his entire clan, on the day of conquest. Whoever delivers Lü Bu—dead or alive—be he commander or commoner, will gain rank and wealth. Let all be cognizant of these instructions.

The next day at dawn the walls seemed to shake from the tumult the besiegers raised. Alarmed, Lü Bu picked up his halberd and ascended the wall, checking each gate. He vowed to punish Wei Xu for letting Hou Cheng get away with his prize steed. Beyond the wall Cao's soldiers saw the white flag and launched their attack. Lü Bu, virtually alone, resisted the assault, which went on from dawn to midday before abating slightly. Giving way to fatigue, Lü Bu dozed off in the city tower. Song Xian dismissed the guards, removed the halberd, and, with Wei Xu's help, tied up Lü Bu. Jerking awake, Lü Bu called for his guard, but the captors cut them down and waved the signal flag. Cao Cao's men stormed the wall. "We have Lü Bu alive!" shouted Wei Xu. General Xiahou Dun refused to believe it until Song Xian threw down Lü Bu's famed halberd and opened the city gate. Cao Cao's soldiers poured through. Gao Shun and Zhang Liao were trapped by the flood at the western gate and captured; Chen Gong was taken by Xu Huang at the southern gate.

After entering Xiapi, Cao Cao ordered the river restored to its normal course and a placard hung assuring the people of their safety. Together with Liu Xuande, whose two brothers stood beside him, Cao Cao sat in the tower at the White Gate examining the captives. Lü Bu, a tall, powerful man now trussed into a ball, continually pleaded for the ropes to be loosened. "A tiger needs to be tightly bound," Cao Cao said to him. Lü Bu saw Song Xian, Wei Xu, and Hou Cheng standing free and cried, "Did I not treat you well? How could you betray me?" "You listened only to your women," Song Xian answered, "not to your commanders. Is that what you mean by 'treat well'?" Lü Bu was silent.

When Gao Shun was hustled in, Cao Cao asked him, "Anything to say?" Gao Shun made no reply, and Cao Cao dispatched him to his death. Then Xu Huang delivered Chen Gong. "I trust you have been well since we parted," Cao Cao said.¹³ "Your mind is depraved," Chen Gong retorted. "Does that explain why you had to serve Lü Bu?" Cao Cao asked. "He may have been incapable at strategy," Chen Gong answered defiantly, "but he was equally incapable of treachery." "And you, with all of

your shrewdness and strategy, how are you going to get out of this?" Cao Cao demanded. Chen Gong looked toward Lü Bu and said, "Alas! Had he taken my advice we might never have been captured." "And now," said Cao Cao, "what shall we do?" "Today," Chen Gong replied, "I look only for death." "And what of your mother," asked Cao, "your wife and your children?" "It is said," Gong responded, "that he who governs with filial duty will never injure another's parents; that he who rules humanely will never cut off the sacrifices from a man's descendants. My lord, their fate lies with you. I am your captive and ask only for execution; I have no misgivings."¹⁴

Cao Cao felt a lingering affection for his former companion, but Chen Gong strode brusquely down from the tower, shaking off the guards who tried to stop him. Cao Cao rose from his seat and wept to see him go, but Chen Gong never turned back. Cao Cao said to his men, "Take his family to the capital and see to their needs as long as they live. Anyone mistreating them will die." Though he heard Cao Cao, Chen Gong said nothing as he offered his neck to the executioner. The assembly wept. Cao Cao had the corpse placed in a double coffin and buried in Xuchang.¹⁵ A later poet lamented Chen Gong:

In life, in death, an undivided will—
A hero staunch and doughty!
But only to a lord of rarest worth
Should a vassal pledge his fealty.
All homage for upholding his liege lord.
We sorrow as he bids his kin farewell.
At White Gate Tower he met his death unbowed:
The conduct of Chen Gong none can excel.

After Cao Cao had left to escort Chen Gong to his execution, Lü Bu appealed to Xuande: "Now you sit in honor, and I sit, a prisoner, at your feet. Won't you spare a word in my behalf?" Xuande nodded. When Cao Cao returned, Lü Bu shouted, "I was your chief foe, but now I submit. With you as commander in chief and me as your lieutenant, the world can be easily conquered." Cao Cao looked over to Xuande and asked, "What do you say?" "Have you forgotten what happened to his former patrons, Ding Yuan and Dong Zhuo?" was the reply. Lü Bu eyed Xuande and cried, "You! Most faithless of all!" Cao Cao ordered Lü Bu removed and put to death by strangulation. "Longeared one," Lü Bu pleaded, looking back at Xuande, "have you forgotten how I saved you with a shot of my bow?" Suddenly someone shouted, "Lü Bu you coward! Die and be done with it! What are you afraid of?" Everyone turned to the speaker, Zhang Liao, who was surrounded by armed guards. Cao Cao ordered Bu's execution to proceed. Afterward his head was displayed. A poet has described his final hour at Xiapi:

The flood tide surged and swamped his last stronghold;
His own men led him bound before his foes.
What use now, his thousand-*li*! steed?
And where was his many-bladed halberd?
Coward now, the tiger looks for mercy:
"Never give the hunting hawk its fill."

Fooled by Cao's words, woman-doting,
Spurning Chen Gong's warning plea—
What right had he to blame
The long-ear'd one's bad faith?

Another poet wrote of Liu Xuande:

No mercy for the tiger when he's tied:
Of Yuan and Zhuo the bloody memory's fresh.
Though, why not spare Bu as a "son" for Cao,
Knowing of his taste for father-flesh!¹⁶

Zhang Liao, the one who had told Lü Bu to die like a man, was marched under guard up to Cao. "This man looks familiar," Cao Cao remarked. "We met once—at Puyang. Have you forgotten?" Zhang Liao said. "So, you remember," Cao Cao said. "Only to regret," was the reply. "Regret what?" asked Cao Cao. "That our fires failed to burn out a traitor like you," he shot back. "No fallen general abuses me!" Cao Cao cried, raising his sword. Zhang Liao remained calm, awaiting death. But someone seized Cao Cao's arm from behind, and another knelt before him, pleading, "Your Excellency, desist."

Indeed:

Lü Bu begged mercy and was refused.
Zhang Liao denounced the traitor and was spared.

Who pleaded for his life?

READ ON.



Cao Cao Leads the Royal Hunt near the Capital; Dong Cheng Receives a Mandate in the Palace

LIU XUANDE CAUGHT CAO CAO'S ARM in midair, and Lord Guan knelt before the prime minister. "Zhang Liao has a true and guileless heart," Xuande pleaded. "We need more like him." "I know him for a man of loyalty and honor," Lord Guan added, "and I will vouch for him with my life."¹ Cao Cao tossed his sword aside and said, smiling, "And I think so too! I acted in jest!" Untying Zhang Liao's bonds himself, Cao wrapped a garment of his own around the prisoner and invited him to a seat of honor. Zhang Liao, moved by Cao Cao's earnestness, swore his allegiance to Cao. Cao Cao then appointed Liao Imperial Corps commander and an honorary lord² and sent him to demand the submission of Zang Ba, leader of the Mount Tai bandits.

Zang Ba, however, had already heard of Lü Bu's death and Zhang Liao's surrender; with his men he promptly went over to Cao Cao. Richly rewarded, Zang Ba was able to secure the surrender of the other bandit leaders—Sun Guan, Wu Dun, and Yin Li. Only Chang Xi held out. Cao Cao appointed Zang Ba governor of Langye fief. He gave Sun Guan and the others appointments and ordered them to protect the coastal region of Qingzhou and Xuzhou.

Lü Bu's wives and daughters were transported to the capital. The imperial army was feasted; then all units decamped and the army marched back to the capital. As they passed through Xuzhou (the province Lü Bu had taken over from Xuande), the people lined the road, burning incense and appealing to Cao Cao to restore Xuande as protector. But Cao Cao said, "Protector Liu has rendered great service. Let him first come before the Emperor for his enfeoffment." The common folk touched their heads to the ground in appreciation.³ Meanwhile, Cao Cao appointed General of Cavalry and Chariots Che Zhou provisional protector of Xuzhou. Back in Xuchang, Cao Cao rewarded all who had joined his campaign and assigned Xuande comfortable quarters near his ministerial residence.⁴

The next day Emperor Xian held court. Cao Cao hailed Xuande's feats of arms and presented him. Attired in court apparel, Xuande paid homage at the base of the steps to the throne. The Emperor then instructed him to ascend. "Tell me of your lineage," the Emperor said.⁵ "I can trace my ancestry through Prince Jing of Zhongshan," Xuande replied, "back to his father, Jing, the fourth emperor. My grandfather was Liu Xiong, my father Liu Hong." Emperor Xian ordered the director of the Imperial Clan to recite from the clan registry.

"Emperor Jing had fourteen sons," the official intoned, "the seventh of whom was Prince Jing of Zhongshan, Liu Sheng by name. Sheng begat Zhen, precinct master of Lu; Zhen begat Ang, lord of Pei; Ang begat Lu, lord of Zhang; Lu begat Lian, lord of Yishui; Lian begat Ying, lord of Qinyang; Ying begat Jian, lord of Anguo; Jian begat Ai, lord of Guangling; Ai begat Xian, lord of Jiaoshui; Xian begat Shu, lord of Zuyi; Shu begat Yi, lord of Qiyang; Yi begat Bi, lord of Yuanze; Bi begat Da, lord of Yingchuan; Da begat Buyi, lord of Fengling; Buyi begat Hui, lord of Jichuan; Hui begat Xiong,

prefect of Fan, a county of Dongjun; Xiong begat Hong, who held no office; Xuande is the son of Hong."

The Emperor checked the order of the lineage and found that Xuande was indeed an imperial uncle. Elated, Emperor Xian summoned him to an adjoining room, where they enacted the formalities befitting uncle and nephew. The Emperor mused, "Cao Cao abuses his authority to the point that state affairs are out of our control. But now we may have a remedy in this heroic uncle of mine." He made Xuande general of the Left and precinct master of Yi. After a grand banquet to mark the occasion, Xuande thanked the sovereign for his generosity and left the court. He was known thereafter as Imperial Uncle Liu.

Returning to his quarters, Cao Cao was confronted by his advisers. "You have nothing to gain, Your Excellency," Xun Wenruo argued, "from this new relationship between Liu Bei and the Emperor." "Although he has been recognized as an imperial uncle," Cao Cao replied, "I still command him by imperial decree. He is thus doubly bound. Don't forget: so long as he's here in Xuchang, we have him well in hand—however near the Emperor he may be.⁶ There's nothing to fear. What really worries me is that Yang Biao, our grand commandant, is a member of Yuan Shu's clan and could do us great harm if he decided to work for the Yuan brothers. I want him eliminated at once."⁷ Accordingly, Cao Cao had Yang Biao incarcerated for alleged connivance with Yuan Shu. Man Chong was assigned to the case.

At this time Kong Rong, governor of Beihai,⁸ was in the capital; he protested to Cao, "Yang Biao comes from a family that has exhibited the purest virtue for four generations. You can't prosecute him for his ties to the Yuans." "It is His Majesty's wish," Cao Cao replied. "Suppose," Kong Rong retorted, "that at the beginning of the Zhou dynasty the child emperor Cheng had had Duke Shao killed. Who would believe a protestation of innocence from the regent, the Duke of Zhou?" On the strength of this argument Cao Cao released Yang Biao and sent him home to his village. But when Court Counselor Zhao Yan, indignant at Cao Cao's high-handed rule, accused the prime minister of lese majesty in arbitrarily arresting high ministers, Cao Cao arrested Zhao Yan and had him killed. The whole court trembled at this demonstration of Cao's temper.

Cheng Yu advised Cao Cao, "Sir, your prestige increases day by day. Perhaps the time is ripe for preparing to ascend the throne yourself?" "The court," Cao Cao replied, "has too many loyal ministers for us to move imprudently. I plan to invite the Emperor to a grand hunt. We'll see what the reaction is then."

Prime horses, pedigreed hunting hawks, and champion hounds were selected; the bows and arrows were made ready. Cao Cao assembled his soldiers outside the city and then entered the palace to invite the Emperor to lead the hunt. "This appears somewhat unorthodox," the sovereign commented. "The kings and emperors of ancient times," Cao explained, "held four grand hunts yearly, riding forth from the capital each season to show the world their prowess. Now with the empire in commotion, a hunt should provide an ideal occasion for us to demonstrate our skill at arms." Unable to refuse, the Emperor mounted his easy-gaited horse and, armed with jeweled bow and gold-tipped arrows, led the procession out of the city.⁹

Liu Xuande, Lord Guan, and Zhang Fei, bows and blades at the ready, breastplates under their dress, led several dozen horsemen in the cavalcade. On a rich chestnut horse, a "flying spark," Cao Cao rode at the head of one hundred thousand men. Arriving at Xutian, they fanned out and enclosed the field in a ring of some two hundred *li*. Cao Cao kept his horse parallel to the Emperor's, never

more than a head apart. His trusted commanders and officers massed behind him. The regular imperial officials, civil and military, trailed in the rear, none daring to draw close.

As the Emperor galloped toward the field, Xuande saluted him from the roadside. "I look forward to admiring the imperial uncle's marksmanship today," the Emperor said. As if receiving a command, Xuande took to his horse. That moment a hare sprang from the bushes. Xuande felled it with one shot from his bow. The Emperor complimented him and rode on. The procession turned and was crossing a low hill when a stag charged from the wood. The Emperor shot three arrows but missed. "Try for it, my lord," the Emperor cried to Cao Cao. Impudently, Cao asked for the Emperor's jeweled bow and gold-tipped arrows. Drawing the bow to the full, he released an arrow that pierced the deer's back; the animal toppled in the grass.

The crowd of ministers and generals, seeing the royal arrow, assumed that the Emperor had scored the hit and surged forward to congratulate him, crying, "Long life to the Emperor!" But it was Cao Cao, guiding his horse ahead of the Son of Heaven, who acknowledged the cheers. All who saw it blanched. Behind Xuande, Lord Guan seethed. Brows arching, eyes glaring, he raised his sword and rode forward to cut Cao Cao down. A sharp look with a motion of the head from Xuande changed his mind, and he reined in.

Xuande bowed to Cao Cao and congratulated him: "Your Excellency shoots with more than human skill. Few in this age can equal you." "It was the largess of the Emperor, really," Cao replied, laughing as he rode his horse round to express his compliments to the sovereign. But instead of returning the jeweled bow, he simply hung it at his side. When the hunt was over, the multitude feasted in Xutian. Afterward the Emperor led the procession back to the capital, and it dispersed.¹⁰

Later Lord Guan asked Xuande, "Why did you stop me? I could have rid the dynasty of a traitor at whose hands the Emperor suffers personally." "If you aim for the mouse," Xuande warned, "don't bring down the house!" Cao Cao was at the Emperor's side, and his lieutenants were thick around him. Dear brother, had you accidentally injured the Emperor in a moment of foolish wrath, we would be the ones accused of the very crimes you denounce." "Spared today—a plague tomorrow," Lord Guan retorted. "Say no more," said Xuande. "We cannot speak freely."

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Inside the palace the Emperor spoke tearfully to Empress Fu: "Since I first assumed the throne, treacherous pretenders have multiplied. First we suffered the disaster of Dong Zhuo, followed immediately by the sedition of generals Li Jue and Guo Si. We have faced griefs unknown to most. Then came Cao Cao, whom we thought a loyal servant of the dynasty, never dreaming he would usurp the government and abuse his authority by arbitrary exercise of fear and favor. I wince to see him. Today in the hunting field he impudently acknowledged the cheers meant for his sovereign. Before long there will be a usurpation, and you and I shall not die natural deaths." Empress Fu replied, "In this court full of lords and peers—not a one of whom but eats and lives at the pleasure of the Han—is there none to assist the dynasty in distress?"

As the Empress was speaking, her father, Fu Wan, entered. "Your Majesties," he said, "do not despair. I have the man who can remove the scourge of the royal house." The Emperor wiped his tears as he replied, "Then you too can see how imperious Cao Cao is?" "Who could have missed the incident at the deer hunt?" Fu Wan responded. "But the whole court consists of either his clansmen or

his followers. Except for the imperial in-laws, who will demonstrate loyalty by bringing the traitor to justice? I don't have the power to do it, but why can't we turn to Dong Cheng, brother of the imperial concubine, general of Cavalry and Chariots?" "He has stepped into the breach more than once," the Emperor agreed. "Have him summoned."

"All Your Majesty's attendants," Fu Wan went on, "are Cao Cao's confidants. If they find out, the consequences will be serious." "What can we do?" the Emperor asked. "I have an idea," Fu Wan responded. "Fashion a garment and obtain a jade girdle, both of which you can privately bestow on Dong Cheng. Sew a secret decree into the girdle lining. When he reaches home and discovers the decree, he will devote himself to devising a strategy, and not even the spirits will know." The Emperor approved and Fu Wan withdrew.

Emperor Xian prepared to write the mandate. He bit his finger, transcribed his words in blood, and instructed the Empress to sew the mandate into the purple embroidered lining of the girdle. The Emperor then slipped on the brocade robe he had had made, tied the girdle, and ordered a palace officer to command Dong Cheng's appearance. The formalities of audience concluded, the Emperor spoke: "Last night the Empress and I were recalling the loyal service you tendered us when we fled from Chang'an across the River Ba, and decided to send for you to express our gratitude." Dong Cheng touched his head to the ground and disclaimed the honor.

The Emperor guided Dong Cheng to the ancestral temple and then into the Gallery of Meritorious Officials, in whose honor the Emperor burned incense before walking on with Dong Cheng to admire the portraits. "Tell me," the Emperor said, stopping before a portrait of the Supreme Ancestor, "where did the founder of the Han commence his career, and how did he create the heritage we enjoy?" "You mock me," Dong Cheng responded, astonished. "How could I forget the deeds of our sacred ancestor? He began as a precinct master in Sishang. From there he went on to slay the white serpent with his three-span sword, marking the rising against the Qin dynasty. Traversing the land, he annihilated Qin in three years and Chu in five. Thus he took possession of the empire and established this enduring patrimony."

"So splendid, so heroic the forefather," sighed the Emperor, "so fainthearted and feeble the progeny. One can't help sighing." As he spoke, he directed Dong Cheng's attention to the portraits of the two officials on either side of the Supreme Ancestor. "Is this not Zhang Liang," he went on, "lord of Liu? And this, Xiao He, lord of Cuo?" "Indeed," replied Dong Cheng, "the Supreme Ancestor relied greatly on them in founding the dynasty." The Emperor observed that no one was near and whispered, "So should you, uncle, stand by us." "I have no merit," Dong Cheng answered, "to serve as they served." "We remember well," the Emperor continued, "your service at the western capital, for which no reward could suffice." Then, pointing to his garments, he added, "Won't you wear this robe of mine and tie it with this girdle so that you will always seem to be by my side?"

Dong Cheng touched his forehead to the ground. The Emperor undid the robe and girdle, whispering, "Examine these carefully when you get home. Do not fail me." Perceiving the Emperor's intention, Dong Cheng put on the garment and, taking leave, quit the gallery.

Informed of this audience, Cao Cao intercepted Dong Cheng outside the palace gate. Where could he hide? Alarmed but helpless, he stood at the roadside and offered a ritual greeting. "What is the imperial in-law here for?" asked Cao. "The Emperor summoned me to present this brocade robe and jade girdle," replied Dong Cheng. "For what reason were you so honored?" Cao Cao asked again. "In recognition of my service at the western capital," was the answer. "Show me the girdle," Cao

demanded. Believing the girdle to contain a secret decree concerning the prime minister, Dong Cheng demurred until Cao Cao barked to his attendants, "Strip it off him!"

Cao Cao examined the girdle closely. "A beautiful belt," he said. "Now take off the robe." Dong Cheng dared not refuse. Cao Cao held the garment up to the sun and scrutinized it. Then he slipped it on, tied the girdle and turned to his men, saying, "Fits me well, doesn't it?" "Perfectly," was the reply. "Would the imperial in-law," Cao Cao suggested, "consider turning these over to me as a gift?" "What the sovereign bestows of his generosity," Dong Cheng protested, "may never be given away. Let me have others fashioned to present to you." "These clothes," Cao Cao snapped, "must be connected with some intrigue." "How could one dare!" Dong Cheng gasped. "If Your Excellency insists, of course I shall leave them with you." "Sire," Cao Cao reassured him, "would I seize what the sovereign vouchsafes? Bear with my facetiousness." He returned the garment and the girdle to Dong Cheng, who took his leave and went home.

Alone in his library that night, Dong Cheng went over the robe inch by inch. Finding nothing, he mused, "When the Son of Heaven instructed me to examine these clothes, he must have had something in mind. But there's no sign of anything. Why?" He inspected the girdle: white jade tesserae wrought into a miniature dragon snaking through a floral design; the underside was lined with purple brocade. The stitching was flawless. Nothing was visible. He placed the girdle on his desk and puzzled over it until he grew drowsy.

Dong Cheng was on the verge of falling asleep, his head on the desk, when a spark from the lamp's smoldering snuff flew onto the material and burned through the lining. He brushed it out, but the spark had already eaten away a bit of the brocade, revealing the white silk and traces of blood. He slit open the girdle: there was the decree, bloodscript in the Emperor's hand:

We believe that in the human order the bond of father and son is foremost, and that in the social order the obligation between sovereign and servant is paramount. Of late the treasonous Cao Cao, abusing his authority, insulting and degrading his sovereign, has connived with his cohorts to the detriment of our dynasty's rule. Instructions, rewards, land grants, and punishments now fall outside the imperial jurisdiction. Day and night we brood on this, dreading the peril to the realm. General, you are a prominent public servant and our nearest relative. Think of the obstacles and hardships the Supreme Ancestor faced when he founded this dynasty: forge a union of stouthearted men, stalwarts of unimpaired integrity and unimpeachable loyalty; exterminate this perfidious faction and restore the security of our holy shrines for our ancestors' sake. I have cut my finger and shed this blood to compose this decree confided to you. Remain vigilant. Do not fail our hopes. Decree of the third month, spring, Jian An 4 [A.D. 199].

Dong Cheng read the edict through his tears. He could not sleep that night and in the morning returned to the library to reread the document. But no concrete plan occurred to him. Finally he fell asleep against his desk pondering the means to get rid of Cao Cao.

The courtier Wang Zifu arrived. Recognizing his master's intimate friend, the gateman did not stop him, and he went straight into the library. Wang Zifu saw Dong Cheng dozing at his desk, a silk scroll under his sleeve. The imperial "we" was barely visible on it. Becoming curious, Wang Zifu quietly took up the document. After reading it, he stowed it in his own sleeve. "Imperial In-law Dong," he

cried, "are you not ashamed? How carefree to be sleeping so!" Dong Cheng came to immediately. Missing the decree, he felt his senses swim and his limbs fail. "You plan to murder the prime minister, then?" Zifu demanded. "I shall have to denounce you." "Brother," Dong Cheng wept, "if that is your intention, the house of Han expires."

"I was simply playing a part," Wang Zifu reassured Dong Cheng. "Our clan has enjoyed the fruits of service to the Han for many generations. Far from failing in loyalty, I mean to lend my all to the task of destroying the traitor." "The dynasty is fortunate indeed if you are so minded," Dong Cheng responded. "Let us retire, then," Wang Zifu suggested, "and draw up a loyalist pledge to do our duty to the Emperor whatever the risk to ourselves and our clans."

In great excitement Dong Cheng fetched a length of white silk and wrote his name at the head. Wang Zifu added his, saying, "My trusted friend General Wu Zilan should make cause with us." "Within the court," Dong Cheng said, "only Changshui Commandant Chong Ji and Court Counselor Wu Shi are trusted friends who will join us."¹¹ At that moment a servant announced the two officials. "Thus Heaven aids us!" Dong Cheng exclaimed and sent Wang Zifu behind a screen to observe while he received the two in his library. After tea Chong Ji said, "The incident at the hunt must have infuriated you." "Yes," replied Dong Cheng, "but what could I do?" "I'd vow to do away with the traitor," Wu Shi added, "but I despair of finding allies." "To rid the dynasty of evil," Chong Ji said, "I would die without regret."

At these words, Wang Zifu emerged from behind the screen and cried, "So! The two of you would assassinate the prime minister! I mean to turn you in, and the imperial in-law will corroborate my charge." "A loyal subject does not fear death!" Chong Ji shot back angrily. "I'd rather be a ghost of the Han than a traitor's lackey like you!" Dong Cheng smiled. "We staged this to test you both. Wang Zifu did not speak in earnest," he explained as he drew the edict from his sleeve and showed it to them. The two men wept copiously as they read. Dong Cheng then asked for their signatures. "Will you gentlemen stay here a while," Wang Zifu said, "while I see if Wu Zilan will join us?" He returned shortly with the general, who added his name. Dong Cheng invited the four to dine in a rear chamber.

The unexpected arrival of Ma Teng, governor of Xiliang, was announced. "Say I am not well and cannot receive him," Dong Cheng instructed the gateman. But when this answer was brought, Ma Teng shouted angrily, "I saw him only yesterday at the Dong-hua Gate in a new robe and girdle. Why is he giving me excuses? I have important business. He must let me in." After hearing the gateman's report, Dong Cheng excused himself and received his latest guest.

"I am on my way home after an audience with His Majesty," Ma Teng said, "and have come to take leave. Why refuse to see me?" "I had a sudden illness," Dong Cheng said, "and failed my duty as a host. Forgive the offense." "You look in the pink of health to me," Ma Teng remarked. Dong Cheng could not bring himself to speak. Flicking his sleeves, Ma Teng rose to leave. "And no one to save the dynasty!" he said with a sigh. Dong Cheng caught his words and held him back, saying, "What do you mean, 'no one to save the dynasty'?" "I am still fuming over the incident at the deer hunt," Ma Teng said. "Even you, it seems, the closest relative of the ruling house, are sunk in dissipation and give no thought to punishing the traitor. How could you be one to relieve the dynasty's distress?"

Wary of deception, Dong Cheng feigned surprise and said, "His Excellency Cao Cao is a high minister, the mainstay of the court. How can you say such a thing?" Enraged, Ma Teng cried, "You still believe that traitor is a decent man?" "There are eyes and ears everywhere," Dong Cheng cautioned. "You must lower your voice." "Those who crave life above all," Ma Teng retorted, "are

unfit to discuss serious matters." He rose to leave. Convinced of Ma Teng's loyalty, Dong Cheng said at last, "Restrain yourself a moment, my lord. I have something to show you." He drew the governor into his chamber and handed him the imperial edict.

As he read, Ma Teng's hair stood on end; he bit his lips until blood covered his mouth. "If you plan to act," he said, "my Xiliang troops will help." Then Dong Cheng led the governor to meet the other supporters of the indictment against the prime minister. At Dong Cheng's request, Ma Teng affixed his signature, confirming his oath with a swallow of wine and some drops of blood. "What we swear here we will never disavow," he said, and pointing to the five men, he added, "If five more will join us, our cause will succeed." "Loyal and stalwart men," Dong Cheng warned, "are all too few. If we take in the wrong ones, we will only ruin ourselves." Ma Teng asked to see the register of current officeholders. Coming to the names of the house of Liu, he clapped his hands and cried, "Here is the man we must talk to!"¹² The group asked who. Calmly and deliberately, Ma Teng spoke the name. Indeed:

Because an in-law received the Emperor's call,
An imperial kinsman came to the dynasty's aid.

Whom did Ma Teng name?

READ ON.



***Cao Cao Warms Wine and Rates the Heroes of the Realm;
Lord Guan Takes Xuzhou by Stratagem and Beheads Che Zhou***

"WHOM DO YOU RECOMMEND?" Dong Cheng had asked Ma Teng. "I see here the name of Liu Xuande, protector of Yuzhou. Why not try him?" was the reply. "True, he's the Emperor's uncle," Dong Cheng said thoughtfully, "but he is too close to Cao.¹ He can't get involved in this." "I saw what happened on the hunting field," Ma Teng responded, "when Cao Cao accepted the public accolade meant for the Emperor. Lord Guan was right behind Xuande and would have struck Cao Cao down had not Xuande stopped him with an angry glance. Xuande is more than willing to organize against Cao, but he feels thwarted, unequal to Cao's many guards. Try to enlist his help—I know he will respond eagerly." The group dispersed with Wu Shi cautioning, "Let's not be too hasty. This requires careful consideration."

The next night Dong Cheng pocketed the imperial decree and paid a quiet call on Xuande. Flanked by his brothers, Xuande received him in a small chamber. After host and guest were seated, Xuande said, "Only a most serious occasion would bring the imperial in-law in the dead of night." "I couldn't risk coming by day," Dong Cheng replied. "Cao would have suspected something." Xuande called for wine, and Dong Cheng went on, "The other day at the hunt Lord Guan seemed set to kill Cao Cao, but you motioned him off. Why?" Taken by surprise, Xuande parried the question, asking, "How do you know that?" "No one else noticed," Dong Cheng said, "but I did." Unable to maintain his pose of indifference, Xuande answered, "My brother, outraged by Cao's insolent ambition, acted impulsively."

Dong Cheng hid his face and wept. "If only the vassals at court compared with Lord Guan," he cried, "the peace of the land would be assured." Wondering if Cao Cao had sent the imperial brother-in-law to sound him out, Xuande said, "With His Excellency Cao Cao in power, is not the peace of the land already well assured?" Dong Cheng's face stiffened as he rose. "It is only because you are the Emperor's uncle that I opened my heart and soul to you. Why have you played me false?" he asked. "Lest *you* play *me* false, Imperial Brother-in-law," Xuande admitted at last, "I had to test you." Dong Cheng then produced the secret edict. Dismay and indignation welled up in Xuande as he read the Emperor's sacred words.

Next, Dong Cheng handed him the loyalists' pledge bearing six signatures: Dong Cheng, general of Cavalry and Chariots; Wang Zifu, an official² in the Ministry of Works; Chong Ji, commandant of the Changshui command; Wu Shi, court counselor; Wu Zilan, General of Manifest Trust; and Ma Teng, governor of Xiliang. "Since the Emperor has charged you with the task of punishing the traitor," Xuande said, "I commit myself to the cause and offer my fullest devotion." Dong Cheng thanked him, and Xuande placed his name and title, general of the Left, on the silk roll.³ "There are three more we should approach," Dong Cheng said. "If they join, we will have ten righteous men confronting the

traitor." But Xuande warned Dong Cheng to act with the utmost caution and secrecy. The two men continued talking until the fifth watch; then they parted.

To avoid arousing Cao Cao's suspicions, Xuande took to his back garden, planting and tending vegetables, keeping his purposes hidden. Lord Guan and Zhang Fei asked, "Brother, why have you lost interest in the great issues of the realm and given yourself to a commoner's toil?" "This is something you might not appreciate," responded Xuande, and his brothers did not ask again.⁴

One day when Lord Guan and Zhang Fei were away and Xuande was watering his plants, two of Cao's generals, Xu Chu and Zhang Liao, led a score of men into the garden. "His Excellency," they announced, "requests that Your Lordship come at once." Alarmed, Xuande asked, "An emergency?" "I don't know," Xu Chu answered. "I was told to request your presence." Xuande could only follow the two men to Cao Cao's residence.

A smiling Cao Cao greeted Xuande. "That's quite a project you have under way at home," he said in a tone that turned Xuande's face pale as dust. Taking Xuande's hand, Cao led him to his own garden. "You have taken up a most difficult occupation in horticulture," Cao continued. "Just to while away the time," Xuande answered, relieved. "There is nothing else to occupy me."

"I was admiring the plums on the branch," Cao remarked. "The new green ones called to mind last year's campaign against Zhang Xiu, when we ran short of water on the march. How parched the men were! Then something occurred to me. 'There's a plum grove ahead,' I cried and pretended to locate it with my whip. When the troops heard me, their mouths watered and their thirst was gone. Seeing these plums now, I can't help enjoying the sight,⁵ and having some wine just heated, I decided to invite Your Lordship⁶ for a drink at this little pavilion." Regaining possession of himself, Xuande went along with Cao Cao. Delicacies had already been set out: a plate piled with new green plums and a jar brimming with warmed wine. Sitting opposite one another, the two men drank freely and enjoyed themselves without constraint.

The wine had enlivened their spirits when dark clouds appeared and overspread the heavens: a flash storm was threatening. An attendant pointed to what seemed like a distant dragon suspended on the horizon. The two men leaned against the balcony and watched it. Cao turned to Xuande and asked, "Does my lord understand the dragon's multiform manifestations?"⁷ "Not in great detail," Xuande replied. "The dragon," Cao continued, "can enlarge and diminish itself, surge aloft or lie beneath the surface of the water. Enlarged, it creates clouds and spews mist. Diminished, it can veil its scaly form from view. Aloft, it prances triumphant in the upper realm of space. Under the surface, it lurks among the surging breakers. Now in the fullness of spring it mounts the season, like men who would fulfill an ambition to dominate the length and breadth of the land. In this respect the dragon can well be compared to the heroes of the age. You yourself have traveled widely and surely must be familiar with the great heroes of our time. Please try to point them out for me."

"How can these eyes of mine sight heroes?" Xuande said. "Set your modesty aside," Cao urged. "Thanks to Your Excellency's gracious benefaction," Xuande responded, "I have succeeded in serving the dynasty. But as for the heroes of the realm, such things are more than I would know of." "Even if you do not know any personally," Cao Cao persisted, "you should at least have heard of some." "Yuan Shu of Huainan?" Xuande ventured.⁸ "His warriors are first rate, his provisions abundant. Would he be one?" "Dry bones," Cao laughed, "rattling in the grave. Sooner or later I will have him." "Yuan Shao, then," Xuande suggested. "For four generations the Yuans have held highest office, and many officials served under them. Shao has a firm grip on Jizhou, where he is supported by capable

men. Would you count him?" "His expression is fierce enough," Cao said. "But his courage is thin. He enjoys conniving but lacks decision. He plays for high stakes but begrudges personal sacrifice, spots a minor gain and risks his life. No hero he!"

Xuande asked, "And how would you rate Liu Biao, a paragon whose reputation stretches across the realm?" "Liu Biao?" Cao answered. "A name without substance, and no hero either." "There is Sun Ce," Xuande suggested. "The leader of the Southland is in his prime." "Sun Ce," Cao replied, "stands on his father's reputation. He's no hero." "Liu Zhang, then," Xuande said, "perhaps he could be considered." "Though connected to the royal house," Cao Cao said, "he is nothing but a watchdog by the gate and hardly deserves the name of hero." "Then," Xuande continued "what about Zhang Xiu, Zhang Lu, Han Sui, and the other warlords?" Cao Cao clapped his hands and laughed.

"Petty mediocrities," he said, "beneath our notice." "Truly," said Xuande, "I can think of no one else."

"Now," Cao Cao went on, "what defines a hero is this: a determination to conquer, a mine of marvelous schemes, an ability to encompass the realm, and the will to make it his." "Who merits such a description?" Xuande asked. Cao pointed first to Xuande, then to himself. "The heroes of the present day," he said, "number but two—you, my lord, and myself." Xuande gulped in panic. Before he realized it, his chopsticks had slipped to the ground. Then the storm came on. A peal of thunder gave him the chance to bend down casually and retrieve them. "See what a clap of thunder has made me do?" he remarked. "A great man afraid of thunder?" Cao asked. "Confucius himself became agitated in thunderstorms," Xuande reminded him.⁹ "How could I not fear them?" In this way he succeeded in glossing over the cause of his anxiety. Later a poet left these lines in admiration:

Xuande sheltered in the tiger's lair:
Cao betrayed two names that made him quake.
He seizes on the thunder as the cause—
A perfect ploy negotiates the pause.

The rain stopped. Two men burst into the garden. Swords in hand, they dashed to the pavilion, shoving aside the guards. There before Cao's eyes stood Lord Guan and Zhang Fei! The two warriors, after returning from archery practice, were told that Xu Chu and Zhang Liao had escorted Xuande to see Cao Cao. Anxious for their elder brother's safety, the two had rushed to the prime minister's residence and pushed their way into the rear garden, only to find Cao Cao and Xuande calmly drinking together. Lord Guan and Zhang Fei stood still, hands resting on their weapons. Cao asked the reason for the visit, and Lord Guan replied, "We heard Your Excellency was carousing with our brother and have come to present a sword dance for your amusement." "Not another Hongmen, I hope," Cao said, smiling. "We hardly need a repeat of that performance."¹⁰ Xuande smiled too. "Two more cups," ordered Cao, "to take the edge off these would-be Fan Kuais!" But the brothers respectfully declined and the party broke up. Xuande bid Cao Cao good-bye and returned to his quarters.

"We thought it was the end," Lord Guan said. Xuande told them how he had dropped his chopsticks, and his brothers asked what that meant. "I work in the garden," Xuande explained, "to show Cao Cao I have no ambition. But he caught me off guard by calling me a hero, and the chopsticks slipped from my hand. I told him it was the thunder to put him off the track." The brothers marveled at Xuande's quickness.

The following day found Xuande a guest of Cao's once again. While they were together, Man Chong reported that Yuan Shao had defeated Gongsun Zan. Xuande, anxious about his longtime friend, asked for details.

Man Chong replied, "Zan could not cope with Yuan Shao in the field, so he walled in his position, built a hundred-span tower above it called Yijing Tower, and laid in three hundred thousand measures of grain. His soldiers, however, kept passing in and out of the fortified area, and some were caught outside. Zan's followers wanted to rescue them, but Zan said, 'Rescue one, and others who will have to fight will be looking for help instead of fighting to the death.' Zan's denial of help only prompted many of his men to surrender to Yuan Shao. Isolated now, Zan sent to the capital for help. Unfortunately, Shao captured his messenger. Next, Zan tried to get Zhang Yan to cooperate inside of Shao's camp by setting a fire as a signal. Again, Shao intercepted the letter and used the information to draw Zan into an ambush. Zan lost more than half his men before retreating into the city. Shao then tunneled under the Yijing Tower and set it ablaze. Trapped, Zan killed his wife and children and hanged himself. The rest of his family was consumed in the flames.

"Consequently, Yuan Shao is now vastly strengthened by the new forces he has acquired. Meanwhile, Yuan Shu, Shao's brother, lives a dissipated life, scorning the needs of his army and his people—many of whom have already turned against him. Shu has proposed transferring to Yuan Shao the imperial title he usurped, and Shao for his part wants the royal seal more than anything.¹¹ Shu has promised to deliver it personally and is now moving from south of the Huai to north of the Yellow River. If the Yuan brothers overcome their former enmity and join forces, we may not be able to handle them. I beg Your Excellency to deal with this emergency."

Xuande grieved for the loss of Gongsun Zan, who had once so kindly recommended him. And where, he worried, could his dear friend General Zhao Zilong be? The time had come, Xuande calculated, to make his break with Cao Cao. Xuande stood up and faced the prime minister. "For Yuan Shu to join his brother, Shao," Xuande declared, "he will have to pass through Xuzhou. Grant me an army to attack him en route, and I will capture Yuan Shu." Cao Cao smiled and said, "Shall we submit your proposal to the Emperor? We can take action after that."¹²

The following day, after formal request to the Emperor, Cao Cao gave Xuande command of fifty thousand men and sent two generals, Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao, to accompany him. The Emperor was distraught as Xuande begged his leave, and wept in parting with his uncle. Back at his quarters, Xuande spent the night preparing weapons and gear; then he took his general's seal and set out. Dong Cheng rushed to the wayside pavilion ten *li* beyond the city to see him off. "You must bear with this," Xuande said to him. "I will find a way to fulfill the decree." "Take care and remain loyal to the Emperor's purpose," Dong Cheng pleaded. The two men parted. Lord Guan and Zhang Fei, riding beside Xuande, asked, "Brother, what made you so eager to fight this battle?" "Here I am a caged bird, a trapped fish," Xuande replied. "With this move I gain the sea, the lofty space, free of cage or net." He told his brothers to have Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao hurry the troops along.¹³

Cao Cao's advisers, Guo Jia and Cheng Yu, who had just returned to the capital from checking the treasury and granary, opposed Cao Cao's decision to send Xuande to Xuzhou. "How could you give him a military command?" they asked. "I wanted to cut off Yuan Shu," Cao explained, "that's all." "When Xuande was protector of Yuzhou," Cheng Yu said, "we urged you to kill him. You ignored the advice. Now by giving him troops you have let the dragon into the sea, the tiger into the hills. You can never again dominate him." "Even if you could not bring yourself to kill him," Guo Jia added,

"what was the point of letting him leave? The ancients warned that 'endless difficulties ensue when you let the enemy escape.' I hope Your Excellency will consider what we say." Persuaded by this advice, Cao Cao sent Xu Chu ahead with five hundred men to bring Xuande back. Xu Chu took up his orders and left.

Xuande spotted the pursuers and told his brothers, "Cao must have sent men after us." He stopped the march, camped, and posted Lord Guan and Zhang Fei, weapons in hand, at either side of the entrance. Xu Chu arrived to find Xuande's company in perfect formation, completely armed. Cao's general dismounted and entered the camp. Xuande received him, asking, "What brings you here?" "I have an order from the prime minister," Xu Chu said. "You are to return for further consultation." "You know the custom," Xuande answered, "'A general in the field may refuse his lord's command.' I have appeared before the Emperor and have been duly assigned by His Excellency. What remains to be discussed? Ride back to him with my answer."¹⁴

Xu Chu thought, "The prime minister has always been close to Xuande. And I was told not to use force. What can I do but report what he says? Any action against him will have to wait." Thus, Xu Chu took his leave and gave Cao Cao an account of his mission. Cao was of two minds about his next step. "If he won't return," Cheng Yu and Guo Jia argued, "clearly he has turned against us." But Cao rejoined, "Two of our generals are with him. My guess is he won't rebel. Anyway, we have sent him. Regrets are useless." The idea of bringing Xuande back was dropped. Admiration of Xuande is expressed in these lines of later times:

The soldiers packed, the horses fed, the hero dashed away;
But ever sacred to his mind was what Xian had decreed.
He broke from an iron cage, a tiger loose again;
He sprung the metal lock, a dragon newly freed.

Now that Xuande was gone, Ma Teng returned west to Xiliang to calm a disturbance on his border.

At Xuzhou, Xuande was greeted by Che Zhou, the acting imperial inspector Cao Cao had appointed after defeating Lü Bu.¹⁵ The welcoming feast concluded, Xuande's men, Sun Qian and Mi Zhu, paid their respects to him. Then Xuande went home to see his family. He also had agents investigate Yuan Shu's situation. The scouts reported back, "Yuan Shu has sunk into a life of excess. Lei Bo and Chen Lan have left him and gone to Mount Song. Shu's position is now so weak that he has offered the imperial title to his brother Yuan Shao. At Shao's summons, Shu got together men, horses, and articles of the sacred regalia and set off. But he will first have to come through Xuzhou."¹⁶

In command of fifty thousand men, Xuande, Lord Guan, and Zhang Fei—joined by Cao's generals Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao—marched forth. They met Yuan Shu's advance guard, led by Ji Ling. Wasting no words, Zhang Fei went for Ji Ling. Before ten thrusts had been exchanged, Zhang Fei gave an ear-splitting shout and ran his opponent through. Ji Ling tumbled from his horse; his army fled. Yuan Shu advanced and offered battle. Xuande divided his men into three units: Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao to the left, Lord Guan and Zhang Fei to the right, Xuande himself holding the center. As Yuan Shu came into view, Xuande stood beneath his colors and denounced him. "Treasonous renegade!" he cried. "I hold here a mandate to bring you to judgment. Bind your hands and surrender, and your crimes will be excused." "Miserable mat-weaver! Sandal-maker!" Yuan Shu answered. "Will *you* insult *me*?" He waved his soldiers forward.

Xuande held back to allow his flanks to strike first. Their fierce onslaught took its toll: Yuan Shu's slain soldiers were strewn over the blood-soaked field. Thousands more fled. Yuan Shu's former commanders, Lei Bo and Chen Lan of Mount Song, plundered his treasure, grain, and fodder. Bandits kept Shu from returning to his base city, Shouchun, and he was forced to remain at Jiangting with barely a thousand men, most of them old and weak. It was midsummer. He had thirty pecks of wheat to feed his followers. Many of his own family had already starved to death. Shu could not swallow the coarse meal and asked the cook to find some honeyed water to ease his thirst. "We have bloody water," the cook said, "no honey." Suddenly Shu, who had been seated on his couch, groaned and toppled over. He spit up mouthfuls of blood and died. It was the sixth month of the fourth year of Jian An (A.D. 199).¹⁷ Later this verse was written:

The end of Han saw all the realm in arms:
What grounds had Yuan Shu for his mad ambition?
From family high in service all these years,
He alone craved the royal throne.

Having seized the precious seal of state,
He claimed by Heaven's signs to be elected.
Denied a little honey at the end,
Alone he died, spitting blood, in bed.

After Yuan Shu's death, his nephew Yin fled to Lujiang, accompanied by the surviving relatives and Shu's coffin. En route they were captured and killed by Xu Liu, who brought the seal to Cao Cao in Xuchang. Cao expressed his satisfaction by appointing Xu Liu governor of Gaoling.¹⁸

Xuande officially informed the court of Yuan Shu's death. He also reported the fact to Cao Cao. Then he sent Cao's generals, Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao, back to the capital— but without their troops, whom he detailed to guard Xuzhou. At this time Xuande left the city to exhort the people who had scattered during the fighting to return to their occupations.

Back in Xuchang, Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao told Cao Cao how Xuande had kept their troops. Cao wanted to execute the two generals at once, but Xun Wenruo opposed it. "Xuande had the authority," he argued. "Your generals were obliged to obey." Cao therefore released them. Then Xun Wenruo advised him, "Write to the protector of Xuzhou, Che Zhou, and have him work against Xuande from within." Cao Cao adopted this plan and sent instructions to Che Zhou. Che Zhou turned to Chen Deng for advice. "I have a simple solution," Chen Deng said.¹⁹ "While Xuande is out of the city urging people to return to work, place men in ambush by the city's outer wall. When he comes back, they can cut him down as you go out to welcome him. I will have archers placed on the walls to hold off his supporting forces. This plan will work." Che Zhou approved.

Chen Deng then explained the plan to his father, Gui.²⁰ Gui wanted no part of it and ordered his son to inform Xuande. Obediently, Chen Deng raced off and met up with Lord Guan and Zhang Fei, who were returning ahead of Xuande. After Chen Deng had disclosed the plot to them, Zhang Fei wanted to attack the concealed troops, but Lord Guan cautioned him, "They are waiting for us at the outer wall. If we attack, we will lose. I have a better plan. Tonight, let's pretend to be an army of Cao Cao's arriving in Xuzhou. Che Zhou will have to come out and welcome us—then we kill him."

Zhang Fei agreed.

In the dead of night the brothers led a company of men to the gates of Xuzhou, flying the flags and clad in the dress and armor of Cao's army.²¹ To the guard's challenge they answered that they were Zhang Liao's soldiers, marching on orders from Prime Minister Cao Cao. Their demand for entry was taken to Che Zhou, who consulted Chen Deng. "If we don't receive them," Zhou said, "we could arouse suspicion; but it could be a trap."

Che Zhou climbed the wall and shouted, "We cannot tell who you are in the dark. We will receive you at dawn." Below the gate someone shouted back, "What if Xuande sees us here? Open at once!" Che Zhou still hesitated. Then, unable to resist the clamor of the troops outside, he rode out in full armor with one thousand men. As they crossed the lowered drawbridge, Che Zhou shouted, "Where is Zhang Liao?" In the glare of torches he saw Lord Guan bearing down on him, sword held high. "How dare a wretch like you plot to kill our brother?" he cried. Che Zhou took fright. The warriors tangled and fought, but Che Zhou soon fell back. He swung his horse round and raced for the drawbridge, only to be met with volleys of bolts shot on Chen Deng's order. Che Zhou fled, riding close to the wall. Lord Guan overtook him and cut off his head. "The traitor is dead," he shouted. "All others are forgiven. Give up and be spared." Che Zhou's men downed their weapons and surrendered. The army and the people were assured that peace was restored.²²

Lord Guan carried Che Zhou's head to Xuande and explained the plot against his life. "What will we do if Cao Cao comes now?" he asked. "Zhang Fei and I will deal with him," was Lord Guan's answer. But Xuande remained remorseful.²³ Then he reentered Xuzhou to a warm welcome from the people and the elders of the city. He went to the protector's residence looking for Zhang Fei, only to find that his brother had exterminated Che Zhou's entire family. "We've killed Cao Cao's trusted official. Do you think he is not going to act?" he asked Chen Deng. "I think I know how to keep him away," Deng replied. Indeed:

No sooner was Xuande out of the tiger's lair
Than he needed a plan to stop a brewing war.

Chen Deng's cunning had delivered Lü Bu to Cao Cao; could he now save Xuande from Cao Cao?

READ ON.



Cao Cao Takes the Field Against Yuan Shao; Lord Guan and Zhang Fei Capture Two Generals

CHEN DENG OFFERED THE FOLLOWING PLAN to Xuande: "Cao Cao fears no man more than Yuan Shao, for Shao holds firmly the four northern provinces of Ji, Qing, You, and Bing. He commands a million men, and civil and military officials in ample numbers. Why not send to him for help?" "Yuan Shao and I have had no dealings with one another," Xuande responded. "And now that I have just defeated his younger brother, how could he possibly aid us?" "Here in Xuzhou," Chen Deng said, "is a scholar whose family has been intimate with the Yuans for three generations. If he wrote in our behalf, Shao would aid us, I am certain." Xuande asked the man's name. "Someone you have always held in great esteem. Have you forgotten?" Chen Deng said. "Not Zheng Xuan?" Xuande replied, suddenly having a thought. "But of course!" Chen Deng answered.

Zheng Xuan (Kangcheng) was a scholar of many talents who had once studied under Ma Rong, famed for his knowledge of the classic *Book of Odes*. Ma Rong himself was in the habit of lecturing to students before a crimson curtain behind which sat singing girls. Around the room maids stood in waiting. But during the three years that Zheng Xuan studied there, his glance never strayed from the books before him—an act of self-discipline that Ma Rong admired. After Zheng Xuan had completed his studies and returned home, Ma Rong sighed and said, "Xuan is the only one who has grasped the essence of my teachings."

In Zheng Xuan's own household all the serving girls were versed in the *Odes*. Once a maidservant displeased Zheng Xuan, and he had her kneel for a long time at the steps before the main hall. Another maidservant teased her, quoting from the *Odes*: "'What hast thou done to land in the mire?'" The punished maid, quoting back, replied, "I voiced my plaint and met with wrath."¹ This shows the refinement of Zheng Xuan's household. Under Emperor Huan, Zheng Xuan advanced to chief of the Secretariat. Afterward, during the upheaval caused by the eunuchs, he resigned and went home to his farm in Xuzhou. When Xuande was in Zhuo county, he studied under Zheng Xuan.² After he became protector of Xuzhou, Xuande often visited this former teacher whom he revered, and sought his advice. Thus Xuande was delighted to be reminded of Zheng Xuan and went with Chen Deng to solicit the scholar's help. Zheng Xuan consented wholeheartedly and wrote a letter, which he gave to Xuande; Xuande delegated Sun Qian to deliver it immediately to Yuan Shao.

Reading the renowned scholar's recommendation, Yuan Shao mused, "I should not be helping the man who caused my younger brother's death, but this letter in his behalf from the former chief of the Secretariat obliges me to act." Shao put the question of attacking Cao Cao to his officers and officials. Adviser Tian Feng said, "These long years of war have wearied the common people. We lack the grain to supply a large force. This is the time not to make war but to report our victory over Gongsun Zan to the Emperor. If they deny us access to him, we can protest formally—and then we can take up

arms and plant ourselves at Liyang, enlarge our fleet on the Yellow River, repair and deploy our weapons, and assign crack troops to dig in along the borders. Inside of three years we can take power."

Adviser Shen Pei, however, opposed Tian Feng. "Sire," he began, "your marvelous martial prowess and your splendid might have calmed the entire north; we can bring Cao Cao to justice with a wave of the hand. Why keep putting it off?" A third adviser, Ju Shou, said, "It is not 'splendid might' that determines victory. Cao Cao has kept civil order in his realm. His army, steeled and seasoned, is not the easy target Gongsun Zan's was when you encircled it. I beg you not to start an unjustified war but rather to follow the sound strategy of formally announcing the recent victory to the Emperor."

Adviser Guo Tu joined the argument. "Not at all!" he cried. "Who says we have no right to move against Cao Cao? It is high time to set our enterprise in motion. I urge following the course Zheng Xuan's letter recommends—joining with Xuande in loyalty to the throne and sweeping the criminal Cao from his haven! This would correspond to the mind of Heaven and coincide with the mood of the people, an action doubly felicitous." The four counselors disputed back and forth without coming to an agreement. Yuan Shao hesitated to make the decision himself.

Unexpectedly, Xu You and Xun Shen entered, and Yuan Shao thought, "Here are two men of wide experience. Let me hear what they favor." After the exchange of courtesies, Yuan Shao said to them, "I have a letter from Zheng Xuan urging me to help Liu Bei attack Cao Cao. Should I do it, or not?" "Most enlightened lord," they replied, "you have the numbers and the strength to prevail. We, too, favor calling up the army to uphold the royal house and punish the traitor." "My view exactly," Yuan Shao said.³

Yuan Shao began to make preparations. First, he sent Xuande's representative, Sun Qian, to inform Zheng Xuan of his decision; then he coordinated arrangements with Xuande. He appointed Shen Pei and Pang Ji to overall command; Tian Feng, Xun Shen, and Xu You as military advisers; Yan Liang and Wen Chou as generals. Yuan Shao mustered a total of one hundred and fifty thousand cavalry and an equal number of infantry and deployed them at Liyang.⁴ At this point Guo Tu said, "Since Your Lordship resorts to arms in the name of the highest allegiance, it behooves us to spell out Cao's crimes and circulate the indictment through all districts in order to publish his offenses and secure his punishment. Our claim thus will be valid and our position lawful." Yuan Shao took this advice and had Master of Documents Chen Lin draft a bill of charges.

Chen Lin (Kongzhang) was a renowned literary genius. He had served as first secretary during the reign of Emperor Ling. But when his admonitions to Regent-Marshal He Jin went unheeded and the Dong Zhuo calamity overtook him, he fled to safety to Jizhou. There Yuan Shao employed him as documents officer. In response to the command to prepare an indictment of Cao Cao, Chen Lin wrote the following:

All men know that a wise lord anticipates danger in order to master the unexpected, and a devoted subject stands vigilant against any eventuality. Verily, the extraordinary mission requires extraordinary men, and the extraordinary mission will lead to extraordinary merit. But the extraordinary is far from what ordinary men aspire to.

Of old, when a weakling ruled the mighty house of Qin, Prime Minister Zhao Gao concentrated control in his hands, making himself the sole source of authority and favor. In that time of fear and oppression no one in the court dared to speak out for what was right. The

Emperor finally committed suicide in the Wangyi Palace, and the royal clan was consumed in the ensuing conflagration—a disgrace remembered even today and an object lesson for all time.

After the death of the Supreme Ancestor, Empress Lü took power. Toward the end of her reign, she allowed her two nephews Lü Chan and Lü Lu to monopolize the administration. They held military authority in the capital, while the lords of Liang and Zhao did their bidding outside. In the secrecy of the imperial chambers they summarily decided all questions, abusing those below, intending to supplant the One above, until the hearts of all froze in despair. At that point the lords of Jiang and Zhuxu raised an army and displayed their wrath.⁵ They punished the traitors and enthroned Emperor Wen, a son of the Supreme Ancestor, enabling the kingly principle of true descent to flourish once again, and the imperial luster to shine with new brilliance. What a splendid instance of great ministers standing ready to prevent usurpation.

Turning to the present case of Minister of Works⁶ Cao Cao, his grandfather, Teng, was a palace eunuch who joined with other eunuchs like Zuo Guan and Xu Huang to commit unspeakable crimes.⁷ His rampant avarice injured the imperial leadership and ruined the common people. Cao Song, Teng's adopted son and the father of Cao Cao, wheedled his way into Teng's family and bribed his way to advancement. Conveying precious metals and jade to the gates of the mighty, he crept into the highest public office and then subverted the instruments of government. Cao Cao, vile legacy of this eunuch, an unnatural child, a man without integrity or virtue, quickly found his advantage in sedition and calamity.⁸

The valiant warriors of the military command under Yuan Shao swept out the vicious, usurping eunuchs. Alas, the next crisis swiftly followed: Dong Zhuo laid violent hands on officialdom and even on the throne. That was when we took up our swords and flourished our war drums, issuing word to the east of the realm: gather and pick the finest heroes to serve our cause. Thus we came to accept Cao Cao's cooperation and assigned him a supporting command, thinking to put this bird of prey's fierce claws to our good use.

Cao Cao proved himself to be ignorant and frivolous—shortsighted in strategy, hasty in advance, capricious in retreat—and his troops were decimated time after time.⁹ Yet our command again and again parceled out the finest men to make his losses good, his strength whole. Then, on our recommendation, he was put in charge of Hedong district and made imperial inspector of Yanzhou.¹⁰ We cloaked him in the tiger colors of military authority in hopes of gaining the full fruit of his vengefulness against Dong Zhuo, as the state of Qin did when it used Meng Ming against Jin.¹¹

But now Cao Cao has run wild with what we have provided him. By his unbridled conduct and malignant excesses he has bloodied the common people, ruined the worthy, and injured the innocent. Was not Bian Rang, governor of Jiujiang, known across the land for his splendid talents and exalted name, his frank views and forthright expression? Was he not honored as a man whose views were free of craven flattery? And was he not decapitated, his head piked, his harmless wife and babes snuffed out?¹² Since that time, the community of scholars has been sore with indignation. And as the grievances of the people grew heavier, one man rose in opposition and a whole province responded. Was not Cao Cao crushed near

Xuzhou and his territory seized by Lü Bu, leaving him to roam the eastern fringe with nowhere to tread or hold?¹³

But this command, affirming the principle of "strong trunk, weak branches," sanctioned no revolt of the disaffected Lü Bu against central authority. Hoisting our standards and donning our armor, we again set out in force to commence the campaign. Gong and drum echoed and shuddered. Lü Bu's hosts melted away as we plucked Cao Cao from sure disaster and restored his position in Yanzhou—though this was more fortunate for Cao than for the people of that province.¹⁴

After Cao was installed in Yanzhou, the royal entourage was attacked by criminal remnants of Dong Zhuo's faction. Preoccupied by a military emergency in the northern reaches of our home province, Jizhou, we had Xu Xun, an imperial corps-man, dispatch Cao Cao to restore the temples and sacrificial sites and to protect the young sovereign.¹⁵ But Cao seized the occasion to give full rein to his ambition. Like a domineering bully, he moved the capital by force and took charge of the inner life of the court; he demeaned the royal house and destroyed its laws and standards. Taking the three highest offices under his control, he monopolized administrative power, dictating according to his whim appointments, conferments, punishments, and executions. Those who held his favor won prestige for their entire clan. Those he held in disfavor were exterminated to the last kinsman. Those who objected openly were publicly executed. Those who objected privately were secretly done away with. Officialdom sealed its lips. Men in the streets communicated with glances. The Secretariat confined itself to recording court sessions. The ministers were reduced to bureaucratic ciphers.

The former grand commandant Yang Biao, who once had served as minister of works and later as minister of the interior, enjoyed the highest station in the land. But once he became an object of Cao's jealous fury, he was smeared with calumny, beaten mercilessly, and tortured. Indeed, Cao Cao punished capriciously anyone who offended him, heedless of the requirements of law.¹⁶ Take the case of Court Counselor Zhao Yan, whose devoted admonitions and forthright criticisms could not be dismissed. The Emperor received his counsel with delight and approval. But Cao was determined to deprive the Emperor of all wise judgment. He terminated the counselor's access and then arrested him and had him killed, without bothering even to inform the court.

Then there was the incident of Prince Xiao's tomb. Prince Xiao of Liang, son of Emperor Wen, was the brother of Emperor Jing. His sepulcher and the trees planted there by his ancestors—the mulberry and the linden, the pine and the cypress—should have been held in most sacred reverence. Yet Cao Cao personally directed his officers in the exhumation of the tomb. Breaking open the coffin, they exposed the remains and seized all the buried treasure. To this day the Emperor weeps for it, and the people grieve.

Next, Cao Cao set up new offices—Imperial Corps Commander for Exhumations, Commandant for Uncovering Valuables—with agents who made havoc with everything they came upon, exhuming corpses to the last bone. Thus Cao held highest office but brutally played the tyrant's part, corrupting the government and injuring the people; the poison has touched the spirits of the dead as well as living men.

On top of that came the suffering caused by trivial regulations and augmented by mutual

surveillance, hedging men's activities with hidden dangers. Lift a hand and catch it in a net; move a foot and spring a trap. That is why the people of Cao's own provinces, Yanzhou and Yuzhou, have lost all spirit, and why the groans of wronged men fill the capital. Search through the annals for renegade ministers who surpass Cao Cao for blatant avarice and cruel malice!

This command, occupied with the punishment of external sedition, had no time to confront the problem at court. More recently we have refrained from taking action in the hope that the situation could be rectified. But the rapacious jackal Cao harbors dire designs. He seeks to destroy the pillars of the dynasty, weaken the house of Han, and remove all righteous and devoted men so that he can play the potentate unopposed.

When we marched north to chastise Gongsun Zan, those stubborn rebels held off our siege for a whole year thanks to the aid Cao quietly gave them while he was overtly supporting our royal forces. But Cao's envoy was discovered. Gongsun Zan was executed and his forces eliminated. We had blunted Cao's thrust, and his scheme came to naught.¹⁷ At present, though Cao Cao holds the Ao granary and enjoys the protection the Yellow River affords, he resembles the mantis that stands against the oncoming chariot wheel with its forelegs upraised.

This command, imbued with the sacred spirit of Han's majesty, will fend off any thrust from any quarter. Our long spears number in the millions, our mounted nomad hordes are in the thousands. We have rallied warriors who are the equal of heroes of myth, and summoned the strength of crack archers and crossbowmen. We shall cross the Taihangs in Bingzhou and ford the Ji and the Ta in Qingzhou to descend in force on the Yellow River and pierce Cao Cao's front; from Jingzhou Liu Biao will sweep up through Wancheng and Ye and block him from the rear. We shall overpower and overwhelm Cao as surely as seawater quenches embers, as the torch fires the kindling.

Those of Cao's officers and men who can fight come from the northern provinces, Ji or You, or from units of former legions—all of whom chafe at their long service and yearn to go home, tearfully gazing northward. The rest are men of Yan and Yu, or remnants of Lü Bu's and Zhang Yang's troops who, vanquished and coerced, follow him out of mere expedience. Scathed in many battles, all nurse grievances and enmities. If they turn their banners against Cao, mounting the high ground and sounding the drum and fife, and we wave the white to offer an avenue of surrender, Cao's host will break apart like clods of clay, without waiting for a decision by blood and blade.

Now the house of Han is dying a slow death. The social fabric hangs slack and torn. The court stands without a shred of support. The top administration is defenseless. In the imperial estates the elite look downcast, heads bowed, wings furled, having lost all hope of succor. Though loyal liegemen remain, how can they manifest their integrity when they are menaced by so cruel and violent a vassal!

Cao Cao controls a picked force of seven hundred that surrounds the palace. It poses as the residential guard, but in reality detains the sovereign, a sign of impending usurpation that we find all too alarming. The time is ripe for those loyal to the dynasty to splash the ground with their life's blood, for upright men to make their mark. Let no one fail to rise to the occasion.¹⁸

Cao Cao has counterfeited an edict empowering him to dispatch envoys and soldiers. We are concerned lest remote regions provide for the renegade out of a mistaken sense of obedience. Whoever aids him will lose imperial sanction and be ridiculed by all. No sensible man will follow such a course.

On this day we are advancing from four provinces—You, Bing, Qing, and Ji. When this proclamation reaches Jingzhou, Liu Biao will coordinate his forces with those of the General of Established Loyalty [Zhang Xiu, stationed at Wancheng]. Let every region and district mobilize its loyal forces, stake out its borders, and display its might to join us in protecting our dynasty's shrines to the gods of soil and grain. Thus will we accomplish our extraordinary mission in full view of the realm.

Whoever takes Cao Cao's head will be made lord of five thousand households and awarded fifty million cash. Any commander of a unit, subordinate commander, military or civil official who surrenders to us will be welcomed without question. Let our generosity and bounty be widely published, together with announced rewards, so that by this proclamation the empire will know of the grave crisis facing the sacred court.

This order has the force of law.

Yuan Shao read Chen Lin's draft proclamation with great satisfaction and ordered it circulated through all regions, and hung at key passes, fords, and other points of entry. The document reached the capital at a time when Cao Cao was stricken with migraine and confined to bed. As he read it, he began quaking to his marrow and broke into an icy sweat. Suddenly his migraine passed, and he leaped out of bed. He found Cao Hong and demanded, "Who wrote this?" When Hong replied that it was said to be from the brush of Chen Lin, Cao laughed and commented, "Such literary style won't work very well without military strategy. However exquisitely Chen Lin writes, what can he do for Yuan Shao's failings in the field?" So saying, Cao Cao summoned his counselors to discuss ways of dealing with Yuan Shao.

The scholar Kong Rong argued, "Yuan Shao's power is immense; we cannot fight him: let us come to terms." "Yuan Shao is incompetent," Xun Wenruo countered. "Nothing compels us to consider a peace." "Shao's territory is broad, and his people are hardy," Kong Rong said. "He has shrewd planners like Xu You, Guo Tu, Shen Pei, and Pang Ji; loyal servants like Tian Feng and Ju Shou; and brave generals such as Yan Liang and Wen Chou; while his other military leaders—Gao Lan, Zhang He, Chunyu Qiong, for example—are known to all. What do you mean, calling Shao incompetent?"

With a laugh Xun Wenruo replied, "His troops are numerous but disorderly. Tian Feng is rigid and insubordinate; Xu You, greedy and unseeing; Shen Pei, arbitrary and inept at planning; and Pang Ji, resolute but ineffective. These men have little tolerance for one another and are therefore bound to quarrel. His generals, Yan Liang and Wen Chou, are brave but reckless. They will be ours in a single battle. And the rest of his misbegotten host, even though a million strong, aren't worth worrying about." Kong Rong fell silent, but Cao Cao burst out laughing. "Wenruo has certainly sized them up!" he exclaimed.

Cao Cao named General Liu Dai to lead the forward army and General Wang Zhong to lead the rear army, a force numbering fifty thousand. They marched east and attacked Xuande in Xuzhou. Cao Cao assigned them the colors of the prime minister to create the impression that he personally was in command. Liu Dai had been imperial inspector of Yanzhou when Cao Cao seized the province and,

after submitting to Cao, was appointed auxiliary commander. Thus Liu Dai, joined by Wang Zhong, came to receive the assignment.

Cao Cao himself marched north toward Liyang with two hundred thousand to oppose Yuan Shao. Adviser Cheng Yu said to Cao, "What if Liu Dai and Wang Zhong fail their mission?" "You know as well as I do," Cao Cao replied, "that they are no match for Xuande. Their function is to divert the enemy." He then ordered the two commanders: "Do not advance until I have defeated Yuan Shao. Then I will turn my attention to Liu Bei." Liu Dai and Wang Zhong set out.

Cao Cao led his army toward Liyang. Yuan Shao's army was eighty *li* away. Both sides dug in and held their ground through the autumn. Disputes in Shao's camp undermined morale: Xu You was unhappy that Shen Pei had a command; Ju Shou resented Shao for rejecting his plans. Commanders and advisers were at odds with one another, and no one thought of taking the initiative. Shao himself, plagued by doubts, chose not to attack. Under the circumstances, Cao Cao ordered Zang Ba (formerly Lü Bu's deputy commander) to maintain pressure on Qingzhou and Xuzhou; Yu Jin and Li Dian to fortify points on the Yellow River; and Cao Ren to station the main army at Guandu. Cao Cao himself took one army back to the capital at Xuchang.

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Liu Dai and Wang Zhong camped one hundred *li* from Xuzhou. At the command headquarters they raised the prime minister's ensign but did not advance. They sent men north of the river for word of Cao Cao's progress. Xuande knew nothing of the actual situation and hesitated to act; he, too, tried to keep informed of developments to the north.

Suddenly the order to attack reached Liu Dai and Wang Zhong. "His Excellency," Dai said, "has commanded us to strike Xuzhou. You should go first." "His Excellency ordered *you*," Wang Zhong replied. "I am the general in charge," Dai said, "it is not for me to begin the action." "Then we'll go together," Wang Zhong proposed. "We'll draw lots, rather," Liu Dai said. Zhong drew and lost. He took half of the men to attack the city.

Xuande said to his adviser Chen Deng, "Yuan Shao is well positioned at Liyang, but frustrated by conflicts on his staff, he takes no initiative. Cao Cao's whereabouts meanwhile remain unknown. They say his personal banner is not with the force near Liyang, but it seems to have turned up here. I wonder why." "Cao Cao's cunning is manifold," Chen Deng said. "His main concern lies north of the river, where he takes command himself. But he has his banner raised here instead of there in order to deceive us. I doubt if he is really here." "Which of you will go and find out?" Xuande asked his two brothers. Zhang Fei volunteered, but Xuande demurred. "Your temper's too hot," he said. "If Cao Cao is there," Zhang Fei pleaded, "I'll bring him here." "Let me go and find out what is happening," Lord Guan said. "If you are going," Xuande said, "I am at ease." So, Lord Guan set out from Xuzhou with three thousand men.

It was early winter. Under a heavy sky snowflakes swirled lightly. Braving the snow, Lord Guan's men positioned themselves for battle as Guan charged up, blade bared, and hailed Wang Zhong. "The prime minister is here!" Zhong shouted. "Therefore, surrender." "Please have him come out," Lord Guan responded. "I have a few things to tell him." "Would His Excellency receive the likes of you?" Zhong demanded. Lord Guan charged; Wang Zhong poised his spear. Their horses crossed. Lord Guan whipped his mount and galloped off; Wang Zhong pursued. After rounding a hillside, Lord

Guan spun around and with a single short cry, his blade dancing, rushed his pursuer. Unable to defend himself, Wang Zhong tried to bolt, but Lord Guan, passing his sword to his left hand, snatched Zhong's armor straps in his right and dragged him out of the saddle and sideways onto his own mount. Lord Guan rode back to camp as Wang Zhong's soldiers scattered.

Lord Guan took his prisoner to Xuande, who demanded, "Who are you and what office do you hold that you dare counterfeit the colors of the prime minister?" "Would I dare?" was the reply. "They told me to create a false impression as a decoy. In fact, the prime minister is not here." Xuande had the captive provided for and guarded until Liu Dai could be taken and a final disposition made. "I knew you wanted no bloodshed," Lord Guan said to Xuande, "so I took him alive." "I was uneasy about our brother's temper," Xuande said. "He might have slain Wang Zhong. There's no point in killing someone who can be detained and used in negotiations."

Then Zhang Fei spoke up: "Now that second brother has captured Wang Zhong, let me go for Liu Dai." "Dai used to be imperial inspector of Yanzhou," Xuande warned. "In the struggle against Dong Zhuo at Tiger Trap Pass he was one of the lords of the alliance. Today he heads Cao's vanguard. Do not slight his abilities." "Is he really worth all this talk?" Zhang Fei asked. "I'll take him alive the same as second brother took Wang Zhong. That's all there is to it!" "Be sure not to kill him and ruin my plans," Xuande cautioned. "I'll answer with my life if I do," was Fei's reply. Xuande gave him three thousand men, and he set out.

After Wang Zhong's capture, Liu Dai refused to show himself. Day after day Zhang Fei came before the camp to try to taunt him into appearing, but Liu Dai was only the more determined to remain inside. Several days passed. Zhang Fei decided to try a stratagem: first he issued an order to raid Dai's camp at the second watch, and then he spent the day in his tent, drinking heavily and feigning intoxication. Next, he found fault with a soldier and had him beaten and tied up. "Tonight," he declared, "I will sacrifice this man to my banners." But he arranged to have the man quietly freed. As anticipated, the soldier fled to Liu Dai's camp and reported the impending raid. The dreadful bruises on his flesh dispelled Dai's doubts. Liu Dai evacuated his camp and posted his forces outside it to await Zhang Fei's attack.

That night Zhang Fei divided his men into three groups. From the center a team of thirty was to raid the camp and burn it. The flanking units were to circle behind the base, watch for the fire signal, and attack from both sides. At the third watch Zhang Fei led his best men to cut off Liu Dai's retreat; then the team of thirty burst into the empty camp and set it ablaze. Liu Dai's waiting troops were about to strike when they themselves were struck from both sides. Dai's army fell into disarray, unable to gauge the size of the enemy it faced. Liu Dai fled with some remnant troops. Zhang Fei was ready for him. Confronted head on, Dai had no time to turn off, and he was seized in a single encounter. The small force with him surrendered.

Zhang Fei reported his victory to Xuande, and Xuande remarked to Lord Guan, "I'm glad to hear our normally rash and reckless brother is starting to use his head." Then Xuande went to greet Zhang Fei outside the walls of Xuzhou. "Well," Fei said to him, "do you still think me impetuous?" "I harped on your failings so you'd learn some tricks," Xuande said, and Zhang Fei roared with delight.

Liu Dai was brought in bonds to Xuande, who hastened to free him. "My younger brother," Xuande said to the prisoner, "has been most disrespectful! I hope you will forgive him." Xuande led Liu Dai into the city and had Wang Zhong released; he treated them with civility. Then Xuande said to them, "Cao Cao's imperial inspector, Che Zhou, tried to kill me, so I was forced to defend myself. His

Excellency wrongly suspected me of rebellion, and he sent you to make me answer for it. But I wish nothing more than to requite with my devotion His Excellency's grace and generosity, and never meant to betray him. If you two would speak well of me to him when you get back to the capital, I would be most grateful." "We owe you our lives," the commanders replied, "and shall plead your cause to the prime minister on the security of our families." Xuande expressed his thanks.

The following day Xuande returned the two commanders' men and horses and escorted them out of the city. They had traveled some ten *li* when they heard a great rolling of drums. Zhang Fei was blocking the way. "My elder brother did not know what he was doing when he let you go," Fei shouted. "How can enemy commanders in custody simply be released?" Liu Dai and Wang Zhong began to tremble. Eyes round with anger, Zhang Fei rushed forward, his spear raised. But at that moment another rider appeared, shouting, "You can't abuse them like that!" It was Lord Guan; Dai and Zhong knew they were saved. "Elder brother has released them," Lord Guan insisted. "You cannot violate his command." "Free them now," Zhang Fei said, "and they'll return." "We'll take care of them then," was Guan's reply. The two commanders reassured the brothers, "Even if the prime minister kills off our entire clans, we will not return. We beg forgiveness." "Even if Cao Cao himself comes here," Zhang Fei retorted, "we'll hit him so hard not a piece of armor will go back. This time the two live heads will do!" The commanders scurried off, grateful to be spared.

But returning to Xuande, Lord Guan and Zhang Fei said, "Cao Cao will be coming." "Xuzhou is too exposed to hold for long," Sun Qian advised. "We'd better fortify Xiaopei and the town of Xiapi, giving us a two-pronged deployment against Cao Cao." Xuande approved the suggestion. He sent Lord Guan to Xiapi and placed his wives, Lady Gan and Lady Mi, in his care. (Lady Gan was from Xiaopei, and Lady Mi was Mi Zhu's younger sister.) Sun Qian, Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, and Mi Fang remained to guard Xuzhou. Xuande and Zhang Fei went to Xiaopei.

In the capital Liu Dai and Wang Zhong defended Xuande's conduct to Cao Cao. But the prime minister swore angrily, "You have disgraced our government. Why should I spare you?" Cao ordered them to be marched out and executed. Indeed:

Can dogs and pigs with tigers share the field?

Can shrimp and fish with dragons vie below the waves?

Would Cao Cao kill the men Xuande had shrewdly spared?

READ ON.



Mi Heng Strips, Denouncing the Traitor; Ji Ping Is Executed for Threatening Cao's Life

CAO CAO WANTED TO EXECUTE the two commanders, but Kong Rong pleaded for them. "They were no match for Xuande," he said. "Killing them would only demoralize your officers and men." So Cao Cao contented himself with depriving them of rank and pay. Then he began planning his campaign against Xuande. Again Kong Rong sought to dissuade him. "We cannot mobilize in the winter cold," he argued. "We must wait until spring comes. If we can get the support of Zhang Xiu and Liu Biao first, we'll be in a better position to attack Xuzhou." Cao Cao accepted this advice and dispatched Liu Ye to Zhang Xiu in Xiangcheng.

The envoy sang Cao Cao's praises to Zhang Xiu's adviser, Jia Xu.¹ Jia Xu welcomed Liu Ye as his personal guest and the following day brought him before Zhang Xiu, explaining that Cao's envoy was offering amnesty. During this discussion an envoy from Yuan Shao was announced. Shao too, according to the documents the envoy bore, was seeking Zhang Xiu's allegiance. Jia Xu said to Yuan Shao's representative, "Your master has taken the field against Cao Cao. How do things stand now?" "We have suspended operations for the winter," he replied. "My lord is making the offer to General Zhang Xiu and Liu Biao because he regards both as leaders of the land." Jia Xu said with a laugh, "Go back and tell Yuan Shao that if he couldn't make common cause with his own brother, how can he expect to do so with the 'leaders of the land'?" Then and there Jia Xu destroyed Yuan Shao's letter in the presence of the envoy and dismissed him harshly.

"Yuan Shao is stronger than Cao Cao," Zhang Xiu complained. "You have torn up his letter and offended his envoy. What if Shao attacks?" "Cao Cao's the surer ally," Jia Xu answered. "But we are enemies," Zhang Xiu said. "How can we work together?" "There are three advantages to allying with Cao," Jia Xu said. "First, by controlling imperial edicts Cao legitimizes his campaigns throughout the realm. Second, precisely because Shao is the more powerful, as you say, he is unlikely to appreciate your small contingent, while the weaker Cao will receive it with enthusiasm. Third, Cao aspires to mastery of the realm and therefore must eschew all personal enmities so that he can manifest his virtue across the land. Do not doubt it, General."

Jia Xu's arguments convinced Zhang Xiu to receive Cao's envoy. At the audience Liu Ye praised Cao Cao's abundant virtues and then added, "If the prime minister carried grudges, General, would he be sending me to seek your friendship?" Delighted with the offer, Zhang Xiu went with Jia Xu to the capital to tender his allegiance. At the steps leading up to the main hall of the palace, Zhang Xiu prostrated himself before Cao Cao, who hastened to help the general to his feet. Taking Zhang Xiu's hand, Cao Cao said, "It was I who offended. Do not hold it against me." He appointed Zhang Xiu General of Manifest Might and Jia Xu an officer in the Capital Guard. Then Cao Cao asked Zhang Xiu to write to Liu Biao urging him to come to terms.

"Liu Biao likes to befriend the luminaries of our day," Jia Xu told Cao Cao. "What we need is a noted man of letters to persuade him to join us." On Xun You's advice, Cao Cao sent for Kong Rong. "His Excellency," Xun You explained to Kong Rong, "seeks a distinguished scholar to represent his views to Liu Biao. Would you consider it, sire?" "I have a friend, Mi Heng (styled Zhengping)," Kong Rong replied, "who is ten times more talented than I. He belongs in the Emperor's personal service, not just handling a minor matter like this. Let me recommend him to the Son of Heaven." Kong Rong submitted the following petition to the court in Mi Heng's behalf:

When floods overran the land, the Emperor provided for their control, searching every corner of the realm for able men. When Shi Zong took the throne,² he meant to expand the patrimony, and toward that end sought out men who would shed luster on his enterprise. Thus he attracted exceptional talent to his service. With profound sagacity, Your Majesty, heir to the great tradition of Han, has met with an unfortunate situation and spends the days in anguish. But spirits are descending from the sacred hills; and remarkable men are coming to the fore.

I know of one such worthy, presently still a commoner. His name is Mi Heng (styled Zhengping); his age, twenty-four. He is a clean and simple man of shining integrity and outstanding ability. He became conversant with literature first, and later was initiated into the secrets of the arts. What he sees but once he can recite in full. What he hears in passing he can commit to memory. His nature is at one with the true way. His power of thought has something divine in it. It would not surprise me if he proved the equal of Sang Hongyang in calculation and Zhang Anshi in comprehensive recall.³ Moreover, his loyalty is unswerving and his intentions pure as snow. The good inspires him, and evil disgusts him. He would risk his life to defend useful criticism as promptly as he would protect Your Majesty from unscrupulous counsel in the manner of a Ren Zuo or a Shi Yu.⁴ A hundred eagles cannot compare to one wise osprey: Mi Heng would have a wonderful effect if placed at court. His quick thinking and elegant rhetoric are never wanting. He can work out problems and resolve dilemmas with absolute mastery, and will never be at a loss in dealing with the enemy.

In the early years of the Han, Jia Yi petitioned the Emperor to establish frontier colonies as a means for controlling the Xiongnu, and Zhong Jun, sent to placate the kingdom of Nanyue, was ready to haul its king to Chang'an to pay homage to the Emperor. Former generations celebrated these two high-spirited youths.

In more recent times Lu Cui and Yan Xiang have been appointed at court because of their unusual ability. Such treatment should be accorded Mi Heng. A dragon like him aloft in the heavenly court, beating his wings among the constellations, raising his voice among the circumpolar stars,⁵ and sending down the rainbow's beams will lend glory to the newly appointed officials and magnify the dignity of Your Majesty's house. The imperial music festivals are for rare and wonderful performers; the imperial chambers, for preserving extraordinary treasures. Men like Mi Heng are all too rare. The song and dance "Ji Chu" and the composition "Yang E" are the music master's first choice for performance par excellence. Fei Tu and Yao Niao, those fleet gallopers, are what the trainer Bo Le and the charioteer Wang Liang were ever eager to obtain. Though but a humble servant of little note, I feel obliged to call this man to Your Majesty's attention. Your Majesty's earnest caution in selecting men to serve you requires comparison and trial. Now I appeal for an audience for

this commoner. If you find in him nothing useful, I will accept the blame for leading you astray.

The Emperor read Kong Rong's petition and passed it on to Cao Cao, who summoned Mi Heng. But at his audience with the prime minister, Mi Heng suffered the indignity of not being commanded to take a seat; and so the scholar looked skyward and said with a sigh, "In this wide, wide world I see not one real man!" Cao snapped back, "I have dozens in my service who rate as heroes of our time. What's your point?" "Name them," Mi Heng responded. Cao Cao answered, "Xun Wenruo, Xun You, Guo Jia, and Cheng Yu are all men of depth and vision, far superior to Xiao He and Chen Ping.⁶ I have Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, Li Dian, and Yue Jin, whose valor surpasses Cen Peng's and Ma Wu's.⁷ Then there are the military aides Lü Qian and Man Chong, and the vanguard leaders Yu Jin and Xu Huang. Xiahou Dun, moreover, is a rare field commander, and Cao Ren one of fortune's favorite generals. What, then, is your point?"

"I beg to differ," Mi Heng said, scoffing. "These men you mention are known to me—all too well. Xun Wenruo is good for attending funerals and visiting the bedridden. Xun You will do for guarding grave sites. Cheng Yu would make a superb gatekeeper. Guo Jia's real talent is for reading prose and reciting verse. Zhang Liao would serve well tapping the chimes and drums, and Xu Chu belongs tending cattle and horses. Yue Jin is good for receiving petitions and reading edicts, Li Dian for transmitting documents and delivering instructions, Lü Qian for sharpening blades and forging swords. Man Chong consumes wine and dregs. Yu Jin can work at lugging blocks and raising walls. Xu Huang would be best employed slaughtering pigs and dogs. Xiahou Dun deserves the title 'Unscathed General'; Cao Ren, 'Well-bribed Governor.' The rest of the lot are so many clothes racks, rice bags, wine casks, meat sacks. ..."

"And what is your specialty?" Cao asked, cold with fury. "I," was Mi Heng's reply, "have mastered the patterns of the heavens and the contours of the land. I have knowledge of the three great teachings and the nine minor traditions. With virtue equal to Confucius' and his dearest disciple Yan Yuan's, I can make a king into as sage a sovereign as Yao or Shun. And you rate me with those mediocrities!" Zhang Liao, who was standing nearby, drew his sword and moved toward Mi Heng, but Cao Cao said, "It so happens, I am short a drum master for our ceremonies and banquets. Let Mi Heng have that job." Mi Heng did not refuse and left as soon as Cao Cao had finished speaking. "Why spare this vulgar fellow?" Zhang Liao asked. "He has something of a name," Cao Cao answered. "Why, I don't know. Everyone seems to have heard of him, though. If I killed him, the world would call me mean and intolerant. Since he thinks so highly of himself, I made him a drummer—to humiliate him."

A few days later Cao Cao summoned Mi Heng to perform for his guests at a palace banquet.⁸ The previous drum master had warned Mi Heng to put on fresh attire before touching the instruments, but he entered shabbily dressed and proceeded to sound out the "Triple Tolling of Yuyang." The tone and rhythm were superb and the notes resounded with the richness of pealing bells and shining stones. Every guest was moved to tears. But in the midst of the performance Cao's attendants shouted to him rudely, "Why haven't you changed your clothes?" A moment later Mi Heng had stripped himself stark naked before the assembly. The guests hastily shielded their eyes. Then, his expression unchanged, Mi Heng nonchalantly drew his trousers back on.

"How dare you commit such an outrage," Cao cried, "in the hallowed hall of the imperial court?"

"To abuse one's lord," Mi Heng shot back, "to deceive the sovereign, is what I call an 'outrage.' Let everyone see that I have kept the form my parents gave me free of blemish." "If you are so pure," Cao demanded, "who is corrupt?" Mi Heng responded, "That you cannot distinguish between the able and the incompetent shows that your eyes are corrupt. Your failure to chant the *Odes* and the *Documents*⁹ shows that your mouth is corrupt. Your rejection of loyal advice shows that your ears are corrupt. Your ignorance of past and present shows that your whole being is corrupt. Your conflicts with the lords of the realm show that your stomach is corrupt. Your dream of usurpation shows that your mind is corrupt. To make a renowned scholar like me serve as drum master is a poor imitation of the tricks of such villains of old as Yang Huo who slighted Confucius, or Zang Cang who tried to ruin Mencius. Do you think you can hold men in such contempt and still become the leader of the lords of the realm?"

Kong Rong, witnessing the scene, feared for the life of the man he had recommended. Approaching Cao, he said calmly, "For this crime let him be sent to do hard labor as a convict. He will never be another Fu Yue!"¹⁰ Cao Cao pointed to Mi Heng and said, "I am sending you to Jingzhou as my envoy. Win Liu Biao to our side, and you may return as a high official." But Mi Heng refused to go. Cao Cao ordered three horses made ready and had Mi Heng escorted away. Cao also arranged a departure feast at the Eastern Gates to be attended by his officials and commanders. Mi Heng appeared, but on instructions from Xun Wenruo, the assembly did not rise. Suddenly, the guest of honor gave a mournful cry.

"What are you wailing for?" Xun Wenruo asked Mi Heng. "I'm walking among dead men waiting to be buried—why shouldn't I wail?" was the reply. "If we are in our coffins," the officials responded, "you are a headless demon." "I," Mi Heng declared, "am not of Cao's clique. I serve the Han. I have my head!"¹¹ The officials wished to kill him on the spot, but Xun Wenruo said, "Don't dirty your blades on a rat." "I may be a rat," Mi Heng retorted, "but I have my human nature. The likes of you can only be called parasitic wasps." The exchange of insults ended, and the officials dispersed in an angry mood.

Under duress Mi Heng went to Jingzhou where Liu Biao received him. He sang his host's praises, but in a tone so ironic that Liu Biao took offense and sent him off to Huang Zu in Jiangxia. Someone said to Liu Biao, "Mi Heng has mocked Your Lordship and should die for it." But Liu Biao replied, "He slandered Cao Cao more than once and has survived because Cao couldn't risk killing a noted scholar. He sent him here, hoping we would save him the trouble—and take the blame. I've sent Mi Heng on to Huang Zu to show Cao that two can play that game." Liu Biao's advisers were impressed with his shrewdness.

At this time Yuan Shao's envoy also arrived in Jingzhou. "Now," Liu Biao said, "we have envoys from Shao as well as Cao. Which of them can do more for us?" Han Song, an Imperial Corps commander assigned to Liu Biao,¹² said, "Two rivals are locked in struggle. General, if you have serious ambitions, you have a chance now to destroy your enemies. The alternative is to go with the better man. Cao Cao is adept at warfare. Many able men have joined him. Judging from the situation, he will conquer Yuan Shao first and then move against the Southland. I don't see how we can hold Cao off. But if you commit your province to him now, he should treat you well." "I'd rather you went to the capital and looked things over before I decide," Liu Biao responded.

"Sovereign and subject have their inescapable duties," Han Song said. "Now I serve you, General, and am bound to obey you at whatever risk. So long as you fully intend to follow the

Emperor and cooperate with Lord Cao, I can represent you. But if, when I enter the capital, you are still undecided, should the Emperor offer me an office, I will have to become his loyal subject instead of Your Lordship's pledged servant." "Go and find out what you can," Liu Biao said. "I have plans of my own." And so Han Song took leave of Liu Biao and went to Xuchang. Cao Cao made him a privy counselor and governor of Lingling. Xun Wenruo said to Cao Cao, "Han Song came to spy on us, yet you have richly rewarded him before he has made the slightest contribution to our cause. At the same time you have sent Mi Heng to Liu Biao, though the outcome of his mission seems to be of no interest to you." "He went too far," Cao said. "I meant for Liu Biao to kill him. The matter is closed." He sent Han Song back to Jingzhou to enlist Liu Biao's support.

Han Song returned, praised the virtues of the new court, and urged Liu Biao to send a son into the imperial service. But Liu Biao, in a burst of rage, cried, "Death for your double-dealing!" "It is you, my lord," Han Song replied, "who betrays me, not I you." Biao's adviser Kuai Liang agreed, reminding the protector that Han Song had anticipated what would happen before he left. Liu Biao therefore relented and pardoned him.

At this time Liu Biao learned that Huang Zu had executed Mi Heng. "They were drinking together," a messenger reported, "and both of them became drunk. Huang Zu asked Mi Heng, 'Tell me, who are the great men at the capital?' Heng answered, 'There's that big child Kong Rong and a smaller one, Yang Xiu. No one else.' 'And what do you think of me?' Huang Zu asked him. 'You?' Mi Heng replied. 'A deity in a temple, who receives the fragrant offerings but is lifeless and impotent!' 'So you take me for an idol of wood or clay?' Huang Zu cried, and ordered him put to death. Curses streamed from Mi Heng's lips until the last moment." Liu Biao openly lamented the death of Mi Heng and ordered his body recovered and interred on Yingwu Isle. A poet of later times wrote:

Huang Zu was not a man of charity;
Upon his shores Mi Heng died, yet worthily.
Now his body lies on Yingwu Isle:
Who visits, but the river flowing by?

The news of Mi Heng's death made Cao Cao smile. "A rotten pedant," he remarked, "done in by his own sharp tongue." Cao Cao was impatient for Liu Biao's submission and prepared to send the army. But Xun Wenruo cautioned, "Yuan Shao remains to be conquered, Xuande to be eliminated, and you want to wage war in the great river region of the Yangzi and the Han. Go for the vital organs, not the limbs. Do away with Yuan Shao and Xuande first, then sweep the central river region." Cao Cao agreed.

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After Liu Xuande left the capital, Dong Cheng continued to meet night and day with Wang Zifu and other members of his cabal, but they were unable to concert any action against Cao Cao. At the New Year's court ceremonies for the fifth year of Jian An (A.D. 200), Dong Cheng watched Cao Cao's arrogant and ruthless behavior with growing indignation until his health was affected. The Emperor noticed that the imperial brother-in-law looked unwell and ordered the noted court physician Ji Ping of Luoyang to treat him. Ping called on Dong Cheng at his residence and applied various remedies.

He stayed with his patient day and night, noting his mournful sighs but refraining from expressing his concern.

On the fifteenth of the first month, the time of the first full moon festival, the physician was ready to take his leave, but Dong Cheng detained him, and the two men began drinking. After several hours Dong Cheng felt fatigue; loosening his clothes, he drifted into a dream in which Wang Zifu and three other comrades were announced. As Dong Cheng received them, Wang Zifu said "Everything is going smoothly." "Let me hear the details," Cheng answered. "Liu Biao," Zifu began, "has joined with Yuan Shao. They have half a million men marching here in ten field armies. In the northwest Ma Teng and Han Sui have mobilized seven hundred thousand Xiliang troops; they are advancing now. Cao Cao has mustered his last man and horse, dividing his fronts to meet his enemies. The capital is undefended. If we marshal a thousand servants and young attendants from our five households, we can surround the prime minister's residence this evening while the full moon festival is being held, and charge in and kill him. We have a unique opportunity." Enthusiastically Dong Cheng gathered the men of the household. Arms were collected. Dong Cheng was mounted and dressed for battle, spear couched for action. They were to assemble at Cao's inner gate and storm his quarters. Night, the second watch: all advanced. Dong Cheng raised his jeweled sword and strode into the banquet hall, where Cao was presiding. "Don't move, traitor!" Dong Cheng cried to Cao, chopping at him with his blade. Cao crumpled in the wake of the blow, as Cheng repeated the words "traitor, traitor," until he had awoken from the empty dream.

The physician leaned forward. "So you intend to murder Lord Cao?" he asked. Dong Cheng was too stunned to reply. "Calm yourself," Ji Ping went on. "Though a mere physician myself, I have never forgotten how much I owe the Han. Day after day I have listened to your deep-drawn sighs but hesitated to question you. Now, by chance, the words you spoke in your dreams have disclosed the actual situation. Please do not keep the truth from me. If there is any way I can help, even if it means clan-wide extermination, I shall do it without regret." Then, as a pledge, Ji Ping bit off the tip of his finger.¹³

"I only hope you are sincere," Dong Cheng said, covering his face; then he handed Ji Ping the Emperor's secret edict, adding, "Our prospects are poor now, with Xuande and Ma Teng gone. My worries over our inability to act have made me ill." "You have nothing to worry about," the physician replied. "The traitor's life is in these hands. He suffers from chronic headaches, with pain that pierces his marrow. The moment one comes on, he calls for me; and the next time he does, I will administer a treatment sure to kill him. Why bother with weapons?" "If we succeed in this," Dong Cheng answered, "the sacred shrines of the Han will owe their salvation to you." Ji Ping then took his leave.

Dong Cheng suppressed his excitement and was walking to his room when he came upon a house servant, Qin Qingtong, whispering in a secluded corner with the concubine Yunying. Dong Cheng had them seized. Only on his wife's appeal did he spare their lives. Each was given forty strokes with a staff, and the man was locked in an empty room. During the night Qin Qingtong, burning with resentment, forced open the metal lock and bounded over the wall. He went straight to Cao's residence, offering valuable information. Questioned in a side room, the man said, "Wang Zifu, Wu Zilan, Chong Ji, Wu Shi, and Ma Teng held a secret talk with my master¹⁴—I am sure there is a plot against you—and my master brought out a roll of silk with something written on it. And yesterday Ji Ping bit off his fingertip to seal an oath. That much I saw myself." Cao Cao kept the man in his house. Dong Cheng thought he had simply run away and made no attempt to locate him.

The next day Cao Cao feigned headache and called for Ji Ping. "A traitor meets his end," the physician thought, entering Cao's residence with the poison. From his bed Cao ordered Ji Ping to prepare the drug. "One dose and you'll be over it," Ping said. He called for a pot and decocted the brew in front of Cao. When the contents were half boiled down, he added the poison and handed the drink to Cao. But Cao, knowing the truth, was slow to drink it. "Take it while it is hot," Ji Ping urged. "A brief sweat and your headache will pass." Cao sat up and said, "You are versed in the Confucian texts and familiar with the proprieties. The servant must taste the lord's medicine; the son, the father's. As one of my closest, most trusted servants, shouldn't you taste the medicine before offering it?"

"Medicine is for the sick," the physician responded. "What's the use of my tasting it?" But Ji Ping knew he had been exposed and yanked Cao's ear in an attempt to pour the potion into him. Cao forced it aside, and the liquid splattered on the ground, causing the bricks to crack and split. Before Cao could give the order, his guards had pinned Ji Ping to the ground. "You really thought I was ill?" Cao said. "It was all arranged to test you, to see if you actually meant to do me harm." Twenty husky jailers whisked Ji Ping to a rear yard for interrogation. He lay bound on the ground, impassive, showing no fear; Cao Cao sat on a raised platform. "A mere physician," he said, "wouldn't have the nerve to poison me. Who put you up to it? Talk and you'll be spared." "Traitor who has wronged the sovereign!" Ji Ping retorted. "The entire realm would see you dead—not I alone." Cao hammered him with questions, but Ji Ping replied vehemently, "I meant to kill you for myself alone. No one sent me. My mission has failed. I'm ready to die." Cao Cao ordered Ji Ping beaten without mercy. After several hours his skin split open and the stairs before Cao Cao were covered with blood. Finally, rather than lose the man and his testimony, Cao Cao ordered a respite.

The next day Cao invited all the eminent court officials to a banquet. Only Dong Cheng declined, pleading illness. Wang Zifu and the rest felt compelled to attend so as not to arouse Cao's suspicions. The banquet was laid in Cao's private apartment. After several rounds of wine Cao said, "Our feast wants entertainment. We do have one man, though, who may sober you all up." At Cao's command the twenty jailers dragged in Ji Ping, secured in movable stocks. "You officials," Cao cried, "may not be aware that this fellow is associated with an evil faction that tried to rebel against the court and kill me. But today Heaven has ruined him. Please hear it in his own words." Cao had the prisoner struck. Ji Ping collapsed on the ground in a faint. Revived by a few splashes of water to the face, he opened his eyes. Then, grinding his teeth, he said, "Traitor! Is there a better time to kill me?"

"Initially there were six conspirators," Cao said. "You made the seventh. Right?"¹⁵ Ji Ping renewed his denunciation. Wang Zifu and his three comrades stared helplessly at one another in torment, as if on a bed of needles. Cao ordered the jailers to continue alternately beating and reviving the prisoner. But Ji Ping had no thought of seeking mercy, and Cao had him dragged off, realizing he would never testify. The assemblage dispersed. Cao detained only Wang Zifu and the other three for an evening banquet. They could feel their souls take flight in fear but had to stay on.

"I had not intended to hold you," Cao said, "but I've been meaning to ask you about your discussions with Dong Cheng." "Nothing of any importance," Wang Zifu replied. "What is written on the white silk roll?" Cao pressed. No clear answer forthcoming, Cao had the servant who had betrayed them brought in. "Well, where did you see it?" Wang Zifu demanded. "Six of you, in private, together, put down your names. You deny it?" the servant responded. "This wretched runaway," Wang Zifu said, "was punished for illicit involvement with the imperial brother-in-law's concubine. Now he slanders his master. He cannot be credited." "Ji Ping tried to poison me," Cao Cao said sharply.

"If it was not at Dong Cheng's bidding, then at whose was it?" The four men denied any knowledge of the act. "If you own up here and now, there will still be time for leniency," Cao said. "If you wait until the whole affair is exposed, it will be difficult to make allowances." But the four men insistently denied everything. Cao harshly ordered them confined.

The next day Cao Cao led his men to Dong Cheng's home to inquire after his health. Dong Cheng had no choice but to receive his guests. "What kept you from last night's banquet?" Cao asked him. "An ailment that continues to trouble me," Dong Cheng replied. "I do not go out unless absolutely necessary." "Probably just a touch of concern for the Han," Cao said. Dong Cheng quailed. Cao continued, "You are aware of the Ji Ping affair? No? How could the imperial brother-in-law not know?" Cao turned and said to his guards, "Bring him in to ease the imperial brother-in-law's ailment." Dong Cheng stood helplessly. Moments later twenty jailers dragged in a swearing Ji Ping and threw him down. "This man," Cao said to Dong Cheng, "has implicated Wang Zifu and the other three in a scheme to poison me; I have them in custody. Only one remains to be apprehended. Now, Ji Ping, who instructed you to kill me? Testify quickly."

"Heaven," the prisoner cried, "sent me to kill a rebel traitor." Cao ordered him beaten, but his body had no skin left to flay. Watching, Dong Cheng felt as if his heart were being crushed. Again Cao turned to Ji Ping and said, "You were born with ten fingers. Why is one missing?" "I chewed it off to mark an oath to kill a traitor!" Ji Ping shot back. Cao called for a knife and cut off the other nine. "Done in one stroke," he said. "Now make your oath." "I still have a mouth to devour a traitor, a tongue to curse him!" Ji Ping responded. Cao ordered his tongue cut out. "Stay your hand," Ji Ping cried. "I can bear it no longer. I am resigned to giving evidence. Release the bonds." When it was done, Ji Ping stood up; then he kneeled, facing the palace gate. "That I failed to rid the land of this traitor is but the design of Heaven." With those words Ji Ping dashed his head against the stair and died. Cao Cao gave a public order for his dismemberment. It was still the first month of the fifth year of Jian An. The records keeper left the following verses:

The ailing court of Han in deep decline,
The court physician worked to save the crown.
Pledging to purge the traitor's clique,
He gave his life for the sacred throne.

Cruelly scourged, he spoke with stronger passion;
Through death's agony his spirit will live on:
For those ten bloody stumps,
A name revered across a thousand autumns.

Now that Ji Ping was dead, Cao Cao confronted Dong Cheng with the informer. "Does the imperial brother-in-law recognize this man?" Cao demanded. "That runaway! Here?" was the angry reply. "He should be put to death at once." "He has volunteered information concerning the conspiracy," Cao said. "He is here to give evidence. Who dares to threaten him?" "Why should the prime minister give credence to the tales of a runaway slave?" Dong Cheng said sharply. "Wang Zifu and the others have already been taken," Cao retorted. "They have confessed. Do you still deny your guilt?" Dong Cheng was held while Cao's followers entered his sleeping quarters. There they

discovered the decree in the girdle and the loyalists' oath. Cao Cao read them and laughed, saying, "How could such a pack of rats expect to get away with this?"¹⁶ I want every member of Dong Cheng's clan seized, bar none!" Cao Cao brought the documents to his counselors and advisers, intending to depose Emperor Xian and enthrone another.¹⁷ Indeed:

A few columns of vermillion ink lead to naught,
And a loyalist oath leads to a tragic end.

Once again, the Emperor's life hung in the balance.¹⁸

READ ON.



*The Traitor Cao Murders the Consort Dong;
The Imperial Uncle Liu Flees to Yuan Shao*

HAVING DISCOVERED THE SECRET DECREE, Cao Cao consulted his advisers. He was determined to depose Emperor Xian and find a man of virtue to reign in his stead. But Cheng Yu opposed it. "Your illustrious Lordship," he argued, "makes his influence felt and his commands effective throughout the kingdom by invoking the cause of the Han. If you rush to depose the Emperor now, while the lords of the realm remain unpacified, it will end in civil war." Cao Cao agreed, contenting himself with the execution of Dong Cheng, his fellow conspirators, and their entire households, adults and children alike.¹ All told, over seven hundred died in executions conducted at every gate of the capital. The spectators, both officials and commoners, wept freely. In later times these lines mourning Dong Cheng were written:

By secret edict sewn into his sash,
He bore the word of Heaven through the gate.
This man, who guarded once the fleeing king,
Had earned again his sovereign's gratitude.
In anguish for the safety of the throne,
"Kill the traitor!" filled his dreaming soul.
Loyalty in memoriam a thousand ages hence—
Success or failure? Loyalty past all doubt!

Another verse honored the memory of Wang Zifu and the other three:

Life and loyalty pledged on a foot-long silk;
They yearned to redeem the sovereign sire.
Mourn their sheer courage; hundreds fell.
Fire-tried hearts outlast a thousand autumns.

Cao Cao's rage was not allayed. The Emperor's beloved high consort, Dong Cheng's younger sister, now five months with child, was his next target. Armed with a sword, Cao Cao went to the palace. The Emperor was in the rear. He had been telling the Empress Fu that he had heard nothing from Dong Cheng concerning the task entrusted to him. Without warning, Cao entered, all fury. The Emperor lost his composure.

"Was Your Majesty aware or not," Cao Cao said, "that Dong Cheng was conspiring to rebel?" "Dong Zhuo was duly punished long ago," the Emperor responded. "I said Dong *Cheng*," Cao

snapped, "not Dong Zhuo!"² The Emperor quivered. "We had no knowledge of this—really," he said. "I suppose," Cao Cao continued, "you have forgotten the pierced finger and the decree drawn in blood." All reply failed the Emperor. Cao ordered his lieutenants to bring in the high consort. "She is in her fifth month," the Emperor pleaded. "We hope the prime minister will show compassion." "Had Heaven not spoiled things for you," Cao replied, "I would have been murdered. Why should I spare a future nemesis?" "Demote her, then," the Empress Fu appealed, "to the cold palace³ and wait until she has delivered. There will be time enough to get rid of her." "And spare the rebel seed to avenge the mother?" Cao Cao retorted.

The consort sobbed. "Then let me die," she begged, "with my corpse intact—and no exposure." Cao Cao had the white cord shown to her. The Emperor wept, saying to his consort, "In the netherworld below the Nine Springs, Beloved, hold no grievance against us." His tears poured forth. The Empress Fu sobbed heavily. "Still these carryings on!" Cao cried. At his curt command the soldiers bore the consort off and strangled her outside the palace gate. Later these lines were written lamenting her death:

The Majesty that graced her could not save her.
Grieve for the dragon seed aborted with her life.
The Royal One, stern and stately, lifted his hand
To screen from welling eyes his undefended wife.

Cao Cao commanded the palace security officer, "Hereafter no kin or member of the imperial clan by marriage may enter without my decree. Execute anyone attempting or permitting entry." Cao Cao also assigned three thousand trusted followers to fill the ranks of the Royal Guard and then placed it in Cao Hong's charge.

Cao Cao said to Cheng Yu, "Dong Cheng and his cohorts are out of the way, but two remain: Ma Teng and Liu Bei. They too must be eliminated." "Ma Teng leads the garrison army in Xiliang," Cheng Yu said. "He cannot be easily taken. Send our greetings to him; let's not arouse his suspicions. Afterward, entice him to the capital and deal with him. As for Liu Bei, his force in Xuzhou, deployed in pincer formation, is not to be slighted. Then there is Yuan Shao, posted at Guandu and ever aiming at our capital. An attack eastward on Liu Bei will drive him to seek aid from Yuan Shao, who will surely exploit the capital's exposure. How will you meet that?"

"I don't agree," Cao said. "Xuande is a figure of great importance. If we hold back until his wings are full spread, we are going to have a hard time coping with him. Yuan Shao, despite his strength, is rarely able to make up his mind. He is really not worth worrying about." At this moment Guo Jia came in and joined the discussion. "I want to march on Liu Bei," Cao said to him. "How much of a threat is Yuan Shao?" "By nature," Guo Jia replied, "Yuan Shao is slow to move, and he frets about everything. His counselors are jealous of each other. I don't see much danger. Liu Bei has just revamped his forces, and they are not yet completely loyal. If Your Excellency leads an eastern campaign, a single battle should give you control." "This coincides with my own thinking," Cao Cao exclaimed. He mobilized two hundred thousand troops and led them out in five field armies to subdue Xuzhou.⁴

Spies brought the news to Sun Qian, who first informed Lord Guan in Xiapi and then Xuande in Xiaopei. In counsel with Sun Qian, Xuande said, "Help from Yuan Shao is our only hope." He

composed a note to Shao, which Sun Qian took north of the Yellow River.

Sun Qian was received by Tian Feng, to whom he described the situation in detail; then Sun Qian requested an audience with Yuan Shao. Tian Feng introduced Xuande's representative, who presented the letter to Yuan Shao. When Yuan Shao appeared, he was emaciated, his attire in disarray. "What's wrong, my lord?" Tian Feng asked. "My life is over," he cried. "What does Your Lordship mean?" Tian Feng inquired. "Of the five sons born to me," Yuan Shao explained, "the youngest is the one I dote on. Now he is on the brink of death, afflicted with scabies, and I have no heart to think about anything else."

Tian Feng said to Yuan Shao, "Cao Cao's march against Xuande leaves the capital vulnerable. This is the moment to invade with a loyalist force to preserve the Emperor and save the populace—a rare opportunity for Your Lordship." "That is true," Yuan Shao replied. "But my mind is distracted—something might go wrong." "What," asked Tian Feng, "is it that distracts you?" "Of my five sons only this one has great promise. If something should happen to him, my fate is sealed," Yuan Shao replied. And so he resolved not to strike; he asked Sun Qian to convey his reasons to Xuande and to assure him that if things went badly, he would find refuge north of the river. Tian Feng beat the ground with his staff and cried in despair, "A godsend! And for the sake of an infant's illness to let it slip! Our cause is lost. What a shame!" With protracted sighs he staggered out.⁵

Sun Qian rode nonstop back to Xuande with the disappointing news. "What do we do?" Xuande asked in alarm. "No need to worry, elder brother," Zhang Fei said. "Cao's force, coming so far, is bound to be fatigued. If we storm their camp the moment they arrive, we will demolish them!" "I used to think you a mere warrior," Xuande said to Zhang Fei. "But you showed great command of tactics when you captured Liu Dai. And your present plan agrees well with the logic of warfare." Thus Zhang Fei's proposal was adopted, and troops were readied for attack.

Cao Cao led his army toward Xiaopei. On the march a gale sprang up, and something cracked loudly. One of the leading banner poles had snapped. Cao Cao halted and called a conference to consider the omen. Xun Wenruo asked the direction of the wind and the color of the banner. "The wind came from the southeast," Cao answered, "and broke one of the banners at the side of our formation. It was two-colored, blue and red." "It must signify a night raid by Liu Bei," Xun Wenruo announced. Cao Cao nodded in agreement. A later poet expressed his chagrin in these lines:

Alas for this scion of kings, isolate, outspent,
Staking his all on a night foray.
The broken-banner sign betrayed his plan.
Old Man Heaven! Why let that villain free?

"Heaven answers our prayers," Cao Cao said. "Prepare defenses." Cao divided his men into nine contingents. One was placed forward, simulating encampment. The other eight lay in ambush all around.

That night the moon was dim. Xuande and Zhang Fei led two groups forward. Sun Qian stayed in Xiaopei. Confident of his plan, Zhang Fei rode ahead and burst into the camp with his small cavalry force. He found here and there a few men and horses. Even as he realized he was caught, flames surrounded him and voices resounded everywhere. Escape seemed impossible. To the east, Zhang Liao; to the west Xu Chu! To the south, Yu Jin; to the north, Li Dian! To the southeast, Xu Huang; to

the southwest, Yue Jin! To the northeast, Xiahou Dun; to the northwest, Xiahou Yuan! From eight sides Cao's commanders closed in. Zhang Fei thrust left and charged right, blocked front and fended rear. But his men, mostly soldiers captured from Cao's army, defected in the heat of combat.⁶ Zhang Fei, striving mightily, clashed with Xu Huang; Yue Jin threatened him from behind. Zhang Fei barely escaped with a few dozen riders, slashing a bloody trail. The road back to Xiaopei was blocked, and the way to Xiapi or to Xuzhou was sure to be closed. The region of the Mang-Dang Hills was his only hope.

Unaware of Zhang Fei's fate, Xuande was still moving toward Cao's camp when he heard the noise and cries of war. Suddenly behind him an enemy force cut off half his unit. Ahead, Xiahou Dun came fully into view. Xuande struggled free and fled, Xiahou Yuan in hot pursuit. Xuande had only some thirty men. Xiaopei was in flames; he could not return there. And Cao's soldiers had blanketed the approaches to Xiapi and Xuzhou. Xuande thought he was doomed; then he remembered a line from Yuan Shao's letter— "If things go badly, I will shelter you" —and decided to seek refuge in Qingzhou until he could make new plans. He started north only to be checked, this time by Li Dian. In the confusion Xuande managed to slip away, but his all his followers were taken.

Alone, Xuande rode north, making three hundred *li* a day. When he reached Qingzhou, the gate guards reported his name to the imperial inspector, Yuan Tan, Shao's eldest son. Yuan Tan had always respected Xuande. He admitted him at once and conducted him to his official quarters. Xuande recounted the details of his defeat and his hopes for Yuan Shao's protection. Yuan Tan provided for him in the guesthouse and sent a letter to his father. He then had Xuande escorted to the border of Pingyuan district. Leading a crowd of retainers, Yuan Shao came out of the city of Ye thirty *li* to welcome Xuande. Xuande expressed his appreciation, and Yuan Shao promptly returned the courtesy, saying, "Our son's recent illness has caused us to neglect your needs—to our sincere regret. But now fortune brings us together, fulfilling a lifelong expectation."

"Here is a poor and helpless Liu Bei," Xuande replied, "who has long desired to serve in your ranks, though by fate or circumstance it has never come to pass. Now I am under attack by Cao Cao; my family is lost. I believe that you, General, are willing to welcome warriors from round the realm, so in all humility I have come straight to you. If I may enter your service, I will be sworn to repay your kindness." Well pleased with these words, Yuan Shao treated Xuande with great generosity and allowed him to remain in his home province, Ji.⁷

On the night of Xuande's abortive raid Cao Cao seized Xiaopei and attacked Xuzhou. Mi Zhu and Jian Yong fled, unable to defend the city; and Chen Deng delivered it to Cao Cao. Cao entered in force and, after calming the populace, summoned his advisers to plan the capture of Xiapi. "Lord Guan is there," said Xun Wenruo, "keeping Xuande's family. He will defend it to the death. If you don't strike quickly, Yuan Shao will!"⁸ "I have always admired Lord Guan's military competence and personal ability," Cao Cao said, "and would be delighted to have him in my service. Could someone persuade him to submit to us?" "His loyalty is too deep," Guo Jia said. "He would never do it, and the envoy could well lose his life." But Zhang Liao stepped forward and said, "I am acquainted with the man and would like to attempt it." Cheng Yu said to Cao Cao, "Though Zhang Liao and Lord Guan are on familiar terms, as I read the man, no words will persuade him. But consider—if we can corner him first and then use Zhang Liao to work on him, he should transfer his allegiance to the prime minister." Indeed:

The hidden arrow fells the savage tiger,
But it takes some tasty bait to land a fish or turtle.

With Xuande lost, how would Lord Guan act?

READ ON.



Trapped, on a Hill, Lord Guan Sets Three Conditions; At Baima, Cao Cao Breaks the Heavy Siege

CHENG YU'S PLAN WAS THIS: "Lord Guan can stand off a myriad of men. To take him we need a stratagem. Now suppose we send some of the soldiers we've just captured back to Xiapi posing as escapees but remaining in covert contact with us. Next, we draw Lord Guan out to battle, feign defeat, and lure him to a prearranged point while crack troops cut off his way back. Then you can begin to negotiate with him." Cao Cao approved and put Cheng Yu's plan into action by sending a few score of Xuzhou troops to Xiapi to surrender. Lord Guan took the men back in good faith.

The next day Xiahou Dun spearheaded Cao Cao's attack. With five thousand in his command he tried to provoke Lord Guan to battle, but it was in vain. Finally, he sent a man to the base of the city wall to denounce Lord Guan personally. And Lord Guan, incensed, rode forth with three thousand. The two warriors clashed, but after ten bouts Dun wheeled and fled. As Lord Guan pursued, Dun fought and ran in turn until he had drawn his man some twenty *li* from the city. Fearing that Cao's army might seize Xiapi, Lord Guan turned back—only to hear the peal of bombards. To his left, Xu Huang; to his right, Xu Chu—their squadrons checked his retreat. Lord Guan moved to force a path. Ambushers concentrated their crossbow shots from two sides, and bolts whizzed down like locusts. Lord Guan could not pass. He pulled his men back, but Xu Huang and Xu Chu were ready for him. With a supreme effort Lord Guan pushed them back, making a valiant last attempt to fight his way through to Xiapi, but Xiahou Dun barred the way. The battle raged into the night. Finding no way home, Lord Guan struggled to a hilltop with his followers. There he rested.

Cao Cao's men clustered around the base of the hill, sealing all avenues of escape.¹ In the distance Lord Guan could see flames rising from the city. (In fact, the false defectors sent by Cao Cao had quietly opened the gates, and Cao, after battling his way into Xiapi, had told his men to set some harmless fires to weaken Lord Guan's will.) Distraught at the sight, Lord Guan charged down the hill again and again throughout the night, only to be driven back by volleys of arrows. At dawn he marshaled his men for a breakthrough when he saw a single rider—as if from nowhere—racing toward him. He recognized Zhang Liao.²

"You come as an adversary, I presume," Lord Guan called to him as he approached. "No," Liao replied. "I come in respect of our long-standing friendship." The envoy threw down his sword and dismounted. The formalities concluded, the two men sat together at the summit. "You must have come to win me over," Lord Guan began. "Not so," Zhang Liao responded. "Brother, you once saved my life. How could I not try to return the favor?" "Then you come to lend us aid!" Lord Guan exclaimed. "Not that, either," Zhang Liao said. "Then why have you come?" Lord Guan asked.³ "Xuande's survival is in doubt," Zhang Liao went on, "as is Zhang Fei's. Last night Lord Cao took Xiapi, without injury to soldier or civilian. A special detail guards Xuande's family for their

safety and peace of mind. I come first of all to tell you this."

"You will not succeed in influencing me," Lord Guan said angrily. "Bad as things look, death means no more to me than a welcome homecoming. You'd better leave at once. I will be riding down to do battle." Zhang Liao laughed loudly. "Brother," he said, "do you want to be the laughingstock of the empire?" "I will die," Lord Guan said, "devoted to my duty. I don't think the world will take it as a joke." "Dying here," Zhang Liao said, "you commit three offenses."⁴ "Well then," Lord Guan replied, "what are they?"

"In the beginning," Zhang Liao said, "when you, brother, and Protector Liu⁵ bound yourselves in fraternal allegiance, you swore to share life or death. Now your brother has been defeated, and you are about to die in combat. If Xuande survives and seeks your aid in vain, won't you have betrayed your oath? That is your first offense. Protector Liu's immediate family was placed in your care. If you die now, his two wives will have no one to defend them, and you will have betrayed his trust.⁶ That is your second offense. And third, not only is your martial skill incomparable, you are learned in the classics and the histories. You joined with the protector to uphold the house of Han. If you lapse in your determination and achieve a fool's valor instead by vainly rushing to certain death, how have you fulfilled your 'duty'? This is the statement, brother, I felt obliged to make."

Lord Guan pondered. "Well," he said at last, "you have explained the three offenses. What would you have me do?" "Lord Cao's troops," Zhang Liao replied, "are on four sides. If you refuse to submit, you will die. To die in vain avails nothing. It makes more sense to submit, for now, while you seek news of the protector. When you learn where he is, you may go to him immediately. That way you will ensure the safety of the two ladies, you will remain true to the peach garden oath, and you will preserve your own most useful life. These, brother, are the advantages for you to weigh." "Brother," Lord Guan replied, "you speak of three advantages. I have three conditions. If His Excellency agrees, I will lay down my arms at once. If not, I am content to die with the three offenses upon my head." "His Excellency is magnanimous and accomodating and has always shown forebearance. I beg to hear your conditions," answered Zhang Liao.

"First," Lord Guan said, "the imperial uncle, Liu Xuande, and I have sworn to uphold the house of Han. I shall surrender to the Emperor, not to Cao Cao.⁷ Second, I request for my two sisters-in-law the consideration befitting an imperial uncle's wives. No one, however high his station, is to approach their gate. And third, the moment we learn of Imperial Uncle Liu's whereabouts, no matter how far away he may be, I shall depart forthwith. Denied any of these conditions, I shall not surrender. Please return to Cao Cao with my terms."

Zhang Liao communicated Lord Guan's terms to Cao Cao. Told of Lord Guan's insistence on yielding to the Emperor and not to the prime minister, Cao Cao laughed and said, "I am the prime minister of the Han. The Han and I are one. This then may be granted." To the second condition, protection of the women, Cao Cao responded, "To the income of an imperial uncle I will add a like amount, thus doubling it. As for prohibiting outsiders from entering the residence of Xuande's wives, that is the rule of any decent house and a matter of course here." But at Lord Guan's third condition, rejoining Xuande if he was located, Cao Cao demurred. "In that case," he said, "I would be feeding him for nothing. It is difficult to grant." Zhang Liao asked Cao Cao, "Have you forgotten Yurang's saying?⁸ Liu Xuande treats Lord Guan with generosity and consideration—no more. If Your Excellency extends a greater largess to bind his love, need we fear his leaving us?" "Apt words," Cao replied. "I agree to his three conditions."⁹

Zhang Liao returned to the hilltop and announced Cao Cao's acceptance. "Nevertheless," Lord Guan said, "I shall have to request that His Excellency withdraw temporarily so that, before formally surrendering, I may reenter the city and inform my two sisters of the arrangements." Zhang Liao carried this new request back to Cao Cao, who ordered the army to remove thirty *li*. Xun Wenruo opposed it, saying, "It could be a trap." But Cao Cao answered, "Lord Guan's word is his bond. He would never break faith." The pullback was implemented.

Escorted by his own soldiers, Lord Guan entered Xiapi. He found public order undisturbed. At Xuande's residence Lady Gan and Lady Mi received him eagerly. Lord Guan saluted them from below the stair. "The distress you have suffered," he said, "is my fault." "Where is the imperial uncle?" they asked. "I do not know," Lord Guan replied. "What are we to do now, brother-in-law?" they asked. "When I left the city," he replied, "I fought as hard as I could but was trapped on a hill. Cao Cao sent Zhang Liao to talk me into surrendering, and I agreed—but on three conditions, which Cao Cao has already accepted. Then, at my request, he withdrew his troops, enabling me to enter the city and consult you two first."

"What are the three conditions?" the ladies asked. Lord Guan recounted the terms of his agreement with Cao Cao. Lady Gan said, "Yesterday, when Cao's army entered the city, we thought we were doomed.¹⁰ To our surprise we have enjoyed security. Not a single soldier has dared come through our gate. Brother-in-law, since you have already given your word, why bother asking us? But I do fear Cao Cao will prevent you from finding the imperial uncle." "Rest assured, sisters," he said. "I will handle that in my own way." "Brother," they said, "make all these decisions yourself. It is not necessary to consult us womenfolk."

Lord Guan took his leave and rode to Cao Cao's camp with a few dozen horsemen. Cao greeted him before the entrance as Lord Guan dismounted and made obeisance. Cao rushed forward to reciprocate. "As the general of a defeated army," Lord Guan began, "I am obliged by your mercy in sparing me." "Having long esteemed your loyalty and sense of honor," Cao responded, "I am favored today with a meeting which fulfills a lifelong desire." Lord Guan said, "Zhang Liao has conveyed to you on my behalf the three conditions of my surrender. I am honored by your consent and trust there will be no retraction." "My word, once given, is honored," was Cao's reply. "Should I learn of the imperial uncle's whereabouts," Lord Guan went on, "I must go to join him, whatever the dangers or obstacles. In that event, I may not have time even to take formal leave, so I humbly beg your pardon against that time." "If Liu Xuande still lives," Cao Cao said, "you are free to join him. But he may have perished unnoticed in the confusion of battle. For the time being you might as well content yourself while we gather more information." Lord Guan expressed his respectful appreciation. Cao Cao held a banquet in his honor.

The following day Cao Cao began withdrawing the imperial army from the newly conquered Xiapi for the march back to the capital. Lord Guan prepared for the journey, provided the carriage guard, and bade his sisters-in-law ascend. En route he rode alongside in attendance.

They broke their trip at a hostel, where Cao Cao, aiming to disrupt the proprieties between lord and liege man, assigned Lord Guan and his sisters-in-law to a single chamber. But Lord Guan never entered the chamber; he remained at attention outside the door, holding a candle that burned through the night until dawn. His eyes showed no trace of fatigue. Cao Cao's respect for him grew.¹¹ In the capital Cao Cao provided official quarters for Lord Guan and Xuande's wives. Lord Guan had the dwelling divided into two compounds. At the inner gate he posted ten elderly guards. He occupied the

outer compound himself.

Cao Cao conducted Lord Guan into the presence of the Emperor, who conferred on him the title adjutant general. Lord Guan gave thanks for the sovereign's grace and returned to his quarters. The next day Cao Cao held a grand banquet, assembling his entire corps of advisers and officers and treating Lord Guan as an honored guest. Cao invited him to take the seat of honor and presented him with brocade silks as well as gold and silver utensils—all of which Lord Guan gave over to his sisters-in-law for safekeeping. Cao Cao showed unusual generosity, giving him small banquets every third day, large ones every fifth. Ten handsome women were given to Lord Guan, but he sent them on to serve his two sisters-in-law. Every three days he would appear at their door to perform the proper formalities and inquire about their condition. They in turn would ask for news of the imperial uncle. Only when the ladies had excused him would he retire. Learning of this high courtesy, Cao Cao inwardly honored Lord Guan more than ever.

One day Cao Cao noticed that Lord Guan's green embroidered combat garb was badly worn. He had the warrior's measure taken and presented him with battle dress of the rarest brocade. Lord Guan accepted it, but he wore it underneath the old one. Cao Cao teased him for being frugal, and Lord Guan said, "It is not frugality. The old dress was a gift from Imperial Uncle Liu. I feel near him when I wear it. I could never forget my elder brother's gift on account of Your Excellency's new one. That is why I wear it underneath." "Truly, a man of honor," Cao Cao exclaimed. But inwardly he was troubled.

One day a message was brought to Lord Guan; "The ladies have collapsed in tears. No one knows why. Pray go to their chamber soon." Lord Guan, formally attired, knelt before their door and asked the cause of their distress. "Last night," Lady Gan began, "I dreamed the imperial uncle was trapped in a pit. I woke and told Lady Mi, and we believe he is now in the netherworld. That is why we have lost our composure." "Dreams of the night bear no credence," Lord Guan responded. "This is from excessive worry. Please do not let such matters vex you."

At this time Cao Cao invited Lord Guan to a banquet. Lord Guan took leave of his sisters and came before Cao Cao, who asked the reason for his sorrowful look. "My sisters-in-law," Lord Guan replied, "yearn for my elder brother and cry so pitifully that I grieve despite myself." Cao Cao smiled and tried to console him, urging him to drink. Lord Guan became intoxicated and, stroking his beard, said, "I have lived in vain, having neglected my responsibility to the imperial house and my duty to my elder brother." "Have you ever counted the hairs in your beard?" Cao asked. "There are several hundred," Lord Guan replied. "In autumn I lose a few. In winter I wrap it in a black silk sack so the hairs don't break." Cao Cao had a gorgeous silk sack made to protect Lord Guan's beard.

Early the next morning they were received by the Emperor, who asked the purpose of the sack that hung on Lord Guan's chest. "As my beard is rather long," Lord Guan informed the sovereign, "the prime minister bestowed this sack on me to keep it safe." At the Emperor's request he unfurled it in the royal sanctum, and it reached below his stomach. The Emperor called him the Man of the Magnificent Beard—and so he was known thereafter.

One day after a banquet Cao Cao was escorting Lord Guan from the ministerial residence when he noticed that his mount was emaciated. "Why is your horse so skinny?" Cao inquired. "My worthless carcass has grown heavy," Lord Guan replied. "The horse is worn out from bearing me." Cao had his aides bring in a horse. Its color was like fiery coal, its stature magnificent. Pointing to it, Cao asked, "Do you recognize this horse?" "Isn't it Red Hare," Lord Guan answered, "the horse Lü Bu

once rode?"¹² Cao Cao nodded and presented the mount, completely equipped, to Lord Guan, who bowed repeatedly and declared his gratitude. Piqued, Cao Cao asked, "I have sent you beautiful women, gold, rolls of silk, one after the other, and never did you condescend to bow. Now for this horse you keep bowing and bowing. Do you value a beast above humans?" "I admire this horse," Lord Guan said. "It can cover a thousand *li* in a single day. It is a gift that will enable me to reach my brother in a single day should his whereabouts become known." Cao Cao swallowed his astonishment and regretted the gift. Later a poet wrote:

Upon a realm divided shines this hero's fame;
Staying by his sisters, he kept his honor clean.
The cunning chancellor showed false courtesy,
Little knowing Guan would never bend the knee.

Cao Cao asked Zhang Liao, "Why is Lord Guan so determined to leave us when I have treated him with the greatest generosity?" "Let me look into it," Zhang Liao replied. The next day he visited Lord Guan. After greetings were exchanged, Zhang Liao said, "Since I recommended you to the prime minister, has anyone been favored over you?" "I am deeply grateful," Lord Guan answered, "for the prime minister's generosity. But though my body is here, my heart is still with the imperial uncle. He never leaves my thoughts." "I believe your attitude is incorrect," Zhang Liao said. "In this world a real man must be able to establish correct priorities. Xuande could not have treated you better than His Excellency has. Why are you bent on leaving?" "I know only too well," Lord Guan continued, "how lavishly Lord Cao honors me. But I have received Xuande's favor. We are sworn to die for each other. Bound by that oath, I cannot remain here. Nonetheless, before I leave, I am determined to perform some act of merit to requite Lord Cao's kindness." "And if Xuande is no longer alive?" Zhang Liao asked. "I am bound to follow him to the world below."¹³ Seeing Lord Guan immune to persuasion, Zhang Liao took his leave and went to report the results of his conversation to Cao Cao. "To follow one's lord, always true to the first oath," the prime minister said with a sigh, "that is the meaning of loyalty in this world." Then Xun Wenruo added, "He said he would not leave until he had done us a major service. If we deny him the opportunity to do so, it will be difficult for him to go." Cao Cao indicated his approval.

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Meanwhile, having joined Yuan Shao, Liu Xuande was in a state of constant fretfulness. "What troubles you?" Yuan Shao asked him. "Not a shred of news of my two brothers," Xuande answered. "My family is in the traitor Cao's hands. I have neither served the Han nor kept my loved ones from harm. How can I help grieving?" "I have long wanted," Yuan Shao said, "to move against the capital. The spring thaw has arrived—the ideal time for marshaling the army." The two men discussed strategies for defeating Cao Cao. But Tian Feng objected. "Last time," he said, "when Cao attacked Xuzhou and left the capital undefended, you did not respond to the opportunity. Now Xuzhou has fallen, and Cao's troops are keen. He is formidable now. Shouldn't we hold fast here until some weakness shows itself in Cao's army?" "Give me time to think it over," Yuan Shao said.

Yuan Shao asked Xuande's view of Tian Feng's conservative tactics. "Cao Cao," Xuande said, "is

a traitor to the sovereign. If Your Lordship fails to bring him to justice, I fear that in the eyes of the world you will forfeit our claim on the great principle of allegiance." "Your position is well taken," Yuan Shao replied and ordered the mobilization. To Tian Feng's repeated protests he said angrily, "Those like you, addicted to civil procedures, despise the military side of things. Do you want us to renege on our allegiance to the Han?" Tian Feng bowed low and knocked his head on the ground. "Ignore my words," he cried, "and you will march into disaster." Yuan Shao wanted Tian Feng executed, but agreed to have him simply incarcerated after Xuande's strenuous appeals.

Tian Feng's fate prompted Ju Shou to gather his clan, distribute his property among them, and say farewell. "I am off to war," he explained. "If we win, there will be no limit to my wealth and influence. If we lose, not even my life can be saved." Tearfully, his people saw him off.

Yuan Shao sent General Yan Liang in the lead; his first target, Baima. Ju Shou protested: "Yan Liang, though brave and spirited, is too narrow to assume command alone." "He is my best general," Yuan Shao replied. "The likes of you cannot take his measure." Yuan Shao's army advanced to Liyang. Liu Yan, governor of Dongjun, reported the invasion to the capital, and Cao Cao called his advisers into conference to work out tactics. Lord Guan went to see the prime minister. "I understand Your Excellency is calling up the army," he said. "I volunteer for the vanguard." "I don't think I should trouble you, General," Cao Cao replied. "But sooner or later we will require your services, and I shall come to you then." Lord Guan withdrew.

Cao Cao had command of a force of one hundred and fifty thousand divided into three armies. As they marched, bulletins from Liu Yan kept arriving. Cao Cao took one army of fifty thousand to Baima and pitched camp there with the hills to his back. In the distance he could see Yan Liang's one hundred thousand deployed over the open fields and the flats near the river. Uneasily Cao said to Song Xian, formerly in Lü Bu's service, "You are known as one of Lü Bu's fiercest fighters. I want you to go against Yan Liang." As ordered, Song Xian galloped out in front of his line, spear couched for combat. Yan Liang, sword leveled, horse poised, waited beneath the bannered entrance to his formation. When he spotted Song Xian, a roar burst from his throat, and he raced forth. The clash was brief. A hand rose, a sword struck, and Song Xian fell. "What a warrior!" Cao Cao exclaimed in consternation.

Wei Xu volunteered to avenge his comrade, and Cao Cao sent him out. Lance set, Wei Xu galloped to the front where he loudly cursed Yan Liang. Liang wasted no words. On the first exchange he cleaved Wei Xu's forehead. "Who have we left to oppose him?" Cao asked. In response Xu Huang took the field and fought twenty bouts with Yan Liang, only to be driven back to his line. Cao's commanders began to tremble. Cao recalled the army, and Yan Liang withdrew also.

The spectacle of his fallen generals left Cao Cao depressed. Cheng Yu said to him, "I can suggest a match for Yan Liang—Lord Guan." "I fear that if he scores such a victory," Cao replied, "he will leave." "If Xuande lives," Cheng Yu said, "he must be with Yuan Shao. If Lord Guan destroys Yuan Shao's troops, Shao is sure to turn against Xuande and kill him. With Xuande dead, where can Lord Guan turn?" Satisfied, Cao Cao sent for Lord Guan to request his help. Lord Guan went first to bid his sisters-in-law farewell. "This is your chance," they said, "to get news of the imperial uncle." Lord Guan accepted the call.

Armed with his blade Green Dragon, mounted on Red Hare, and accompanied by a handful of men in train, Lord Guan rode to Cao Cao at Baima. Cao described to him the exploits and ferocity of Yan Liang and asked his opinion. "Let me have a look at him," Lord Guan said. Cao ordered wine for

the warrior. While drinking, they were told that Yan Liang was issuing his challenge. Cao Cao led Lord Guan to a hilltop to observe. They sat together, ringed by the chief commanders, and Cao pointed to the foot of the hill, where Yan Liang's forces had camped. Their banners and standards were fresh and brilliant, and their spears stood tall like a stand of trees, impressive in their strict array. "How strong and valiant, this army from north of the river!" Cao Cao exclaimed. "Mud hens and clay dogs to me!" was Lord Guan's response. Cao Cao pointed again. "Under the command canopy," he said, "with the brocade robe and gold-trimmed armor, armed with a sword, erect on his horse—that's Yan Liang." Lord Guan glanced over the scene. "His head is ours for the asking," he said. "Do not underrate him," Cao Cao warned. "With as little merit as I have," Lord Guan answered, "I beg permission to present his head to Your Excellency. I will seize it from under their very noses!" "We do not make sport in the army," Zhang Liao commented. "Take care."

With a thrust Lord Guan mounted. Pointing his blade to the ground, he raced downhill, his phoenix eyes round and fixed, his silkworm eyebrows bristling. He dashed into the enemy line. The northern army parted like a wake as Lord Guan charged straight for Yan Liang, who was still under his canopy. Before Liang could identify the figure crashing toward him, the speed of Red Hare had already brought them face-to-face. Yan Liang was too slow, and with a stroke of the blade Lord Guan pierced him. Before the stunned enemy Lord Guan dismounted and cut off the head, strapped it to the neck of his horse, remounted, and sped away, sword raised in warning. All the while it seemed as if Lord Guan was moving across an empty plain. The men and leaders of the northern force were thrown into tumult, routed without having fought. Cao's troops seized their chance and struck, taking a toll in lives beyond numbering. The booty in weapons and horses was enormous.¹⁴

Lord Guan reascended the hill to the acclaim of Cao's generals, and placed the head before the prime minister, who said, "General, this is more than any mortal could do!" "Not worth mentioning," Lord Guan replied. "My brother Zhang Fei could snatch the head of the chief general of an army ten times that size." Cao Cao turned in astonishment to his aides, saying, "Hereafter, should we encounter Zhang Fei, we must not risk engaging him!" And he had them write down the warning under their lapels.

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Yan Liang's defeated force fled homeward. Meeting Yuan Shao on the way, the soldiers described all that had happened. Yuan Shao asked in amazement who the warrior could be. "It must have been Lord Guan, Liu Xuande's younger brother," Ju Shou answered. Angrily, Yuan Shao turned to Xuande and said, "Your brother has killed my beloved commander. I am certain you were involved. What am I keeping you for?" He had the axemen take Xuande to be executed. Indeed:

Moments ago an honored guest;
Now a prisoner awaiting death.

Would Xuande meet his doom?¹⁵

READ ON.



Yuan Shao Loses a Battle and Another General; Lord Guan Returns His Official Seal

UNPERTURBED BY YUAN SHAO'S THREAT, Liu Xuande said, "My lord, do you really mean to sever an old friendship on the basis of an uncorroborated report? Since my brothers and I were separated at Xuzhou, we have had no reliable information regarding Lord Guan's fate. Many men in this world look alike: not every ruddy-faced, long-bearded man can be Lord Guan. Why not try and verify the report before anything else?" Yuan Shao, who was basically a man with little mind of his own, reacted by rebuking Ju Shou. "You nearly misled me into killing my good friend," he said and invited Xuande to resume his privileged place in his council.

Discussion on avenging Yan Liang was in progress. One man stepped forward and spoke: "Yan Liang and I were like brothers. That villain Cao has killed him, and I have to avenge him." Xuande observed the man. He was eight spans tall, with a long, flat face that reminded him of the mythical wild goat that butted down wrongdoers. The volunteer was Wen Chou, the renowned general from north of the river. Gratified by the offer, Yuan Shao said, "You are the one who can avenge Yan Liang. I am giving you one hundred thousand men. Cross the river and rout those villains now." Ju Shou protested: "It won't work. This is the time to remain entrenched in Yanjin while sending a corps over to Guandu. It is no time to risk a general crossing. Our army could never get back in the event of a surprise." "The likes of you," Yuan Shao said irately, "dull my men's spirits, backing away from the tasks at hand and spoiling our chances. Don't you know that in warfare 'the moment matters most'?" Ju Shou sighed and withdrew, saying, "The leader is willful; the followers ambitious; the Yellow River flows on and on. What power have I to change things?" Pleading ill health, Ju Shou attended no more councils.

Xuande said to Yuan Shao, "You have honored me with great favor, and I have not reciprocated. I want to go along with Wen Chou, both to requite your kindness and to find out whatever I can about Lord Guan." Delighted to oblige, Yuan Shao ordered Wen Chou and Xuande to lead the vanguard. But Wen Chou complained, "Xuande has lost one battle after another. He will bring bad luck. Since you insist on his going, I am assigning him thirty thousand men to bring up the rear." Thus, Wen Chou advanced with his seventy thousand.

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Lord Guan's stunning victory over Yan Liang prompted Cao Cao to recommend that the Emperor enfeoff him as lord of Hanshou precinct.¹ The seal was cast and presented to Lord Guan. At this time it was reported that Wen Chou had crossed the river and reached Yanjin. Cao took action at once. First he had the residents west of the river evacuated; then he moved his forces up but ordered the

rear guard to the front and the vanguard to the rear, so that the grain and fodder preceded the main army. Lü Qian asked, "What is Your Excellency's purpose?" "Our supplies," Cao replied, "have been raided a number of times. Now I want them in the front." "What if the enemy makes off with them?" Lü Qian asked. "I'll think of something," Cao said. But Lü Qian thought the plan dubious.

Cao Cao sent the supply train ahead along the riverbank to Yanjin. Soon shouts of panic arose from the van. A runner reported back, "General Wen Chou appeared from the north, and the supply guards scattered. The provisions are lost. Our main force is too far behind to help. What shall we do?" Cao Cao pointed south. "Take shelter on that small hill," he ordered. The soldiers rushed up the hill in response. Cao Cao had them remove their armor and let all the horses run free while the men rested, even as Wen Chou's army was drawing near. "The enemy is coming," Cao's commanders reported. "We have to round up the horses and retreat to Baima." But Xun You quickly stopped them. "These horses," he told them, "make the perfect bait for the enemy. Why retreat?" Cao Cao smiled meaningfully at Xun You, who, having perceived Cao's intent, said no more.

After capturing Cao Cao's supplies and wagons, Wen Chou's men began swarming over the field, eager to plunder the horses. At Cao's signal his commanders descended the hill and attacked in well-coordinated assaults that threw Wen Chou's army into chaos. Ringed by Cao's soldiers, Wen Chou's men trampled over each other. Wen Chou, powerless to control his men and unable to fight on alone, tried to escape. From the hilltop Cao Cao singled him out. "There!" he cried, "the famed general from the north! Who will take him?" Zhang Liao and Xu Huang rode swiftly down together, shouting to Wen Chou, "You can't escape!"

Wen Chou turned and saw two warriors charging. He put his spear aside and aimed an arrow at Zhang Liao. Xu Huang shouted a warning: "The devil's about to shoot." Zhang Liao ducked, and the arrow pierced his helmet, shooting away its ornamental tuft. Liao resumed his charge. Wen Chou's second shot hit his horse in the face. Down it went, its knees folding, tossing Liao forward into the dirt.

Wen Chou was turning back for the kill. Xu Huang, twirling his great axe, intercepted him only to take flight at the sight of fresh forces coming up behind Wen Chou. Chou pursued, galloping along the river. Suddenly he saw a dozen riders, pennants flying bravely. Their leader, sword held high, came at him. It was Lord Guan. "Halt, rebel commander!" he shouted. The two tangled, but after a few moments Wen Chou lost heart and fled. Lord Guan gave chase, overtook his man, and felled him with a stroke to the back of the head. Observing from the hilltop, Cao Cao ordered another wave of attacks. Half of Yuan Shao's northern army perished in the river, and Cao Cao recovered all his supplies and horses.²

During the fighting Lord Guan's cohort attacked savagely on all sides. Xuande meanwhile arrived on the opposite shore with his contingent of thirty thousand. Spies informed him that Wen Chou had been killed by a red-faced, long-bearded warrior, so he rode to the river's edge. Xuande looked across and saw a group of men and horses moving back and forth as if they were flying. In their midst was a banner that read "Lord Guan, Lord of Hanshou Precinct." Xuande silently thanked Heaven and earth. "So my brother is with Cao Cao," he murmured to himself. He looked for a way to hail Lord Guan, but a mass of Cao's men swallowed him up, and Xuande pulled back.

Yuan Shao next reinforced Guandu with fresh camps and barricades. Guo Tu and Shen Pei came before Yuan Shao and said, "Once again that Guan has killed our general, and Liu Bei feigns ignorance." "Long-eared devil! How dare he!" Yuan Shao railed and ordered Xuande seized for

execution once again. "What have I done?" Xuande asked him. "You sent your brother to defeat my top general again," Shao answered. "You claim you are innocent?" "Allow me one last statement," Xuande pleaded. "Cao Cao has always been bitterly jealous of me. He knows I am with Your Lordship and dreads my helping you. That's why he sent Lord Guan to cut down your generals—to provoke Your Lordship and then use you to do me in. I beg you to consider this." "There is truth in what you say," Yuan Shao conceded. Then, turning to his advisers, he said, "You almost ruined my reputation, having me kill a worthy man!" Roughly he dismissed the two and invited Xuande to the seat of honor in his tent.

Xuande said gratefully, "I am indebted for Your Lordship's magnanimous consideration, which I could never repay. But let me have someone you trust carry a secret letter to Lord Guan. Once he knows where I am, he will come at once to lend his support, and together we may punish Cao Cao and avenge Yan Liang and Wen Chou. What do you say?" Delighted, Yuan Shao said, "Getting Lord Guan would be worth more to me than ten Yan Liangs or Wen Chous."³ Xuande drew up a letter, but there was no one to deliver it.

Yuan Shao ordered his army back to Wuyang, where he set up a string of encampments scores of *li* long and suspended all military operations. Cao Cao sent Xiahou Dun to guard the entry points to Guandu and took the main army back to the capital. At a great feast of the court he hailed Lord Guan's victories, then he turned to Lü Qian and declared, "Remember how I trapped the enemy by shifting provisions to the front? Only Xun You read my mind." The assembly voiced its admiration.

During the banquet Cao Cao received an urgent report: "Yellow Scarves, led by Liu Pi and Gong Du, are spreading havoc in Runan. Cao Hong, unable to suppress them, wants troops." Lord Guan volunteered. "Let me do my best to break the rebels," he said. "You have rendered distinguished service time and again," Cao Cao said, "and have yet to receive your due. How can we let you serve?" "If I remain inactive too long," Lord Guan replied, "I will lose my health. Let me go." Impressed by his zeal, Cao Cao detailed fifty thousand men to follow him, assigning Yu Jin and Yue Jin as his deputy commanders.

The next day after Lord Guan's army had set out, Xun Wenruo quietly warned Cao Cao, "His allegiance to Xuande is firm as ever. If he gets word of his brother, he will leave us. I wouldn't keep sending him out on these campaigns." "After this," Cao Cao responded, "I won't let him fight again."

Lord Guan pitched camp close to Runan. His men seized two spies in the night. Lord Guan recognized one of them as Sun Qian, an adviser to Xuande. Dismissing his attendants, Lord Guan said to him, "After the debacle at Xuzhou I lost all trace of you. What are you doing here?" "After the defeat," Sun Qian replied, "chance brought me to Runan, and Liu Pi gave me refuge. What are you, General, doing on Cao Cao's side? Are Lady Gan and Lady Mi safe?" Lord Guan then related the intervening events. "I have heard," Sun Qian said, "that our lord is with Yuan Shao. I have wanted to join him but have found no chance to. At the moment Liu Pi and Gong Du, the two Yellow Scarves leaders, have pledged to help Yuan Shao against Cao Cao. We learned that providence had led you to Runan, and so they arranged to have me brought here in disguise to tell you they will feign defeat tomorrow. You will then be able to bring the two ladies to Yuan Shao and be reunited with our lord."

"Since my elder brother is with Yuan Shao," Lord Guan said, "I must go to him at once. If only I had not killed Yuan Shao's two generals—now anything could happen." "I'll sound things out for you," Sun Qian said, "and report back." "I am ready to die ten thousand times," Lord Guan declared, "for

one look at my brother. I am returning to the capital now to bid Cao Cao good-bye." That night Lord Guan sent Sun Qian north on his mission to Yuan Shao.⁴

The next day Lord Guan went into battle against Gong Du. Clad for combat, Gong Du appeared before his lines. Lord Guan cried to him, "Why have you turned against the court?" Gong Du retorted, "As one who has turned against his lord, you are in no position to reproach me." "I, betray my lord?" Lord Guan demanded. "What are you doing in Cao Cao's service," Gong Du went on, "when Liu Xuande is with Yuan Shao?" Lord Guan said no more. He swung his sword and charged. Gong Du fled. Lord Guan pursued. Du shouted back, "Remember your former lord's kindness. Advance swiftly—we will yield Runan." Lord Guan knew what he meant and sent his army forward. Feigning defeat, Liu Pi and Gong Du abandoned the field. Lord Guan took control of the district, reassured the populace, and returned to the capital. Cao Cao welcomed him outside the city walls and rewarded the troops.

After the celebration Lord Guan went home and paid his respects to his sisters-in-law. From behind her screen Lady Gan asked, "Brother, after two expeditions, is there still no news of the imperial uncle?" "Not yet," Lord Guan answered and left. The two ladies cried bitterly. "The imperial uncle is probably no more, and second brother is sparing us from the truth." But just then an old soldier long in their service heard them sobbing and whispered through the screen, "Dry your tears, ladies, your lord is with Yuan Shao north of the river." "How do you know that?" they asked. "I was on campaign with General Guan," the soldier replied. "Someone at the front told me."

The two ladies summoned Lord Guan and demanded an explanation. "The imperial uncle has never wronged you," they said. "But now that you have Cao Cao's favor, you have promptly forgotten your duty to your former liege. Why have you kept the truth from us?" Lord Guan touched his head to the floor. "It is true," he replied, "that elder brother is north of the river. I kept it from you to ensure secrecy.⁵ We have to plan carefully now; haste will accomplish nothing."⁶ "Do not delay," Lady Gan pleaded. Lord Guan retired again but knew no peace, racking his brains for a plan.

In fact, Yu Jin had already informed Cao Cao of Xuande's whereabouts, and Cao Cao had sent Zhang Liao to learn Lord Guan's intentions. Zhang Liao found his friend sitting, depressed. "I hear you had news of your brother on the last campaign," Zhang Liao said, "and come especially to congratulate you." "My former lord may be alive," Lord Guan replied, "but I have yet to see him. There is no cause for rejoicing." Zhang Liao asked, "How does your relation with me differ from that between you and Xuande?" "You and I," Lord Guan replied, "are just friends. Xuande and I are friends to begin with, brothers in the second place, and, finally, lord and vassal. The relationships are not comparable."⁷ "Xuande is with Yuan Shao," Zhang Liao continued. "Are you going to join him?" "I must stand by my pledge," Lord Guan replied. "Please convey my best wishes to the prime minister." Zhang Liao reported the conversation to Cao Cao, who said, "I have a way to detain him."

Lord Guan was mulling over the situation when an old friend was announced. But it turned out to be someone Lord Guan did not recognize. "Who are you, sir?" he asked. "Actually," the man replied, "I am in the service of Yuan Shao—Chen Zhen of Nanyang." Astounded, Lord Guan dismissed his attendants and said, "What have you come for, sir?" The man handed him the letter from Liu Xuande. It read in part:

In the peach garden you and I once swore to share a single fate. Why have you swerved from that course, severing the bond of grace and allegiance? If you seek recognition for your deeds

or aspire to wealth and status, I will gladly offer up my head to make your accomplishment complete. Who can write all he wishes to say? Unto death I will abide by your instruction.

Lord Guan wept bitterly reading Xuande's words. "Would I not have sought out my brother," he cried, "had I known where to seek him? Would I break our original covenant for the sake of wealth and status?"⁸ "Xuande's anxiety to see you is most keen," the messenger said. "If you remain true to the oath, you should go to him as soon as possible." "In this life," Lord Guan said, "man stands between Heaven and earth. He who fails to finish as he starts is no man of honor. I came to Cao Cao open and aboveboard and can leave him no other way. I shall compose a letter for you to carry to my brother. This will give me time to take leave of Cao and bring my sisters-in-law to Xuande." "What if Cao Cao refuses?" the messenger asked. "I am content to die rather than remain here," Lord Guan declared. "Then draft it quickly," the messenger said, "for Lord Liu despairs." Lord Guan sent the following reply:

In my humble view, honor brooks no reservation, nor does loyalty respect death. In my youth I came to know the classics and to appreciate something of our traditions and code of honor. When I reflect on the fraternal devotion and sacrifice of such ancient models as Yangjue Ai and Zuo Botao, I cannot help sighing over and over through my tears.⁹ At Xiapi, which you assigned me to guard, we had no stores and no reinforcements. My own wish was to fight to the death, but with the heavy responsibility of my two sisters-in-law, could I sacrifice myself and thus abandon those entrusted to me? So I assumed a temporary obligation in hopes of rejoining you later. Only recently at Runan did I first receive reliable information about you. Now I shall go at once in person to bid Lord Cao good-bye. I will then deliver the two ladies to you. May the gods and man scourge me if I harbor any undutiful intent. I open my bosom to you, but pen and silk cannot convey my loyalty, my sincerity. Humbly awaiting the time when I can bow before you, I offer this for your examination.

The messenger took the letter. After informing the ladies of what he had done, Lord Guan went to the ministerial residence. But Cao Cao knew why he was coming and had a sign saying "Absent" hung at his gate. Lord Guan left, perturbed. He next ordered his original followers to prepare the carriages and horses for departure at a moment's notice. Finally he instructed the members of his household to leave all gifts from Cao—even the least trifle—in place. Nothing was to be taken away.

The following day Lord Guan went to the prime minister's residence. The same sign greeted him. He returned several more times but never succeeded in seeing Cao Cao. Lord Guan then sought out Zhang Liao at his home, but he would not appear, pleading ill health. Realizing that the prime minister would not formally let him leave and yet resolved to do so, Lord Guan wrote this farewell message:

In my youth I undertook to serve the imperial uncle, vowing to share with him both life and death. Radiant Heaven and fertile earth bore witness to the oath. When I lost my command at Xiapi, I received your gracious consent to my three demands. Now I have discovered that my first liege is in the army of Yuan Shao. Our covenant is ever in my thoughts; to betray it is unthinkable. Despite the great favor you have bestowed on me of late, this original bond must be honored. I hereby deliver this letter to announce my departure, presuming to hope that you may consider it. For whatever benefaction I may yet remain in your debt, kindly defer the

accounting until some future day.

Transcribed and sealed, the letter was taken to the prime minister's residence.

Lord Guan locked away all valuables received during his stay and left his seal of office, lord of Hanshou precinct, hanging in the hall. Next he had his sisters-in-law mount the carriage readied for them. Astride Red Hare, the sword Green Dragon in hand, and ringed by his original followers, Lord Guan, with menacing eye and leveled blade, pushed straight out of the north city gate, past the objecting gate warden. Lord Guan then dropped back to deal with any pursuers as the retinue hastened along the highroad.

Cao Cao was still considering his next move when Lord Guan's letter was brought to him. Stunned, Cao said, "So he has left!" Next, the warden of the north gate reported: "Lord Guan burst out of the gate. One carriage and some twenty riders are heading north." Lord Guan's house staff also reported, "He locked up all Your Lordship's gifts; the ten ladies-in-waiting are in a separate room. His seal of office was left hanging in the hall. He took none of the servants assigned to him, only his followers from former days and some personal belongings. They left by the north gate." Cao Cao's entire council was shocked. But one general stood boldly forth and said, "Give me three thousand horsemen and I will deliver him alive!" It was Cai Yang. Indeed:

Lord Guan exchanged the dragon's lair
For a pack of wolves in hot pursuit.

Would Cao Cao send Cai Yang to seize Lord Guan?¹⁰

READ ON.



***The Man of the Magnificent Beard Rides Alone a Thousand Li;
The Lord of Hanshou Slays Six Generals and Breaches Five Passes***

LORD GUAN HAD TWO FRIENDS in Cao Cao's camp, Zhang Liao and Xu Huang. Moreover, he was generally respected by the other generals, with one exception—Cai Yang. But Cai Yang's offer to bring him back drew an angry rebuke from Cao Cao: "Lord Guan is a man of highest honor, for his loyalty to his lord and for leaving as aboveboard as he came. All of you would do well to emulate him." "Your Excellency," Cheng Yu declared, "you treated that fellow with the utmost generosity, yet he departed without taking leave. That scrap of nonsense he wrote insolently sullies your prestige—a great offense. If you permit him to give his allegiance to Yuan Shao, you lend your enemy new strength. Pursue and dispatch him, and spare yourself future troubles." "At the beginning," Cao said, "I granted his demands. Can I break my own promises? He acts for his own lord. Let him go!"¹

Turning to Zhang Liao, Cao continued, "Lord Guan locked away his valuables and left his seal. Rich bribes seem not to move him, nor do dignities and emoluments deflect his purpose. We cannot esteem such men too highly. He must still be within range. We might as well make one last effort to cultivate him. Ride ahead and beg him to stop until I can escort him off properly—provide some money for the journey and a battle dress— so he will remember me in future times." Zhang Liao raced off, followed by Cao Cao and a few dozen riders.

Lord Guan, on Red Hare, could not normally have been overtaken. But he was keeping to the rear to guard the carriage. Hearing a shout, he turned. Zhang Liao was pounding toward him. Lord Guan ordered the carriage guard to press on while he reined in and, hand on sword, said, "I trust you are not coming in pursuit?" "I am not," Zhang Liao replied. "The prime minister, in consideration of the long road ahead of you, wishes to see you off personally and has sent me to request that you delay for a few moments. I have no other intent." "Even if he comes in force," Lord Guan replied, "I will do battle to the death." He poised his horse on a bridge, surveying their approach. Cao Cao himself, surrounded by a small contingent, was racing up, trailed by Xu Chu, Xu Huang, Yu Jin, and Li Dian. Before the bridge Cao Cao told his commanders to rein in and spread out. Seeing they carried no weapons, Lord Guan became easier.

"Why do you go in such haste?" Cao Cao asked. Remaining mounted, Lord Guan bent forward to show respect and replied, "It is as I petitioned on arriving:² now that my original lord is north of the river, I must not delay. Time after time I presented myself at your quarters but never succeeded in seeing you, so in all humility I wrote to announce my departure, stored away your valuable gifts, and hung up my seal for return to Your Excellency, who, I am confident, will not forget what we agreed to." "I seek the trust of all the world," Cao Cao said. "Would I renege on my word? I was only concerned that you might run short on your journey, General, and so I have made a point of coming to see you off with something for your expenses." At this point one of Cao Cao's commanders

extended toward Lord Guan a plate heaped with gold.

"Time and again," Lord Guan said, "I have benefited from your considerable bounty, of which much yet remains. Reserve this treasure to reward your officers." "This trifling recompense for your magnificent services," Cao Cao responded, "is but one ten-thousandth of what I owe you. Why decline it?" "My paltry efforts," Lord Guan answered, "are not worth the mention." "You are the model of the honorable man," Cao Cao exclaimed. "I only regret that destiny deprives me of the opportunity to keep you. This damask robe is an expression of my good will." One of Cao Cao's captains dismounted, carried the robe to Lord Guan, and offered it up to him with two hands. Cautiously, Lord Guan leaned down, lifted the garment on the tip of his sword, and draped it over his body. "I am indebted," he said, "for Your Excellency's gift. Another day we may meet again." Turning, Lord Guan rode off the bridge and headed north.

"Insolent barbarian!" Xu Chu cried. "Why not seize him?" "He was outnumbered, more than ten to one," Cao Cao replied. "He had to be on his guard. I gave my word. Do not pursue him." Cao Cao led his men back to the capital, but the loss of Lord Guan weighed on him.

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Lord Guan rode on for thirty *li* but found no trace of the carriage. He was anxiously searching in all directions when a rider hailed him from a hilltop. Lord Guan looked up at a young man in a brocade garment and yellow scarf, holding a spear. A human head swung from his horse's neck. He raced down with a hundred men on foot. "Who are you?" Lord Guan demanded. The young man threw down his lance, dismounted, and touched the ground before Lord Guan, who said again, "Tell me your name, young warrior!"

"I come from Xiangyang," he began. "My surname is Liao; my given name Hua, my style Yuanjian. In these troubled times I've turned to a roving life. My five hundred men and I survive by plunder. My partner, Du Yuan, patrolling the foot of the hill, seized the two ladies by mistake. Their attendants mentioned they were the wives of Imperial Uncle Liu and under your protection. I wanted to deliver them to you right away, but Du Yuan was outraged; so I killed him and have brought his head to atone for our offense." "Where are the ladies now?" Lord Guan asked. "At the moment, on the hill," Liao Hua replied. On Lord Guan's demand they were brought forth.

Lord Guan approached the carriage. Standing with hands clasped to show respect, he inquired, "Did these men frighten you, sisters-in-law?" "If not for Commander Liao," they answered, "we would have lost our honor to Du Yuan." "How so?" Lord Guan asked. The attendants explained, "Du Yuan abducted the ladies. He wanted to wed one and offered the other to Liao Hua. But once Liao Hua discovered who they were, he treated them with due respect and killed Du Yuan for objecting to their return." Lord Guan thanked Liao Hua, who volunteered to serve him. But Lord Guan was reluctant to associate with a Yellow Scarves bandit and declined the offer as well as the gold and silk Liao Hua proffered. They parted, therefore, and Liao Hua went back to the hills. Lord Guan described to the ladies his last encounter with Cao Cao. He then told the carriage guard to push on.³

At nightfall they stopped at a farmstead. The elder of the household, hair and beard all white, greeted them and asked Lord Guan, "Who are you, General?" "A brother of Liu Xuande, known as Guan," he replied, bowing. "Not the warrior who cut down Yan Liang and Wen Chou?" the old man asked. Lord Guan nodded, and the delighted host invited him into the farmstead. "There are still two

ladies in the carriage," Lord Guan said, so the host had his wife and daughter escort the ladies to their thatched grange. Lord Guan stayed beside the ladies, standing, hands clasped, and declined the offer to be seated. "Not in the presence of my sisters-in-law," he said. The elder had his wife and daughter provide for them in the inner chamber, while he entertained Lord Guan in the main hall, "I am Hu Hua," the elder said, "a court counselor in the reign of Emperor Huan. I retired to tend my farm. At present my son, Hu Ban, is serving as an aide to Wang Zhi, governor of Yingyang. Do you expect to pass that way, General? I have a letter for him." Lord Guan agreed to carry it.

The next morning after breakfast Lord Guan escorted his sisters-in-law to the carriage. He took the letter for Hu Ban, bid his host good-bye, and set out for Luoyang. Soon he reached Dongling Pass, which was guarded by Commander Kong Xiu and five hundred men. Lord Guan guided the coach toward the pass. Kong Xiu stepped forward to meet Lord Guan, who dismounted and extended the ritual courtesies. "Where are you bound, General?" Kong Xiu asked. "I have bid the prime minister good-bye," Lord Guan replied, "and am going north of the river to find my brother." "Into Yuan Shao's territory?" Kong Xiu said. "He's the prime minister's enemy. No doubt you have his authority for your trip?"⁴ "I don't have it. Our departure was rushed," Lord Guan replied. "In that case," Kong Xiu said, "I cannot let you pass until I send for the prime minister's approval." "That would delay us," Lord Guan remarked. "I am bound by regulations," Kong Xiu explained, "there is no alternative." "You will not let us through, then?" Lord Guan asked. "Not unless you leave the imperial uncle's kinfolk as security," he said.

Lord Guan drew his sword. Kong Xiu went into the pass and returned mounted and in battle regalia, summoning his men with drums. "I dare you to come through," he shouted. Lord Guan had the carriage and escort removed to safe ground; then he charged. Kong Xiu raised his lance. The two riders clashed. Lord Guan's steel blade struck but once, and Kong Xiu slumped, dead, from his mount. The soldiers fled. "Stay!" Lord Guan shouted to them. "Kong Xiu forced my hand, but you are blameless. Inform Prime Minister Cao that Kong Xiu left me no choice." The pass guards prostrated themselves before Lord Guan.

Lord Guan had the ladies' carriage guard pass through and resume the journey toward Luoyang. Han Fu, the district governor, learned of their approach and gathered his commanders. Captain Meng Tan said, "If he has no papers from the prime minister, he is a fugitive, and we will be held to account unless we stop him." "Lord Guan," Han Fu said, "is a powerful and ferocious fighter. He has killed Yan Liang and Wen Chou. I think he can be taken by strategy better than by force." "In that case," Meng Tan replied, "we should block the pass with an 'antler' barricade of sharpened sticks and branches. When he arrives, let me engage him. I will feign defeat and draw him in pursuit. Your Lordship, in hiding, can fell him with an arrow and we will all be well rewarded back in the capital." The governor approved this plan.

Soon they sighted the carriage. Han Fu took his bow and deployed a thousand men; he challenged the approaching party, "Who comes here?" Lord Guan leaned forward to show respect. "The lord of Hanshou, known as Guan, begs leave to pass." "Have you the necessary documents from the prime minister?" Han Fu asked. "I neglected to obtain them in the rush of departure," Lord Guan answered. "The prime minister," Han Fu declared, "has charged me with the responsibility of guarding this point—above all, to check for spies. If you have no papers, you are a runaway." "At Dongling," Lord Guan said testily, "I killed Kong Xiu. Do you want to die too?" "Who will take him?" Han Fu cried.

Meng Tan rode forth, twirling two swords; he made for Lord Guan. Lord Guan had the carriage

moved away and met his opponent. After two exchanges Meng Tan wheeled and fled, expecting to be pursued but not overtaken. But Lord Guan caught up and cut him in half. He then reined in and rode back. Hiding on horseback by the gate, Han Fu got off a powerful shot, and the arrow struck Lord Guan's left arm. Lord Guan pulled the bolt out with his teeth and, despite the bleeding wound, raced for Han Fu. Plowing through the pass guards before Han Fu could escape, Lord Guan knocked him from his horse with a blow that cleaved his head and shoulder. Han Fu's guard scattered, and Lord Guan returned to his charges.

Lord Guan delayed only long enough to cut a piece of his robe and dress his wound. Then, fearful of more foul play, he led his party through the pass toward the Si River. They traveled through the night and by morning had reached the next pass. The commander in charge was Bian Xi from Bing province, a warrior who specialized in hurling irons. Originally a Yellow Scarves adherent, Bian Xi had been posted at this checkpoint after giving himself up to Cao Cao. The moment he learned Lord Guan was arriving, Bian Xi decided to place an ambush in the Zhenguo Temple on his side of the pass. Inside, two hundred men armed with hatchets waited to strike the moment Bian Xi tapped his wine-cup. His preparations made, Bian Xi received Lord Guan as he dismounted.

"General," Bian Xi said, "the realm reveres your name. Your return to the imperial uncle demonstrates true loyalty and a most honorable sense of duty." Lord Guan described his difficulties at the previous pass, and Bian Xi said, "Your action was entirely justified. When I see the prime minister, I shall petition in your behalf." Lord Guan was delighted. The two men rode through the pass and dismounted in front of the temple. A crowd of monks surged forth to welcome them as bells chimed. This temple, where Emperor Ming, second ruler of the Later Han, once worshiped, now housed more than thirty monks.

One of the monks, whose name in religion was Pujing, or Universal Purity, turned out to be from Lord Guan's home area. Knowing what was afoot, the monk said to Lord Guan, "How many years has it been since you left Pudong?" "Nearly twenty," Lord Guan replied. "Don't you recognize this poor monk anymore?" he asked.⁵ "After so many years," Lord Guan responded, "I'm afraid not." "Our homes," the monk reminded him, "were separated only by a stream." As the monk went on about their native place, Bian Xi, fearful he might give away the plot, said sharply, "I have invited the general to a banquet. Why are you going on so?" "Please! Please!" Lord Guan interjected. "When fellow townsmen meet by chance, why shouldn't they catch up on old times?" The monk invited Lord Guan to the abbot's quarters for tea. "I have the ladies in the carriage," Lord Guan said. The monk served them first and walked Lord Guan to his chamber. Signaling with his eyes, he raised the monastic knife symbolizing the sacred renunciations. Lord Guan caught his suggestion and ordered his followers to stick close with ready swords.

Bian Xi came to escort Lord Guan to the banquet in the temple's main hall. "My friend, is this invitation well intentioned?" Lord Guan asked. He had already spotted the henchmen behind the arras. Without waiting for a reply, Lord Guan turned and bellowed, "I took you for a decent man. How dare you!" Bian Xi called out his men, but Lord Guan swept them down with his sword before they could act. Bian Xi fled around a corridor. Lord Guan changed his sword for his dragon blade and gave chase. Bian Xi hurled one of his iron missiles at Lord Guan, but Lord Guan brushed it aside with his sword, overtook the commander, and cut him in two. He then rescued his sisters-in-law from the guards who had surrounded their carriage.

When it was over, he thanked the monk, saying, "If not for you, master, we would have fallen to

those villains." "I cannot remain here," he responded. "I shall gather my robe and alms bowl and go wherever my steps may lead me. Perhaps we shall meet hereafter.⁶ Pray care for yourself, General." Lord Guan again voiced his appreciation and, positioning himself by the carriage, set off for Yingyang.

Wang Zhi, governor of Yingyang, was related to Han Fu, commander of the second pass, by their children's marriage. On learning that Lord Guan had killed Han Fu, Wang Zhi and his advisers planned to assassinate him. Their first step was to reinforce the pass. When Lord Guan arrived, Wang Zhi greeted him heartily. Lord Guan explained that he was searching for his brother. "The ladies," Wang Zhi said, "must be exhausted from such hard travel. They should spend the night in the city and resume their journey tomorrow." Wang Zhi seemed so sincere and thoughtful that Lord Guan agreed. In the guesthouse everything had been perfectly arranged. Wang Zhi invited Lord Guan to a banquet, but he declined, so Wang Zhi had a grand dinner sent to his quarters. Afterwards, at Lord Guan's urging, the ladies retired to the master room. He let his attendants off, had the horses fed, removed his armor, and tried to get some rest himself.

Wang Zhi, meanwhile, secretly instructed his lieutenant, Hu Ban, "This Guan is a fugitive, an enemy of the prime minister. What's more, he killed a district governor and several commanders and captains at the passes. Death is better than he deserves! But he is a brave and invincible warrior. Tonight I want you to put a thousand men around his quarters, each with an unlit torch. At the third watch burn the place down. I don't care who dies in there. I'll back you up with troops."

As ordered, Hu Ban organized the men and had kindling moved to the gate of the guesthouse. But all the while he was thinking, "I have heard about Lord Guan. I wonder what he looks like. Let me see if I can get a peek." He entered the building and found out from the keeper that Lord Guan was reading in the main hall. Hu Ban stole up to the doorway and observed the warrior at a desk, stroking his long beard with his left hand while he read by lamplight. "Truly like a god!" The words escaped Hu Ban and attracted Lord Guan's attention. "Who's there?" he called.

Hu Ban entered and saluted. "Hu Ban, lieutenant to Governor Wang Zhi," he announced. "Not the son of Hu Hua who lives outside the capital?" Lord Guan asked. "The same," he replied. Lord Guan had an aide fetch the letter he was carrying. Hu Ban read it and sighed. "We almost killed a worthy man!" he said. "Wang Zhi is a schemer. He plans to kill you. They're going to surround the guesthouse and burn it down at the third watch. But I'm going to open the city gate now. Get everything ready." Lord Guan rearmed himself and mounted his horse. He placed the ladies in the coach and left. Outside he saw soldiers waiting with torches. He hurried to the wall and, finding the open gate, motioned the carriage ahead. Quickening his pace, he followed it out of the city. Hu Ban went back to set the fire.

After riding several *li*, Lord Guan saw the glow of torches behind him and a body of men approaching. "Halt where you are!" cried Wang Zhi. "Do not proceed!" Lord Guan reined in and cursed him, "You cur! For what grudge would you burn us to death?" Wang Zhi charged, lance ready, but a thrust of Lord Guan's blade severed him at the waist. Wang Zhi's men bolted. Lord Guan continued on his way, silently thanking Hu Ban.

Lord Guan's arrival at the boundary of Huazhou was reported to Liu Yan, who met them outside the city wall with a contingent of horsemen. Lord Guan bent low over his horse and asked, "Governor, have you been well since we parted?" "Where are you bound?" Liu Yan inquired. "I have taken leave of the prime minister," Lord Guan explained, "to rejoin my brother." "Liu Xuande is with

Yuan Shao, the prime minister's enemy," said the governor. "How could Lord Cao allow you to go there?" "It was agreed to long ago," Lord Guan explained. "The strategic crossing at the river," Liu Yan warned, "is guarded by Qin Qi, a deputy general to Xiahou Dun. I don't think he'll let you cross." "Governor," Lord Guan asked, "could you accommodate me with a boat?" "I have boats," he replied, "but cannot accommodate you." "When I killed Yan Liang and Wen Chou," Lord Guan reminded him, "I saved you a lot of trouble. Why refuse me a single boat?" "Xiahou Dun would hold me responsible if he found out," was the reply.

Lord Guan knew that Governor Liu Yan would be of no use, so he left him alone and headed for the crossing. Qin Qi met him. "Who comes here?" he demanded. "Lord Guan of Hanshou," was the reply. "Where bound?" Qin Qi asked next. "I'm trying to find my brother, Liu Xuande, on the other side," Lord Guan said, "and respectfully request passage." "Where is your approval from the prime minister?" Qin Qi demanded. "I am not subject to his authority," Lord Guan answered. "Why should I need documents?" "I have orders from General Xiahou Dun to guard this point. A pair of wings couldn't get you through," Qin Qi said. A powerful anger took hold of Lord Guan. "You know," he said, "I have killed those who tried to block my way." "Try and kill me!" Qin Qi taunted him. "You think you're as good as Yan Liang and Wen Chou?" Lord Guan cried.

Qin Qi charged, sword held high. The two riders crossed but once. Lord Guan's blade rose and fell, beheading Qin Qi. Lord Guan shouted to Qin Qi's troops, "Your commander opposed me; now he's dead. No one else will be hurt. Do not run. Prepare a boat for us." A soldier promptly poled a craft to shore, and Lord Guan escorted the ladies onto it. Once across, they were in Yuan Shao's territory. In all Lord Guan had forced five checkpoints and slain six commanders. A later poet wrote:

Nor rank nor gift could tempt Lord Guan to stay.
Seeking his brother by long and winding road,
He covered the ground on a thousand-*li* horse;
With dragon blade he took each pass by force.

He thrust loyalty and honor high into the spheres,
A manly model who kept the world in awe.
This single knight, before whom each foe fell,
Left the world a story that men will ever tell.

Riding on, Lord Guan sighed. "Circumstances have forced me to kill Cao's guards," he mused. "It was not my wish. But Cao Cao will only consider me ungrateful for his kindness." His thoughts were interrupted by a single rider coming toward him from the north. "Lord Guan, go no farther!" he shouted. Lord Guan reined in. Liu Xuande's adviser Sun Qian was before him. "What has happened since we parted at Runan?" Lord Guan asked. "Liu Pi and Gong Du have retaken Runan," Sun Qian replied. "They sent me to work out an alliance with Yuan Shao and to coordinate Xuande's plans to move against Cao Cao. But I found Yuan Shao's leadership torn by rivalries. Tian Feng remains in jail and Ju Shou in disgrace. Shen Pei and Guo Tu compete for power. Yuan Shao himself is sunk in misgivings and wavers on every issue. I convinced the imperial uncle to clear out, and he has already gone to join Liu Pi in Runan. Had you gone on to Yuan Shao unaware of the change, you would have come to harm. That is why my lord, Liu Pi, sent me to find you—luckily I did! Make haste for Runan!"

Lord Guan had Sun Qian salute the two ladies. Sun Qian then told them, "On two occasions Yuan Shao wanted to kill the imperial uncle. Fortunately he has escaped to Runan; you can meet him there." They covered their faces and wept.

Lord Guan took the road to Runan. But he had hardly set out when a squad of men, obscured by dust, accosted them from behind. It was Xiahou Dun. "Do not advance!" he cried. Indeed:

Six pass commanders fell, but Lord Guan rode through;
Now a fresh squad blocked his way, spoiling for a fight.

Could Lord Guan make good his escape?

READ ON.



***Lord Guan Slays Cai Yang, Dispelling His Brothers' Doubts;
Liege and Liege Men Unite Again at Gucheng***

LORD GUAN AND SUN QIAN, escorting the two ladies on to Runan, found themselves pursued without warning by Xiahou Dun and three hundred riders. Sun Qian went along with the carriage guard, while Lord Guan turned, reined in, and, resting his hand on his sword, said to Cao Cao's general, "Are you trying to compromise the prime minister's reputation for magnanimity?" "I have no specific orders," Xiahou Dun responded. "But you have murdered people and killed my commander. And that's an outrage! I have come to arrest you and deliver you to the prime minister, who will make the final disposition."

So saying, Xiahou Dun urged his mount on and pointed his lance. But behind him a single rider called out, "Hold off! Do not fight Lord Guan!" The warriors stood still as the messenger drew a paper from inside his upper garment and proclaimed, "His Excellency holds Lord Guan's fealty and honor in highest esteem and, to ensure his passage, authorizes his safe-conduct in our territory. He has sent me with documents to notify all concerned." "Does the prime minister know," Xiahou Dun replied, "that Guan has killed our commanders and pass guards?" "He does not," the messenger replied. "I merely want to take him alive to the prime minister," Xiahou Dun explained. "His Excellency can release Guan if he sees fit."

Lord Guan broke in, "You think I fear you?" And gripping his weapon, he started toward the general. Xiahou Dun parried with his lance. The two exchanged ten blows. Another messenger then arrived, shouting, "Generals! Cease fighting!" Xiahou Dun put up his lance and demanded, "Does the prime minister want me to capture this fellow Guan?" "No!" came the answer. "The prime minister has sent me with a safe-conduct pass. He was afraid the commanders at the checkpoints might stop General Guan." Xiahou Dun said, "Does His Excellency know Guan has killed people on his way?" "No," the messenger replied. "In that case, I cannot release him," Xiahou Dun said and signaled his men to surround Lord Guan. The antagonists were about to resume combat for the third time when a third rider appeared, demanding that the fighting stop. It was Zhang Liao.

The warriors halted. Zhang Liao approached. "I have here," he declared, "the prime minister's command. He has heard of the incidents at the checkpoints and, hoping to prevent any further conflict, has sent me to instruct all stations to let Lord Guan pass." "Qin Qi," Xiahou Dun cried, "was the nephew of Cai Yang, and Cai Yang entrusted the lad to me. How can I let his killer go?" "I will explain things to Cai Yang," Zhang Liao said. "Since the prime minister in his generosity grants Lord Guan freedom to pass, you gentlemen should not disregard his wishes." Confronted with this order, Xiahou Dun had to pull back.

"Where are you headed, brother?" Zhang Liao asked Lord Guan. "It seems that my brother is not with Yuan Shao after all," Lord Guan replied. "I shall have to keep looking." "Since his whereabouts

are uncertain," Zhang Liao said, "why not return to the prime minister for the time being?" "That is impossible," Lord Guan said, smiling. "My friend, do me a kindness. When you see the prime minister, offer my apologies." Lord Guan saluted Zhang Liao and left. Zhang Liao and Xiahou Dun led their contingents homeward.

Catching up with the carriage, Lord Guan described the incident to Sun Qian. The party continued on for several days. They were forced to stop by a sudden rainstorm that drenched the baggage. A manor house stood beside a hill ahead of them. Lord Guan steered them toward it to put up for the night. An old man came out, and Lord Guan explained to him who they were and why they had come. "I am Guo Chang," the old man said. "We have lived here for generations. Your great name has been long known to us. It is an honor to pay my respects to you." He butchered a lamb for them and served wine. After inviting the two women to rest in a rear apartment, he joined Lord Guan and Sun Qian in the hall, where they drank freely while the luggage was dried and the horses fed.

At dusk a young man burst into the hall with a few companions. Guo Chang called him over. "My son," he said, "pay your respects to the general." Turning to Lord Guan, the old man added, "My humble son." "What was he doing?" Lord Guan asked. "Hunting," was the reply. After the lad left, Guo Chang said in tears, "For generations we have lived tilling the land and studying the classics, but my only son cares for nothing but hunting. Misfortune is sure to visit our house." "These are times of great disorder," Lord Guan remarked. "If he is accomplished in the military arts, he may yet make a name for himself that way. Why speak of 'misfortune'?" "If only he were willing to devote himself to such a discipline," the father said, "it would show a sense of responsibility. But all he does is roam around, getting himself into all sorts of trouble. That's what worries me." Lord Guan sighed sympathetically.

Late that night Lord Guan and Sun Qian were preparing to retire when they heard a horse neighing and men's angry voices. They went out with drawn swords and found Guo Chang's son groaning on the ground and their own followers brawling with the servants of the manor. One of Lord Guan's men said, "This fellow tried to steal Red Hare, but the horse kicked him. His cries brought us out. Then these servants started a row." "Little rat of a thief!" Lord Guan exclaimed, raising his hand. But Guo Chang flung himself before the warrior and pleaded, "My unfilial son deserves to die for this, but his old mother dotes on him so—I beg your mercy, General. Spare him." "He really is a bad son, as you said yourself a moment ago," Lord Guan responded. "Who knows a son better than his father? I spare him only out of respect for you, sir." He had his men see to the animal, dispersed the servants, and returned with Sun Qian to his quarters.

The next day Guo Chang and his wife bowed in front of Lord Guan's lodging. "Our son dared to affront you, esteemed General," they said. "We are deeply grateful for your mercy." "Call him," Lord Guan said. "I want a word with him." "He dashed off again during the fourth watch," the father said, "with those worthless companions of his. Who knows where he is now?" So Lord Guan bid his host good-bye, saw the women into the carriage, and set out. They had traveled some thirty *li* over hilly paths when they saw more than one hundred men rushing toward them. The horsemen were in the lead. The first wore a yellow scarf and a battle gown. Right behind him was Guo Chang's son.

"I was a commander," the leader cried, "under General of Heaven Zhang Jue! You there, leave the red horse and I'll let you pass." "Ignorant villain!" Lord Guan mocked him. "You followed the bandit Zhang Jue? Then you ought to know of the three brothers, Liu, Guan, and Zhang!" "I've only heard of a red-faced long-beard known as Guan, but I've never seen his face," the rider replied. "Who are you?"

Lord Guan set his weapon to one side and steadied his horse; then he opened the sack protecting his beard and let it show full length. Instantly the bandit chief jumped down, pulled Guo Chang's son down by his hair, and thrust him before Lord Guan. "I am Pei Yuanshao," he announced. "We've had no master since Zhang Jue. We rendezvous in the hills and were lying low here. This morning this good-for-nothing fool told us that a guest with a splendid horse was staying at his house; he wanted me to steal it. What a surprise to find you, General!" Meanwhile, Guo Chang's son lay on the ground, begging for mercy. "I spare you," Lord Guan growled, "only for your father's sake." The young man took to his heels.

"You didn't know my face," Lord Guan said to Pei Yuanshao, "how did you know my name?" "Twenty *li* from here," he replied, "on Sleeping Ox Hill lives a Guanxi¹ man, Zhou Cang, with the strength to lift a thousand pounds. He has a striking face with a wiry, curled beard—used to be a commander under the Yellow Scarves leader Zhang Bao. When Bao died, Zhou Cang became an outlaw. He's often told me about you, but what hope had I of ever meeting you?" Lord Guan replied, "A life of banditry is not for a gallant man like you. Better get back on the right track and not fall into the mire." Pei Yuanshao thanked him for his advice. Behind them a body of men flashed into view. "It must be Zhou Cang!" Pei Yuanshao cried. Lord Guan held his horse still, waiting.

A tall, dark-faced man, armed with a spear, rode up with his followers and exclaimed, "General Guan!" Prostrating himself at the roadside, he continued, "Zhou Cang pays his humble respects." "Where did a stout warrior like yourself hear of me?" Lord Guan asked. "Following Zhang Bao," he replied, "I once saw your esteemed face. If only I had joined you, General, instead of losing myself with a pack of bandits! How thankful I am for this meeting. Give me the chance, General, and I will serve you as a common foot soldier or personal attendant. What wouldn't I give for that!" Moved by the man's earnest appeal, Lord Guan said, "What would you do about your own followers, then?" "Those who wish to join me may," he answered. "The rest are free to leave." All the men were for staying.

Lord Guan put the request to his sisters. "Brother," Lady Gan said, "since leaving the capital we have come through many an ordeal, but we've never heard you suggest taking on men. You turned down Liao Hua before. Why make an exception now? But the views of women matter little. Brother, you decide." "I think you are right," Lord Guan said. Then he told Zhou Cang, "Do not think me lacking in friendly feeling, but the ladies I serve, I regret to say, do not agree to your proposal. You should all return to the hills, and when I have found my elder brother, I will call for you."

Touching his head to the ground, Zhou Cang replied, "I am but a rough and vulgar fellow who has wasted his life. This meeting, General, is like seeing the sun after living in darkness. I cannot bear to lose the opportunity. If it is inconvenient for my men to accompany you, let them follow Pei Yuanshao, and I will join you alone on foot. A journey of ten thousand *li* could not deter me!" Zhou Cang's second offer was presented to the ladies. "There's no harm in one or two coming with us," Lady Gan said. Lord Guan had Zhou Cang assign his men to Pei Yuanshao, but Pei himself wanted to follow Lord Guan. "If you and I both leave," Zhou Cang argued, "our men will disband. Better for you to lead them for the time being. Let me go first with General Guan. I will come for you after we are settled." Disconsolate, Pei Yuanshao took his leave.

Lord Guan and Zhou Cang proceeded in the direction of Runan. As they neared a city in the hills, a local resident told them, "This is Gucheng. Some months back a general named Zhang Fei rode in with a few dozen horsemen, threw out the county officer, and established himself. He recruited troops, purchased horses, gathered fodder, and stored grain. Now he has a few thousand men, and no one dares oppose him in this area." "This is the first I've heard about my younger brother since the debacle at Xuzhou," Lord Guan cried joyfully. "Who would have thought he'd turn up here!" Sun Qian was sent into the city to talk with Zhang Fei and arrange for him to come and receive his two sisters-in-law.

After fleeing Xuzhou, Zhang Fei had lain low in the Mang-Dang Hills for more than a month. Once, coming into the open in hopes of getting word of Liu Xuande, he had chanced upon Gucheng and entered the town to borrow grain. The county officer refused him, however; so Zhang Fei drove him off, took his seal, and occupied the city. Thus things stood when Sun Qian arrived.

After the formal greeting Sun Qian said to Zhang Fei, "Xuande left Yuan Shao and went to Runan. Lord Guan is here from the capital with Lady Gan and Lady Mi and requests that you receive them." Zhang Fei made no response. Arming himself, he mounted and led one thousand men out of the north gate. Lord Guan saw his brother approaching and, excitedly handing his sword to Zhou Cang, raced forward. Moments later he was confronting Zhang Fei's steady, menacing gaze and bristling tiger whiskers. With a thundering shout Zhang Fei brandished his spear. Lord Guan, aghast, dodged the taunting thrusts and cried, "What does this mean, worthy brother? Can you have forgotten our pact in the peach garden?"

Zhang Fei shouted, "You have the face to confront me after dishonoring yourself!" "Have I dishonored myself?" Lord Guan demanded. "You betrayed our elder brother," Zhang Fei cried, "by submitting to Cao Cao and accepting rank and title under him. Now it looks as if you've come back to trick me. Let's settle things here once and for all." "Can you actually not know?" Lord Guan continued. "How can I explain myself? You see our two sisters. Question them yourself, worthy brother."

Raising their screen, the ladies spoke: "Third Brother, what is the reason for this?" "Sisters," Zhang Fei replied, "watch me dispatch a faithless man before I escort you into the city." "Second brother did not know where you were," Lady Gan pleaded, "so we lodged temporarily with Cao Cao. Then we learned that eldest brother was in Runan. Second brother has borne great hardship attempting to bring us to him. Do not misjudge him!" "Second brother's sojourn in the capital," Lady Mi added, "was beyond his control." "Be deceived no longer, sisters," Zhang Fei went on. "A loyal vassal² prefers death to disgrace. What self-respecting man serves two masters?"

"Worthy brother," Lord Guan pleaded, "you do me wrong." Sun Qian interjected, "Lord Guan has been looking for you. That's why he is here." "You too speak like a fool," Zhang Fei snapped. "Don't tell me of his good intentions. He's here to capture me." "Wouldn't I have needed an army?" Lord Guan asked. "And what is that?" Zhang Fei cried, pointing at an armed cohort approaching in a haze of dust. Cao Cao's troops, the windblown banners proclaimed. "Still trying to keep up the act?" Zhang Fei shouted, moving toward Lord Guan with his eighteen-span snake-headed spear. "Brother," Lord Guan protested, "hold on. Let me kill their leader to show my true feelings." "If you have 'true feelings,'" Zhang Fei said, "get him before the third drum roll." Lord Guan agreed.

Cai Yang, in the lead, galloped toward Lord Guan. "You killed my nephew Qin Qi," he shouted, "yet expect to escape me here? I have the prime minister's warrant to take you prisoner." Lord Guan did not trouble to respond. He lifted his blade and aimed his blow. Zhang Fei himself sounded the

drum. Before the first roll had ended, Cai Yang's head was tumbling on the ground in the wake of Lord Guan's stroke.

Cai Yang's cohort fled. Lord Guan captured the flag-bearer and demanded an explanation. "Cai Yang was furious over his nephew's death," the soldier said, "and wanted to cross the river to attack you. The prime minister would not allow it and sent him instead to Runan to destroy Liu Pi. We ran into you by accident." Lord Guan had the soldier tell his story to Zhang Fei, who questioned him carefully concerning Lord Guan's conduct in the capital. The soldier's answers confirmed Lord Guan's account, and so Zhang Fei's faith in his brother was restored.

At this moment a report came from the city that a dozen unfamiliar horsemen were riding hard toward the south gate. Zhang Fei rode to the scene and found a small contingent with light bows and short arrows. They dismounted at once when Zhang Fei appeared. Recognizing Mi Zhu and Mi Fang, Zhang Fei also jumped down and welcomed them. "After the rout at Xuzhou," Mi Zhu said, "my brother and I fled to our native place. We inquired high and low and finally heard that Lord Guan had submitted to Cao Cao and that Lord Liu—and Jian Yong too—were with Yuan Shao. We had no idea you were here, General. Yesterday a group of travelers told us that a General Zhang, whom they described briefly, was occupying Gucheng. We thought it must be you and came to find you. How fortunate that we have met!" Zhang Fei replied, "Lord Guan and Sun Qian have just brought my sisters-in-law. Eldest brother too has been located." Overjoyed at the reunion, the brothers Mi presented themselves to Lord Guan and then to the two ladies. Zhang Fei led his sisters to his headquarters in the city. At their description of the ordeal Zhang Fei wept and bowed deeply to Lord Guan. The brothers Mi were profoundly moved as well. Later Zhang Fei recounted his own adventures at a grand feast.

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The following day Zhang Fei was for going at once to Runan to see Xuande. "Not yet, brother," Lord Guan said. "Better stay and guard the ladies while Sun Qian and I seek news of our brother." Zhang Fei consented. Lightly attended, Lord Guan and Sun rode to Runan, where Liu Pi and Gong Du informed them, "The imperial uncle remained here only a few days; then he went back to Yuan Shao to see if he could work things out since we simply had too few troops here." Lord Guan looked downcast. "Do not lose heart," Sun Qian said. "One more hard ride will take us to him, and we can all go back to Gucheng together."

The two returned and told Zhang Fei what they had found out. Once again they had to persuade him to stay behind. "This city," they said, "is our only retreat. We can't afford to lose it. Qian and I will bring our elder brother here. Please stay to defend it." "Brother," Zhang Fei argued, "you have killed Yuan Shao's finest generals. How can you go there?" "It's all right," Lord Guan assured him. "When I get there, I'll do whatever's called for." Then he asked Zhou Cang, "How many troops does Pei Yuanshao have on Sleeping Ox Hill?" "Four or five hundred," was the reply. "I'll take a short cut to my elder brother," Lord Guan said. "You go to the hill, assemble the men, and meet me on the main road." Zhou Cang left to carry out the order.

Lord Guan and Sun Qian headed north of the Yellow River with two dozen followers. At the boundary Sun Qian advised, "Let's not rush in. You stay here while I talk to the imperial uncle." Sun Qian rode on, and Lord Guan headed for a nearby farm to spend the night. He was met by an old man

who steadied himself on a cane. After an exchange of courtesies Lord Guan gave an account of himself. "I too am surnamed Guan," the old man said. "My given name is Ding. I am most gratified by this unexpected meeting with one I have long admired." He called out his sons, and they welcomed Lord Guan and his men warmly.

Meanwhile, Sun Qian had entered Yuan Shao's base, Jizhou city, capital of Jizhou province, and had described the multiple reunion to Xuande. Xuande called in Jian Yong, and the three considered ways and means of escape. "My lord," Jian Yong suggested, "when you see Yuan Shao tomorrow, tell him you want to go to Jingzhou to convince Liu Biao to join our struggle against Cao Cao.³ That will be your excuse for leaving." "Ingenious!" Xuande exclaimed. "But can you come too?" "I have my own plan for escape," Jian Yong replied.

The next day Xuande said to Yuan Shao, "Liu Biao keeps guard over the nine districts of Jingzhou and Xiangyang. He has keen soldiers and ample grain. We should cooperate in a joint attack on Cao Cao." "I have tried to arrange it," Yuan Shao responded, "but he is unwilling." "Liu Biao is my clansman," Xuande said. "If I go to him now, I know he will not turn us down." "Liu Biao could be worth far more to us than that Liu Pi," Yuan Shao said and approved Xuande's mission. He then added, "There's been a report that Guan has left Cao Cao and wants to come here. If he does, I mean to avenge Yan Liang and Wen Chou." "My lord," Xuande replied, "once you desired his service, so I summoned him. Now you want to kill him? Those two generals were but stags. Guan is a tiger. You've traded two stags for a tiger; how have you been wronged?" Yuan Shao smiled and said, "A jest, a jest! Indeed I do prize the man. Have him sent for at once." "Sun Qian will take care of it," Xuande said. Yuan Shao was content.

After Xuande had set out for Jingzhou, Jian Yong came before Yuan Shao. "Liu Bei," he said, "is unlikely to return. I think I should accompany him—to help him work on Liu Biao and also to keep an eye on him." Persuaded by this argument, Yuan Shao directed Jian Yong to go with Xuande. The adviser Guo Tu cautioned Yuan Shao, however, "Liu Xuande has just returned after failing to win Liu Pi to our side. Now you are sending him and Jian Yong to Jingzhou. I can tell you, they will never come back." "You are too mistrustful," Yuan Shao replied. "Jian Yong is experienced and knowledgeable." Guo Tu left in despair.

Sun Qian was sent ahead to join Lord Guan. Xuande and Jian Yong took their leave and rode to the border, where Sun Qian picked them up and took them to Guan Ding's farm. Lord Guan was waiting at the entrance. He bowed low, then took his brother by both hands, unable to master his tears. Guan Ding led out his two sons to pay their respects, and Lord Guan introduced the father to Xuande. "This man is named Guan too," he said, "and these are his sons, Guan Ning, a student of letters, and Guan Ping, the junior, a student of martial arts." Guan Ding said, "I wish my second son could enter General Guan's service. I wonder if it would be possible." "How old is he?" Xuande asked. "Eighteen," the father replied. "Since you have been so generous," Xuande said, "and since my brother has no son, your son may become his. What do you say?" Guan Ding was delighted and had Guan Ping honor Lord Guan as his father and address Xuande as uncle. Then, fearful of pursuit, Xuande quickly organized their departure. Guan Ping followed Lord Guan, and Guan Ding escorted them a good stretch before returning to his farm.

Xuande, Lord Guan, and their party headed for Sleeping Ox Hill to join Zhou Cang, whom Lord Guan had sent to rally his five hundred followers. But Zhou Cang rode up with only a few score of men, many badly wounded. "Before I reached the hill," Zhou Cang said, "a lone rider had killed Pei

Yuanshao and all the men had surrendered. He took over our fortress. I could persuade only these few to join us; the rest were too afraid. I tried to put up a fight, but that warrior overpowered me. I took three wounds. I was just on my way to inform you, master." "What did he look like?" Xuande asked. "Do you know his name?" "He was formidable!" Zhou Cang answered. "His name I don't know." Lord Guan and Xuande headed for the hill, and Zhou Cang hurled curses at his conqueror from the bottom of the slope. The warrior emerged, fully armored, a spear in his fist. He rode downhill like the wind with his newly acquired followers. Xuande pointed with his whip. "It's Zhao Zilong!" he cried.

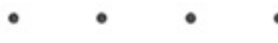
The warrior leaped from the saddle and prostrated himself by the roadside. It was Zhao Zilong indeed. Xuande and Lord Guan dismounted and asked him how he came to be here. "I rejoined Gongsun Zan after leaving Your Lordship," Zhao Zilong began, "but Zan was too headstrong to accept good advice. Yuan Shao defeated him, and he burned himself to death. Yuan Shao made many offers to me, but he couldn't seem to make good use of those serving him, either. So I stayed away. I went to join you in Xuzhou but heard that you had lost it and that Lord Guan had gone over to Cao Cao. When I learned Your Lordship was with Yuan Shao, I often thought of coming to you but doubted Shao would accept me now. I was still at loose ends, roaming the realm, when I passed by here and Pei Yuanshao tried to steal my horse. After I killed him, I decided to settle here. Next I heard that Zhang Fei was in Gucheng, so I decided to join him if it was true. What a miracle, meeting Your Lordship like this!"

Xuande excitedly recounted for Zhao Zilong the recent events, and Lord Guan filled it in with his story. "Since our first meeting," Xuande said, "I have hoped you would remain with us. I too rejoice in this reunion." Zhao Zilong replied, "I have covered this land in search of a lord to serve, and have not found your like. To follow you now satisfies my lifelong aspiration. Though my heart's blood stain the ground in your service, I shall never regret my choice." He destroyed his fortifications on Sleeping Ox Hill and led the men into Gucheng with Xuande.

Zhang Fei, Mi Zhu, and Mi Fang welcomed the party. Amid ritual bows and salutes they exchanged their stories. Xuande sighed over and over as the two ladies described Lord Guan's trials. Then they slaughtered an ox and a horse, gave thanks to Heaven and earth, and feasted their men.⁴ Reunited with his brothers, Xuande rejoiced at having his commanders and advisers back uninjured and Zhao Zilong added to his service. Lord Guan too was delighted beyond measure with his newly adopted son, Guan Ping, as well as with Zhou Cang. For several days they all caroused exuberantly. Later a poet left these lines;

Like severed limbs, three brothers torn apart:
Doubtful news, scant word, a fading into silence.
But when the liege and liege men renewed their brother-tie,
Tiger winds joined dragon clouds, masters of the sky.

At this time Xuande, Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, Zhao Zilong, Sun Qian, Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, Guan Ping, and Zhou Cang commanded an army of some four or five thousand, including infantry and cavalry. Xuande proposed leaving Gucheng to protect Runan, and, as luck would have it, Liu Pi and Gong Du sent an envoy requesting their aid. Thus Xuande and his followers set out, recruiting men and buying horses along the way and planning for their campaign.



When Yuan Shao realized Xuande would not return, he wanted to attack him. But Guo Tu said, "Xuande need not concern you. Cao Cao is a more formidable opponent. He must be eliminated. And Liu Biao, even though he holds the province of Jingzhou, will never become a power. On the other hand, Sun Ce dominates the land below the Great River, the Southland, an area that includes six districts. His counselors and commanders are numerous. Ally with him to attack Cao!" Yuan Shao accepted his advice and sent Chen Zhen to represent him. Indeed:

Having lost Xuande, hero of the north,
Yuan Shao sought a champion from the south.⁵

What happened next?

READ ON.



The Overlord of the Southland Executes a Sorcerer; The Rule of the South Passes to Green-eyed Sun Quan

NOW SUN CE HAD BECOME RULER of the Southland. His army was well trained, his granaries well stocked. By the fourth year of Jian An (A. D. 199) he had taken Lujiang district from Governor Liu Xun and had sent his adviser Yu Fan to Yuzhang to accept the surrender of Governor Hua Xin.¹ Having made his name and power felt, Sun Ce dispatched Zhang Hong to the capital with a memorial to the throne detailing his victories. Cao Cao sighed and said, "We cannot take the lion head on," and arranged for Cao Ren's daughter to marry Sun Ce's youngest brother, Sun Kuang, thus binding the two houses. The emissary Zhang Hong he detained in the capital.

Sun Ce next sought the post of grand marshal, but Cao Cao refused him. The resentful Sun Ce plotted to surprise the capital.² But Xu Gong, governor of the Southland district Wujun, secretly wrote to Cao Cao. His letter said in part:

Sun Ce is bold and ambitious, another Xiang Yu in the making.³ It might be appropriate for the court to show its ostensible appreciation by recalling him to the capital, rather than let him remain in a remote military area where he may become a serious problem.

A messenger was carrying this letter across the river when a border guard seized him and turned him over to Sun Ce. After reading the letter, Sun Ce beheaded the messenger. He then found a pretext for summoning the author of the document and showed it to him. "You would have sent me to my death," he said harshly and had Xu Gong strangled.⁴ The governor's family took flight.

Among Xu Gong's retainers were three who wished to avenge him but despaired of finding any opportunity. One day Sun Ce was leading some troops in a hunt by Xishan in Dantu. They had a large deer on the run. Sun Ce's horse, given free rein, had chased it up a hillside. Sun Ce found himself among some trees, where three men with spears and bows appeared. They claimed to be Han Dang's men, also out hunting deer. Sun Ce was about to pass by, when one of them hefted his lance and slashed Sun Ce's left thigh. Sun Ce cut desperately at the man with his waist sword, but suddenly the blade snapped off, leaving him with only the hilt in his hand. Another of the men had raised his bow and positioned an arrow. He shot Sun Ce in the cheek. Sun Ce pulled the arrow out, took his own bow, and shot back. The man fell as the bowstring sang. The remaining two forced Sun Ce back, jabbing wildly with their lances. "We are Xu Gong's men, here to avenge our lord," they cried. Practically disarmed, Sun Ce tried to fend them off with his bow as he moved away, but the attackers were relentless. It was a struggle to the death. Sun Ce was stabbed in several places, and his horse was maimed. His life was hanging in the balance when Chen Pu rode up with a small party and at Sun Ce's command hacked the two assailants to pieces. Seeing his lord's bloody face and massive wounds, one of the rescuers bound Sun Ce with cloth cut from his own robe and took him to safety in Wujun. A poet of later times praised Xu Gong's avengers:

Sun Ce, fearless cunning dynast of the south,
Was trapped and scathed while hunting in the hills
By three bold knights who paid what honor owed—
Loyal in death, Yurang would have been proud.⁵

Once home, Sun Ce sought the services of the healer Hua Tuo, but the physician had gone to the north, leaving behind a disciple. He was summoned to treat Sun Ce's wounds. "The arrow," the doctor observed, "was tipped with a poison that has penetrated the bone. You need a hundred days' quiet convalescence before the danger will pass—and don't let moods of anger affect you, or the wounds will not heal." Sun Ce, it so happened, had a most irascible nature and was frustrated that he could not be cured that very day.

After some twenty days of resting, the patient heard that a messenger had returned from the capital, and he called him for questioning. "Cao Cao," the messenger began, "is quite wary of you, my lord, and his counselors respect your prestige. The only exception is Guo Jia." "And what does he have to say?" Sun Ce asked. The messenger hesitated, angering Sun Ce, who pressed him to convey the facts. "Guo Jia told Cao Cao," the envoy finally admitted, "that you were not a serious concern because you are reckless and always ill prepared, hasty and deficient in strategy, a foolhardy man⁶ sure to die by a scoundrel's hand." "That fool dares to rate me!⁷ I'll take his capital!" Sun Ce swore. He wanted to begin planning the campaign without further delay, but Zhang Zhao objected. "The physician has cautioned my lord," he said, "against any activity for one hundred days. How can you risk your invaluable person to satisfy a moment's rage?"

At this point Yuan Shao's messenger, Chen Zhen, arrived with the news that his master wanted to ally with the south and attack Cao Cao. Delighted, Sun Ce called his commanders to the city tower for a banquet to honor Yuan Shao's envoy. But during the ceremonies the commanders suddenly began whispering to each other and then streamed down from the tower. Sun Ce was amazed at the disruption. His attendants told him, "The immortal Yu has passed below us. The commanders simply wanted to go out to honor him." Sun Ce rose and looked down over the railing at a Taoist priest cloaked in crane feathers, a staff of goosefoot wood in his hand. He was standing in the middle of the road while a group of commoners burned incense and prostrated themselves in veneration. "Who is this sorcerer?" Sun Ce demanded. "Bring him here at once!"⁸

"The man's name is Yu Ji," Sun Ce was informed. "He resides in the east and has traveled here distributing potions that have relieved an unusual number of ailments. He is widely known as an immortal. Pray do not abuse him." "I want him seized and brought here instantly," Sun Ce bellowed. "Obey me or die." As commanded, Sun Ce's men hustled the holy man in to see their master. "Lunatic priest!" Sun Ce growled. "You dare to fan the flames of men's ignorance?" Yu Ji replied, "This poor priest is a Taoist divine from Langye who, during the reign of Emperor Shun, found a sacred text near a spring in Yangqu while gathering herbs in the hills. Called *The Millennium: Purification and Guidance*, it had one hundred volumes, all concerned with techniques for curing pain and disease. Since obtaining it, I have devoted myself to spreading its influence on behalf of Heaven and for the salvation of mankind, never accepting the smallest gift from anyone nor stirring up the people's hearts."⁹

Sun Ce replied, "If that is true, how do you get food and clothing? Don't you really belong to the

Yellow Scarves, Zhang Jue and his ilk? We will execute you now, or else you'll plague us later!" He delivered the order, but Zhang Zhao protested, saying, "The priest has been living in the Southland for decades guiltless of any offense. You can't put him to death!" "I can kill these sorcerers," Sun Ce responded, "the way a butcher kills pigs or dogs." The assembly of officials, including Yuan Shao's messenger, implored him to relent, but Sun Ce's wrath could not be assuaged. He ordered the priest imprisoned until he could decide what to do with him. The officials dispersed, and Chen Zhen retired to the guesthouse.

Even before Sun Ce had returned to his quarters, a palace attendant had notified his mother of the incident. Lady Wu promptly summoned her son to her private apartments. "They tell me you have imprisoned the immortal Yu," she said. "He has worked many cures and is revered by the army and the people alike. You must not cause him injury." "The man is a sorcerer," Sun Ce replied. "He uses his arts to mislead the multitude and must be eliminated." To Lady Wu's repeated pleas Sun Ce finally said, "Mother, you must not give credence to the absurd statements of outsiders. I will handle this my own way." He had Yu Ji summoned for interrogation.¹⁰

When Yu Ji was first arrested, the jailers removed his cangue and fetters out of respect for their prisoner, replacing them only when he was called out for questioning. On discovering how Yu Ji was treated, Sun Ce punished the jailers and sent the immortal back to prison bound hand and foot. Zhang Zhao and a large group of courtiers appealed for clemency, but Sun Ce said, "For men of learning you seem uninformed. Many years ago the imperial inspector of Jiaozhou, Zhang Jin, subscribed to false doctrine, strummed the zither, and burned incense. He bound his head with a red kerchief, claiming it stimulated his troops, yet he perished at the enemy's hands all the same. Such doings avail nothing, though you have yet to awaken to the fact. I am going to kill Yu Ji because I am determined to prevent such perversities and to alert the people to such deceptions."

Lü Fan said to Sun Ce, "It is well known that Yu Ji can invoke the wind and supplicate the rain. Since there is a drought, why not let him pray for rain to redeem his crimes?" "Very well," Sun Ce said, "let us see what this sorcerer can do." He had Yu Ji brought from prison, freed of his cangue and fetters, and told him to call for rain.

Yu Ji bathed and changed his clothes. Then he bound himself upon an altar under a blazing sun. The commoners thronged the streets and choked the lanes to witness the spectacle. Yu Ji spoke to them. "I will pray," he said, "for three spans of timely rainfall to succor the myriad people. But in the end I will not escape death." "If your rain-summoning craft proves itself," voices from the crowd called back, "our ruler will have to honor you." "My allotted time is up," Yu Ji answered. "Unfortunately there is no escape."

Soon Sun Ce himself arrived at the altar. "If no rain falls by noon," he decreed, "burn Yu Ji to death." In anticipation he had kindling heaped up. A little before noon wild winds claimed the skies, and dense clouds converged from all sides. "It is nearly noon," Sun Ce proclaimed. "The sky is black, but there is no rain. This proves he is a sorcerer." He had Yu Ji carried to the top of the kindling pile and ordered fires started all around it. The flames licked up in the wake of the wind; a trail of black smoke appeared and rose into the sky; then a crackling peal announced the storm. Thunder and lightning issued together, and the rain coursed down in currents. Moments later the main street was a river, and the streams were overflowing with—three spans of rain!

Flat upon the pyre, Yu Ji stared at the heavens and cried out. The clouds withdrew. The rains were stayed. The sun reappeared. Officials and commoners helped Yu Ji down from the pyre, bowing

and voicing their thanks as they undid his ropes. But when Sun Ce saw the crowd around Yu Ji in knee-deep water paying tribute, he could not contain himself. "Fair weather and storms are natural phenomena," he cried. "The sorcerer has simply taken advantage of a lucky coincidence. What are all of you doing in such a mindless uproar?" Gripping his sword, Sun Ce ordered a soldier to execute Yu Ji on the spot. To all who protested he said, "Will you follow him in rebellion?" A single stroke left Yu Ji's head upon the ground. From it a trail of bluish vapor rose to the northeast. Sun Ce had the corpse displayed in the marketplace as a censure against sins of the supernatural.

Wind and rain thrashed through the night. By dawn the corpse was gone. Those assigned to watch the corpse reported this to Sun Ce, who threatened to kill them. Suddenly, from nowhere a man appeared, walking slowly in front of the main hall. It was Yu Ji. Sun Ce moved back and drew his sword to hack at the apparition; then he fainted and was carried to his bedroom. When he recovered, Lady Wu came to him. "My son," she began, "you have provoked disaster by killing an immortal." "From my earliest days," Sun Ce replied with a smile, "I accompanied my father on military campaigns, and we cut men down like stalks of hemp. There was no such thing as provoking disaster. Today we have killed a demon precisely to put an end to a great disaster. How can you say it will bring disaster upon us?" "It is your lack of belief that has brought you to this," she said. "Now you must perform some worthy deed to appease the spirits." "My destiny rests with Heaven," he answered. "No sorcerer can do me harm. Whom should I appease?" Her exhortation unavailing, Lady Wu privately arranged for good works to be done in order to win forgiveness from the spirits and thus ward off retribution.

That night during the second watch, as Sun Ce lay in his chamber, a chill wind sprang up. The lamp went dark, then flamed again. In the shadows it cast Sun Ce saw Yu Ji standing in front of his bed. Sun Ce screamed, "I am dedicated to destroying the supernatural and purging it from the world of men. You ghost from the shades, dare you approach?" He threw his sword toward the vision, and the ghost disappeared. A report of this incident caused Lady Wu great anxiety, and so Sun Ce, despite his condition, went to allay her fears.

Lady Wu said to her son, "Confucius claimed that 'ghostly spirits manifest inexhaustible potency.' He also said, 'Pray ye to the spirits dispersed above and concentrated below.' We may not doubt such things as ghostly spirits. The murder of Master Yu will be punished. I have ordered services for your health in the Temple of Precious Clarity. Go there yourself and pray. Perhaps things will settle themselves."

Unable to refuse his mother's command, Sun Ce went in a sedan chair to the temple. He burned incense at the priests' behest but offered no apology for what he had done. The fumes hung undispersed in the air, taking the form of a canopy with Yu Ji sitting erect atop it. Sputtering and cursing, Sun Ce quit the sanctuary, but Yu Ji appeared again perched on the temple gate, glaring down at Sun Ce. Sun Ce asked his followers if they had seen the sorcerer's ghost. None had. He aimed his sword at Yu Ji and threw it, felling a man. His followers saw the soldier who had killed Yu Ji the day before now lying dead himself, his skull cracked, blood running from his orifices. Sun Ce ordered the corpse removed and buried.

As Sun Ce left the temple grounds, Yu Ji appeared again, strolling toward him. "This temple harbors demons!" Sun Ce cried, and seating himself facing the building, he ordered five hundred warriors to tear it down. As they started pulling apart the tilework, Yu Ji appeared on the rooftop, hurling tiles to the ground. Sun Ce ordered the priests evicted, and had his men set fire to the

sanctuary; but Yu Ji was visible at the heart of the flames.

Returning to his residence, Sun Ce found Yu Ji standing at his gates. Instead of entering, Sun Ce mustered the entire army and camped outside the city wall, calling his generals together to discuss joining Yuan Shao in a combined attack on Cao Cao. The generals said, "Your Lordship should not risk action while your health remains impaired. After you recover, there will be sufficient time." That night again Yu Ji appeared in the camp, his hair disheveled. In his tent Sun Ce emitted a stream of curses.

The next day Lady Wu came to him and, seeing him emaciated, sobbed, "Your natural self is no more!" Sun Ce reached for a mirror, which reflected a face utterly wasted. "What can I do, ravaged like this?" he cried to his attendants in desperation. Even as he spoke, Yu Ji was hovering in the mirror. A shout burst from Sun Ce as he struck at the mirror. His wounds reopened and he fainted. His mother had him carried to a bedchamber, where after a spell he regained consciousness. "I cannot live on," he said and summoned to his bedside the adviser Zhang Zhao, his brother Sun Quan, and others.

"In this period of upheaval the Southland has great possibilities. We have a substantial population and the natural defense of the rivers. I now ask Zhang Zhao and all of you to aid my younger brother." So saying, Sun Ce conferred his seal and ribbon on Sun Quan, adding, "For mobilizing our people, for the instantaneous decision on the battlefield, for contending with puissant adversaries for dominion, you are not my equal. But for selecting and employing worthy and capable men who will give their all to protect the south, I am not your equal. Always bear in mind the hardships and difficulties that our father and your elder brother suffered in founding this heritage, and be vigilant in guarding it." Sun Quan wept and bowed as he accepted the seal.

Sun Ce turned to his mother and declared, "Heaven allots me no more time to serve my dear, devoted mother. I hereby transfer the seal to my brother and pray, Mother, that you may guide him and instruct him never to neglect those who have served his father and elder brother." Weeping, Lady Wu said, "Your brother is yet immature. What if he proves unable to undertake affairs of state?" "He is ten times more able than I," Sun Ce replied. "He is fully capable of the highest responsibility. If there is an internal problem you cannot solve, however, take it to Zhang Zhao; for an external one, go to Zhou Yu. I only wish Zhou Yu were here to accept these instructions himself."

Next, Sun Ce summoned his remaining brothers. "After I die," he told them, "you must lend Sun Quan your full support. And you must join together in destroying anyone in our clan who may contemplate treason. No renegade of our flesh and bone is to be buried in the ancestral grave." Receiving this charge, his brothers wept. Sun Ce then summoned his wife, Lady Qiao. "Alas," he said to her, "you and I must part halfway through life. Honor my mother with your filial love; and when your sister visits, have her tell her husband to give Sun Quan his full support—for the sake of our friendship."¹¹ With that Sun Ce passed away peacefully at the age of twenty-six. Later a poet wrote in eulogy:

His triumphs in the land below the Jiang
Made men declare "Xiang Yu lives again!"
He had the cunning of a tiger set to lunge,
The decision of an eagle poised to plunge.

His dominion made the south secure
And carried his fair name across the realm.
He left behind an unfulfilled ambition
And charged Zhou Yu to bring it to fruition.

Sun Quan cast himself to the ground before his brother's bed. But Zhang Zhao reproached him. "This is no time for you to weep, General," he said. "You must arrange the funeral and take charge of the army and the country." Sun Quan regained his self-control. Zhang Zhao instructed Sun Jing to see to Sun Ce's burial rites and urged Sun Quan to receive the acclamation of the officials in the great hall.

Sun Quan had a square jaw and a broad mouth, jade green eyes and a purplish beard. Many years ago Liu Wan, a Han envoy on a mission to the south, had met all the sons of the house of Sun. "In my view," he had remarked, "though these brothers have splendid talent, none is fated to live long—with the exception of Sun Quan. His striking and heroic looks and massive frame betoken great nobility as well as long life."

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Ordained Sun Ce's heir, Sun Quan undertook the governing of the Southland. He was still organizing the court when Zhou Yu returned to Wujun with a body of troops. "My worries are over," Sun Quan said, "now that Zhou Yu is here." Zhou Yu had been guarding Baqiu when he heard that assassins had wounded Sun Ce. On his way back he learned, even before reaching Wujun, that his close friend had died. He hurried to the funeral and was wailing at the coffin when Lady Wu appeared and delivered Sun Ce's deathbed charge. Zhou Yu bowed to the ground and said, "I will discharge my duty with the loyalty of a dog or a horse until I die." Sun Quan entered. After Zhou Yu had paid his respects, Sun Quan said to him, "It is my heartfelt hope that you will never forget my brother's dying words." Zhou Yu touched his head to the floor and declared, "I would strew the very ground with my liver and brains to requite my dear friend's love."

"Now that I have taken possession of this patrimony," Sun Quan continued, "what strategy shall I use to preserve it?" "One enduring rule," Zhou Yu began, "is that he who finds good men will prosper, and he who does not will perish. To shape plans for the present and to consolidate the Southland you must seek the support of high-minded, far-seeing intellects." Sun Quan said, "My brother's last words were, 'Trust internal matters to Zhang Zhao, external ones to Zhou Yu.'" Zhou Yu replied, "Zhang Zhao is a worthy and accomplished scholar, fit for great tasks. But I am not, and I hesitate to shoulder the burden consigned to me. Let me recommend a man to assist you, General—Lu Su (styled Zijing) from Dongchuan in Linhuai. He is a mine of strategies, a storehouse of machinations. Early in life he lost his father and has served his mother since with utter devotion. Lu Su's family is extremely wealthy, and he is known for his generosity to the poor.

"When I was a precinct leader in Juchao, I was taking several hundred men through Linhuai when we ran short of grain. People told us that the Lu family had two granaries, each holding three thousand bushels. At our urgent request Lu Su put one of the granaries at our disposal. That's an example of his largess. In addition, he has a strong interest in swordsmanship and horseback archery. His home is in Qu'e, but he has returned to Dongcheng for his grandmother's funeral. A friend of his, Liu Ziyang, is

trying to get him to go to Chaohu and join Zheng Bao, but Lu Su has not yet reached a decision. My lord, call him to you without delay."

Sun Quan was pleased with Zhou Yu's recommendation and sent Zhou Yu to engage Lu Su's services. After the formalities Zhou Yu respectfully relayed Sun Quan's intentions, but Lu Su replied, "Liu Ziyang has arranged for me to go to Chaohu and accept a position there." "Remember," Zhou Yu said, "the words of Ma Yuan to Emperor Guang Wu: 'In times like these not only does the lord choose the man, but the man chooses the lord.' General Sun nurtures men of merit and receives scholars well. He has given support to remarkable and even extraordinary men, something all too rare. Do not heed the other commitment; come with me to the Southland. This is the right course for you." Lu Su accepted Zhou Yu's invitation.

Sun Quan received Lu Su with the greatest respect, and they held daylong discussions. One day, after court had adjourned, Sun Quan kept Lu Su behind to share a simple repast; then they went to bed at opposite ends of the same couch. In the middle of the night Sun Quan asked, "Now the house of Han totters precariously, and the four quarters of the empire are in turmoil. I have taken up an unfinished task left to me by my late father and elder brother. I yearn to emulate those ancient hegemony, patriarchs Huan and Wen, who took the Son of Heaven under their protection.¹² How should I proceed?"

"When the Han was founded," Lu Su began, "the Supreme Ancestor sought to give devoted service to the Righteous Emperor, but Xiang Yu frustrated his every effort.¹³ Now Cao Cao may be compared to Xiang Yu. It is he who holds the Emperor in thrall. It is not within your power to play a lord protector's role. In my judgment, the Han is past recovery; and Cao Cao cannot be finally removed. Therefore the best plan for you, General, is to make the Southland the firm foot of the tripod, consolidate your region, and look for opportunities to take action. You can exploit the many preoccupations of the north: knock out Huang Zu's position, attack Liu Biao in Jingzhou, and take control of the Great River in its entirety. This done, establish your imperial title and turn your ambitions toward the rest of the realm, as the founder of the Han once did." Lu Su's analysis made Sun Quan exuberant. He slipped on a garment and got up to thank his guest. The next day he sent rich gifts to Lu Su, and fine clothes, curtains, and other items of value to Lu Su's mother.

At this time Lu Su recommended to Sun Quan another man of great learning, talent, and filial devotion, Zhuge Jin (Ziyu) from Nanyang in Langye. Sun Quan treated Zhuge Jin too as an honored guest.¹⁴ On Zhuge Jin's advice Sun Quan decided not to associate himself with Yuan Shao, but rather to follow Cao Cao's lead for the time being until he could maneuver against him more easily. Consequently, Sun Quan sent Yuan Shao's envoy home with a letter declining the offer of an alliance against Cao Cao.

When Cao Cao heard that Sun Ce had died, he wanted to muster his forces and descend upon the Southland. But the censor Zhang Hong dissuaded him, saying, "To attack when the land is in mourning is dishonorable. If you fail, you will have thrown away whatever amity still exists and created instead a profound enmity. I would suggest you take the opportunity to treat the southerners handsomely." Cao Cao took this advice and recommended to the Emperor that Sun Quan be appointed general and governor of Kuaiji.¹⁵ At the same time Zhang Hong was made military commander of Kuaiji and given the seal of office to deliver to Sun Quan. Sun Quan was elated to have Zhang Hong released from the capital,¹⁶ and instructed him to work closely with Zhang Zhao in administering his kingdom.

At this time Zhang Hong recommended another man to Sun Quan, Gu Yong (Yuan-tan), a disciple

of Court Counselor Cai Yong. Gu Yong was a man chary of speech, not given to drink, both severe and correct. Sun Quan employed him as a governor's deputy and acting governor. Throughout the Southland Sun Quan's prestige was recognized, and the people became deeply devoted to him.

Chen Zhen returned to Yuan Shao and delivered this message: "Sun Ce is dead, and Sun Quan has succeeded him. Cao Cao has made Sun Quan a general, thus securing his support." Yuan Shao was furious and summoned the armies of the four provinces he controlled, Ji, Qing, You and Bing. He called up some seven hundred thousand men in preparation for another attack on Xuchang, the capital. Indeed:

No sooner did the wars in the south subside
Than the battle cry was heard afresh in the north.

Which of the two great rivals would emerge supreme, Cao Cao or Yuan Shao?¹⁷

READ ON.



Yuan Shao Suffers Defeat at Guandu; Cao Cao Burns the Stores at Wuchao

AS YUAN SHAO'S VAST ARMY moved toward Guandu, Xiahou Dun called for help: Cao Cao mobilized seventy thousand men, leaving Xun Wenruo to hold the capital.

Before Yuan Shao ordered his northern army to advance, Tian Feng had sent him a warning from jail. "Now it is better," he wrote, "to sit tight and let the ways of Heaven run their course than to launch a general offensive that may well end in failure." But Pang Ji said critically, "My lord, we go forward in the name of the highest virtue and duty. Feng's ominous predictions are groundless." Yuan Shao ordered Tian Feng executed, but vigorous intercession by the officials won him a reprieve. "After we crush Cao Cao," Yuan Shao said, "his offense will be duly punished." With that, he commanded the army to march without delay.

Flags and banners covering the field, blades thickly clustered like a forest, the northern army pitched camp at Yangwu. Ju Shou said, "We outnumber Cao, but our troops don't have their courage and ferocity. On the other hand, despite the quality of their forces they are low on grain and fodder, while we have more than enough. Thus, their interest is to force a fight; ours, to delay and defend. If we can outwait them, we will win without having to fight." To this advice Yuan Shao retorted angrily, "First Tian Feng tries to undermine morale—the day I return he dies—now you advocate delay." He shouted to his attendants, "Arrest Ju Shou. After Cao's defeat I will take care of him and Tian Feng together!" He then ordered his force seven hundred thousand men to post themselves along the ninety *li* perimeter of the camp.

Spies returning to Guandu described Yuan Shao's order of battle, sending a shiver of fear through Cao Cao's newly arrived army. Cao Cao consulted his advisers. Xun You said, "Though Yuan Shao's army is large, we need not fear it. Our men are at their keenest. Any one of ours could take on ten of theirs. But we need to engage quickly. Our provisions will not last if this drags on." "My thought, exactly," Cao Cao said. He ordered the commanders to advance with much noise of drums and shouting. Yuan Shao's army encountered them, and the battle lines took shape. Shen Pei, one of Yuan Shao's generals, placed five thousand crossbowmen out of view at either wing and five thousand archers near the front entrance to the camp. All were to shoot on hearing the bombard sound.

The triple drumroll finished. Poised on horseback, Yuan Shao stood before his line in golden helmet and armor, fine surcoat and studded belt. His generals grouped around him, Zhang He, Gao Lan, Han Meng, and Chunyu Qiong. The flags and banners and instruments of command stood in perfect order.

Cao Cao rode forth from the bannered entrance to his line. Around him were Xu Chu, Zhang Liao, Xu Huang, Li Dian, and others, all fully armed. Pointing at Yuan Shao with his whip, Cao Cao cried, "I petitioned the Son of Heaven to appoint you regent-marshal. What justifies this rebellion?" Yuan

Shao retorted, "You who pass yourself off as prime minister to the Han are the real traitor. Your crimes mount to the skies, higher than those of the usurpers Wang Mang and Dong Zhuo. Yet you slander others as rebels!" Cao Cao replied, "I bear an imperial decree to punish you." "And I," Yuan Shao countered, "have the decree the Emperor hid in the girdle as authority to bring a traitor to justice!"

Too angry to speak further, Cao Cao sent Zhang Liao into the field. From Yuan Shao's side Zhang He sprang to the challenge. The two commanders clashed some fifty times: it was an even match. Cao Cao watched Zhang He, secretly awed. Flourishing a blade, Xu Chu joined the battle to assist Zhang Liao, and Gao Lan, spear raised, took him on. The four grappled, hewing and slashing at one another.

Cao Cao ordered Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong to charge the enemy line with three thousand fighters each. To counter this move Shen Pei released the bombard, signaling the crossbowmen to commence shooting. At the same time the archers near the front stepped in order through the first line of soldiers, letting fly volleys that drove Cao Cao's troops back toward the south. Yuan Shao directed the infantry in a swift and murderous follow-up, turning Cao Cao's rout to defeat and driving all his troops back to Guandu.

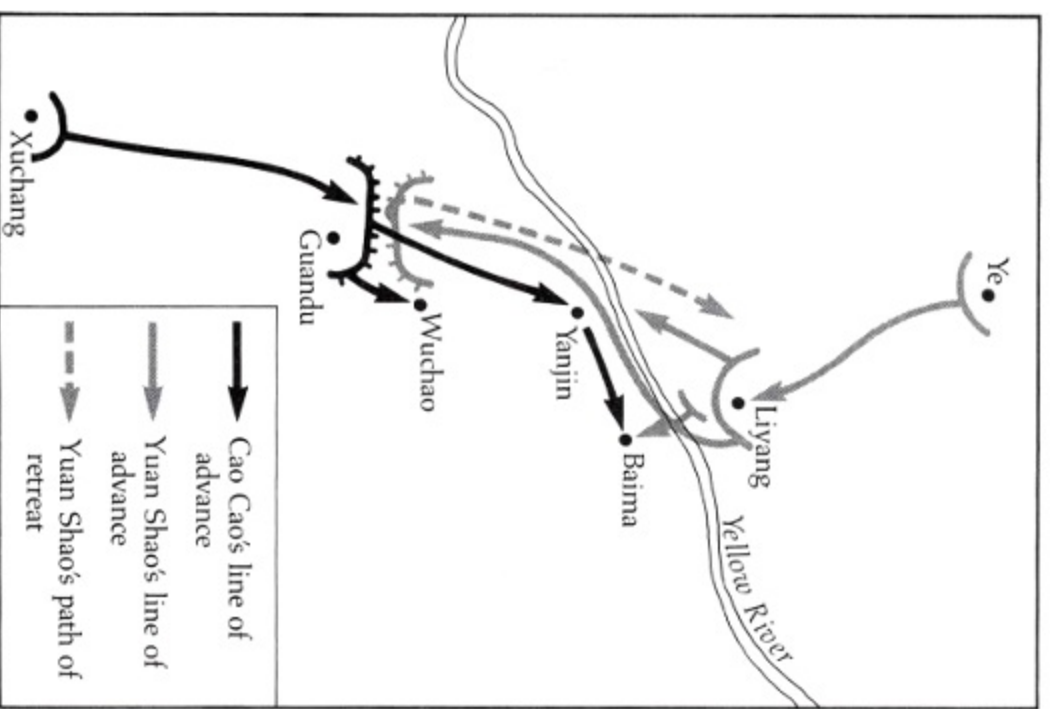
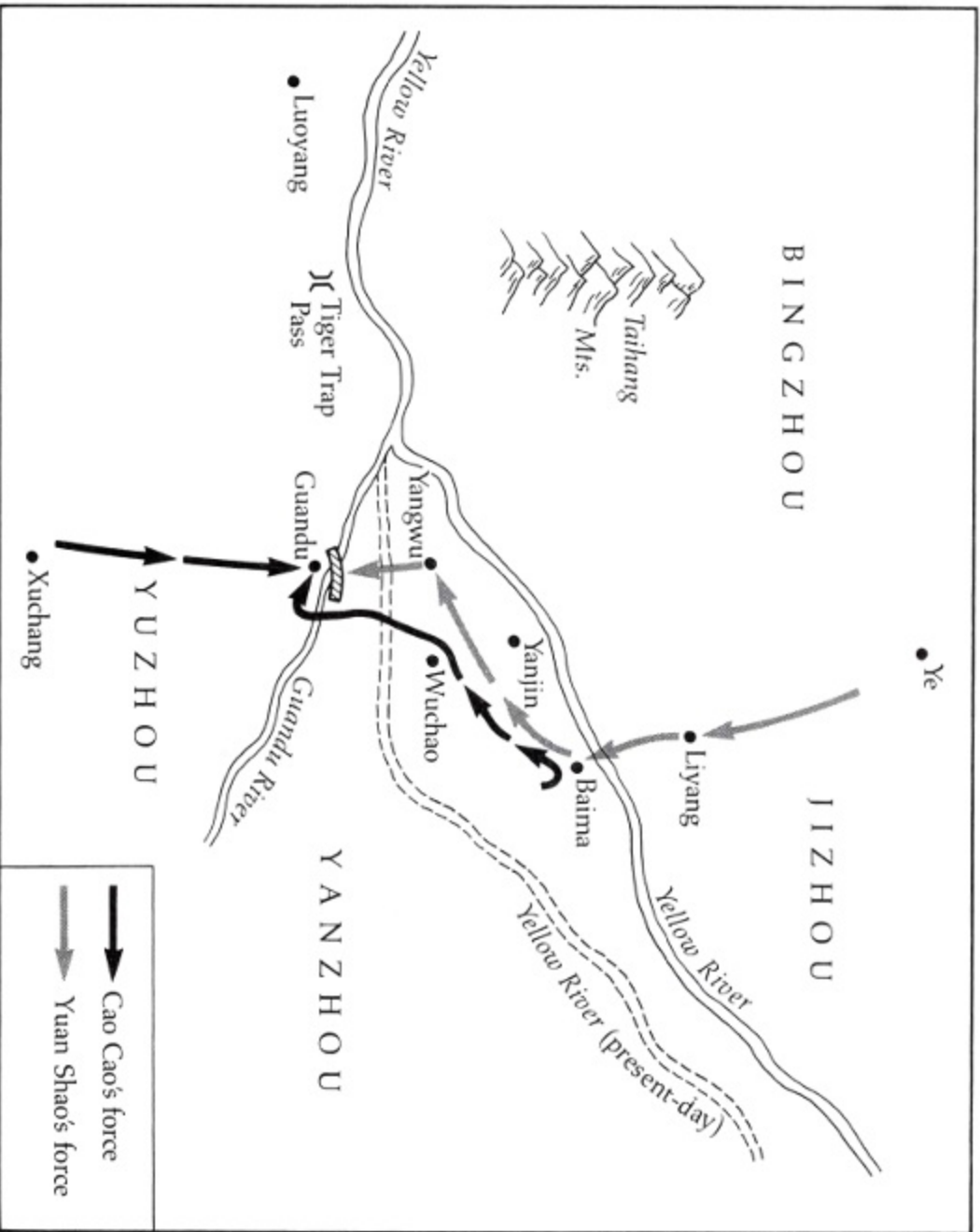
Yuan Shao moved his camps closer to Guandu, Cao's strategic strongpoint. Shen Pei said, "Have a hundred thousand men raise mounds directly facing Cao's camp. Then our archers can control their positions. If Cao retreats, we gain the key point of entry to the capital area, and the capital will fall." Yuan Shao approved the plan. He had his brawniest fighters ply their shovels and carriers, and soon heaps of earth were rising. Cao Cao's men wanted to attack at once, but Shen Pei's archers, commanding the routes of access, deterred all advance. Within ten days more than fifty hills, topped with lookout posts and manned by crossbowmen, loomed over Cao's camp.

Fear gripped Cao's army. The soldiers crouched behind shields as bolts rained down periodically at the signal of wooden clappers. Yuan Shao's men howled with laughter at the sight of the cowering enemy. Confusion spread in the ranks, and Cao Cao convened his counselors. Liu Ye suggested building ballistas to stone the northerners and presented a model he had designed. Over the next several nights hundreds of frames were manufactured, then placed against the camp barricades and aimed at the scaling ladders by the mounds. The next time the archers let fly, Cao Cao's men discharged the first massed battery. Missiles filled the air and demolished the enemy stations. Unable to hide, the crossbowmen perished in great numbers. Yuan Shao's men termed the ballistas "thunder machines" and stopped climbing the mounds to stage attacks.

Shen Pei next proposed tunneling into Cao's camp. Yuan Shao approved the plan, and a corps of sappers went to work. Informed of the threat, Cao Cao again consulted Liu Ye. "Since they can't attack openly," he said, "they are trying to bore into our positions from under the ground." "How can we stop them?" Cao Cao asked. "A trench circling the camp will make their tunnel useless," was the reply. Cao Cao had one cut, and Yuan Shao's effort was wasted.

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MAP 2. The battle at Guandu. a. The region. Source: Zhang Xikong, "Guandu zhi zhan," in Zhongguo lishi xiao congshu, *Guandai zhunming zhangyi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), p. 132. b. The battleground. Source: Liu Chunfan, *Sanguo shihua* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), p. 57.



Cao Cao had held at Guandu from the beginning of the eighth month to the end of the ninth (A.D. 200). His men weary, his rations spent, he began thinking about retreating to the capital and wrote Xun Wenruo for advice. The reply that came back said in part:

I have your esteemed letter instructing me to advise whether or not we should withdraw. In my humble view Yuan Shao has concentrated his forces at Guandu in order to seek a decision. Your weaker force is up against his stronger one. If you cannot dominate the enemy, prepare to have them dominate you. This is a fateful moment for the empire. Yuan Shao has many troops but cannot use them well. Your superb mastery of warfare and clear judgment should carry the day, whatever the circumstances. Though your numbers are few, you are still better off than Liu Bang when he divided the realm with Xiang Yu at Xingyang and Chenggao. Holding your ground at a crucial spot has blocked the enemy. The situation is critical, and at a turning point. It is time for an ingenious move. Do not let it pass. Pray consider my humble suggestion.

Heartened by Xun Wenruo's letter, Cao Cao ordered officers and men to hold firm with renewed effort.¹

Yuan Shao's army pulled back thirty *li*, and Cao Cao sent scouts to reconnoitre. Shi Huan, one of Xu Huang's corps commanders, captured a northern spy. Under interrogation the man told Xu Huang, "Yuan Shao expects General Han Meng with a shipment of grain. They had me out to check the roads." Xu Huang informed Cao Cao. Xun You said to Cao, "Han Meng is a foolhardy warrior. One commander with a few thousand cavalry could knock him out, and the loss of supplies would throw their army into chaos. Xu Huang is the man to do it!" Cao Cao approved the plan, sending Xu Huang and Shi Huan first, with Zhang Liao and Xu Chu as reinforcements.

That night as Han Meng was escorting the several thousand supply wagons, Xu Huang and Shi Huan attacked. Han Meng struggled to defend the stores, but Xu Huang locked him in combat while Shi Huan and his squad put the carters to flight and set the carts afire. Han Meng turned and fled. Xu Huang urged his men on; they burned the whole train and its cargoes. From his base Yuan Shao saw flames to the northwest and in rising alarm learned of the loss from one of the routed guards. Yuan Shao sent Zhang He and Gao Lan to block the main road, but they crossed paths with Xu Huang coming back from the raid. Fighting began as Zhang Liao and Xu Chu arrived, driving off Yuan Shao's generals in a two-sided assault. Cao Cao's four generals returned together to Guandu. Cao Cao, elated by the victory, rewarded his officers and men handsomely. He then had defense points in the form of pincers constructed in front of his camp.

Han Meng returned defeated to an enraged Yuan Shao. Only the intercession of the entire body of officials saved him from execution. Shen Pei advised Yuan Shao, "Food is most vital to an army on the march. It must be protected at all costs. Wuchao is our main depot and should be heavily guarded." "I have formulated a strategy," Yuan Shao said to Shen Pei. "I want you to return to the capital² to assure that we have adequate supplies." Shen Pei went to implement the command, and Yuan Shao sent twenty thousand under General Chunyu Qiong to protect Wuchao. Assisting him were army inspectors Gui Yuanjin, Han Juzi, Lü Weihuang, Zhao Rui, and others. Chunyu Qiong was a hot-tempered drinker feared by his men. After reaching the depot, he passed his time carousing with the commanders.



Meanwhile, Cao Cao was almost out of food and had written to Xun Wenruo in the capital to arrange for a shipment of provisions. The messenger was captured barely thirty *li* from Guandu, however, and brought in bonds to Xu You. Xu You (Ziyuan), a companion of Cao Cao's in his youth but now in Yuan Shao's service, took Cao's intercepted letter to Yuan Shao and offered a suggestion. "Cao Cao has been holding Guandu for a long time, "he said." It's a stalemate. But his capital at Xuchang is vulnerable. A surprise attack will give us the capital, and then we can take Cao Cao. Now that their grain is nearly gone, we can strike twice. "" Cao Cao is wily, "Yuan Shao replied," that letter leads to a trap. "" Unless we act on this plan, "Xu You argued," we will suffer for it. "

At this moment a messenger from Ye arrived with a letter from Shen Pei saying that grain was on its way. In addition, he mentioned Xu You's conduct in Jizhou—how he had taken bribes and how his sons and nephews had been jailed for raising tax rates for personal profit. "You thieving upstart!" Yuan Shao thundered. "You have the face to make proposals? You and Cao Cao go back a long way. I'm beginning to think you're in his service, here to stir up trouble in our ranks. You deserve to die, but we will leave your head where it is for the time being. Now get out and never come before me again."³

Turning his eyes to Heaven, Xu You left. With a sigh he said to his attendants, "What's the use of serving a fool who takes offense at loyal counsel? Shen Pei is persecuting my relatives. How can I go back to Jizhou and face my people?" He reached for his sword, but his men snatched it from him. "My lord," they pleaded, "do you hold your life so lightly? If Yuan Shao rejects honest counsel, he will surely fall to Cao. Once you were Cao's friend—why not foresake this hopeless cause for a brighter prospect?" These words opened Xu You's eyes, and he decided to offer his services to Cao Cao. Later a poet wrote:

Yuan Shao's proud spirit towered o'er the realm.
How foolish to despair at the stalemate at Guandu!
If he had taken Xu You's sound advice,
How could Cao have made the north his prize?

And so Xu You quietly approached Cao Cao's outposts. Sentries arrested him. "I am an old friend of the prime minister's," he told them, "Xu You of Nanyang. Please inform him at once." Cao Cao had already undressed when he was told Xu You had come. Without bothering even with footgear, he went to meet Xu You, rubbing his hands and laughing with pleasure the moment he laid eyes on him. Cao Cao took You's hand and led him back to his own quarters. Then he prostrated himself before his visitor. Xu You rushed to help Cao Cao up, saying, "You are the prime minister of the Han. I, a commoner, cannot accept such homage." "You are one of my oldest friends," Cao Cao said, "and friends need not stand on ceremony or be affected by considerations of status." "I chose my lord unwisely," Xu You went on. "I lowered myself to serve Yuan Shao. He ignored all my ideas, my plans. Now I have left him and only hope that you will accept my service."

Cao Cao said, "Now that you have done us this honor, our cause is served. Now tell me, I pray, how to defeat Yuan Shao." Xu You replied, "I urged Yuan Shao to surprise the capital with light

cavalry while hitting Guandu with his main army." "That would have finished us," Cao Cao said, shaken. "How much grain have you got?" Xu You asked. "A year's worth," Cao replied. "Perhaps not," Xu You suggested, smiling. "Actually, enough for six months," said Cao. Xu You rose to leave, flicked his sleeves, and strode out of the tent, saying, "I came to you in all sincerity, little expecting to be deceived." "Don't be angry, old friend," Cao said to detain him. "The truth is, our grain will last three months." Xu You smiled again, saying, "The world calls you 'villain.' I see how true it is." Cao Cao was smiling too. "As you should know," he said, "there's no end of tricks in warfare." Whispering, he added, "We have enough for the month, and that's it." "Stop fooling around!" Xu You retorted abruptly. "Your grain is finished." "How did you know?" Cao asked, stunned.

Xu You then handed Cao Cao his own letter to Xun Wenruo asking for food. "Who wrote this?" Xu You inquired. "How did you get hold of it?" Cao Cao demanded. Xu You explained that Cao's messenger had been captured. Cao Cao took Xu You's hand and said earnestly, "Advise me what to do, old friend, I pray you." "My lord," Xu You began, "you face a vastly larger adversary: without a quick victory you are doomed. But I have a way to cause his million-strong multitude to destroy itself inside of three days. Will you give me a hearing, my lord?" "Yes," Cao Cao responded with great interest. Xu You continued, "Yuan Shao's rations and supplies are concentrated in Wuchao and guarded by Chunyu Qiong, a commander fond of liquor and ill prepared for an attack. Go there with picked troops, pretending to be Yuan Shao's general Jiang Qi, who has been detailed to help guard the grain. If you can burn the place down, Yuan Shao's army will fall apart in three days." Elated with this plan, Cao Cao treated Xu You royally and kept him in his camp.

The next day Cao Cao selected five thousand horsemen and soldiers for the mission. Zhang Liao warned the prime minister, "Their depot can't be altogether unguarded. You are running a great risk. What if it's a trap?" "I don't think it is," Cao replied. "Heaven has sent me Xu You to defeat Yuan Shao. We don't have the food to sustain our positions. Unless we use Xu You's plan, we'll be squeezed sitting here. Would he agree to remain here if it were a trap? Anyway, I've wanted to take this step for some time. We have to do it. Set aside your doubts." "We still have to defend this point while you're leading the operation," Zhang Liao said. "I have thought of everything," Cao answered, smiling.

Cao Cao had Xun You, Jia Xu, and Cao Hong guard his main camp, where the defector Xu You remained. Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan were positioned to the left, Cao Ren and Li Dian to the right, in case of surprise. Then, with Zhang Liao and Xu Chu in front, Xu Huang and Yu Jin behind, Cao Cao led forth his commanders and captains and a force of five thousand under the false colors of his enemy. Each soldier carried bundles of straw and kindling, and kept a stick clamped in his mouth. The horses, too, were gagged. At dusk they moved out silently. Soon the night sky was crowded with stars.

Imprisoned by Yuan Shao for his unwelcome advice, Ju Shou could see a corner of the starry designs and persuaded the jailer to take him outside. Looking up, he noticed Venus moving retrograde into the zone of Ox and Dipper, the first two sections of the northern quadrant. Startled, he cried out, "Disaster looms!" and demanded an audience with Yuan Shao.⁴

Though drunk in bed, Yuan Shao granted the request. Ju Shou said to Yuan Shao, "I have been observing the sky. Venus was moving in the opposite direction between the lunar lodgings Willow and Ghost, as streaks of light shot into the zone of Ox and Dipper. I fear the enemy is going to strike. Alert the guards at Wuchao. Send your best men to patrol the roads nearby, or Cao will outmaneuver

you." "You are an offender now," Yuan Shao scoffed irritably, "how dare you try to fool my people with nonsense!" Harshly he said to the jailer, "You were ordered to keep him confined. How dare you release him?" Yuan Shao called for a soldier to take the prisoner away and had the jailer executed. As Ju Shou was led out, he wept, saying, "Our army is doomed. My bones will have no resting place." A poet of later times lamented Ju Shou's fate:

Ju Shou's counsel earned his ruler's hate,
And Yuan Shao proved that he was tactics' fool.
He lost his grain, his base was sacked;
Still he hoped to hold Jizhou intact.⁵

Through the darkness Cao Cao advanced on Yuan Shao's outposts. Challenged by sentries, he had his men answer, "Jiang Qi here, on orders to proceed to Wuchao to guard the grain. "Seeing their own colors, Yuan Shao's troops suspected nothing. Cao got through several outposts the same way and reached Wuchao at the fourth watch. He had his men encircle the depot with lit torches. Then his officers burst in making an uproar. Chunyu Qiong, sleeping off a drinking bout in the command tent, was roused by the din." What's going on? " he shouted. Before he could say more, Cao's men had attacked him with staves and pulled him down.

Gui Yuanjin and Zhao Rui, officers of Yuan Shao's who were returning with a grain delivery, saw the flaming bins and raced to the rescue. Cao Cao was told of the officers' arrival: "They're almost upon us—to the rear. Send men to stop them." "The front," Cao shouted back, "give everything to the front. When they're at our backs, we'll deal with them." His commanders pressed forward, redoubling their blows. In moments fire was everywhere; smoke blotted out the sky. Yuan Shao's officers, Gui and Zhao, set upon the raiders from behind. Cao Cao turned on them, overpowering and killing both and burning the grain they were delivering. Next, Chunyu Qiong was brought before Cao Cao, who ordered his ears, nose, and fingers cut off, had him tied onto a horse, and sent him back in this manner to humiliate Yuan Shao.

In his tent Yuan Shao heard reports of the great fire to the north. He realized Wuchao was lost and summoned his advisers. Zhang He said, "Let me go with Gao Lan and save Wuchao." "Not a good idea," Guo Tu responded. "If they have plundered the stores, then Cao is there and Guandu is undefended. Strike Guandu first, and Cao will retreat swiftly. This is exactly how Sun Bin relieved Wei's siege of Zhao and went on to defeat Wei's army."⁶ But Zhang He disagreed. "Cao Cao," he argued, "is full of schemes. He would never undertake such an operation and leave his base vulnerable. If we attack Guandu and fail, Chunyu Qiong will be captured and so will we." Guo Tu, however, insisted that Cao Cao, intent only on the supplies, had left no forces behind. Guo Tu's view prevailed. Yuan Shao sent Zhang He and Gao Lan with five thousand against Guandu, and Jiang Qi with ten thousand to relieve Wuchao.

Cao Cao's men decimated Chunyu Qiong's units and took possession of their battle dress, armor, and banners; then they disguised themselves as remnants of Chunyu Qiong's guards struggling back to camp. When they met up with Jiang Qi, the commander Yuan Shao had sent to relieve the depot, Cao's men said they were Wuchao guards fleeing Cao's attack. Unsuspecting, Jiang Qi rode on toward Wuchao. Suddenly, the backup contingents led by Zhang Liao and Xu Chu challenged Jiang Qi. "Halt!" they shouted; and before Jiang Qi could respond, Zhang Liao had cut him down and

slaughtered his troops to a man. Meanwhile, Cao Cao arranged for a report to reach Yuan Shao saying that Jiang Qi had chased off the raiders. As a result, Yuan Shao sent more men on to Guandu and none to Wuchao.

Zhang He and Gao Lan had already begun their attack on Guandu. The three-sided defense—Xiahou Dun on the left, Cao Ren on the right, Cao Hong in the center—was concerted. By the time Yuan Shao's reinforcement arrived, Cao Cao was in striking position behind them, sealing shut the fourth side. During the ensuing slaughter Zhang He and Gao Lan managed to break away.

The defeated Wuchao guards straggled back to Yuan Shao with the mutilated Chunyu Qiong. Yuan Shao demanded to know how Wuchao was lost. "Chunyu Qiong was drunk," the guardsmen replied, "we couldn't fight them off." Yuan Shao had Chunyu Qiong beheaded.

Guo Tu realized that Zhang He and Gao Lan would testify to the folly of his advice to Yuan Shao, so he acted to prevent their return from Guandu. He began by slandering them. "I think, my lord," he told Yuan Shao, "that our defeat will be most gratifying to Zhang He and Gao Lan." "What are you talking about?" Yuan Shao asked. "Those two have been meaning to defect for some time," Guo Tu asserted. "By not exerting themselves on this mission they have caused us heavy losses." At once Yuan Shao sent for the two commanders to answer to their crime.

Guo Tu, however, had informed Zhang He and Gao Lan that Yuan Shao was going to execute them for the defeat at Guandu. Thus, when Yuan Shao's messenger delivered his summons, Gao Lan asked bluntly, "Why is our lord recalling us?" "I do not know," he replied. Without further ado Gao Lan slew the messenger and told the startled Zhang He, "Yuan Shao believes any slander. Sooner or later Cao Cao is going to take him. Why sit and wait to die? Let's join Cao Cao." Zhang He responded, "I have wanted to do it for a long time."

Yuan Shao's two commanders surrendered to Cao Cao with their troops. Xiahou Dun asked Cao Cao, "Is this genuine?" Cao Cao replied, "If I treat them well, they will come around in any event." The two commanders received permission to enter the camp. Coming before Cao Cao, they dropped their weapons and prostrated themselves. "Had Yuan Shao listened to you," Cao Cao said, "he could have spared himself this defeat. Now you two have come to us like Weizi, who quit the dying Shang dynasty, or Han Xin, who left Xiang Yu to serve the house of Han." Cao Cao appointed them adjutant generals and, respectively, lord of a higher precinct and lord of Donglai. The two defectors were completely satisfied.

Yuan Shao had now lost the services of Xu You, Zhang He, and Gao Lan, as well as his supply depot at Wuchao. His army was confused and demoralized. Xu You urged Cao Cao to strike quickly. Zhang He and Gao Lan offered to take the lead. Cao Cao approved and sent them to raid the northern army's main camp. At the third watch the attackers divided into three units and struck. Fighting raged until dawn; then the raiders withdrew, having inflicted casualties on half of Yuan Shao's army.

Xun You proposed the next step; "Spread rumors that you are sending one force to take Suanzao and attack Ye, and another to take Liyang and cut off their return to Jizhou. Yuan Shao will panic and divide his troops, and we can wipe him out." Cao Cao adopted the plan and ordered the army to noise about the new strategy. The rumors reached Yuan Shao and in alarm he dispatched Yuan Tan with fifty thousand men to Ye, and Xin Ming with fifty thousand to Liyang that very night. As soon as Cao Cao learned that Yuan Shao had made his move, he divided his army into eight units and descended on the enemy camp.

Having lost all taste for combat with Cao Cao's forces, Yuan Shao's troops broke and ran. The

army disintegrated. With no time even to don his armor, Yuan Shao fled on horseback, wearing an unlined tunic and a headband. His youngest son, Shang, followed him. The attackers, Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, Xu Huang, and Yu Jin, swept after him. Yuan Shao, in his anxiety to cross the river, had left behind maps, documents, chariots, gold, and silk. Accompanied by a mere eight hundred riders, he outraced his pursuers.

Cao Cao gathered up all that Yuan Shao had abandoned. Eighty thousand of the northern army had perished. The earth ran red, and the drowned were past numbering. Cao Cao's victory was total; he rewarded his men with the captured valuables. Among the official papers he found a packet of letters written by those in his capital who had secretly communicated with Yuan Shao. Some of his advisers urged Cao Cao to round up the unreliable elements and kill them. But Cao Cao replied, "When Yuan Shao was powerful, my own safety stood in doubt—not to speak of others'." He ordered the letters burned and the matter dropped.

During the debacle Yuan Shao's imprisoned adviser, Ju Shou, had not been able to escape. Taken before Cao Cao, who had known the man in former times, he declared, "I shall not submit!"⁷ "Yuan Shao," Cao Cao said, "was a fool to ignore your counsel. Why cling to folly? With you to advise me, the empire would know peace." Cao Cao treated Ju Shou handsomely and kept him in the army, but he stole a horse in an attempt to flee to Yuan Shao. He was consequently executed. Ju Shou maintained an unperturbed demeanor to the moment of his death. "I should not have killed so loyal and honorable a man," Cao Cao sighed and ordered that Ju Shou's body lie in state. He was interred at a crossing point of the Yellow River. A tumulus raised over the grave bore the inscription "Tomb of Master Ju, Who Died Gloriously for Loyalty." Later a poet expressed his admiration in these lines:

Men of note abounded in the north:
"Loyalty uncompromised" made Ju Shou's fame.
His steady eye could gauge the turns of war.
His upturned gaze could read a moving star.

Iron-hearted to the very last;
His spirit facing death was light and free.
His splendid conduct led him to his doom;
Cao Cao in tribute raised a lonely tomb.

Cao Cao gave the order to attack Jizhou. Indeed:

The weaker prevailed by cunning calculation;
The stronger failed for want of strategy.

Would Cao Cao become the master of the north?

READ ON.



Cao Cao Defeats Yuan Shao at Cangting; Liu Xuande Turns to Liu Biao in Jingzhou

TO EXPLOIT YUAN SHAO'S DEFEAT, Cao Cao regrouped and tracked his fleeing enemy. But Yuan Shao reached Liyang on the north shore safely. He was wearing an unlined tunic and a headband. Eight hundred horsemen remained in his command. Jiang Yiqu, the general in charge, welcomed the defeated leader to Liyang and, after receiving an account of the battles at Guandu, publicly announced his arrival. Yuan Shao's scattered forces rallied in a vast multitude, and their morale revived. Yuan Shao ordered the newly assembled army to begin marching to his home province, Jizhou.

One night, bivouacked in the wilds, Yuan Shao heard faint cries. Investigating, he found stragglers from his army clutching one another, moaning for the loss of brothers, comrades, and kinsmen. "If only he had taken Tian Feng's advice," they cried, weeping and beating their breasts, "we would not have known these sorrows." Yuan Shao said remorsefully, "I doomed my own cause when I ignored Tian Feng's advice. How can I face him at home?"

The next day Pang Ji greeted Yuan Shao as he was setting out with a party of soldiers. Yuan Shao said to him, "This defeat was my doing. I ignored Tian Feng's counsel, and now I cannot face him." "My lord, when he heard of your defeat in the prison," Pang Ji lied, "he clapped his hands and smirked, saying, 'Just as I anticipated.'" Rage mounted in Yuan Shao. "Mocked by that idiot? He dies!" he roared, and sent his sword to the jail.

Meanwhile, a guard visiting Tian Feng in his cell said, "Congratulations, Assistant Inspector!" "The occasion?" Tian Feng asked. The guard responded, "When General Yuan returns, you are sure to be acclaimed for predicting his defeat." "I am done for," Tian Feng replied with a smile. "Everyone is so happy for you," the guard went on, "why speak of death?" "General Yuan," Tian Feng explained, "may appear broadminded but is in fact deeply suspicious. Loyalty and sincerity count for little with him. In the rejoicing after a victory he might have been inclined to be lenient, but after a humiliation like this there is no hope." The guard shook his head doubtfully. At that moment the envoy arrived with Yuan Shao's sword and the order to behead Tian Feng. "It is no surprise," Tian Feng remarked to the astounded guard. All the jailers wept. "A man of honor," Tian Feng said, "takes his stand in the wide world between Heaven and earth. If he chooses the wrong lord, he is responsible for his ignorance. I can face death today. Despair is pointless." Then he slit his throat. In the words of a later poet,

First Ju Shou fell, a captive of the foe;
Then Tian Feng died, a prisoner of his lord.
Breaking thus the pillars of his state,
Yuan Shao sealed his northern country's fate.

Many grieved for Tian Feng.

Yuan Shao arrived in Jizhou too agitated to administer his province. His wife, Lady Liu, who had replaced Shao's principal wife after her death, urged him to name an heir. Of his three sons, the eldest, Tan (Xiansi), ruled Qingzhou, and the second, Xi (Xianyi), ruled Youzhou. The third son, Shang (Xianfu), was the son of Lady Liu and had grown to magnificent manhood. His father doted on him and kept him near home.

Since the battle of Guandu, Lady Liu had been pressing Yuan Shao to name Shang his heir. Yuan Shao took counsel with Shen Pei, Pang Ji, Xin Ping, and Guo Tu. Shen Pei and Pang Ji were in Shang's service and favored him; Xin Ping and Guo Tu served Tan and favored him. At the meeting each supported his master's cause. Yuan Shao said, "With continuing external threats, it is urgent that we establish the succession. My eldest, Tan, is hot-tempered and prone to violence. The second, Xi, is a weak sort, unlikely to amount to much. The third, however, has the makings of a true hero: he attracts the worthy and respects the able. He is my choice. What are your views?"

"Of the three," Guo Tu began, "the eldest, Tan, has priority. Moreover, he is ruling a province. My lord, to reject the elder and elevate the younger will cause strife. Now with our prestige somewhat tarnished and our enemies at our borders, we must not disturb the vital relation of father to son, brother to brother. My lord might better devote himself to coping with the threats we face and give less attention to the other matter." Yuan Shao wavered and took no action.

Suddenly Yuan Shao had a report that Yuan Xi was coming from Youzhou with sixty thousand men; Yuan Tan, from Qingzhou with fifty thousand; and Gao Gan, Shao's nephew, from Bingzhou with another fifty thousand to help Shao fight the enemy. Delighted, Yuan Shao consolidated his army and prepared to face Cao Cao.

Cao Cao pitched his triumphant forces along the river, where people greeted them with food and wine. The white-headed village elders were invited into Cao Cao's tent. He asked them, "How old are you gentlemen?" "Nearly a hundred, each of us," they responded. "Our troops have disrupted your communities, and it troubles me," Cao Cao said. "In the time of Emperor Huan," one of them responded, "a yellow star shone in the region above this ground, once the boundary between the ancient states of Song and Chu.¹ Yin Kui of Liaodong, the star-teller, stayed here one night. He told us that the yellow star foretold that in fifty years' time a true king would arise here between Liang and Pei. It is now fifty years since Yin Kui spoke those words. The people here have suffered from Yuan Shao's taxes, but you, Prime Minister, march in the name of the highest virtue and duty to succor the people and punish the guilty. Yuan Shao's defeat at Guandu confirms Yin Kui's prediction. Now the millions inhabiting this region can look forward to an era of just peace."

Cao Cao replied to the elder, "How can I live up to such claims?" He gave the elders gifts of food and drink and bade them good-bye. He then issued an order saying, "Any soldier who kills even a chicken or a dog in these villages will be punished as if he had taken human life." This command shocked the troops, but they complied and thereby won popular support, to Cao Cao's quiet satisfaction.

It was reported to Cao Cao that Yuan Shao had mobilized from his four provinces an army of two to three hundred thousand, which was now camped at Cangting. Cao Cao advanced and deployed his troops in opposition. The next day, when each side had consolidated its order of battle, Cao Cao showed himself before the formation with his generals. Yuan Shao also appeared, surrounded by his

three sons, his nephew, and his civil and military officials. Cao Cao spoke first. "Yuan Shao," he cried, "your plans have come to naught, your strength is spent. Why hold out? Will there be time for regret when the sword is on your neck?"

Furiously Yuan Shao looked back at his generals. "Who will begin?" he said. His youngest son, Shang, anxious to impress his father, dashed forward, two blades dancing in the air. "Who's that?" Cao Cao asked. "Yuan Shao's third son," someone replied. Shi Huan, Xu Huang's lieutenant, was already in the field, spear couched for action. The horsemen tangled. After a few exchanges, Yuan Shang wheeled and reversed direction, parrying with his blade. Shi Huan pursued. Yuan Shang fitted an arrow to his bow and, twisting back, shot Shi Huan through the left eye. Down he went. Witnessing his son's triumph, Yuan Shao flourished his whip toward the enemy and his troops flocked forward. In the moil and ruck of battle great slaughter was done; then gongs from both sides recalled the troops.

Cao Cao convened his generals. Cheng Yu offered a plan for a "ten-part ambush." He advised withdrawing to the river and placing ten units in five pairs along either side of the route to the river and then enticing Yuan Shao to pursue. "Our troops," Cheng Yu explained, "backed against the water, will fight to the death and defeat Yuan Shao." Cao Cao approved the plan, and the men were assigned to the following squads; on the left, squad one, Xiahou Dun; squad two, Zhang Liao; squad three, Li Dian; squad four, Yue Jin; squad five, Xiahou Yuan; on the right, squad one, Cao Hong; squad two, Zhang He; squad three, Xu Huang; squad four, Yu Jin; squad five, Gao Lan. The center force was under Xu Chu in the van. Next day the ten squads assumed their positions. At midnight Xu Chu feigned a raid on Yuan Shao's camp, and as Cao Cao had expected, Yuan Shao's troops responded in force.

Xu Chu's raiding party reversed course at once, drawing Yuan Shao in pursuit, his men yelling steadily. By dawn they had crowded Cao Cao's men against the river. "There's no way out! Each man fights to the finish!" Cao Cao shouted to his troops, and they turned on the enemy with new vigor. Xu Chu now moved swiftly forward and slew ten of Yuan Shao's commanders, causing disorder in his ranks. Yuan Shao scrambled to retreat. Cao Cao harried his rear guard. Drums began beating, and the first ambush was sprung—a lightning squeeze on Yuan Shao from Xiahou Yuan to the left, Gao Lan to the right. Ringed by his sons and nephew, Yuan Shao hacked his way free. But they had retreated barely ten *li* from the river when Yue Jin and Yu Jin attacked from both sides, taking a bloody toll. The ground ran with gore. Yuan Shao advanced another few *li*; then Li Dian and Xu Huang gripped him in another murderous pincer.

Stricken with fear, Yuan Shao and his sons fled back to their original camp. Yuan Shao ordered a meal, but there was no time to prepare it: Zhang Liao and Zhang He had charged the camp. Yuan Shao took to his horse and sped to Cangting. His men and mounts were nearly spent. From behind, Cao Cao's main force came on. Yuan Shao fled for his life, but his escape was cut off by Cao Hong and Xiahou Dun. "Fight or fall!" Yuan Shao screamed to his followers. With a final burst of energy he broke out of the fifth trap. Yuan Xi and Gao Gan had been wounded by arrows; few troops survived. Yuan Shao embraced his sons and wept. Then he fainted. His men crowded around trying to revive him, but he kept vomiting blood. Finally he came round and said brokenly, "I never expected to be ruined like this after dozens of battles. Return to your own provinces. We'll settle with the traitor Cao yet!"²

Yuan Shao instructed Xin Ping and Guo Tu to follow Yuan Tan back to Qingzhou to reorganize and prevent Cao Cao from crossing the border there. He sent Yuan Xi back to Youzhou and Gao Gan

back to Bingzhou. The three were to gather men and horses and await the next call to action. Yuan Shao and his third son, Shang, returned to Jizhou, where Yuan Shao recuperated. He placed Shang in charge of military affairs and assigned Shen Pei and Pang Ji to assist him.

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After the victory at Cangting, Cao Cao rewarded his soldiers. Spies informed him that Yuan Shao was confined to bed and that Yuan Shang and Shen Pei were guarding the city of Jizhou tightly, while Yuan Tan, Yuan Xi, and Gao Gan had returned to their provinces. Cao Cao resisted arguments for an immediate attack, saying, "Jizhou is well stocked, and Shen Pei is an able adviser. The city will not fall easily. Now the crops are in the field, and we must protect the harvest. Wait for late autumn."

During the discussion Cao Cao had an urgent report from Xun Wenruo in the capital: "Liu Xuande has taken in tens of thousands in Runan, men who had been under Liu Pi and Gong Du.³ When Xuande heard of your campaign in the north, he left Liu Pi holding Runan and marched toward the capital. Your Lordship must go back and head him off." Cao Cao assigned Cao Hong to maintain a presence along the river in Yuan Shao's domain; then he moved south toward the capital.⁴

Bent on surprising Xuchang, Liu Xuande with his two brothers and Zhao Zilong had reached the Rang Mountains when they encountered Cao Cao's troops marching toward them. Xuande pitched camp and divided his force into three units: Lord Guan at the northeast point; Zhang Fei at the southwest; and Xuande and Zhao Zilong due south, where they built a fortification. Amid a fearful din Cao Cao came into view, formed his line, and called Xuande out.

From beneath his banners Xuande rode forward. Leveling his whip at Xuande, Cao Cao cried out, "As my honored guest, you once received much kindness. Will you dishonor our friendship now?" Xuande replied, "You claim to be prime minister to the Han. In fact you are a traitor to the Han, whom I, a kinsman of the Han, am authorized by imperial decree to punish." Before the two armies Xuande read out loud and clear the secret decree from the girdle of Emperor Xian.⁵

Driven to fury by Xuande's recitation, Cao Cao ordered Xu Chu into the field. From behind Xuande, Zhao Zilong charged out with ready spear. The generals came to grips thirty times, but neither could prevail. Suddenly the ground trembled with battle cries as Lord Guan from the northeast and Zhang Fei from the southwest plunged into the action. Cao Cao's warriors, already fatigued from their long march, turned and fled. Xuande returned to base triumphant.

The next day Xuande sent Zhao Zilong to challenge the enemy, but Cao Cao's troops did not show themselves for ten days.⁶ Zhang Fei was unable to provoke any response, either. While puzzling over Cao Cao's tactics, Xuande was informed that a grain shipment Gong Du was bringing in had been trapped. Xuande sent Zhang Fei to rescue it. No sooner had Zhang Fei set out than Xuande learned that Xiahou Dun was about to capture Runan from the back routes. "The enemy is in front and behind," Xuande cried, "where can I turn?" He sent Lord Guan to relieve Runan, but Runan fell that day. Liu Pi had fled, and Lord Guan was surrounded. Xuande became alarmed; then he heard that Zhang Fei, vainly trying to relieve Gong Du, had also been trapped. Xuande wanted to retreat but feared Cao Cao would attack from behind. Finally, a direct challenge came: Xu Chu stood before his camp to do battle.

Xuande held his ground until daybreak. He told his men to eat their fill and gave the order to break camp. The foot soldiers, followed by the cavalry, began moving out. False watches were

announced to delay Cao Cao's attack. Xuande and his men had gone several *li* when, rounding a hill, they faced a row of torches. Above voices boomed, "Don't let Xuande escape! His Excellency has been waiting here especially for him!" Xuande despaired. Zhao Zilong said, "Do not fear, my lord. Follow me," and he plunged ahead, working his spear to cut a path as Xuande plied his twin swords. But then Xu Chu challenged them, followed by Li Dian and Yu Jin. Cao's commanders drove Xuande into the brush. Alone, he pushed deeper into the hills by unused trails. The sounds of battle receded. He had barely escaped.

Night dragged on. At dawn one thousand of his own defeated cavalry appeared, led by Liu Pi, who was escorting Xuande's family. Sun Qian, Jian Yong, and Mi Fang also rode up. "Xiahou Dun forced us from Runan," they said. "Lord Guan held off Cao Cao, and we got away." "Where is Lord Guan?" Xuande asked. "General, keep moving for now," Liu Pi replied. "We'll try to find him later."

After another few *li* a drum sounded and a body of troops surged in front of them. "Dismount and surrender!" cried the commander, Zhang He. Xuande tried to turn back. On a hill he saw enemy soldiers moving red flags in great sweeping circles. From a glen another company of men burst into view, commanded by Gao Lan. Xuande had no recourse. He cried to Heaven, "Why have you decreed this ordeal? Let me die!" He lifted his sword to his throat, but Liu Pi checked him. "I'll try to break through. Death does not daunt me!" he said. But Gao Lan cut him down at the moment of engagement. Xuande prepared himself to fight when a tumult arose in the rear of Gao Lan's force. A general tore into Gao Lan's back ranks and speared the commander. It was Zhao Zilong. Xuande was thankful to be saved.

Zhao Zilong, mounted, continued thrusting and stabbing as his horse reared and plunged. After putting Gao Lan's back ranks to flight, he reached the front and drove off Zhang He in a bitter struggle of thirty bouts. Zhao Zilong took a bloody toll until he found himself squeezed into a narrow valley blocked by Zhang He. He was rescued almost at once as Lord Guan, Guan Ping, and Zhou Cang arrived with three hundred men. Now squeezed himself, Zhang He was forced to withdraw. Zhao Zilong and Lord Guan came out of the defile and camped at a strongpoint in the hills. Xuande had Lord Guan look for Zhang Fei.

Zhang Fei had gone to relieve Gong Du, but Du was already in Xiahou Yuan's hands. Zhang Fei engaged Xiahou Yuan and forced him back. He pressed the attack but was himself surrounded by Yue Jin's men. Lord Guan, aided by stragglers, managed to track his way back to Zhang Fei, and together they drove off Yue Jin. The two brothers then returned to Xuande—only to hear that Cao Cao himself was coming in force. Xuande sent Sun Qian on with his family and began retreating with his comrades. In the end Xuande got far enough away, and Cao Cao called off the pursuit.

The harried remnants of Xuande's troops—now less than a thousand—pressed on. They reached a river known locally as the Han. Xuande pitched camp. People in the area brought lamb and wine especially to honor Xuande, and the gathering ate and drank at the river's edge. Then Xuande addressed his followers. "Good friends," he said sadly, "you are men with the talent to serve a king. Alas, following one whose fate is sealed has brought you only grief. For I possess nothing, not even the ground I stand on. I have led you far astray, I fear, and I urge you to seek out another more enlightened lord in whose service you may distinguish yourselves." His followers averted their faces and covered their eyes with their sleeves.

"Brother," Lord Guan said, "it is not so. At the beginning of the Han when the founding emperor suffered so many reverses in his struggle for mastery with Xiang Yu, his success in a single battle at

Nine Mile Mountain enabled him to establish a four-hundred-year patrimony. Reverses are common in war and must not be allowed to affect morale." To this Sun Qian added, "There is a time for victory and for defeat. Do not lose heart. We are near Jingzhou, where Liu Biao controls the nine districts. He has a strong army and ample stores. And, like yourself, he is a Liu, a kinsman of the Han, who may protect us if we ask." "I doubt he'd grant us protection," Xuande replied. "Perhaps I can persuade him to receive you properly," Sun Qian suggested, and Xuande gave his approval.

Sun Qian presented himself before Liu Biao.⁷ After the formalities Liu Biao said, "You serve Xuande. Why have you come here?" "My master," Sun Qian replied, "is one of the great heroes of the empire. At the moment his forces are at a low point, but he remains determined to sustain the sacred shrines of the Han. In Runan two utter strangers, Liu Pi and Gong Du, laid down their lives for him. Your Lordship and my master are both of the royal line. Recently Lord Liu suffered a setback and was thinking of taking refuge with Sun Quan in the Southland, but I took the liberty of saying to him, 'Why turn to a stranger? Nearby in General Liu Biao we have a kinsman, a leader who welcomes the worthy, who attracts men of talent, and who will welcome us all the more since both of you are Lius.' And so my master bid me offer his respects and learn your will."

Delightedly Liu Biao said, "I look upon Xuande as a younger brother; I have long wished to meet him but have never had the privilege. If he now so kindly seeks me out, it is fortunate indeed." However, Cai Mao objected: "That would be a serious mistake. Xuande first served Lü Bu, then Cao Cao, and after them, Yuan Shao. But he has served no one to the end. Doesn't that tell us enough about his character? If we welcome Xuande here, Cao Cao will turn on us. We will be involved in hostilities for no good reason. I would cut off this envoy's head and have it delivered to Cao Cao! That should raise your standing with the prime minister, my lord."

Sternly Sun Qian said, "I do not fear death. My master is loyal, heart and soul, to the Han. There is no comparison with a Cao Cao, a Yuan Shao, or a Lü Bu, whose service he entered only under duress. You, General Liu, are a descendant of the Han, a kinsman bonded in friendship, and that is why he seeks—despite all obstacles—to join you. How can Cai Mao purvey such slanders and show his jealousy of men of worth?" "I have made up my mind," Liu Biao said to Cai Mao in a tone of rebuke. "You need say no more." Shamed and resentful, Cai Mao left. Liu Biao had Sun Qian inform Xuande of his decision, and then he personally traveled thirty *li* outside the city to welcome his guest. At the reception Xuande showed great reverence for Liu Biao, who extended the most generous hospitality. Xuande introduced Lord Guan and Zhang Fei, who offered their respects, and all together they entered the city of Xiangyang. There the guests were assigned to suitable quarters.⁸

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When Cao Cao discovered where Xuande had gone, he wanted to attack Jingzhou at once. Cheng Yu tried to dissuade him: "It is too risky with Yuan Shao threatening from the north. Return to the capital and build up your forces. After the spring thaw we can destroy Yuan Shao first and then take Xiangyang, sweeping north and then south in a single action." Cao Cao accepted this advice and took his army back to Xuchang.

In the first month of Jian An 7 (A.D. 202) Cao Cao reopened discussion of the campaign. He detailed Xiahou Dun and Man Chong to hold Runan and keep Liu Biao in check; he left Cao Ren and Xun Wenruo guarding Xuchang; and then he himself led the main army back to Guandu.

Yuan Shao, having recovered from the physical effects of last year's campaigns—catarrh and spitting of blood—was ready to plan another attack on the capital. Shen Pei argued against it: "In the battles at Guandu and Cangting last year our morale was badly hurt. We need to stay on the defensive and strengthen the army and the people." During this discussion, however, word came that Cao Cao had returned to Guandu and was preparing to attack Jizhou. "I don't think we can wait for the enemy to reach our walls and moats before we take the field," Yuan Shao said. "I will lead the main army myself." Then Yuan Shang, his youngest son, spoke up. "Father's condition does not yet permit a long campaign. Let me take command," he said. Yuan Shao consented and directed the other three provinces of his realm to gather their forces and defeat Cao Cao. Indeed:

Hardly had the war drums died away at Runan
When they began rolling again north of the river.

Could Cao Cao dominate both sides of the Yellow River?

READ ON.



Yuan Shang and His Brother Struggle for Jizhou; Xu You Proposes Diverting the River Zhang

YUAN SHANG, WHO HAD KILLED Cao Cao's commander Shi Huan at Cangting, confidently marched his host of tens of thousands to Liyang without waiting for the armies of his brothers. At Liyang he engaged Cao Cao's vanguard. Zhang Liao rode out first, hot for combat. Spear braced, Yuan Shang answered the challenge but could not fend off Zhang Liao; he fled the field. Pressing his advantage, Zhang Liao drove the stunned Yuan Shang back to Jizhou. There Yuan Shao, in shock after his son's defeat, collapsed vomiting quantities of blood.

Lady Liu rushed Yuan Shao to a bedroom. His survival looked doubtful. She summoned Shen Pei and Pang Ji to his bedside to discuss the succession. Unable to speak, Yuan Shao answered by gestures. "Shall Shang succeed you?" Lady Liu asked. Yuan Shao nodded. Shen Pei wrote out his lord's testament. Yuan Shao rolled over, uttered a last cry, and passed away, blood spewing from his mouth.¹ A later poet wrote:

From this noble and long-honored line
Sprang a youth of unrestrained ambition,
Who called three thousand champions up in vain
And led his puissant armies to their ruin.

No glory for this sheep in tiger's hide!
No triumph for a chicken phoenix-plumed!
The saddest part of this pathetic end:
Both brothers of this fallen house were doomed.²

Shen Pei took charge of Yuan Shao's funeral. Lady Liu had all five of Yuan Shao's favored concubines put to death. Driven by jealousy, she had their heads shaved, their faces slashed, and their corpses mutilated, lest they try to rejoin their master in the netherworld. As a further precaution Yuan Shang killed the concubines' relatives. Next, Shen Pei and Pang Ji installed Yuan Shang as chief commanding officer and protector of the four provinces Ji, Qing, You, and Bing. After these measures were taken, they announced Yuan Shao's death.

Yuan Tan had already marched from Qingzhou to fight Cao Cao when he learned of his father's death. Guo Tu advised him, "My lord, hasten to Jizhou, or Shen Pei and Pang Ji will take advantage of your absence to put Shang in power." But Xin Ping cautioned, "Those two will be ready for us. Go now at your peril." "What should I do?" Yuan Tan asked. "Station troops outside the city and wait,"³ Guo Tu said, "while I go in and survey the scene." Yuan Tan approved this plan; Guo Tu proceeded

to Jizhou and presented himself to Yuan Shang.⁴

After the formalities Yuan Shang asked, "Where is my brother?" "With the army, convalescing. He couldn't come today," Guo Tu answered. "By my father's will," Yuan Shang said, "I am now lord. My brother is promoted to general of Chariots and Cavalry. Cao Cao threatens the southern border, and I want my brother to hold the front against him. I will bring reinforcement." Guo Tu replied, "We have no tacticians with the army. Could you let us have Shen Pei and Pang Ji?" Yuan Shang responded, "I depend on their counsel myself at all times. I cannot spare them." "Then," Guo Tu pressed, "would you send one of them?" Unable to refuse this request, Yuan Shang had the two men draw lots. Pang Ji was selected and went back with Guo Tu to deliver the seal and ribbon of command.

Finding Yuan Tan in perfect health, however, Pang Ji proffered the regalia with great anxiety. Yuan Tan would indeed have put Pang Ji to death, but Guo Tu dissuaded him: "With Cao Cao at the border, we'd better keep Pang Ji entertained to avoid provoking your brother. There'll be time enough to make our bid for Jizhou after Cao is defeated." Yuan Tan broke camp and advanced to Liyang. Deploying opposite Cao Cao, he sent Wang Zhao to challenge the enemy. Xu Huang rode forth to engage him. The duel had hardly begun when Xu Huang swept Wang Zhao to the ground with a stroke of his blade. Cao Cao's men pressed forward and fell upon the northerners. Yuan Tan retreated to Liyang and sought Yuan Shang's aid.

On Shen Pei's advice Yuan Shang sent a mere five thousand men. Cao Cao, learning of it, had Yue Jin and Li Dian intercept the relief force. The two generals surrounded the small unit before it arrived and wiped it out. When Yuan Tan learned that his brother had sent a small force and that Cao's commanders had swiftly eliminated it, he angrily summoned Pang Ji for an explanation. "Let me write to my lord and have him come himself," Pang Ji said. Yuan Tan agreed, and Pang Ji dispatched a letter.

Shen Pei advised Yuan Shang to turn down Pang Ji's request. "Guo Tu is full of tricks," Shen Pei argued. "Last time, Yuan Tan left without contesting Jizhou because Cao Cao was in our territory. But now, if he breaks Cao, he will try for Jizhou. Send your brother no aid. Let Cao's army take care of him." Yuan Shang did as Shen Pei advised. Enraged by his brother's treachery, Yuan Tan had Pang Ji executed immediately; then he discussed with his officers the possibility of surrendering to Cao Cao. Informed of his brother's intent, Yuan Shang said to Shen Pei, "If my brother surrenders to Cao Cao and they attack us jointly, we will be overcome." In the end Yuan Shang went to Liyang to relieve Yuan Tan.

Yuan Shang left Shen Pei and Commander Su You guarding the city and set out with a force of thirty thousand. The vanguard was led by two brothers who had volunteered, Lü Kuang and Lü Xiang. They reached Liyang, and Yuan Tan, pleased that his brother had come in person, dropped the idea of surrendering to Cao Cao. His troops, stationed inside the city, and Yuan Shang's, stationed outside, were positioned for mutual support. Before long, Yuan Xi and Gao Gan also arrived in force. Now the Yuans had three strongpoints. Every day they sent out troops to skirmish with Cao's. Again and again Yuan Shang was outfought by Cao Cao.

In the second month of Jian An 8 (A.D. 203) Cao Cao divided his army to attack the Yuans' positions and succeeded in his units' routing the Yuan brothers and Gao Gan, who abandoned Liyang. Cao Cao pressed on to Jizhou. Yuan Tan and Yuan Shang established a defense within the city; Yuan Xi and Gao Gan camped thirty *li* away and made a show of force.

Cao Cao's initial attacks on Jizhou failed to subdue the city. Guo Jia advised him, "Yuan Shao

named the junior, not the elder, as his heir. The brothers are competing for power, and each has his faction. Threatened, they cooperate; otherwise, they quarrel. I think we should abandon this front and march south against Liu Biao in Jingzhou. When the Yuan brothers fall out again, Jizhou will be ours." Satisfied with this proposal, Cao Cao left Jia Xu governing Liyang and Cao Hong holding Guandu; then he started for Jingzhou.

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Yuan Tan and Yuan Shang congratulated each other on Cao Cao's withdrawal. Yuan Xi and Gao Gan went home to their respective provinces. Yuan Tan said to his advisers Guo Tu and Xin Ping, "Though the eldest, I have not been named heir. Shang is the son of a later wife, yet he has the title to my father's estate. I cannot put up with it!" "My lord," Guo Tu suggested, "hold your troops in readiness outside the city while you entertain your brother and Shen Pei. Have your men cut them down at the feast and settle this business!" Yuan Tan approved, but Assistant Inspector Wang Xiu, just arrived from Qingzhou, opposed it. He said to Yuan Tan, "Brothers are like two limbs. When locked in struggle with somebody, can you cut off your right arm and say, 'Now I'm sure to win'? Deny fraternal love and who will trust you, who will hold you dear? Give no heed, I beg you, to those who would set kinsmen at odds for passing advantage." But Yuan Tan rebuked Wang Xiu and issued the invitation.

Yuan Shang consulted Shen Pei. "Guo Tu's plotting," he said. "There is treachery in this. Now is the time to attack." Yuan Shang agreed. He donned his armor and rode out of the city at the head of fifty thousand men. Seeing that his brother had come with troops, Yuan Tan knew his plot had been exposed. He, too, armed himself and mounted. The two brothers faced off, hurling scorn at each other. "You poisoned Father," Yuan Tan cried, "and stole his estate. Now you come to kill your elder brother." The two engaged. Yuan Tan was defeated. Braving stones and arrows, Yuan Shang drove his opponent into the town of Pingyuan.⁵

On Guo Tu's advice Yuan Tan assigned General Cen Bi to renew the fight. Yuan Shang took the field again. Two opposed fronts formed, close enough for the troops on one side to see the banners and drummers on the other. Cen Bi and Lü Kuang clashed and Cen Bi fell. Defeated again, Yuan Tan retired once more to Pingyuan and would not come out. Yuan Shang besieged the city from three sides. "We are short on rations," Guo Tu told Yuan Tan. "The attackers are at full strength. Surrender to Cao Cao and try to get him to attack Jizhou. Yuan Shang will have to retreat to protect his city. Between Cao's army and ours, he will be taken. After Cao defeats him, we can seize his supplies and deny them to Cao. Too far from his base to feed his troops, he will have to withdraw, and Jizhou will be ours. Then we can plan further."

Yuan Tan asked, "Who will take Cao our message?" Guo Tu replied, "Xin Ping's younger brother Pi (styled Zuozhi), the prefect of Pingyuan and an eloquent scholar, may be trusted with this mission." Yuan Tan summoned the man, who came readily, provided him with a letter, and had him escorted past the border by three thousand men. Xin Pi took Yuan Tan's letter to Cao Cao at a time when Cao Cao was positioned at Xiping, preparing to attack Liu Biao. Liu Biao had sent Xuande to lead the vanguard against Cao Cao. Yuan Tan's envoy arrived before the battle.

Presenting himself to Cao Cao, Xin Pi explained Yuan Tan's proposal and delivered his letter. Cao Cao took it to his advisers. Cheng Yu said, "Yuan Tan is reeling from his brother's attack. Don't

trust a man who comes under duress." Lü Qian and Man Chong also argued against turning the army around at the moment of battle, but Xun You favored the reversal. "You three gentlemen are mistaken," he said. "Liu Biao stays put between the Great River and the Han because, in my view, he lacks ambition. The Yuans, however, hold the four provinces north of the Yellow River and have hundreds of thousands under arms. If the two Yuan brothers get together to defend their land, the question of who rules the empire will remain unsettled. It is a rare occasion when one of the Yuans is desperate enough to come to us. Dispose of Yuan Shang, watch for the chance to destroy Yuan Tan, and you can control the empire. Do not let the opportunity pass."

Pleased with Xun You's advice, Cao Cao invited Yuan Tan's envoy to a banquet. "Is this surrender genuine?" Cao Cao asked Xin Pi. "Can Yuan Shang's army really be conquered?" "My lord," the envoy replied, "what need to ask? The situation speaks for itself. Year after year the Yuans have suffered defeat. Their armies are exhausted. Their advisers have been dismissed or executed. Slander and scheming have divided the brothers—and the realm. Add to that successive famines, natural disasters, and human crises—even a fool can see that the Yuans are on the verge of collapse. Heaven has doomed them. Now, my lord, you attack Ye, the administrative seat, and if Yuan Shang withdraws from Pingyuan to defend it, he loses his bastion. Yuan Tan will strike him from behind, and your mighty host will sweep away the wearied enemy as a storm does fallen leaves. Compare this to your present campaign against Liu Biao's Jingzhou, a prosperous territory, whose people and government enjoy a relationship far too harmonious for you to undermine. Besides, the north is your main problem. Once you have tamed it, your protectorship of the Emperor will be secure. Please consider this fully." Exuberantly, Cao Cao said, "How I regret coming to know you so late!" That same day Cao Cao supervised the shift of his armies to the north. Liu Xuande, well acquainted with Cao Cao's treacherous devices, pulled back to Jingzhou instead of pursuing him.

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Yuan Shang learned that Cao Cao had crossed the Yellow River. He called off the siege of Pingyuan and hastily led his troops back to Ye, with Lü Kuang and Lü Xiang bringing up the rear. Yuan Tan mobilized his troops at Pingyuan and gave chase for several dozen *li*. Suddenly a bombard sounded, and two units confronted him, Lü Kuang to the left, Lü Xiang to the right. Yuan Tan reined in and denounced them: "I always treated you well when my father was alive. How can you oppose me like this in my brother's service?" At Yuan Tan's words the two commanders offered to surrender. Yuan Tan said, "Surrender to the prime minister, not to me." They followed Tan back to his camp. When Cao Cao's army arrived, Yuan Tan conducted the brothers Lü into his presence. Cao Cao welcomed them with pleasure and promised Yuan Tan one of his daughters in marriage. Cao Cao had the Lü brothers arrange the match.

Yuan Tan appealed to Cao Cao to attack Jizhou. The prime minister replied, "We are still waiting for grain. Transport is a major problem. I'll have to recross the Yellow River and divert the Qi into the White Canal in order to open up a supply route. After that we can advance." Cao Cao quartered Yuan Tan in Pingyuan and then withdrew to Liyang. He granted the Lü brothers noble titles and placed them in his army with orders to hold themselves in readiness.

Guo Tu warned Yuan Tan, "This proposed wedding conceals Cao Cao's true intent. His generosity to the Lü brothers is meant to win over the northerners. It will end badly for us, though. My

lord, have two seals of command carved and secretly delivered to the Lüs binding them to serve you. Then, after Cao defeats Yuan Shang, you can make your move." Yuan Tan adopted this plan, but the moment the Lü brothers received their seals, they turned them over to Cao Cao, who said with a laugh, "Tan has sent these so that you will help him after I defeat Shang. Very well. Accept the charge. I have my own way of handling it." Then and there Cao Cao decided to dispose of Yuan Tan.

In Ye, Yuan Shang said to Shen Pei, "Cao is moving grain through the White Canal. An attack must be coming. How shall we defend ourselves?" "First," Shen Pei replied, "have Yin Kai, our precinct master at Wuan, garrison Maocheng, where he can reach the Shangdang supply line. Next, have Ju Shou's son, Ju Gu, hold Handan to back up Yin Kai. You, my lord, will then send troops to Pingyuan and launch a lightning strike on Yuan Tan. Destroy Yuan Tan first, then Cao Cao." On this advice, Yuan Shang left Shen Pei and Chen Lin guarding Ye and sent generals Ma Yan and Zhang Yi to spearhead his attack on Pingyuan.

Yuan Tan informed Cao Cao that his brother Shang's troops were again approaching. The prime minister said, "This time I shall take Jizhou!" He was working out the tactics when Xu You arrived from the capital and said, "Your Excellency, what are you waiting for? For thunder to strike the Yuans?" "I have reached a decision," Cao responded with a smile. He dispatched Cao Hong to attack Ye while he moved against Yin Kai. In the action Xu Chu made short work of Yin Kai and scattered his ranks. Cao Cao welcomed all who surrendered, then guided his forces to Handan. There he found Ju Gu ready to do battle. Zhang Liao rode onto the field and fought with Ju Gu. The issue was quickly decided: Ju Gu fled in defeat. Zhang Liao raced after him and, as his mount narrowed the distance, brought him down with a single shot of his bow. Cao Cao dispersed Ju Gu's men and proceeded to Ye.

Cao Hong had already reached Ye. Cao Cao's troops ringed the wall around the city, piled up dirt mounds, and dug a tunnel out of the enemy's sight. Within the city Shen Pei issued stern orders on maintaining defenses and severely punished Feng Li, commander of the east gate, for drunkenness and negligence. The resentful Feng Li escaped through an underground passage and went over to Cao Cao. Cao Cao asked him how to reduce the city; Feng Li answered, "The earth is thick just behind the sally port.⁶ Tunnel through there to get inside." Cao Cao then gave Feng Li three hundred men, and they began digging that night.

After Feng Li's defection Shen Pei mounted the wall himself to survey the scene. One night he noticed that there were no fires outside the wall by the sally port. "Feng Li must be digging his way in," Shen Pei whispered to himself. He ordered his best troops to crush the passage with heavy stones. It fell in, and Feng Li and his corps of three hundred perished underground.

Unable to penetrate the city, Cao Cao returned to the banks of the Huan to await Yuan Shang. Shang had heard of the defeat of Yin Kai and Ju Gu as well as the siege of Jizhou, so he broke off the battle at Pingyuan and started back to his city. A subcommander, Ma Yan, said to him, "Take the small road. Cao Cao will have an ambush on the main road. If we go by way of Xishan and come out at the head of the River Fu, we can raid his camp and break the siege." Yuan Shang approved the plan and left Ma Yan and Zhang Yi guarding the rear. Informed of Yuan Shang's movements, Cao Cao said, "If he takes the main road, we will avoid him. If he takes the small road out of Xishan, I can capture him in one battle. My guess is that he will signal with fire for reinforcement from the city: we will attack both him and the city." Cao Cao divided his troops in preparation for the action.

Yuan Shang passed the River Fu and went east to Yangping, where he established a position

seventeen *li* from Ye, keeping near the water. During the night he made a bonfire to signal the city and sent his first secretary, Li Fu, to Ye disguised as one of Cao's inspectors. At the base of the wall, Li Fu shouted for entry. Shen Pei, recognizing the voice, admitted him. Li Fu said to Shen Pei, "Yuan Shang is at Yangping precinct waiting for reinforcement. When you send the men, light a fire as a signal." Shen Pei had the fires set to transmit the message. Li Fu continued, "The city is out of grain. Let the old and weak, the disabled and the women surrender to Cao. It'll put him off guard, and our troops, close behind them, can attack." Shen Pei approved this plan.

The next day a white flag went up on the wall proclaiming the surrender of the people of Jizhou. "They have no grain," Cao Cao said. "They'll push the old and weak out first, but the troops will be right behind." Cao Cao had Zhang Liao and Xu Huang conceal three thousand men on either side of his position; then, mounted, he spread the canopy of command and went to the city wall. He watched the people issuing from the gate, white flags in hand, supporting the elderly and pulling the children along. Soldiers rushed from the city in the wake of the exodus, but at a signal from Cao Cao's red flag Zhang Liao and Xu Huang emerged from hiding and drove the Jizhou troops back inside the city wall. Cao Cao raced to the side of the drawbridge, hoping to force an entry, but arrows rained down on him. One pierced his helmet and nearly killed him. His commanders pulled him back to the battle line for safety.

Cao Cao changed his armor and horse and led an attack on Yuan Shang's camp. Yuan Shang met him in the field, and the brigades of both sides swept into the fighting. Yuan Shang, severely beaten, withdrew to his camp at Xishan. Unknown to him, his outpost commanders, Ma Yan and Zhang Yi, had already accepted amnesty and enfeoffment as lords from Cao Cao.

Cao Cao attacked Xishan again the same day. At his order the Lü brothers, with Ma Yan and Zhang Yi, cut Yuan Shang's supply line.⁷ Yuan Shang fled to Lankou in the night. But Cao Cao's men were waiting for him. Before he could pitch camp, Yuan Shang was encircled by torches and hidden troops. His soldiers, caught unprepared, were driven off fifty *li*. Desperate, Yuan Shang sent Yin Kui, imperial inspector of Yuzhou, to plead with Cao Cao to accept his surrender. Cao Cao pretended to heed the plea, even while sending Zhang Liao and Xu Huang to raid Yuan Shang's camp that night. Yuan Shang abandoned everything—regalia of office, tally of authority, and broadaxe of command, as well as armor and stores—as he fled north to Zhongshan district.

Once again Cao Cao turned his attention to Jizhou. Xu You advised him to divert the River Zhang and flood the enemy out. Cao Cao approved and had a moat forty *li* in circumference dug around the city. Shen Pei watched the digging from the wall. Observing that the trench was shallow, he thought smugly, "Cao will have to dig deep to flood this city," and took no measures for defense.

During the night, however, Cao Cao had the number of workers multiplied tenfold and by dawn the channel was nearly twenty spans wide and twenty deep. The Zhang was diverted into the trench, and the city was inundated. Soon rations ran out within the city and the defenders began to starve. Outside the wall Xin Pi held up to view Yuan Shang's seal, cord, and apparel, while offering amnesty to the resisters. In a rage Shen Pei executed eighty members of Xin Pi's family on the wall and threw down their heads. Xin Pi howled and groaned. Shen Pei's nephew Rong, a close friend of Xin Pi's, indignant at the slaughter of his friend's family, shot an arrow over the wall bearing an offer to surrender the city gate. The message was taken to Cao Cao.

Cao Cao issued an order: "When we enter the city, the old and young of the Yuan clan are to be spared; soldiers and civilians who surrender shall receive amnesty." The next morning Shen Rong

opened the west gate to Cao Cao's army. Xin Pi leaped to the fore, and Cao Cao's commanders followed, slashing their way in. From the tower at the southeast gate Shen Pei saw the enemy inside the wall and tried to do battle. Xu Huang captured him and took him out of the city. On the way they met Xin Pi, who gnashed his teeth and whipped Shen Pei about the head, crying, "Thug! Cutthroat! Today you die!" "You're the traitor," Shen Pei retorted, "helping Cao Cao take our city. If only I had killed you."

Xu Huang brought Shen Pei to Cao Cao. "You know who yielded the city to us?" Cao Cao asked him. "No," Shen Pei said. "Your own nephew," Cao Cao said. "The vicious little brat!" Shen Pei responded angrily. "When I came to the wall," Cao Cao went on, "why were so many shots fired at me?" "Too few! Too few!" was Shen Pei's answer. "It was only natural," Cao Cao continued, "that you were loyal to the Yuans. Will you submit to me?" "Never! Never!" Shen Pei cried. Pleading from a prostrate position, Xin Pi wept. "This villain slaughtered eighty of my people," he cried. "Put him to death, Your Excellency, I pray you, to avenge my family." Shen Pei declared, "Alive, I served the Yuans. Dead I shall remain their loyal ghost. I'm not one of your fawning, wheedling villains. Get it over with!" Cao Cao ordered him executed. Facing death, Shen Pei shouted at the axeman, "My lord is to the north. I won't die facing south!" Turning north, Shen Pei kneeled and stretched his neck for the knife. Later a poet expressed his admiration for Shen Pei in these lines:⁸

Above the northland's many famous men,
Shen Pei truly rises all the more
For laying down his life for feckless lord
And standing fast as truest man of yore.
Loyal and straight, to his lord a vassal frank,
Pure and able, proof against temptation,
He faced his lord as he faced his end:
Let all defectors know their degradation.

Stirred by Shen Pei's spirit, Cao Cao had him interred north of the city wall. The commanders then invited the prime minister to enter Ye. Suddenly his guards hustled in a man whom Cao Cao recognized as Chen Lin. Cao Cao questioned him: "When you drew up the indictment of me for Yuan Shao, I understood that you had to denounce me. But why did you drag in my father and grandfather?" "The string sends the arrow," Chen Lin replied. Cao Cao thought it a pity to lose so talented a man. He rejected advice to execute him and made him an aide instead.⁹

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Cao Cao's eldest son, Pi (Zihuan), was now eighteen. At his birth a cloud, purple in color and round like a canopy, hovered over the house all day. An observer of signs and auras told Cao Cao privately, "This is an imperial aura. Your son will know honors beyond naming." At the age of eight Cao Pi could write literary compositions that showed outstanding talent. He was knowledgeable about things ancient and modern, excelled in horsemanship and marksmanship, and was fond of sword fighting.¹⁰

In the conquered city of Ye, Cao Pi approached the residence of Yuan Shao with a few guards. A

commander posted at the building warned him that the prime minister had banned entry, but Cao Pi brushed past and went into the private chambers wearing a sword. He found two women holding one another and sobbing. Cao Pi decided to kill them. Indeed:

Four generations of patricians and nobles, now a vanished dream;
Kith and kin of the Yuans faced disaster.¹¹

What was their fate?

READ ON.



Cao Pi Exploits the Yuans Troubles and Marries Lady Zhen; Guo Jia Bequeaths a Plan to Secure Liaodong

AS CAO PI BARED HIS SWORD before the sobbing women, a red light flashed before his eyes.¹ Putting up his weapon, he asked, "Who are you?" One of them replied, "I am Lady Liu, wife of the late General Yuan Shao." "And her?" Cao Pi said. "Lady Zhen," was the reply, "the wife of Yuan Xi, General Yuan Shao's second son. When the general sent Yuan Xi to administer Youzhou, Lady Zhen did not want to travel so far and stayed with us." Cao Pi drew Lady Zhen toward him, lifted her disheveled hair, and wiped her soiled face with his sleeve. With a face fair as jade, her skin flower-fresh, she was a beauty whose glance could topple kingdoms. Cao Pi said to her, "As the son of Prime Minister Cao Cao, I shall protect your family. Set your mind at ease." So saying, he posted himself inside the chamber, his hand on his sword.

Cao Cao arrived at Ye, the city he had conquered. Xu You approached him on horseback and, pointing to the gate with his whip, addressed the prime minister by his childhood name, Ah Man. "Without me," Xu You boasted loudly, "would you be entering in triumph today?" Cao Cao laughed, but his commanders were outraged.

Cao Cao rode first to the residence of Yuan Shao and asked the guard, "Has anyone entered?" "The young master is within," was the reply. Cao Cao scolded Cao Pi for violating his ban, but Lady Liu bowed and appealed to the prime minister, "If not for your son, our family would have perished. Allow me to offer Lady Zhen to serve in his household." Cao Cao summoned the woman, who prostrated herself. Cao Cao looked at her and said, "The perfect wife for my son!" and gave Cao Pi permission to take Lady Zhen as his wife.²

After taking control of Ye, Cao Cao made an offering at the grave of Yuan Shao. Making his kowtow, he wept bitterly. He then turned to his officials and said, "Years ago, when he and I were fighting Dong Zhuo, Yuan Shao asked me, 'If we cannot prevail now, which region would you choose to hold?' I asked his preference, and he replied, 'To my south, firm possession of the Yellow River; to my north, security against the rugged regions of Yan and Dai: if I had the desert peoples on my side, I could then turn my attention south of the river and make a bid for empire that might well succeed!' I replied to Shao, 'I prefer employing men of intelligence and energy and guiding them by my lights. That way I can accomplish whatever I set out to.' Our conversation seems as recent as yesterday. Now Yuan Shao is gone, and I can't help shedding a tear for him." The assembly was deeply moved. Cao Cao provided Yuan Shao's widow, Lady Liu, with gold, silk, and grain. He forgave all taxes for the current year in areas affected by the fighting. Then, after informing Emperor Xian, he assumed the protectorship of Jizhou himself.

One day Xu Chu was riding in through the east gate when he met up with Xu You, who hailed him and said, "Without me you could never have taken this city." Angered, Xu Chu said, "We all risked

our lives in many a bloody battle for this place. What are you boasting about?" "You commonplace good-for-nothing!" Xu You taunted him. At those words Xu Chu lost his temper and killed Xu You; then he took the head to Cao Cao and described for him how Xu You had provoked him. "He and I were old friends," Cao Cao said, "so he felt free to tease us. Did you have to kill him?" He rebuked Xu Chu and buried Xu You lavishly.

Cao Cao ordered Jizhou scoured for men of worth and talent. People recommended Cavalry Commander Cui Yan (Jigui) from Dongwu in Qinghe. Cui Yan had retired on the pretext of illness after several futile attempts to counsel Yuan Shao on the defense of the northland. Cao Cao summoned Cui Yan, appointed him aide to the assistant inspector of Jizhou, and said to him, "The population registers I examined yesterday list three hundred thousand people. We have a considerable province here." Cui Yan responded, "The entire empire is going to pieces. The nine provinces of the realm³ have been sundered from each other, and the plains of this one are covered with those who died in the battles between Yuan Shao's sons. What have the people to hope for unless Your Lordship will look into the moral and social conditions here and alleviate the crisis instead of calculating what the province may yield?" Cao Cao was abashed. He apologized and treated Cui Yan as an honored guest.

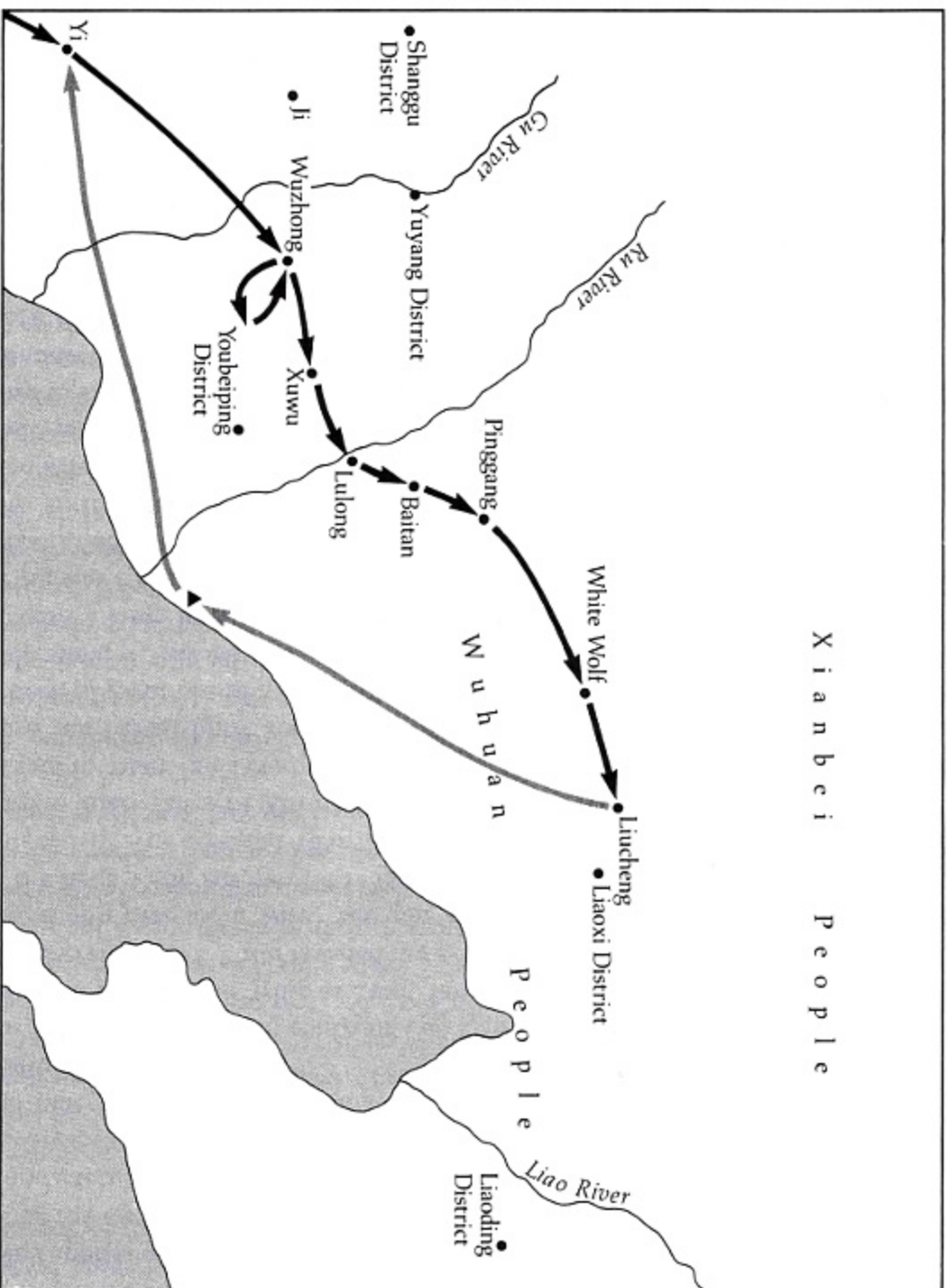
With Jizhou secured, Cao Cao sent for news of Yuan Tan. Yuan Tan had plundered Ganling, Anping, Bohai, Hejian, and other areas. He went on to attack Zhongshan after hearing that Yuan Shang had fled there. But Yuan Shang had no inclination to fight. He escaped to Youzhou to beg refuge of Yuan Xi. Yuan Tan accepted the surrender of all Yuan Shang's men and prepared to retake Jizhou. Cao Cao ordered Yuan Tan to present himself, but he would not come. Cao Cao angrily broke off the prospective marriage and marched against Pingyuan. In response Yuan Tan turned to Liu Biao for help.

Liu Biao consulted Liu Xuande, who said, "The conquest of Jizhou has strengthened Cao Cao enormously. He will capture the Yuan brothers shortly, and there's nothing you can do about it. Bear in mind that Cao Cao has had his eye on this city of yours for a long time. I'm afraid all we can do is continue training the soldiers and improving our defenses while avoiding reckless moves." "Then," Liu Biao asked, "how shall I explain to Yuan Tan our refusal to help him?" "We can do it in a roundabout way," Xuande suggested, "by urging both brothers to settle their differences." On this advice Liu Biao wrote first to Yuan Tan:

A man of honor will not turn to hostile lands to escape civil broils. Some time ago I was advised that you had bent the knee to Cao Cao, thus setting at naught your late father's unpaid blood debt and abandoning your fraternal responsibilities. Your actions have dishonored the alliance that once bound your father and me. Even if Yuan Shang failed you as a brother, you should have yielded to his demands all the same, waiting for the turmoil to subside before sorting out the rights and wrongs. Would that not have been the nobler course?

Liu Biao next wrote to Yuan Shang:

Yuan Tan is hasty-tempered by nature. He has become confused about right and wrong. The first thing is to get rid of Cao Cao and avenge your late father; after that you can sort out your conflicting claims. Is this not the wiser course? Unless you relent, you and your brother will end up like the hunting dog and the rabbit. Both ran themselves to death, and a passing farmer picked them up.



MAP 3. Youzhou province, showing Cao Cao's campaign against the Wuhuan people. Source: Liu Chunfan, *Sanguo shihua* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), p. 71.

Liu Biao's letter gave Yuan Tan no hope. He knew he could not withstand Cao Cao alone and abandoned Pingyuan for Nanpi. Cao Cao pursued him. It was the harshest time of winter. No supplies could be moved on the frozen river. Local laborers ordered by Cao Cao to chop up the ice and pull his boats forward ran away. In a rage Cao Cao demanded their arrest and execution, and the laborers gave themselves up. Cao Cao said to them, "If I spare you, my orders will command no respect. But it would be sheer cruelty to kill you. Go and hide yourselves in the hills so that my men don't find you." The people wept for gratitude and departed.

Yuan Tan led his men forth to confront Cao Cao, and the two armies deployed. Cao Cao rode out, and pointing his whip at Yuan Tan, said scornfully, "I treated you all too well, and you betrayed me." "You invaded my territory," Yuan Tan retorted, "and seized my cities—and you owe me a wife. Yet you say I betrayed *you!*?" Cao Cao sent Xu Huang into the field. Peng An met him. The two horsemen clashed; Xu Huang downed his opponent swiftly. The defeated Yuan Tan retreated to Nanpi, where Cao Cao hemmed him in. In panic Yuan Tan sent Xin Ping to negotiate a surrender.

Cao Cao said to Yuan Tan's envoy, "This fellow Tan is one way one day, another way the next. How can I trust him? You should stay with me. Your younger brother Xin Pi has already been of great use to me." "Your Excellency," Xin Ping replied, "you mistake me. As I understand it, 'the servant shares in his lord's glory—or his humiliation.' I have served the Yuans a long, long time. Could I turn my back on them now?" Cao Cao realized Xin Ping was too resolute to be won over, and sent him back. Yuan Tan received Xin Ping's report and said, "Isn't your brother already in Cao's service? What loyalty can I expect from you?" Overwhelmed with indignation at this charge, Xin Ping collapsed and died soon after. Yuan Tan regretted his words.

Guo Tu advised Yuan Tan, "We will have to drive the people out of the city and follow with the army to stage a last-ditch battle." Yuan Tan approved. That night they rounded up the inhabitants of Nanpi, armed them, and told them to stand by. The next morning, with a mighty hue and cry, the crowd herded together and streamed through all four gates toward Cao Cao's positions. Then, shielded by the populace, the army emerged and a general melee ensued. The battle raged until noon with no clear outcome; the slain covered the ground. Determined on a decisive victory, Cao Cao dismounted, climbed a hill, and struck the drums himself. At the signal his men and officers resumed their advance. This time, giving their utmost, they routed Yuan Tan's army. Civilian losses were enormous.

With a thrust of energy Cao Hong broke through a defending line and came face-to-face with Yuan Tan. Slashing fiercely, Hong cut him down. In the confusion Guo Tu dashed back to the city, but Yue Jin felled him with a perfect shot: man and mount toppled into the moat. Cao Cao entered Nanpi and comforted the populace. Suddenly, another contingent appeared, led by Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan, lieutenants to Yuan Xi. Cao Cao maneuvered to engage them, but unexpectedly they threw down their arms in surrender. Cao Cao granted them lordships. Zhang Yan, leader of the Black Hill bandits, also surrendered with one hundred thousand. Cao Cao made him General Who Pacifies the North.

Yuan Tan's head was set on display at the north gate. Despite Cao Cao's threat to execute any mourners, a man in plain cap and hempen mourning coat was found weeping below the severed head. Brought before Cao Cao, the offender identified himself as Wang Xiu, assistant to the imperial inspector of Qingzhou. Wang Xiu had been driven from his post for his forthright criticism⁴ of Yuan Tan; nonetheless he came to pay his respects. Cao Cao demanded, "Did you know of my ordinance?" "I did," Wang Xiu replied. "And you have no fear of death?" Cao Cao asked. "I received office from Yuan Tan," Wang Xiu answered, "and not to mourn him would be disloyal. One cannot stand before

the world holding life dearer than honor. If you would let me collect my lord's remains and inter them, I will accept the punishment of death without regret."

Cao Cao remarked, "Many indeed were the loyal servants of the north. And if the Yuans had made good use of them, I would never have set my sights on this territory." Cao Cao allowed Wang Xiu to bury Yuan Tan's body, treated him as an honored guest, and made him an officer in the Metals and Weaponry Division. Cao Cao then asked Wang Xiu, "Yuan Shang has taken refuge with Yuan Xi. How can I defeat him?" But Wang Xiu refused to reply, and Cao Cao remarked, "Truly a loyal servant to the Yuans."

Guo Jia advised Cao Cao, "Let the former Yuan generals, Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan, launch the attacks." Cao Cao approved the plan and strengthened the force with separate commands under Lü Kuang, Lü Xiang, Ma Yan, and Zhang Yi. They attacked Youzhou in three field armies. Cao Cao also dispatched Li Dian and Yue Jin to help Zhang Yan defeat Gao Gan, Yuan Shao's nephew, in Bingzhou.

Rather than face Cao Cao's army, Yuan Shang and Yuan Xi abandoned Youzhou and hurried to Liaoxi, taking refuge with the Wuhuan people.⁵ At the same time the new imperial inspector of Youzhou, Chu of the Wuhuan, led the provincial officials in a joint vow to transfer their allegiance to Cao Cao: "We are surrendering to His Excellency Cao Cao, one of the great heroes of our age. Whoever violates this order dies." Each official stepped forward and validated his vow with a smear of sacrificial blood. Only Assistant Inspector Han Heng refused. He threw his sword to the ground and declared, "I have benefited from the kindness of the Yuans, the son as well as the father. Now in their hour of defeat I have neither the wit to save them nor the courage to die for them; I am lacking in loyalty. But to turn and serve Cao Cao is more than I can bring myself to do." The officials paled. Imperial Inspector Chu said, "Any great enterprise must rest upon the highest ethical principles. Our success depends on no one man. If such be Han Heng's bent, let him suit himself." Dismissing Han Heng from the assembly, the imperial inspector surrendered his army to Cao Cao, who with great satisfaction appointed Chu as General Who Quells the North.

Unexpectedly, Cao Cao was told that the assault on Bingzhou had failed: Yue Jin, Li Dian, and Zhang Yan could not break Gao Gan's defense at Wine Jar Pass. Cao Cao marched to the battleground. After learning of the commanders' difficulties, he called a general meeting. Xun You advised using the false surrender ploy, and Cao Cao approved. He summoned the recent defectors Lü Kuang and Lü Xiang to carry out the tactic.

The Lü brothers came to the pass with a few dozen men and called out, "We are former commanders of Yuan Shao's who have been forced to surrender against our will. Cao Cao is treacherous and unreliable and has used us ill. We want to work for our former lord again. Let us in at once." Gao Gan warily allowed only the two brothers up to the pass. They disarmed, left their horses, and went in to tell Gao Gan, "Cao Cao has only just arrived. Attack his camp tonight before they dig in. We will take the lead." Gao Gan accepted the proposal.

Following the Lü brothers with more than ten thousand men, Gao Gan approached Cao Cao's camps. Suddenly a roar went up behind him, and an ambush was sprung from all sides. Gao Gan dashed back to the pass but found it already in the hands of Cao Cao's commanders, Yue Jin and Li Dian. Gao Gan turned north and rode to seek refuge with the chief of the Xiongnu. Cao Cao took control of the pass and sent men after the fugitive.

Gao Gan entered the territory of the Xiongnu nation and came before their khan.⁶ Dismounting and

pressing himself to the ground, Gao Gan said, "Cao Cao has devoured my homeland. Now he has designs on yours. With your assistance we could protect the north." But the khan rebuffed him. "I have no quarrel with Cao Cao," he said. "Why should he invade my land? Are you trying to foment hostilities?" Thus rudely dismissed, Gao Gan began riding south to Liu Biao, his last hope. En route District Commander Wang Yan killed him and sent the head to Cao Cao, for which he received a lordship.

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With Bingzhou secured, Cao Cao began planning to attack the Wuhuan to the west. Cao Hong and others argued, "Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang have lost their men and officers. They are powerless, refugees in the remote desert. If we go after them now, the capital could fall: we could not reach it in time to meet an attack from Liu Biao and Liu Xuande. Rather than take that risk we should march home."

Guo Jia, however, said, "My colleagues are wrong. You are feared across the realm, my lord, while the desert tribes will be off guard, secure in their remoteness. A sudden strike is bound to succeed. Remember that Yuan Shao and the Wuhuan had close ties and that as long as the Yuan brothers survive, they will be a threat. Liu Biao, on the other hand, is an armchair strategist. He knows he can't dominate Liu Bei. If he gives Liu Bei a major task, he will lose control. If he gives Liu Bei a trivial task, he will refuse. The capital only appears to be vulnerable during this extended campaign. Actually, there is little risk." "Sound advice," Cao Cao decided and led the entirety of his forces, supported by thousands of supply wagons, to carry the war to the Wuhuan.

When Cao Cao came to the vast sea of yellow sand with its sudden windstorms and treacherous terrain, daunting to both man and beast, he wavered and consulted Guo Jia once again. Unfortunately, the adviser, unused to the punishing climate of the north, was lying ill in a wagon. Cao Cao wept and said, "Because of my wish to conquer the desert, you have been subjected to hardships that have broken your health. Now I will not know peace again." "I am grateful for Your Excellency's kindness," Guo Jia said. "My death could not requite one ten-thousandth of my debt." "The way is too dangerous," Cao Cao said. "I think we should turn back. What's your opinion?" "In war," Guo Jia answered, "speed is precious. On a march of this length the supply train requires too much time. You'd be better off with a small force that can reach the Wuhuan before they suspect anything. But you'll need someone who knows the routes." Cao Cao left Guo Jia recuperating in Yizhou.

Someone recommended Tian Chou, a former commander of Yuan Shao's, as a guide. Cao Cao called him for advice. "In summer and autumn," Tian Chou told him, "the routes are flooded, too deep for wagons and horses but too shallow for boats. I would turn back and go across Baitan through the defile at Lulong. You'll come out on open land. Advance to Liucheng and you should catch them unawares. Tadu can be overthrown in a single battle." Cao Cao accepted this advice, appointed Tian Chou Queller of the North, and assigned him to lead the way. Zhang Liao led the second contingent, Cao himself the rear.⁷

The small mounted force advanced double time to the White Wolf Hills, where they found Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang together with Tadu. There were tens of thousands of Wuhuan horsemen. Cao Cao guided his horse to a high point and surveyed the enemy. The troops of Tadu were not organized into ranks and files. "Their lines are a mess," Cao Cao said. "We can attack." He gave the banner of

command to Zhang Liao, who led Xu Chu, Yu Jin, and Xu Huang in a swift descent. The attackers routed Tadu, and Zhang Liao cut him down. The mass of horsemen surrendered. Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang fled east with a few thousand riders to Liaodong.

Cao Cao regrouped and entered Liucheng. He offered Tian Chou the lordship of Liu precinct to protect the township. But the guide, weeping bitterly, declined. "I am a faithless fugitive," he lamented. "Your kindness in sparing me is more than I deserve. How could I accept a reward for betraying Lulong? I prefer death to rank and office." Cao Cao acknowledged Tian Chou's sense of honor and made him a court counselor. Cao Cao comforted the Xiongnu. He had acquired ten thousand superb mounts as spoils of the campaign.

That very day Cao Cao started homeward. Through dry, bitter cold his army traveled two hundred *li*. There was no water and their grain was gone. They slaughtered horses for food and dug hundreds of spans into the earth for water.

On reaching Yizhou, Cao Cao rewarded first those who had opposed his expedition into the desert. "The campaign," he explained, "was too great a risk. Luck alone enabled us to succeed, and we can thank Heaven for it but never take it as an example to be followed. Your prudent objections deserve to be well rewarded. Please do not hesitate to speak out again." Guo Jia, the valued adviser, had died before Cao Cao reached Yizhou. His great outer coffin was placed in the main hall. Cao Cao offered sacrifice and wept sorely. "Heaven has taken you from me," he cried. Then, turning to his officers, he said, "Guo Jia was the youngest of our generation. I thought I would have his help in deciding on my heir, but his life has been cut short. It breaks my heart!" Guo Jia's attendants handed Cao Cao their master's last letter. "It is in his own hand," they said. "He told us that if Your Excellency followed his recommendations, the Liaodong problem could be settled." Cao Cao unsealed it. He sighed and nodded as he read it through, but he kept the contents to himself.

The next day Xiahou Dun and a group of leaders petitioned Cao Cao: "Gongsun Kang, governor of Liaodong, has not paid his respects in some time. Now that Yuan Shang and Yuan Xi have joined him, there could be trouble. Better to strike before they stir, and make Liaodong ours." "No need to put your mettle to the test this time," Cao Cao said with a smile. "A few days more and Gongsun Kang should be sending over the heads of the Yuan brothers." His bold statement left the commanders unconvinced.

Meanwhile, Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang had reached Liaodong, the district under Governor Gongsun Kang. Gongsun Kang came from Xiangping. He was the son of Gongsun Du, General of Martial Might under the Han. When the governor learned that Yuan Shao's sons were seeking his assistance, he consulted his officers. One of them, Gongsun Gong, said, "Yuan Shao was always trying to take us over. Now his sons have arrived like a pair of thieving cuckoos looking for a magpie's nest, utterly defeated, with nowhere to roost. Let them in and they'll plot against you. But if you lure them into the city and kill them, Cao Cao will be more than grateful for their heads!" "What worries me," the governor replied, "is that Cao Cao may try and conquer us. In that case we might be better off with the Yuan brothers' help." "Let's find out then," Gongsun Gong suggested. "If Cao Cao is coming, welcome the Yuans. If not, deliver the heads." And so Governor Gongsun Kang sent spies to discover Cao Cao's intentions.

Yuan Shang and Yuan Xi conferred before meeting the governor. Yuan Shang said, "Liaodong has tens of thousands of troops, more than enough to hold off Cao Cao. If they receive us, we can kill the governor, take his land, and rebuild our strength until we're ready to stand against the heartland

region. That way we can recover the whole of the north." Thus agreed, the brothers presented themselves. But the governor, feigning illness, postponed their reception and kept them in a guesthouse.

Before long spies reported to the governor that Cao Cao was established in Yizhou and had no intention of marching to Liaodong. Delighted with the news, Gongsun Kang positioned armed men behind the wall hangings in the official hall and had the visitors shown in. The formalities concluded, the governor bade them be seated. It was bitter cold. Yuan Shang, seeing no cushions on the floor, asked, "May we have mats?" Glaring at them, the governor said, "Your heads are going on a long journey. What do you want mats for?" Yuan Shang was taken aback. Gongsun Kang shouted, "Guards! What are you waiting for?" The executioners rushed out and beheaded the brothers where they sat. The governor had their heads placed in a wooden box, which he dispatched to Yizhou.

At this time Xiahou Dun and Zhang Liao were impatiently petitioning Cao Cao: "If we aren't going to attack Liaodong, let's get back to the capital before Liu Biao becomes ambitious." "All I'm waiting for," Cao Cao said to them, "is the heads." The commanders snickered. But the arrival of the heads of the Yuan brothers caused general astonishment. Cao Cao read the accompanying letter from Governor Gongsun Kang and said, laughing, "Exactly as Guo Jia predicted." Cao Cao rewarded the messenger and made the governor lord of Xiangping and general of the Left. Finally, to satisfy his officers, Cao Cao produced Guo Jia's letter:

I have learned that the Yuan brothers are seeking refuge in Liaodong. Your Lord-ship, do not use the army against it under any circumstances. The governor has always feared that Yuan Shao would annex his territory and will surely suspect his sons. If you attack, they will unite and resist; you may not succeed for some time. Give them no cause for alarm, and the brothers and the governor will intrigue against each other. That is what circumstances dictate.

The officers voiced their admiration; then Cao Cao led further ceremonies to honor the adviser's spirit. Guo Jia was thirty-eight when he died, had campaigned with Cao Cao for eleven years, and had many startling achievements to his credit. In the words of a later poet,

Guo Jia, born with gifts divine,
Excelled the heroes of Cao's court,
His stomach filled with erudition,
His mind deploying shield and sword.

Like Fan Li of old, he worked his schemes.
Like Chen Ping, he shaped and planned.
Alas, he died before his time,
A broken pillar of the land.⁸

Cao Cao sent Guo Jia's body on to the capital for solemn burial. Then he led his men back to Jizhou.⁹

Cheng Yu and others advised Cao Cao, "The north is now secure; it's time to plan the conquest of the south. We should start as soon as we return." "I've been thinking about it all along," Cao Cao responded with a smile. "Your proposal fits in perfectly with my own designs." That night in Jizhou,

Cao Cao stood on the tower above the eastern corner of the wall. Leaning against the battlement, he stared into the sky. Xun You was beside him. Cao Cao pointed upward. "What dazzling signs of good fortune there to the south," he said. "But I am afraid we are not ready for that campaign." "Your Excellency," Xun You said, "who could withhold allegiance from your Heaven-sent prestige and power?" As they watched the heavens, a golden beam rose from the ground. "There is treasure there below," Xun You said. Cao Cao descended from the tower and ordered the light traced to its source and the spot dug up. Indeed:

The stars pointed south,
But an unexpected treasure appeared in the north.

What was to be unearthed?

READ ON.



*Lady Cai Eavesdrops on a Private Talk;
Imperial Uncle Liu Vaults the River Tan on Horseback*

AT THE SOURCE OF THE GOLDEN EMANATION Cao Cao unearthed a bronze bird. He asked Xun You what it portended. "In ancient times," the adviser replied, "Shun was born after his mother dreamed that a jade bird had entered her body. This discovery is auspicious."¹ Cao Cao was delighted with Xun You's interpretation and ordered a tower built to celebrate the omen. Workmen prepared the site, cut down trees, fired tiles, and polished bricks to construct the Bronze Bird Tower overlooking the River Zhang. A year was allotted for completion of the work.

One of Cao Cao's younger sons, Cao Zhi, proposed "A storied tower should comprise three structures: in the middle, the tallest: the Bronze Bird; another on the left: the Jade Dragon; and a third on the right: the Golden Phoenix. With two flying bridges traversing the space between, it will be a magnificent sight." Cao Cao responded, "A good idea, my son. And the completed towers may later serve to make my declining years more pleasurable."

Cao Cao had five sons. Among them Zhi alone was keen, quick-witted, and adept at composition. He was his father's favorite. Now Cao Cao left this son and his elder brother, Pi, in Ye to build the tower, and assigned Zhang Yan to defend the northern border; then with Yuan Shao's captured forces, which numbered some half a million, Cao Cao withdrew to the capital at Xuchang. Once established there, he ennobled those who had distinguished themselves; proposed that the Emperor honor Guo Jia with the posthumous title Faithful Lord; and arranged to have Guo Jia's son Guo Ye raised in his own household.

Once again Cao Cao assembled his council to discuss a southern campaign against Liu Biao. Xun You was opposed. "Our main force," he argued, "is not yet ready for mobilization after the northern campaigns. If we wait half a year to recover our strength and nourish our mettle, Liu Biao and Sun Quan too will fall at the first roll of our drums." Cao Cao accepted this advice and assigned the soldiers to settle and reclaim wasteland until the next call to arms.

. . . .

Since Liu Xuande's arrival in Jingzhou, Liao Biao had treated him with kindness and generosity. One day as guests were gathering for a banquet, there was a report that the generals who had previously submitted, Zhang Wu and Chen Sun, were pillaging in Jiangxia and organizing an insurrection. Liu Biao said in alarm, "So, they have rebelled again. This may be serious." "Do not trouble yourself, elder brother," Xuande said. "Let me go and punish them." Delighted, Liu Biao gave Xuande a force of thirty thousand.²

A day later Xuande was in Jiangxia. The insurgents met him in the field. Xuande, Lord Guan,

Zhang Fei, and Zhao Zilong rode to the front of their position. Ahead they could see Zhang Wu astride a magnificent horse. "An extraordinary animal!" Xuande exclaimed. At that moment Zhao Zilong braced his spear and rushed the enemy line. Zhang Wu raced to meet him. After three passages-at-arms the rebel, pierced through, dropped from his horse. In one motion Zhao Zilong seized the unguided animal's reins and pulled it back to his own line. The other rebel charged out to retake the horse. But Zhang Fei, shouting lustily, plunged into the fray and stabbed the pursuer. With both leaders slain, the rebel host broke and dispersed. Xuande pacified the remnants, restored order in the several counties of Jiangxia, and returned to the capital of Jingzhou. Liu Biao received him outside the walls and led him into the city.

At a banquet to celebrate the victory Liu Biao, warmed with wine, said to Xuande, "If this is an example of your valor and skill, our Jingzhou will be safe. But we still face constant raids by the Southern Viets, and Zhang Lu to the west and Sun Quan are an ever-present danger." "Elder brother," Xuande answered, "I have three commanders who are more than equal to such enemies. Let Zhang Fei cover the Southern Viet border, send Lord Guan to Guzi to restrain Zhang Lu, and have Zhao Zilong hold Three Rivers against Sun Quan. What will remain to worry about?"

Liu Biao was ready to adopt Xuande's recommendation, but there was opposition from Cai Mao, brother of Lady Cai, Liu Biao's wife. Cai Mao said to his sister, "If Xuande sends his three generals to those strategic points and remains in the capital himself, there's bound to be trouble." Accordingly, Lady Cai spoke to Liu Biao that night: "I've heard that a number of our people have entered into liaison with Xuande. You can't afford not to take precautions. It does us no good to let him stay in the capital. Why not send him elsewhere?" Liu Biao answered, "Xuande is a humane and benevolent man." "Others," Lady Cai responded, "may not be so well-meaning as you." Liu Biao pondered her words but did not reply.³

The next day outside the city wall Liu Biao noticed Xuande's magnificent horse. Someone told him it had been captured from the Jiangxia rebels. Liu Biao expressed such admiration that Xuande presented the animal to him. Liu Biao was delighted and rode back to the city. Kuai Yue found out the horse was a gift from Xuande and said to Liu Biao, "My late brother, Kuai Liang, an expert judge of horses, taught me something about them. Notice the little grooves or tear tracks under the eyes and the white spots on the side of his forehead. They call such horses 'marked';⁴ they bring their masters bad luck. Zhang Wu fell in battle because of that horse, and you, my lord, must not ride it."

Impressed by this warning, Liu Biao told Xuande the following day, "I am deeply grateful for the horse you so generously gave me, but, worthy brother, you go off to war from time to time and will need it yourself. With all respect I return the gift." Xuande rose to thank him. Liu Biao went on, "Worthy brother, you have been here so long that your military skills are wasted. We have a prosperous county over in Xinye. What about establishing your command there?" Xuande agreed.⁵

The next day Xuande took formal leave of Liu Biao and led his force toward Xinye. As he was exiting the city gate, a man stepped before him, made a lengthy salutation, and said, "My lord, you should not ride that horse." It was Yi Ji (Jibo) of Shanyang, an adviser to Liu Biao. Xuande dismounted hurriedly. "Yesterday," Yi Ji explained, "I heard Kuai Yue say to my master, 'This horse has a marked head; it will bring its master ill fortune.' That's the reason he returned it. Do not ride it any more." "I am deeply grateful," Xuande replied, "for your concern. But all men have their appointed time; that's something no horse can change." To this wisdom Yi Ji deferred, and afterward he kept in frequent touch with Xuande.

Liu Xuande's arrival at Xinye was a boon to soldier and civilian alike, for he completely reformed the political administration. In the spring of the twelfth year of Jian An (A.D. 207) Xuande's wife, Lady Gan, bore him a son, Liu Shan. On the night of the birth a white crane alighted on the *yamen*, sang some forty notes, and flew into the west. During parturition an unknown fragrance filled the room. Once Lady Gan had dreamed that she swallowed the stars of the Northern Dipper and conceived as a result—hence the child's milkname, Ah Dou, or Precious Dipper.

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Previously, when Cao Cao was campaigning in the north, Xuande had returned to the capital of Jingzhou to persuade Liu Biao to take action.⁶ "All Cao's forces are engaged," Xuande argued. "His capital stands vulnerable. With a surprise attack we can assume control of the dynasty." But Liu Biao replied, "I am content with the nine districts of Jingzhou. What would I do with more?" Xuande fell silent. Liu Biao invited him to his private apartments for wine. Becoming mellow, Liu Biao sighed deeply, and Xuande asked why. "There is something on my mind," Liu Biao answered, "that is difficult to speak of. ..." Xuande had started to inquire further when Lady Cai emerged from behind a screen. Liu Biao lowered his head and said no more. Shortly afterward they adjourned, and Xuande rode back to Xinye.

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Winter came, and Cao Cao returned triumphant from his campaigns. Xuande despaired over Liu Biao's refusal to adopt his proposal. Unexpectedly, Liu Biao sent for him, and Xuande went with the envoy. The ceremonies of greeting concluded, Liu Biao conducted Xuande to a banquet. "We have had word," Liu Biao told him, "that Cao Cao is back in Xuchang with his forces, strengthening his position daily. Surely he covets this land. Now I regret ignoring your excellent advice. We lost a perfect opportunity to attack." "The empire," Xuande responded, "is breaking apart. Armed clashes occur every day. Do you think 'opportunity' no longer exists? If you can make the most of it in the future, then 'regret' is premature." Liu Biao responded, "What you say makes sense."

They drank more and grew warmer. Suddenly Liu Biao began weeping profusely. Xuande asked what was the matter. "Something is on my mind," was the reply. "I tried to broach it that last time we were drinking but circumstances made it awkward." "What is the problem, elder brother?" Xuande asked. "If I can be of use, death itself could not daunt me." "I first married Lady Chen," Liu Biao began, "who bore my first son, Qi—a worthy enough lad, but too weak and timid to keep affairs of state on a steady course. My second marriage was to Lady Cai. She bore my younger son, Zong, a bright and perceptive boy. If I set aside the elder to make the younger my heir, I will be going against tradition and law, but if I leave the elder as my heir, what do I do about the Cai clan? They control the military and will stage a coup. This is my dilemma."

Xuande responded, "From most ancient times removing the elder and confirming the younger has led to disaster. If you are worried about the extent of the Cai clan's power, try paring it down a bit at a time. But on no account should you confirm the younger because you dote on him." Liu Biao fell silent.

Lady Cai had been suspicious of Xuande from the start and eavesdropped on his conversations with Liu Biao whenever she could. On this occasion she was listening behind a screen and bitterly

resented what she heard. Xuande himself realized that he had said more than he ought and rose to excuse himself. Doing so, he noticed the extra weight around his middle. Suddenly he found tears welling in his eyes. When Xuande resumed his place, Liu Biao asked what was distressing him. "I used to spend all my time in the saddle," Xuande replied with a deep sigh. "Now it has been so long since I have been riding that I am growing thick around the waist. Time is passing me by. My years come on but my task languishes, and it grieves me."⁷

Liu Biao responded, "They say, worthy brother, that in the capital you and Cao Cao once judged the heroes of the age over hot plum wine. Cao would acknowledge none of the renowned men whom you proposed, saying, 'Of heroes, this world has but two—you and me!' If Cao with all his power and influence did not rate himself above you, why are you so concerned that your task is not being accomplished?" Under the effect of the wine Xuande said more than he meant to when he replied, "If I had a real base, these tedious types would no longer vex me." Liu Biao made no response. Xuande realized his mistake. Alleging intoxication, he rose and went back to the guesthouse. Many years later a poet wrote of Xuande:

Lord Cao named the rivals that he owned:
"Inspector, you're the second of the realm!"
But Xuande felt his sinews going slack—
How could he keep the world of Han intact?

Liu Biao made no reply, but Xuande's last comment had perturbed him deeply. He retired to the company of Lady Cai, who said to him, "I overheard Xuande just now. How contemptuous he is! It's easy enough to see he means to have our province. Unless he is eliminated now, there will be great trouble." Liu Biao, however, simply shook his head and kept silent. Lady Cai secretly summoned Commander Cai Mao, and they discussed the matter. "I could go to Xuande's lodging and kill him," Cai Mao suggested. "We would report it to His Lordship afterward." Lady Cai agreed, and Cai Mao called up soldiers for the purpose that night.

Meanwhile, Xuande was sitting in his quarters in the candlelight. He was about to retire, a little after the third watch, when someone knocked on his door and came in. It was Yi Ji, the man who had warned him about the marked horse. He had learned of the plot to kill Xuande and had come to inform him. He described Cai Mao's scheme and urged Xuande to get away immediately. "How can I leave before saying a proper farewell to Liu Biao?" Xuande asked. "If you wait for that, Cai Mao will get you, I know." Xuande therefore bade Yi Ji a grateful good-bye, summoned his followers, and rode off before daybreak. By the time Cai Mao had reached the guesthouse with his soldiers, Xuande was back in Xinye. Vexed that Xuande had eluded him, Cai Mao inscribed a poem on the wall of Xuande's room and then reported to Liu Biao, "Xuande intends to rebel. He wrote a seditious poem on his wall and then departed without bidding you good-bye." Liu Biao, unwilling to believe this tale, went to Xuande's room, where he found the following:

So many years in hard adversity,
Staring back at the same old hills and streams—
In a pond no dragon's meant to lie;
He'll ride the thunder to the sky!

The verse enraged Liu Biao; he drew his sword and swore, "I'll kill the faithless ingrate!" But he reconsidered almost at once. "In all our time together," Liu Biao mused, "I have never known him to compose poetry. Some outsider may well be trying to estrange us." Liu Biao walked slowly back into Xuande's room and scratched out the poem with the point of his sword; then he threw down the weapon and mounted his horse. "My men are all in readiness," Cai Mao said. "We should go straight to Xinye and arrest Xuande." "Don't be so impetuous," Liu Biao replied. "It will take careful planning."

Unable to provoke his lord to act, Cai Mao planned privately with Lady Cai to hold a grand feast in Xiangyang for all the officials and to use the occasion to kill Xuande. The next day Cai Mao petitioned Liu Biao: "Let us have a gathering of officials at Xiangyang to show our satisfaction over the excellent harvests of recent years. Would Your Lordship be willing to make the trip?" "My breathing ailment has been acting up of late," Liu Biao replied. "My two sons may serve in my stead." "I am afraid," Cai Mao responded, "they are too young to do justice to the ceremony." "Then invite Xuande to officiate," Liu Biao suggested. Secretly delighted that his plan was working, Cai Mao sent a messenger to Xinye to request Xuande's presence in Xiangyang.

Xuande had fled back to Xinye well aware of the danger his careless comments had placed him in. He kept his own counsel, however, until the unexpected invitation arrived. "My lord," Sun Qian said to him, "you came home so distracted, I feared something had happened in Jingzhou. Now this invitation . . . We must consider it carefully." Xuande then confided to his companions the events of the preceding day. "Elder brother," Lord Guan said, "you are being overly suspicious if you think you misspoke. Liu Biao⁸ is not holding it against you. Why should you believe a stranger like Yi Ji? But if you refuse to go to nearby Xiangyang, you will arouse Liu Biao's suspicions." "I agree," Xuande said, but Zhang Fei objected. "There's no such thing as a good banquet or a good conference," he asserted flatly. "Better not go!" Zhao Zilong said, "I will take three hundred men to escort you and prevent anything from happening." "That would be best," Xuande decided.

Cai Mao received Xuande and Zhao Zilong outside of Xiangyang and showed himself both modest and attentive. Following Cai Mao were Liu Qi and Liu Zong, Liu Biao's two sons, leading a delegation of officers and officials. They greeted Xuande, who felt somewhat reassured by the presence of the sons. He was taken to the guesthouse, and Zhao Zilong set up the guard. Fully armed, he never left Xuande's side.

Liu Qi said to Xuande, "My father suffers from a breathing ailment. It is difficult for him to move. He especially wanted you, uncle, to receive the guests and give sympathetic encouragement to the officials who guard and govern our districts." "For myself," Xuande replied, "I would never dare undertake it. But since my elder brother commands it, I dare not decline." The next day it was reported that official personnel from the forty-two counties of Jingzhou had arrived for the celebration.

Before the ceremonies, Cai Mao conferred with Kuai Yue. "Xuande," he said, "is a hero of our age, and shrewd as an owl. If he remains with us, it means trouble. But today we have the chance to get him out of the way." "Don't you think," Kuai Yue replied, "that would risk our losing popular support?" "I already have Protector Liu's secret instruction on this," Cai Mao replied.⁹ "In that case," Kuai Yue answered, "let's get ready." Cai Mao said, "The east gate leads to Xian Hill. My brother Cai He is guarding that road. Cai Zhong is outside the south gate, and Cai Xun by the north gate.

There's no point in covering the west: that direction is cut off by the rapids of the River Tan. Even if Xuande had tens of thousands of men with him, he still couldn't get through." "What about Zhao Zilong? He never leaves Xuande's side," Kuai Yue asked. "I have five hundred men hidden in the city," Cai Mao replied. "Have Wen Ping and Wang Wei host a dinner for the military commanders in one of the outer rooms," Kuai Yue proposed, "and get Zhao Zilong to attend. That's when we'll do it." Cai Mao approved the plan. That day oxen and horses were slaughtered for the feast.

Xuande, riding the marked horse, arrived at the Xiangyang *yamen*, where attendants hitched his mount in a rear courtyard. The officials assembled in the main hall. Xuande took the host's seat with Liu Biao's sons on either side, and the guests were placed according to rank. Zhao Zilong, armed with a sword, stood beside Xuande. As arranged, Wen Ping and Wang Wei invited Zilong to the commanders' feast. Zilong declined at first, but Xuande told him to go. Meanwhile, Cai Mao had sealed the place as tight as an iron barrel and sent Xuande's three hundred guards to their quarters. He was waiting only for the company to mellow with drink before giving the signal to strike.

During the third round of wine Yi Ji raised his cup and approached Xuande. With a meaningful look in his eye, Yi Ji murmured, "Excuse yourself!" Xuande took the hint and went at once to the privy. Yi Ji drained his cup and rushed to the back courtyard. Catching up with Xuande, he whispered, "Cai Mao plans to kill you. Outside the wall, all routes to the east, the south, and the north are patrolled. The only way out is west. Get away at once." In high alarm Xuande untied his horse, pulled it through the courtyard gate, and vaulted into the saddle. Without giving a second thought to his escort, he fled by the western gate of Xiangyang. To the challenge of the gatekeepers he made no reply. He laid on the whip and dashed off. The guards could not check him, but they reported his flight at once, and Cai Mao pursued with five hundred men.

Xuande had traveled only a *li* or two when a river loomed before him several rods broad, its waves whipping. It was the Tan, a spur of the Xiang; Xuande rode to the bank. Seeing he could not get across, he turned back only to see dust clouds in the distance, west of the city: his pursuers would soon arrive. Thinking his time had come, he turned again to the river. Cai Mao's troops were already close behind. At his wit's end, he charged into the racing current. After a few paces the horse lost its footing. As they began to sink, Xuande's surcoat became soaked. Belaboring the horse, he shouted, "A jinxed horse, indeed! Today you have brought me misfortune." But the horse reared and, making thirty spans with every thrust, gained the opposite shore. Xuande emerged from the wild water as if from cloud and mist. This ballad by Su Dongpo in the old style sings of Xuande crossing the Tan:

Late one spring day official service took me by the Tan:
The sun was low; the blossoms newly down.
I stopped the carriage and paced the bank, gazing across;
Shreds of catkin, stirred by the wind, caught the sun.
I saw in them the dying fire of Double Suns,¹⁰
That time dragon battled dragon and tiger, tiger.

At Xiangyang the guests of honor reveled,
While Xuande, marked for death, made his escape.
Out the western gate he rode,
Reaching the rushing mistbound Tan

Moments ahead of an angry cavalry—
The rider's shout urged the *dilu* in.

The pounding hooves break up the glassy waves,
Under a golden whip flailed like Heaven's wind.
Behind, to hear the clamor of a thousand cavalry!
Amid the waves, to see those dragons rear:
The noble hero who would rule the west,
Borne (by some design) upon the dragon-steed.

And eastward race the currents of the Tan;
The dragon-steed, its master—whither gone?
By river's edge, heartsore, to sigh, to sigh. . . .
The last rays touch the hills, deserted, void.
Was it more than dream—that age of kingdoms three?
More than idle traces in our memory?¹¹

Looking back across the Tan, Xuande saw Cai Mao on the far bank. "My lord," Cai Mao shouted over, "why have you fled our feast?" "We were never enemies," Xuande answered back, "why do you want to kill me?" "I never meant to," Cai Mao responded. "You give too much credence, my lord, to others." But Xuande had noticed Cai Mao reaching for his bow and arrow, so he headed his horse southwest and rode off. "Sheer providence!" Cai Mao said to his followers. At that moment he saw Zhao Zilong and his three hundred fighters racing toward him. Indeed:

The river-vaulting steed had saved its master.
Would the oncoming tiger take revenge on Cai Mao?

What was Cai Mao's fate?

READ ON.



*Xuande Encounters a Recluse in Nanzhang;
Shan Fu Finds a Hero-Lord in Xinye*

CAI MAO WAS TURNING BACK to the city of Xiangyang as Zhao Zilong hastened toward him with the three hundred guards. Earlier, during the banquet arranged for the military commanders, Zilong had noticed the movement of the host's cavalry and went to check on Xuande. Unable to find Xuande in the main hall, he went to the guesthouse. There he was told that Cai Mao and a party of troops had ridden west. Zhao Zilong, spear in hand, hastened after him. Now meeting up with Cai Mao he demanded, "Where is my lord?" "Lord Liu," Cai Mao replied, "left the banquet. We do not know where he is."

Circumspect by nature, Zhao Zilong did nothing rash. He rode on to the river and stared across its swift flow. Where could his lord have gone? He confronted Cai Mao again. "Lord Liu was your guest," he said. "Why were you chasing him?" "We have officials from the forty-two counties of Jingzhou's nine districts meeting here," Cai Mao answered. "As senior commander I am responsible for the security of them all." "Where have you driven my lord?" Zhao Zilong pressed him. "I was told," Cai Mao said evenly, "that Lord Liu had left unattended through the west gate. I went to look but could not find him." Alarmed but uncertain, Zhao Zilong returned to the edge of the river. He spotted a watery trail on the opposite shore and mused, "Could he have made it over on the horse?"

An extensive search turned up no trace of Xuande. Cai Mao returned to the city, and Zhao Zilong pressed the gate guards for information. They confirmed that Xuande had left by the west gate at a gallop. Zhao Zilong decided it was too dangerous to reenter the city and led his men back to Xinye.¹

. . . .

Having vaulted the Tan, Xuande was dazed with excitement. "I couldn't have spanned that broad a stretch," he thought, "except by Heaven's will." He rode on toward Nanzhang by a winding path. In the setting sun he saw an ox drawing closer. On its back a cowherd blew on a flute. "Oh, for such a life!" Xuande said with a sigh. He held his horse and watched the lad bring the beast to a halt. The cowherd stopped piping and scrutinized Xuande. "You must be General Liu Xuande," he said, "who destroyed the Yellow Scarves!" Startled, Xuande replied, "How does a lad from this out-of-the-way village come to know my name?"

The youth replied, "Not from my own knowledge, of course. But when guests come and I attend my master, I often hear talk of Liu Xuande—over six spans tall, arms reaching past his knees, eyes that can almost see behind him—one of the heroes of the age! The description fits, so I think you must be the man." "And who is your master?" Xuande asked. "He has a double surname, Sima," the youth replied. "His given name is Hui, his style Decao. He comes from Yingchuan and answers to the

Taoist name of Still Water." ² Xuande inquired about the master's companions, and the boy answered, "His closest friends are Pang Degong and Pang Tong, uncle and nephew, from Xiangyang. Pang Degong is styled Shanmin; he's ten years older than my master. Pang Tong is styled Shiyuan; he is five years younger than my master. One day Pang Tong came by while my master was picking mulberry leaves, and they spent the whole day talking without tiring. My master has the greatest affection for Pang Tong and regards him as a younger brother." "And where is your master now?" Xuande inquired. Gesturing toward the woods, the lad said, "The farm is over there." Xuande finally acknowledged his identity and asked to be taken to Master Still Water.

The cowherd guided Xuande some two *li* to a farmstead, where they dismounted. Entering through the central gate, they heard a lute being played. Xuande listened attentively to the exquisite sounds and asked the boy to wait before announcing him. The notes stopped, however, and the lute was struck no more. A man came out, smiling as he said, "The harmonies of the lute were somber yet distinct. Suddenly, through the melody a proud, assertive tone surged up. Some noble hero must have come to listen unobtrusively." "This is my master," the lad said to Xuande. Xuande remarked that he had the configuration of a pine tree, the bone structure of a crane. His physique and his aura were utterly extraordinary. Flustered, Xuande came forward to offer a greeting. His war coat was still soaking.

"My good lord," Still Water said, "today it was your blessing to be spared calamity." Xuande was struck speechless. Still Water invited him into his thatched cottage, where they sat as host and guest. Xuande saw written scrolls heaped on the shelves; pine and bamboo flourished outside the window. The lute lay on a stone frame. The atmosphere was pure and euphoric. "What brings you here, my lord?" Still Water asked. "I happened to be passing through," Xuande replied, "and thanks to the boy's assistance I now have the satisfaction of being able to pay homage to your venerable self."

Still Water smiled and said, "There is nothing to conceal or evade. You seek refuge, surely." This comment led Xuande to recount the details of his escape. "I knew. The look on your face bespoke the circumstances," the recluse said, and went on to ask, "I have long been acquainted with your great name, illustrious sir. But why has fortune frowned on you?" "The road ordained for me," Xuande conceded, "has not been smooth. That's why I am where I am." "There may be a different reason," Still Water continued. "It seems to me, General, that you have not found the right men to assist you." Xuande replied, "I know that I myself am not particularly capable. But among my civil officials I have Sun Qian, Mi Zhu, and Jian Yong; and among my military officers Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Zilong. The unstinting loyalty of these men sustains me, and I rely on their support." "Each of the warriors, it is true," Still Water responded, "is a match for ten thousand. The pity is that you have no one to make good use of them. As for your civil officials, they are no more than pasty-faced bookworms, not of a caliber to unravel the complexities of the age and see our poor generation through these troubled times."

"Actually," Xuande confessed, "I have been anxious to find a worthy man who has absented himself from the world of men. But, alas, I have yet to encounter him." Still Water replied, "You can't have forgotten Confucius' words: 'Even in a hamlet of ten households one is sure to find loyalty and good faith.' Do not despair of finding the man you seek." "I am dull and unobservant," Xuande said, "and would be grateful for your guidance." Still Water asked him, "Have you heard the jingle going around the Xiangyang area?"

In nine years' time things start to waste;
In thirteen years there isn't a trace.
Heaven sends things where they're due;
The mudbound dragon mounts the blue.

The song originates from the early years of Jian An. In the eighth year the death of Governor Liu Biao's first wife gave rise to domestic turmoil. 'Things start to waste' refers to this. As for 'there isn't a trace,' Liu Biao will shortly pass away himself, and his officials and officers will scatter to the four winds. 'Heaven sends things where they're due' and 'The mudbound dragon mounts the blue' find their echo in you, General. "

Xuande was alarmed. "How dare I?" he protested. "Now," Still Water replied, "the most extraordinary talents of the empire are gathered here. You should seek them out." "Where?" Xuande asked eagerly. "Where are these extraordinary talents? And who are they?" "Sleeping Dragon, Young Phoenix," Still Water answered. "With either of them you could settle our unsettled realm." "But who are they?" Xuande asked again. Rubbing his palms, Still Water laughed out loud. "Good! Good!" he said. "Good! Good! But it grows late. You should stay the night. We can discuss it further tomorrow." So saying, he ordered his young attendant to see to the needs of man and horse.

After his dinner, Xuande was taken to a room adjoining the thatched cottage. He lay down but could not sleep for thinking of Still Water's words. The night wore on. He heard a man knock and enter his host's room. "Yuanzhi!" Still Water said, "what brings you?" Xuande sat up in bed, attentive. He heard the visitor say, "I have long heard that Liu Biao treats both the virtuous and the wicked as they deserve, and so I made a point of presenting myself to him. But I found his reputation false. He favored the virtuous all right, but he couldn't use them in government. And though he recognized the wicked for what they were, he couldn't get rid of them. So I took my leave by letter and came here." Still Water replied, "You have the ability to be a king's right-hand man and should be more selective about whom you serve. What's the use of lowering yourself to go before Liu Biao—especially now when we have a heroic contender and enterprising champion right here with us? You have only failed to spot him!" "What you say makes sense," the visitor answered. Listening with elation, Xuande surmised that the visitor must be Sleeping Dragon or Young Phoenix. But much as he wanted to show himself, he was reluctant to appear undignified and so waited until daybreak before going to see Still Water.

"Who came last night?" Xuande asked Still Water. "A friend of mine," was the reply. Xuande expressed his desire to meet him. "He seeks," Still Water explained, "to commit himself to an enlightened ruler and has already gone elsewhere." Xuande asked his name, but Still Water only smiled, saying, "Good, good. Good, good." "Sleeping Dragon, Young Phoenix—who are these men?" Xuande pressed him. But Still Water kept smiling as he repeated, "Good, good. Good, good." Xuande then appealed to the recluse to leave the hills and join him in upholding the house of Han. But Still Water demurred. "Carefree recluses like me," he said, "are not fit to serve the world. There are men ten times my superior to aid you; you should take yourself to them."

While Xuande and Still Water were speaking, they heard noise and commotion outside. A commander had ridden up with several hundred men. Xuande rushed out and was delighted to find Zhao Zilong. Dismounting, Zilong said, "Last night I went back to Xiangyang, but you were not there, so I tracked you here. My lord, you are needed at Xinye. Fighting could break out there anytime."

Bidding Still Water good-bye, Xuande rode off with Zhao Zilong. En route they met Lord Guan and Zhang Fei. It was a joyful reunion. Xuande astonished everyone by describing how he had crossed the Tan.

Xuande reached Xinye county and took counsel with his advisers. Sun Qian said, "Before anything else, Liu Biao must be informed of the recent events." Xuande thus sent Sun Qian with a letter to the governor. Liu Biao called Sun Qian before him and said, "I invited Xuande to preside over the provincial assembly in Xiangyang. What made him depart so unceremoniously?" Sun Qian handed him Xuande's letter detailing Cai Mao's attempt on his life and his escape over the Tan. The governor was outraged. He summoned Cai Mao, castigated him for threatening Xuande, and ordered him beheaded. Even Lady Cai's tearful pleas for mercy failed to temper the governor's wrath. But when Sun Qian argued, "If you kill Cai Mao, Imperial Uncle Liu will not be safe here," Liu Biao decided to release Cai Mao after further reproof. He also sent his older son, Liu Qi, back with Sun Qian to extend his personal apologies to Xuande.

At Xinye, Xuande received Liu Qi and prepared a banquet in his honor. As the wine mellowed them, Liu Qi began to weep. Xuande asked the reason. "Since she became my stepmother," the youth began, "Lady Cai has been intent on eliminating me—and I have no way to escape her. I would be most grateful for your advice, uncle." Xuande urged him to remain circumspect and scrupulously filial, and assured him no calamity would ensue. The next day Liu Qi bid Xuande a tearful farewell. Escorting the youth past the city wall, Xuande pointed to his own horse and said, "If not for him, I would have been a man of the netherworld."³ "It was not the horse, uncle," Liu Qi responded, "rather your great good fortune." Thus they parted. Liu Qi was inconsolable.

Back in Xinye, Xuande rode through the market and saw a man in a linen scarf and plain cloth robe, black belt and black footgear, crooning as he approached Xuande:

Heaven and earth are topsy and turvy, O!
The "fire" is growing cold.
A stately hall is coming down, O!
It's hard for one beam to hold.
But away in the valleys are worthy men, O!
Who long for a lord to whom to repair.
And though that lord is seeking the men, O!
Of me he is all unaware!

Xuande heard the song and thought, "This must be one of the men Still Water spoke of—Sleeping Dragon or Young Phoenix." He got down and addressed the singer, inviting him into the county office. Xuande asked his name. "My surname is Shan, given name Fu; I am from Yingchuan," was the answer. "I have always thought Your Lordship hospitable to worthy men and have been hoping to enter your service. But rather than approach you too directly, I decided to catch your attention by singing in the marketplace."

Delighted, Xuande treated Shan Fu as a guest of honor. "Could I have another look at your horse?" Shan Fu said. Xuande had it led unsaddled before the building. "Isn't he the *dilu*, the marked horse?" he inquired. "He may have phenomenal powers, but he will bring his master misfortune. Do not ride him." "But he has discharged his sign," Xuande said, and he related his crossing of the Tan. "Indeed,"

Shan Fu said, "that time the animal saved its master instead of ruining him. But in the end the horse will ruin a master— though I have a scheme for avoiding it." "I would like to hear it," Xuande said.

"If you have an enemy," Shan Fu continued, "give him the horse as a gift. Wait until its curse is spent upon that man, and then you can ride it without incident." Xuande turned color. "Sir!" he cried. "You come to me for the first time, and instead of advising me to be just and fair would have me harm another for my own gain. Excuse me if I decline to hear such advice." With a smile Shan Fu apologized. "Everyone," he explained, "holds Your Lordship to be humane and virtuous. But how could I simply accept the common view? I've used this idea to test you, that's all." Xuande's expression relaxed, and he too rose to apologize. "What humanity or virtue have I to benefit others?" he asked. "It is for you, good master, to show me." "When I arrived here," Shan Fu said, "I heard people in Xinye singing, 'Since Imperial Uncle Liu took Xinye in his care, / The people roundabout have enough and to spare!' This shows how Your Lordship's humane virtue has benefited the populace." After this, Xuande appointed Shan Fu director general and had him reorganize and train the army.

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Cao Cao, since returning to the capital, had been determined to take Jingzhou, Liu Biao's province. For this purpose he assigned Cao Ren, Li Dian, and the recently surrendered generals Lü Kuang and Lü Xiang to assemble thirty thousand soldiers in the city of Fan. In Fan, Cao's generals, probing strengths and weaknesses, threatened the capital of Jingzhou, Xiangyang. The Lü brothers petitioned Cao Ren: "Xuande is now stationed at Xinye. He recruits troops and purchases horses, accumulates fodder and stores grain. His ambitions are not petty. You had better prepare your moves against him in good time. We two, since submitting to the prime minister, have achieved nothing. Grant us five thousand crack troops, and we will present Xuande's head to Your Excellency." Cao Ren agreed with pleasure, and the two generals marched their unit to Xinye to commence hostilities.

Spies rushed word to Xuande, who consulted Shan Fu. "They must not enter our territory," he advised. "Send Lord Guan with a company to meet their center from the left; Zhang Fei, to the right to meet their rear; and you, my lord, together with Zhao Zilong, will receive their vanguard. This way the enemy can be defeated." Xuande adopted Shan Fu's plan. He dispatched his two brothers to intercept Cao Ren's force; then, joined by Shan Fu and Zhao Zilong, he led two thousand men beyond his defense barrier to meet the attack.

Xuande had hardly advanced a few *li* when, lo, he saw dust rising behind the hills. Lü Kuang and Lü Xiang were drawing near. The two sides secured their flanks. Xuande emerged mounted from his bannered entrance and shouted out, "Who dares breach our boundary?" Lü Kuang rode forward to reply. "I am General Lü Kuang," he cried. "I bear the prime minister's mandate to seize you." With fierce determination Xuande ordered Zhao Zilong into battle. The two warriors closed in combat, and before many passages Zhao Zilong had unhorsed his man with a fatal spear thrust. Xuande motioned his forces to charge.

Unable to hold his ground, Lü Xiang drew back and fled; but Lord Guan's company attacked the retreating unit. After a short period of clash and slaughter, the bulk of Lü Xiang's unit was wiped out. He managed to flee, but he had hardly made ten *li* when another force blocked his path. The leader

hoisted his lance and shouted, "Meet Zhang Fei!" He took Lü Xiang at spearpoint, thrust him through, and overturned him under his horse. The rest of the enemy scattered. The units of the three brothers now combined and gave chase, capturing a great number. Afterward, Xuande withdrew to Xinye, where he feasted Shan Fu and rewarded the three contingents.

The report of the battle appalled Cao Ren. Li Dian said to him, "Our generals were killed because they took the enemy too lightly. All we can do now is hold our forces in place while we petition the prime minister for enough soldiers to wipe them out. That's the best strategy." "Not at all," Cao Ren countered. "In a single clash we have lost two commanders and a good number of men to boot. Reprisal must be swift. For a 'bowshot' of a place like Xinye, should we be troubling the prime minister?" Li Dian warned, "Xuande is a champion warrior. Do not underrate him." "Losing your nerve?" Cao Ren asked pointedly. "The rules of war," Li Dian retorted, "tell us that if you 'know the other side and know your own, then in a hundred battles, a hundred victories.' It's not that I'm losing my nerve but that victory is uncertain." "Perhaps it's your loyalty that's uncertain," Cao Ren shot back irritably. "I am going to take Xuande alive!" "If you go," Li Dian said, "I will guard Fan." "If you refuse to go with me," Cao Ren said with finality, "your disloyalty is certain!" Li Dian had no alternative. Together they mustered twenty-five thousand, crossed the River Yu, and made for Xinye. Indeed:

Lieutenants dishonored, corpses carted home;
The general raises troops again to take revenge.⁴

Which side would prevail?

READ ON.



Xuande Surprises the Town of Fan; Shan Fu Recommends Zhuge Liang

THAT NIGHT CAO REN STRUCK OUT across the River Yu in full force, determined to trample Xinye flat. Meanwhile, back in Xinye after the victory, Shan Fu warned Xuande, "Cao Ren is stationed at Fan. He knows the fate of his two commanders and is sure to attack in full force." Xuande asked him the best defense. "If Cao Ren comes," Shan Fu replied, "Fan will be vulnerable to capture." Asked for specific tactics, Shan Fu whispered certain things, to the delight of Xuande, who proceeded to make the suggested preparations.

Soon the outposts reported the attack Shan Fu had predicted. Xuande, following his adviser's counsel, put his forces into the field against Cao Ren. The opposed ranks were drawn up. Zhao Zilong issued the challenge to the enemy commanders. Cao Ren ordered Li Dian forth from the line to begin combat. Zhao Zilong and Li Dian crossed weapons several times. Li Dian saw he was no match for Zhao Zilong and wheeled back to his line. Zhao Zilong charged after him but was stopped by sustained volleys of arrows from both enemy wings. The two combatants returned to their camps.

Li Dian said to Cao Ren, "They have a crack company, one to be reckoned with. We would do better to return to Fan." "You!" Cao Ren hissed. "Even before the battle you were undermining morale. And we should have your head for that half-hearted performance in the field." Only the strenuous appeals of the assembled commanders prevented Cao Ren from executing Li Dian. Cao Ren took over command of the vanguard and assigned Li Dian to the rear. The next day he advanced with the beating of drums, and deployed before Xinye. He sent a messenger to Xuande to ask if he recognized the formation he was using.

Shan Fu surveyed the enemy from an elevation and told Xuande: "They are using the formation called 'Eight Gates to Impregnable Positions.' The first gate is Desist; the second, Survive; the third, Injure; the fourth, Confound; the fifth, Exhibit; the sixth, Perish; the seventh, Surprise; and the eighth, Liberate. If you can enter through Survive, Exhibit, or Liberate, things will go in your favor. If you take Injure, Surprise, or Desist, you will suffer casualties. If you take Confound or Perish, you are doomed. These 'gates,' or points of articulation between units, are deployed perfectly, and yet the central mainstay or axis is missing. Surprise them at Survive from the southeast corner, move due west and out at Exhibit, and their ranks will be dislocated."

Xuande ordered his men to defend both ends of their advanced position and commanded Zhao Zilong to take five hundred men and do as Shan Fu had advised. Spear high, Zhao Zilong cut his way in, his horse leaping and thrusting, his men howling and yelling. Cao Ren retreated north. Instead of pursuing, Zhao Zilong burst through the west gate and swung round to the southeast again, throwing Cao Ren's forces into disarray. Xuande signaled his men to redouble their blows upon the foe, and Cao Ren fled the field in utter defeat. Shan Fu called off the action and recalled his contingents.

Cao Ren, who was beginning to see the merit of Li Dian's caution, said to him, "Someone very, very capable is in Xuande's army. My formations were completely destroyed." "While we are here," Li Dian responded, "I am worried about Fan." "Tonight then," Cao Ren said, "we'll raid their camp. If we succeed, we can take the next step. If not, we return to Fan." "It won't work," Li Dian said. "Xuande is sure to be ready for that." "How can we wage war without taking chances?" Cao Ren cried in exasperation. Ignoring Li Dian's advice, he took command of the vanguard, had Li Dian reinforce him, and marched to Xuande's camp that same night. It was the second watch.

Xuande and Shan Fu had been discussing the course of the battle when the seasonal northeast wind that visits the area began blowing up. "Cao Ren should strike tonight," Shan Fu predicted, "but we will be ready." Quietly he put his defense in place. By the second watch Cao Ren's men were nearing Xuande's camp. They found it surrounded by flames. The enclosing palisade had been set afire. "They were waiting for us!" Cao Ren thought. At once he ordered a retreat, but Zhao Zilong struck before the retreat could be effected. Cao Ren fled north to the river where he searched for boats; another contingent, led by Zhang Fei, confronted him. After hard fighting with Li Dian protecting him, Cao Ren managed to ferry himself across the river; most of his men drowned. He returned to Fan and called at the gate, but a barrage of drumming greeted him. A general came forward and shouted, "I took Fan long ago!" Cao Ren's brigade looked in awe at the general. It was Lord Guan. Cao Ren fled in fright, losing more men to Lord Guan's pursuing warriors, until he had made his way back to the capital, Xuchang. On the way, however, Cao Ren had discovered the identity of Xuande's new military adviser.

Xuande's victory was complete. Entering Fan, he was welcomed by Liu Mi of Changsha, the prefect of the county. Like Xuande, Liu Mi was an imperial kinsman. After the populace had been reassured, Liu Mi invited Xuande to his home and feasted with him. There Xuande noticed a pleasing youth with dignified deportment standing to the side. He asked the host who it was. "A nephew, Kou Feng," Liu Mi replied, "son of Kou, lord of Luo. He became our ward when his parents died." Xuande took a great liking to the lad and wished to adopt him. Liu Mi eagerly agreed. He had Kou Feng honor Xuande as his father and had the youth's name changed to Liu Feng. Xuande brought Liu Feng back from the feast and bid him honor Lord Guan and Zhang Fei as uncles. But Lord Guan said, "Elder brother, you already have a son of your own. What use do you have for another's? It will lead to trouble." "If I treat him as my son," Xuande insisted, "he will serve me as his father. What trouble can there be?" This answer left Lord Guan sulking.¹ Xuande turned to the problems of tactics. On Shan Fu's advice he returned to Xinye, ordering Zhao Zilong to guard Fan with a force of one thousand.

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In the capital Cao Ren and Li Dian prostrated themselves tearfully before Prime Minister Cao Cao and confessed their failure. "A soldier must take the fortunes of war in his stride," Cao Cao said. "But I wonder who drafted the plans for Liu Bei." Cao Ren mentioned the name he had heard on the way home. "Shan Fu?" Cao Cao asked. "Who is he?"² Cheng Yu smiled and answered, "That's not his real name. In his youth he was an expert swordsman. Then, sometime toward the end of Emperor Ling's reign, he killed a man to avenge an injustice—and became a disguised fugitive. When he was finally apprehended, he refused to identify himself. The officers paraded him through the market area

ried up on a cart. They beat the drums to collect a crowd, hoping someone would name him. But even those who did recognize the man would not speak up. Soon his comrades quietly freed him. He fled again, changed his name, and resolved to lead a scholar's life. He has paid his respects to all the well-known teachers and masters in our area and has studied with Sima Hui too. His real name is Xu Shu, and he's originally from Yingchuan. His style is Yuanzhi. Shan Fu is an assumed name."

Cao Cao asked Cheng Yu, "How does Shan Fu's ability compare with yours?" "Ten times greater," was the reply. "It is most unfortunate," Cao Cao said, "that Xuande is winning the loyalty of worthy and capable men. His wings are fully formed. What can we do?" "Although Shan Fu is with the other side," Cheng Yu said, "if Your Excellency is determined to have him serve you, there is an easy way to do it." "How can we win him over?" Cao Cao asked. "He is devoted to his mother," Cheng Yu replied, "his father having died when he was young. She is all he has. His brother Kang is also dead, so there is no one else to look after her. If you can entice his mother here and induce her to write Shan Fu to join her, he cannot refuse." Cao Cao was delighted with Cheng Yu's advice.

Shan Fu's mother, Madame Xu, was brought to the capital and treated royally. Cao Cao said to her, "They say your excellent son, Yuanzhi, is actually one of the extraordinary talents of the empire. Now he is in Xinye assisting the disobedient subject Liu Bei in his revolt against the court. For so precious a jewel to fall in the muck is truly regrettable. We would prevail upon you to write and call him back to the capital. I will guarantee him before the Emperor, who will reward him amply." Cao Cao ordered writing instruments brought.

"What manner of man is Liu Bei?" the matron asked. "A low-class sort, once based in Xiaopei," Cao Cao replied. "He makes preposterous claims to being an imperial uncle and is utterly without credibility or righteous commitment. He is a perfect example of 'a noble man on the outside, a base man within.'" Madame Xu reacted sharply to this indictment. "You!" she cried harshly. "What fraud and fabrication! I have long known Xuande to be a descendant of Prince Jing of Zhongshan, the great-great-grandson of Emperor Jing the Filial. Xuande is a man who humbles himself before men of ability and treats others with self-effacing respect. And he is renowned for his humanity. Why, callow youths and grey old men, herdsman and wood-gatherers all know his name. He is one of the true heroes of our age. And if my son serves him, then he has found himself the right master. As for you, though you claim the name of prime minister to the Han, you are in reality a traitor who perversely takes Xuande to be the 'disobedient subject,' and would have my son forsake the light and elect the dark. Where is your shame?"

With that, Madame Xu struck Cao Cao with an inkstone. In a fury Cao Cao ordered armed guards to march the matron out and behead her. But Cheng Yu intervened. "The woman," he said, "antagonized you *in order* to die. If you kill her, you will earn yourself a vicious name even as you confirm her virtue; and once she is dead, Shan Fu³ will commit himself to assisting Liu Bei avenge his mother. But if you detain her, the son's body will be in one place, his heart in another. That way, even if he remains with Liu Bei, he will not give his utmost. Furthermore, if we keep the woman alive, I think I can induce Shan Fu to come here and serve Your Excellency." Cao Cao concurred and spared the woman.

Madame Xu was held in custody and cared for. Cheng Yu visited her regularly and, pretending he had once sealed a pact of brotherhood with her son, attended her solicitously, as if she were his own mother. Cheng Yu honored her with gifts, always including a personal note, and the matron would answer in her own hand. Having coaxed these samples of her script out of her, Cheng Yu proceeded

to imitate it. He then forged a letter and had a henchman carry it to Xinye. A guard brought the messenger to Shan Fu, who, knowing there was a letter from his mother, immediately received him. The messenger said, "I am a house servant. Your mother sent me with this." The letter read:

The recent death of your younger brother has left me with no other kin save you. In the midst of my sorrow and isolation, I never dreamed His Excellency Cao would lure me to the capital to denounce your betrayal and to put me in chains. My life has been spared only through Cheng Yu. If you surrender, I will be saved. When you read this, do not forget the hardships your mother endured to raise you. Come with all speed to fulfill your duty as a filial son. Afterward, we will bide our time until we can go home and tend our garden. That way we will avoid calamity. My life hangs by a thread. You are my sole hope of salvation. Need I implore further?

Tears flooded Shan Fu's eyes as he read the letter. He went to Xuande to acknowledge his identity and explain his intentions. "At the beginning," Shan Fu said, "I went to Governor Liu Biao, impressed by his reputation for welcoming men of learning. But in advising him, I soon discovered how unfit he was. I took my leave by letter, went to the farm of Still Water, and told him all that had happened. He took me to task for not recognizing my true lord, and then urged me to serve you.⁴ I put on that mad show in the market to attract Your Lordship's interest. I was favored by your gracious invitation and given grave responsibilities. But what am I to do now that my mother has been tricked and taken by Cao and threatened with harm? She has written herself summoning me, and I cannot fail her. It is not that I am loath to toil for Your Lordship to repay your confidence in me, but with my dear mother in his hands I would not be able to give your cause my best. Permit me therefore to announce my departure. Surely we shall find a way to meet again."

Xuande cried out at these words, but then he said, "Mother and son are nature's nearest kin. You need not give further thought to me. I can wait until you have been reunited with your mother for another opportunity to profit from your instruction." Shan Fu prostrated himself in gratitude and begged permission to leave. Xuande prevailed upon him not to leave at once but to remain the night for a final farewell dinner.⁵

Sun Qian took Xuande aside and said, "This extraordinary genius is thoroughly familiar by now with our military situation. If you let him go, they will use him at the highest level, and we will suffer for it. Try your utmost, my lord, to get him to stay— then Cao Cao will execute his mother, and to avenge her Shan Fu will fight all the more fiercely against Cao Cao." But Xuande replied, "That I cannot do. It would be inhumane to let them kill the mother so that we can use the son. It would be unjust and dishonorable to hold him against his will and keep mother and son apart. I would rather die first." Xuande's firmness moved all who heard of it.

Xuande invited Shan Fu to drink. But Shan Fu said, "Knowing my mother is imprisoned, I could not swallow the most precious potion, the most exquisite liquor." "When you said you were leaving," Xuande declared, "I felt as if I were losing my very hands. The rarest delicacies will seem tasteless to me." The two men faced one another and wept, then they sat down to await the dawn. Xuande's commanders had already arranged the farewell banquet outside the walls of Xinye. Afterward, Xuande and Shan Fu rode out of the city side by side. Reaching a pavilion, they dismounted and prepared to part. Xuande, proposing a last toast, said, "My meagre lot, my paltry destiny keep us from

remaining together. I hope you will serve your new master well and gain recognition for your merits."

Weeping freely, Shan Fu said, "Despite my insignificant talent and superficial knowledge, Your Lordship charged me with the gravest responsibilities. Now on my mother's account I have to leave, though our task remains incomplete. But no matter how Cao Cao pressures me, I will not propose a single strategy for him to my dying day." "Once you have gone, master," Xuande said, "I intend to withdraw to the mountain forest." "When I laid plans with Your Lordship for the royal cause," Shan Fu went on, "my meagre intelligence was all I had to count on. But now, because of my mother, I cannot think clearly. Even were I to remain, I would be of no use. My lord would do well to seek elsewhere some high-minded worthy to support and assist you in your great enterprise. You must not lose heart like this."

"Not one of the worthy men of our age," Xuande said, "surpasses you." "How can my useless, commonplace qualities deserve such high praise?" Shan Fu asked. Then, on the verge of parting, Shan Fu turned to the commanders and said, "It is my earnest wish that you all continue to serve our lord well. Leave behind a record of worthy deeds and shun my example of failing to finish what I have begun." The commanders grieved.

Xuande could not bring himself to say good-bye and saw him off one stage farther, then another stage. "You should not take the trouble to escort me so far," Shan Fu said. "Here I bid you farewell." Xuande took Shan Fu's hand. "Now we part," Xuande said, "to go to different worlds.⁶ Who knows when we may meet again?" Xuande's tears fell like rain. Shan Fu, too, wept as he parted from his lord. Xuande poised his horse at the forest's edge, watching Shan Fu and his attendants race into the woods. "Gone!" Xuande cried. "What will become of me now?" Through blurry eyes he gazed into the distance, but a clump of trees blocked his line of vision. "I want those trees cut down," he shouted, "so I can see Shan Fu once again!"

At that very moment Shan Fu reappeared, whipping his horse to a gallop. "He's coming back! Can he have changed his mind?" Xuande cried and eagerly rode out to meet him. "Good sir," Xuande addressed him, "can it be that you are not leaving after all?" Shan Fu reined in and said, "My emotions were so conflicted, I forgot one thing. There is an extraordinary scholar in this area, in Longzhong, barely twenty *li* from Xiangyang. Your Lordship should seek him out." "Dare I trouble you to request that he come to see me?" Xuande inquired. "It would not be appropriate to send for him," Shan Fu replied. "Go to him in person, my lord. If you gain his services, it will be like the Zhou dynasty's winning Lü Wang, or the Han's winning Zhang Liang."⁷

Xuande asked Shan Fu, "Compared to yours, sir, what are his talents like?" "To compare him to someone like me," Shan Fu answered, "would be like comparing the fabled unicorn to a dray, a peafowl to a crow. He is in the habit of likening himself to Guan Zhong and Yue Yi—but he surpasses them in my view,⁸ for he is perhaps the one man in the empire who can plot the interaction of the heavens and the earth." "I would hear his name," Xuande said. "He is from Yangdu in Langye," Shan Fu replied, "and bears the double surname Zhuge. His given name is Liang; his style, Kongming. He is a descendant of Zhuge Feng, former commander of the Capital Districts. His father, Zhuge Gui styled Zigong), was a governor's deputy in Taishan district. Zhuge Gui died young, leaving Liang in the care of his younger brother Xuan. Zhuge Xuan, Liang's uncle, was a long-standing friend of Liu Biao, protector of Jingzhou. That is why they made their home in Xiangyang, under Liu Biao's protection. After Zhuge Xuan died, Liang and his younger brother Jun worked on the family's farm in Nanyang. Liang enjoyed chanting the Liangfu elegies.⁹ Where they lived there was a stretch of hills known as

Sleeping Dragon Ridge; he took the sobriquet Master Sleeping Dragon from that. His talents are indeed transcendent. Your Lordship, ignore his low estate and visit him—the sooner the better, for if he is willing to assist you, you need have no fear for the stability of the empire."

Xuande said to Shan Fu, "Master Still Water once said to me, 'If either Sleeping Dragon or Young Phoenix will help you, you can reestablish order in the realm.' Could the man you speak of be one of the two?" "Young Phoenix," Shan Fu replied, "is Pang Tong of Xiangyang. Sleeping Dragon is none other than Zhuge Liang—Kongming." In his excitement Xuande leaped up and cried, "Now I know what Still Water meant. These great men are before my very eyes. But for you, I should have remained blind to them." A later poet left these lines commemorating the moment Shan Fu recommended Zhuge Liang:¹⁰

To part for aye made Xuande sore with grief.
At road's fork they stopped; in each emotions deep.
A word is dropped, like thunder's boom in spring,
Rousing the dragon sleeping in Nanyang.

Having imparted Kongming's name, Shan Fu once again took leave. Xuande, now awakened to the meaning of Still Water's words, led his men back to Xinye to prepare gifts to take to Kongming in Nanyang.¹¹

On the road, Shan Fu was moved by his lord's love and his unwillingness to say goodbye, but he began to wonder if Kongming would actually be willing to leave the hills and help guide Xuande's course. Before going to Cao Cao, therefore, Shan Fu rode straight to the young recluse in his thatched hut. Kongming asked his purpose in coming. "My wish," Shan Fu said, "was to serve Protector Liu,¹² but Cao Cao seized my mother, and she has written summoning me. What choice do I have? I'm on my way to her now. Just before leaving, I recommended you to Xuande; he should be coming to pay his respects. I hope you will not deny him, but will put at his disposal those great abilities you have always shown. It would be a blessing for us all."

Kongming was annoyed. "And you mean to make *me* the victim of this sacrifice?" he said, and with a flick of his sleeves retired. Shan Fu retreated in embarrassment and resumed his journey. Indeed:

Out of love for his lord, Shan Fu appealed to a friend;
Out of love for his mother, he was homeward bound again.

What would the outcome be?

READ ON.



***Still Water Recommends Another Noted Scholar;
Liu Xuande Pays Three Visits to Zhuge Liang***

RIDING AT BREAKNECK SPEED, SHAN FU reached the capital. Informed of his arrival, Cao Cao had Xun Wenruo, Cheng Yu, and other advisers greet him at the city gate. From there Shan Fu went to the ministerial residence and paid his respects to Cao Cao. Cao Cao said to him, "How could so noble and enlightened a scholar as you, sir, lower himself to serve Liu Bei?" "In my youth," Shan Fu responded, "I fled my village and drifted through all sorts of places. Chance brought me to Xinye, where I formed a strong friendship with Xuande. But since my mother is here now in your care, I feel overcome with shame and gratitude." "Now that you are here," the prime minister said, "you will be able to tend and care for your honorable mother at dawn and at dusk as ritual prescribes. And I, too, perhaps may benefit from your superior learning." Shan Fu expressed his thanks and withdrew to his mother's chamber.

Shan Fu prostrated himself tearfully before his mother. "What brings *you* here?" she exclaimed in amazement. "I was in the service of Liu Xuande," he explained, "when your letter came. I rushed here at once." Mother Xu exploded in fury, swearing as she struck the table. "You disgraceful son," she shouted, "flitting hither and thither for so many years. I thought you were finally making progress with your studies. Now you've ended up worse than you started out!¹ As a scholar, you should be aware that loyalty and filial devotion may conflict. How could you have failed to see Cao Cao for what he is—a traitor who has abused and ruined his sovereign—while Liu Xuande is widely known for humanity and righteousness? Moreover, he is a scion of the royal house. You had found yourself a proper master, but trusting a forged scrap of paper, which you never bothered to verify, you left the light for the dark and have earned yourself a name beneath contempt. Oh, you utter fool! With what kind of self-respect am I supposed to welcome you, now that you have shamed the spirit of your ancestors and uselessly wasted your own life?"

During his mother's tirade Shan Fu cowered on the ground, hands clasped over his head, not daring to look up. Suddenly, she turned and vanished behind a screen. Moments later a house servant appeared and called out, "The lady has hanged herself from the beams!" Beside himself, Shan Fu rushed to her, but her breath had ceased. Later someone wrote "In Praise of Mother Xu" :²

Mother's Xu's integrity
Will savor for eternity.
She kept her honor free of stain,
A credit to her family's name.
A model lesson for her son,
No grief or hardship would she shun.

An aura like a sacred hill,
Allegiance sprung from depth of will.
For Xuande, words of approbation,
For Cao Cao, utter condemnation.
Boiling oil or scalding water,
Knife or axe could not deter her.
Then, lest Shan Fu shame his forebears,
She joined the ranks of martyred mothers.
In life, her proper designation;
In death, her proper destination.
Mother Xu's integrity Will savor for eternity.

Seeing his mother dead, Shan Fu lay broken on the ground. Much time passed before he recovered. Cao Cao sent him ritual gifts of condolence and personally attended the sacrificial ceremonies. The coffin was interred in the high ground south of the capital. Shan Fu fulfilled the mourning and guarded the grave site. Everything that Cao Cao proffered he declined.

At this time Cao Cao was considering a southern expedition. But Xun Wenruo warned, "Winter is no time for that. After the spring thaw we can make an all-out attack." Cao Cao agreed. He then diverted water from the River Zhang to make a lake for naval training for the attack on the south. The lake was called the Pool of the Dark Tortoise.³

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As Liu Xuande was preparing gifts for his visit to Kongming in Longzhong, the arrival was announced of an unusual-looking Taoist with a tall hat and broad sash. "Why, this must be Kongming himself!" Xuande said and attired himself formally to welcome him. It turned out, however, to be Still Water. Delighted, Xuande took him into his private quarters and led him to the seat of honor. Xuande said, "Since leaving your saintly presence, I have been beset by military concerns and thus failed to pay a courtesy call. Now I am honored by this visit, which gratifies my deeply felt longing and admiration." "I had heard," Still Water replied, "that Shan Fu was here and came especially to see him." "He went to the capital," Xuande explained, "in response to an appeal from his mother, whom Cao Cao had jailed."

"So he fell for the ruse!" Still Water said. "Mother Xu is known for her absolute integrity. Even if Cao imprisoned her, she would never agree to call for her son. The letter has got to be a forgery. By not going he could have saved her; his going dooms her." Agitated, Xuande asked for an explanation. "She lives according to the highest ethic," Still Water said, "and would be ashamed for her son." "As he was leaving," Xuande said, "he recommended Zhuge Kongming of Nanyang. What do you know about him?" "If Shan Fu had to leave, he had to leave," Still Water replied. "But why did he have to drag Kongming into this to sweat out his heart's blood?" "What do you mean by that, good master?" Xuande asked.

Still Water said, "Kongming befriended Shan Fu and three others: Cui Zhouping of Boling, Shi Guangyuan of Yingchuan, and Meng Gongwei of Runan. These four dedicated themselves to esoteric rituals of spiritual refinement. Kongming, however, was the only one who contemplated the doctrine

in its entirety. Once while sitting embracing his knees and chanting in prolonged tones he remarked to his three friends: 'In official service any of you might advance to inspector or governor.' But when they asked what ambitions he had, he only smiled. He was wont to liken himself to Guan Zhong and Yue Yi. His ability is beyond measuring." "I wonder," Xuande commented, "why the Yingchuan area has produced so many great men." "Long ago," Still Water replied, "Yin Kui, a skilled observer of the constellations, remarked that with so many stars congregated in its part of the sky, the district was sure to have many worthy men."

Lord Guan, who had been listening to this conversation, interjected, "To my knowledge Guan Zhong and Yue Yi were outstanding figures of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, men whose merit overarched the realm. Is it not presumptuous for Kongming to compare himself to them?"⁴ "To my mind," Still Water replied smiling, "he might rather be compared to Jiang Ziya, who helped found the eight-hundred-year Zhou dynasty, or Zhang Liang, whose advice was responsible for the Han's four hundred years of glory." This praise left all hearers astonished. Still Water then took his leave, declining Xuande's invitation to stay. But on reaching the gate, he gazed upward and laughed aloud, "Sleeping Dragon has found his lord but not his time. A pity!" So saying, he was gone like a breeze. "Truly a recluse of great worth," Xuande said with a sigh.

The next day Xuande, Lord Guan, and Zhang Fei went to Longzhong. On the hills men were carrying mattocks to their acres, singing:

The sky's a curving vault of blue,
The level earth a chessboard,
Where men their black and white divide,
Disgrace or glory to decide.

For the winners, peace and comfort,
For the losers, tiring toil.
In Nanyang someone lies secluded,
Securely sleeping. Stay abed!

Xuande reined in and asked who had composed the song. "Why, Master Sleeping Dragon," was the reply. "Where does he live?" Xuande asked. A farmer answered, "A short way south runs a high ridge called Sleeping Dragon Ridge. In front is a thin wood where you'll find the little thatched lodge that he's made his refuge." Xuande thanked the man and rode on. Soon the ridge came into view. It was a soothing scene of extraordinary peace, as depicted in this old-style ballad:

West of Xiangyang county twenty *li*,
A rising ridge leans over a flowing stream.
The twisting, turning ridge bears heavy clouds;
The frothing, churning stream is liquid jade.
Caught between the rocks, this dragon winds;
Shadowed by the pines, this phoenix hides.
A wattle gate half-screens a thatched retreat:
Undisturbed, the recluse rests within.

The bamboo forms a veil of green outside,
Where year-round hedgerows exhale flowery scents.
Learned works are piled around his bed;
No common men have come before his seat.
Now and then a gibbon taps to offer fruit;
A crane, his gateguard, attends his nightly chants.
A brocade sack contains the precious lute;
The seven-star sword is hung upon the wall.
In this refined seclusion the master waits
And works his acres in his leisure hour,
Until spring thunder starts him from his dream
To calm the kingdom with one impassioned cry.

Xuande arrived at the farmstead and knocked at the brushwood gate. A lad answered the door and asked his name. "General of the Left under the Han," Xuande declared, "Lord of Yicheng Precinct, Protector of Yuzhou, Imperial Uncle Liu Bei comes to pay his respects to your master." "Too many names to remember," said the youth. "Just say Liu Bei is paying a call," Xuande urged him. "My master," the lad said, "went out for a bit earlier this morning." "Where to?" Xuande asked. "His movements are uncertain; I don't know where he has gone," was the reply. "When will he be back?" Xuande asked. "I don't know that, either," the lad said. "It could be three to five days or ten or more."

Xuande was greatly disappointed. Zhang Fei said, "Since we have failed to see him, let's go home and have done with it!" Xuande was for waiting a little longer, but Lord Guan also said, "We might as well be off. We can send someone later to inquire." Xuande finally agreed and told the lad, "When your master returns, will you say that Liu Bei came to call?"⁵

The brothers remounted and rode off. Several *li* later they reined in and looked back on the scenic figurations of Longzhong. Now the hills seemed more elegant than lofty, the streams more sparkling than deep, the land more smooth than spacious, the woods more lush than large, with gibbons and cranes joining in play, pine and bamboo blending their green. Xuande could not take his eyes away. Suddenly a man appeared, his countenance imposing, his bearing stately yet simple. A scarf was wound casually around his head; a plain black gown covered his frame. With a staff of goosefoot wood he trod down a hillside path.

"This must be Master Sleeping Dragon," Xuande said eagerly as he dismounted and made a gesture of respectful greeting. "Could you be Sleeping Dragon, master?" he asked. "Your name, General?" the man responded. "Liu Bei," he answered. "I am not Kongming," the man went on, "but a friend of his, Cui Zhouping of Boling." "Your name has been long known to me," Xuande said. "This is a meeting ordained by fortune. I would like to benefit from your instruction if you could find the time. ..."

The two men sat on some rocks in the woods; Lord Guan and Zhang Fei stood to either side. Cui Zhouping began, "For what reason, General, do you wish to see Kongming?" "There is such disorder in the empire," Xuande replied. "The four quarters are as unsettled as the clouds. I would seek of Kongming the strategy to secure and stabilize the government and the country." "My lord," Cui Zhouping responded with a smile, "you are bent on bringing the disorder of our day to an end? However benevolent your intentions, since ancient times periods of discord and civic order have

come and gone quite unpredictably. When the Supreme Ancestor of the dynasty slew the white serpent and embarked on the rising that destroyed the despotic Qin, that interval, which led to the founding of the Han, was a time of transition from discord to civil order. Two hundred years of peace and prosperity followed. Then, in the time of the Emperors Ai and Ping, Wang Mang usurped the throne and brought us again from order to disorder. But the first emperor of the Later Han, Guang Wu, revived the dynasty and, righting its foundations, brought us out of discord and back to civic order.

"Now after two another hundred years, during which the population has enjoyed peace and contentment, we find sword and shield around us. This only shows that we are moving again into a period of disorder, and one which cannot be quickly ended. For Kongming to try to reverse the course of events or mitigate what fortune has in store would be, I am afraid, a futile expense of mind and body. It is said, 'Adapt to Heaven and enjoy ease; oppose it and toil in vain.' It is also said, 'None can deduct from the reckoning, or force what is fated.' "

"There is great insight in your words," Xuande conceded. "But I, a Liu, scion of the Han, committed to maintain the dynasty's rule, may not leave the task to fate or reckoning." "A mountain rustic like myself," Cui Zhouping responded, "is hardly fit to discuss the affairs of empire. You honored me with your profound question, and I expressed myself rashly." "You have favored me with your insight and instruction," Xuande said, "but I would know where Kongming has gone." "I, too, was hoping to pay a call on him," Cui Zhouping replied, "so I could not tell you where he is." "Would you be interested, master," Xuande inquired, "in coming back with me to our humble county seat?" "My uncultured nature," Cui Zhouping replied, "has grown too fond of leisure's freedoms to give thought to success and fame. But there will be occasion for us to meet again." With that, the man left after making a deep bow. "We have failed to find Kongming," Zhang Fei said, "and bumped into that rotten pedant instead. Too much idle talk!" "That is how men in seclusion express themselves," Xuande admonished him.

A few days after returning to Xinye, Xuande made inquiries and was told that Kongming had come back from his rambles. Xuande ordered the horses readied for another visit. "Do you have to go yourself for that village bumpkin?" Zhang Fei demanded. "Have him summoned." "It looks," Xuande said sharply, "as if you do not know what the sage Mencius meant when he said, 'Trying to meet a worthy man in the wrong way is as bad as closing the door on an invited guest.' Kongming is one of the greatest men of our time, and yet you expect me to send out a summons?" And so a second time, attended by his brothers, Xuande went to Sleeping Dragon Ridge.

It was the dead of winter, severely cold. Dense, somber clouds covered the sky.⁶ The brothers rode into a cutting northern wind. A heavy snow made the mountains gleam like arrowheads of white jade and gave the woods a silvery sheen. "The air is bitter," Zhang Fei said, "and the ground frozen solid. A bad time even for military operations, and yet you think we should be going this distance to meet someone of no use to us at all? Let's go back and get out of the storm." "I am determined," Xuande replied, "to show Kongming my earnest intentions. If you can't stand it, brother, go on back yourself." "If death doesn't frighten me," Zhang Fei retorted, "why should the cold? I just hate to see my elder brother waste his energy." "Then stop complaining," Xuande said, "and follow me." As they approached the thatched cottage, they were surprised to hear someone singing in a roadside wineshop:

No deeds, no fame achieved at manhood's prime:

Shall he ever find his lord or meet his time?
Remember when Jiang Ziya,⁷
The old sage of the Eastern Sea, quit his hazel wood
And followed Zhou's first king, Wen, as servant and as kinsman?
When, uncalled, eight hundred lords converged,
And a white fish flew into King Wu's boat⁸
As he forded at Meng
To battle the Shang at Grazing Field,
Where he shed a tide of blood
That bore off sword and shield,
As, fierce and majestic, an eagle on the wing,
He towered above King Wu's martial vassals?⁹ And when
The tippler from Gaoyang (as he liked to call himself),
Li Yiji, came and made a common bow¹⁰
To the "Big Nose Governor" in those dark hours
And spoke such startling truths of reign and rule
That the king-to-be dismissed his footwashers
And feasted Li Yiji, honoring his splendid spirit?
The surrender of the east soon followed:
Seventy-two cities and towns.
What man has followed in those footsteps?
Such were the deeds of Jiang Ziya and Li Yiji,
Heroes unsurpassed unto this very day.¹¹

As soon as this song was finished, another man tapped the table and began to sing:

Han's first king took the realm by sword;
The house he founded lasted twenty score.
With Huan and Ling, Han's fire-virtue waned.
And evil men the chancelorship profaned.

They saw a serpent coiled beside the throne;
A rainbow in the consort-quarters shone.
Ant-like, outlaws gathered everywhere;
Villains rose like raptors in the air.¹²

We pound our hands and keen, but all in vain;
Our sorrows take us to the village inn.
Leading lives of simple decency,
Who needs a name that lasts eternally?

Their songs sung, the two men clapped and laughed aloud. Convinced that Sleeping Dragon was within, Xuande dismounted and entered the wineshop. The singers were leaning over a table drinking.

One had a light complexion and a long beard, the other a fresh, ageless look. Xuande saluted them and asked, "Which of you is Master Sleeping Dragon?" "Who are you, sir?" the long-bearded one responded. "And what have you to do with him?" "I am Liu Bei," was the reply, "and I need the master's skill to aid my cause and succor our age." "I am not the man you seek," the long-bearded man replied, "nor is he. But we are friends of his. I am Shi Guangyuan of Yingchuan, and this is Meng Gongwei of Runan." "Noble names long known to me," Xuande exclaimed with delight. "I am favored by this fortunate encounter, and I have extra horses if you gentlemen would be willing to accompany me to Sleeping Dragon's farm." "Country idlers like us," Shi Guangyuan replied, "have no knowledge of the weighty matters that concern you. Do not waste time on the likes of us, sir, but resume your search yourself."

Xuande bade the drinkers good-bye and rode toward Sleeping Dragon Ridge. He dismounted at Kongming's farm and, finding the youth at the gate, asked, "Is your master in today?" "In the house reading," was the reply. Excitedly, Xuande followed the lad. Coming to the inner gate, they stopped before a couplet on the wall that read: "Only through austerity and quiescence can one's purpose shine forth; only through concentration and self-control can one's distant goal be reached."¹³ As Xuande was studying the words, he heard someone singing inside. Standing attentively by the door of the thatched house, he peered in and saw a young man with his arms about his knees, chanting:

The phoenix winging on the air
Will choose no tree
Except the *wu*.

The scholar keeping to his lair
Will have no lord
Except the true.

Oh, let me till these furrowed fields,
By this sweet home
That I call mine.

In books and song I place my dreams
And wait the time
The fates assign.

When the singer stopped, Xuande entered and extended his courtesies. "I have long held you in admiration," Xuande began, "but wanted occasion to express it personally. The other day, thanks to Shan Fu's suggestion, I came to pay my respects at this retreat of yours. Unable to meet you, however, I went home disappointed. Now I come a second time, undaunted by the storm. This glimpse of your learned countenance is an untold blessing."

Flustered by this speech, the young man returned the greeting and then replied, "General, you must be Liu Yuzhou and, I believe, wish to see my elder brother."¹⁴ "Master," Xuande said in astonishment, "then you are not Sleeping Dragon, either?" "No, I am his younger brother, Zhuge Jun. There are three of us brothers. The oldest, Zhuge Jin, is in the Southland advising Sun Quan.

Kongming is the second brother." "Is the Sleeping Dragon at home?" Xuande inquired. "Yesterday," Zhuge Jun replied, "he was invited by Cui Zhouping to go on a jaunt." "Do you know where?" Xuande asked. "They might have gone rowing down some lake or river," Zhuge Jun answered. "Or to visit some Buddhist or Taoist on his hilltop retreat. Or to look for friends in the villages. Or they might have simply decided to entertain themselves with lutes and chess in some cavern den. My brother comes and goes quite unpredictably, and I have no idea where he might be."

"How meagre my lot!" Xuande exclaimed. "Twice now have I missed this excellent man!" "Sit awhile," Zhuge Jun suggested. "Let me offer you tea." But Zhang Fei broke in, "The master is not here. Let's get going!" "Why go back," Xuande answered him, "without having spoken to anyone?" With that, Xuande turned to Zhuge Jun and said, "Your esteemed brother is known for his mastery of military arts. They say he applies himself to the subject daily. Can you tell me more about this?" When Zhuge Jun said he knew nothing about it, Zhang Fei spoke again. "Look at that storm," he said. "Better be starting back." But Xuande told him sharply to be quiet. "Since my brother is not here," Zhuge Jun said, "I should not detain you officers. He will return your courteous call at a future time." "I would not want him to have to travel," Xuande replied. "I expect to be coming again in a few days. Could I trouble you, though, for a brush and paper? As an expression of the earnestness of my wish, I shall leave your elder brother a letter." The writing instruments were brought.

Xuande thawed the frozen hairs of the brush with his breath and unrolled the writing paper. His letter read:

A longtime admirer of your honored name, I, Liu Bei, have come twice to present myself, only to leave again without having met you—a keen disappointment. I am humbly mindful that as a remote kinsman of the court, I have enjoyed prestige and rank far beyond my merits. When my thoughts turn to the rude displacement at court—our laws and customs crumbling and swept aside while countless contenders subvert the state and vicious factions abuse the sovereign—my heart breaks, my gall is rent. Whatever sincerity I may offer to the cause of delivering the Han perishes for want of strategy.

I admire your humane compassion, your sense of loyalty and honor. If in your greatness of spirit you would unfold your mighty talents, talents comparable to those of Jiang Ziya, and apply your grand strategy in the manner of Zhang Liang, then the empire and the sacred shrines of the royal house would be doubly blessed. I am forwarding this to convey my intention, after further ceremonial purification, to pay homage yet again to your honored presence, respectfully offering my poor, simple sincerity and entreating your discerning consideration.

Xuande handed the letter to Zhuge Jun, bade him good-bye, and left. Zhuge Jun accompanied him past the gate, listening to his earnest reiterations. Finally they parted.

Xuande was starting homeward when he saw the lad beyond the fence waving and shouting, "The old master is coming!" Ahead, past a small bridge, a man in winter headdress and fox furs was riding a donkey through the descending snow. He was followed by a youth in simple black carrying a gourd of wine. Turning on to the bridge, the rider sang:

Nightlong, north winds chill,
Myriad-leagued, dusky clouds expand.

Capering snow through an infinite sky
Transforms the never-changing land.

He looks into the ether's vastitude:
Are jade dragons at war up there,
Strewing their scales every which way,
And filling up the hollow sphere?

Alone,
Sighing for the plum trees' battered blooms.¹⁵

Certain that Sleeping Dragon was coming, Xuande leaped from the saddle to extend his greetings. "It must be hard for you, master," he said, "to brave this bitter cold. I have long been awaiting you." The startled rider climbed off his beast and returned the salutation. Then Zhuge Jun came up and said, "This is not Sleeping Dragon; it is his father-in-law, Huang Chengyan."

"I happened to hear you chanting just now," Xuande said. "It sounded so elevated and poignant." "I was reading the 'Liangfu Elegies' in my son-in-law's home," the man replied. "I had that stanza in mind as I crossed the bridge; the plum blossoms near the fence moved me to sing. I never imagined an honored guest might hear me." "Have you seen your esteemed son-in-law?" Xuande asked. "Actually, I am coming to see him," was the reply. With that, Xuande took his leave, remounted, and headed home. The wind and snow grew fiercer. Giving a last look back over Sleeping Dragon Ridge, Xuande felt overwhelmed by sadness and uncertainty. As a poet of later times wrote,

That stormy day he sought the sage in vain,
And sore at heart, he started home again.
The creek bridge, frozen; the land, sheer ice—
His trembling horse has many *li* to cross.

Pear-petal flakes descending from the skies,
Antic willow puffs darting at his eyes,
He turns and halts to view the scene behind:
Banked with snow, the silvered ridges shine.

Back in Xinye time crept by until it was again spring. Xuande ordered the diviners to cast for a propitious time to visit Kongming. After three days' abstinence from meat and wine, Xuande bathed, smeared himself with ritual oils, changed his clothes, and went back to Sleeping Dragon Ridge. His two brothers expressed intense displeasure and protested.¹⁶ Indeed:

The worthiest has yet to bend the hero's will;
Servility could shake his fighters' confidence.

What would Xuande say to them?

READ ON.



Kongming Determines the Realm's Division and Charts a Course; Sun Quan Leads a Naval Attack and Exacts Revenge

DESPITE HIS TWO FRUITLESS VISITS, Liu Xuande resolved to pay another call on Kongming. "Twice, brother," Lord Guan said, "you have respectfully presented yourself. Such courtesy is indulgence. It seems to me that Kongming has a false reputation and no real learning. That is why he avoids receiving you. Why are you so captivated by this man?" "You fail to understand," Xuande replied. "Long ago Prince Huan of the state of Qi tried five times before he succeeded in seeing the recluse of Dongguo, Guan Zhong. Getting to see the wise and worthy Kongming may well demand even more of us."

"Dear brother," Zhang Fei declared, "I think you overrate this village bumpkin. What makes him so wise and worthy? Spare yourself the trip. If he refuses to come, it will only take a bit of rope to bring him here!" "I suppose," Xuande said with a scowl, "you've never heard of King Wen, founder of the Zhou, presenting himself to Jiang Ziya. If King Wen could show a wise man such respect, what excuses your utter discourtesy? This time you may stay here. Lord Guan and I will go on together." "Since my elder brothers are going," Zhang Fei replied, "I cannot stay behind." "Let us have nothing unsociable out of you, then," Xuande warned. Zhang Fei agreed.

The brothers and their attendants rode toward Longzhong. Half a *li* from the hermitage they dismounted as a sign of respect. Approaching on foot, they met Zhuge Jun. Xuande hastily extended a greeting and asked, "Is your honored brother at the farm?" "He came home last night," was the reply, "and today, General, you may see him." With that, Zhuge Jun sauntered away. "We're in luck this time," Xuande said. "We will see the master." "What a rude fellow!" Zhang Fei exclaimed. "What would it have cost him to walk us to the farm? Why did he make off just like that?" "He must have something to attend to," Xuande remarked. "Don't be unreasonable."

The three went to the front gate and knocked. A youth received them. "May I trouble you, young acolyte," Xuande said, "to report that Liu Bei has come especially to pay his respects to the master?" "The master is at home today," the lad replied, "however, he is napping in the cottage and has not yet awakened." "In that case, do not announce us for now," Xuande said. He ordered his brothers to wait near the door, and slowly entered the cottage himself. He saw the master lying on a couch and assumed a humble posture as he stood below. A while passed; the master continued sleeping.

Growing impatient, Lord Guan and Zhang Fei came into the chamber and found Xuande standing in attendance as before. Zhang Fei said angrily to Lord Guan, "The insolence! Our brother standing in attendance, while he pretends to sleep peacefully on! Let me go out and torch the rear. We'll see whether that gets him up or not!"¹ Lord Guan calmed his junior, and Xuande ordered both outside to resume their watch. When Xuande looked into the chamber again, the master was turning over and seemed about to wake, but then he rolled back toward the wall, sleeping soundly once again. The lad came in and tried to announce the visitor, but Xuande persuaded him not to disturb Kongming. After

another hour or so Kongming finally rose and chanted a song:

From this great dream who would waken first?
All along I've known the part to play:
To sleep in springtime, and to ask no more,
Though outside, longer, longer grow the days.²

"Any callers from the outside world?" Kongming asked, turning to the lad. "Imperial Uncle Liu," he replied, "has been waiting here for some time." Kongming stood up. "You should have told me sooner! I need time to change my clothes," he said and hurried to his private quarters. It was another while before he reappeared, clothes and cap correct, and greeted his guest.

To Xuande, Kongming appeared singularly tall, with a face like gleaming jade and a plaited silken band around his head. Cloaked in crane down, he had the buoyant air of a spiritual transcendent. Xuande prostrated himself and said, "I, Liu Bei, a foolish fellow from Zhuo district, a distant scion of the house of Han, have long felt your mighty name thunder in my ears. Twice before I have presented myself and, failing to gain audience, finally set my worthless name to a letter. I have never learned whether it was brought to your discerning attention." "A simple rustic of Nanyang," Kongming replied, "negligent and indolent by nature, I am indebted to you, General, for the pains you have taken to travel our way. I have been remiss."³ After further civilities they seated themselves as host and guest, and tea was served.

The conversation continued. "I could see in your letter," Kongming began, "a compassionate concern for the people and the dynasty. But I fear that you are mistaken in seeking the help of one so young and so limited in ability." "I don't think Sima Hui and Shan Fu would have praised you so highly without good reason," Xuande responded, adding, "I only hope that you will overlook my crudeness, my lack of status, and vouchsafe your edifying instruction." Kongming answered, "Sima Hui and Shan Fu are two of the noblest scholars of the age. I am but a common tiller of the soil. What right have I to speak of the empire? These gentlemen have made a preposterous recommendation. What good can it do, General, to pick the dull and useless stone but pass up the precious jewel?" "How can a man with the ability to shape the times waste himself among the groves and springs?" Xuande continued. "I beg you to consider the living souls of this land and for their sake enlighten me, free me of ignorance and folly." "I would like to know your aspirations, General," Kongming said with a smile.

Xuande dismissed everyone present, shifted his mat closer to Kongming's, and declared, "The house of Han teeters on ruin. Unscrupulous subjects have stolen the mandate of rule. Failing to recognize my limitations, I have tried to promote the great principle of true allegiance throughout the empire; but my superficial knowledge and inadequate methods have so far kept me from achieving anything. If you, master, would relieve my ignorance and keep our cause alive, the blessing would be truly ten-thousandfold."

"Since the time of Dong Zhuo's sedition," Kongming began, "powerful and aggressive figures have come into their own. Cao Cao could overcome Yuan Shao, though his strength was initially inferior, thanks to wise planning and favorable occasion. Now Cao has an army of one million and uses his hold on the Emperor to make the feudal barons do his bidding. There is no way you can cross spearpoints with him. As for Sun Quan, he has a firm grip on the Southland and represents the third

generation of his family's power there. The territory is difficult of access, and the people are devoted to him. Hence, the south may serve as a supporting ally, but it is not a strategic objective.

"Now consider the central province, Jingzhou. To the north it commands the Han and Mian rivers; to the south it draws wealth from Nanhai;⁴ eastward it communicates with the Southland districts; westward it offers access to the districts of the Riverlands—that is, Xichuan—Ba and Shu. Jingzhou—that's the place to fight for! Only a fitting ruler can hold it. And Jingzhou seems to be the very place that Heaven wants to give you, General, if you have the ambition for it.

"Yizhou in the west, strategically located, is an inaccessible frontier province whose fertile wildlands extend thousands of *li*—a kingdom rightly called Heaven's Cornucopia. The first emperor of the Han consummated his imperial enterprise by basing himself there. The present provincial protector, Liu Zhang, is benighted and feeble, and even though the people are well-off and the realm is thriving, he does not know how to care for either. Yizhou's men of insight and capability are yearning for enlightened rule.

"Now, General, you are known across the land as a trustworthy and righteous scion of the Han, one who keeps noble warriors in hand and thirsts for men of merit. If you sit astride these two provinces, Jing and Yi, guard well their strategic points, come to terms with the Rong tribes on the west, placate the Yi and the Viets to the south, form a diplomatic alliance with Sun Quan, and conduct a program of reform in your own territory—then you may wait for the right moment when one of your top generals will be able to drive north to Luoyang by way of Wancheng while you yourself mount an offensive from the Riverlands through the Qinchuan region.⁵ And won't the good common folk 'basket food and jug wine' to welcome you, my general! Thus can your great endeavor be brought to fulfillment and the house of Han revived. This is how I would shape strategy for you, General. It remains for you to consider it."⁶

Kongming hung a map and continued: "These are the fifty-four counties of the west. To establish your hegemony, let Cao Cao in the north have the advantage of timely circumstance; let Sun Quan in the south have his geographical advantages; you, my general, will have the allegiance of men. First, take Jingzhou and make it your home base. Then move into the Riverlands and build your third of the triangle of power. Eventually, the northern heartland will become your objective."

Rising from his mat and joining his hands in respectful gratitude, Xuande said, "Master, you have opened the thicket that barred my view and have made me feel as if clouds and mists have parted and I have gained blue sky. The only thing is, Liu Biao of Jingzhou and Liu Zhang of the Riverlands are both, like myself, imperial kinsmen. How could I bear to seize what is theirs?" "Every night," Kongming replied, "I study the configurations of the heavens. Liu Biao will not be long among the living. And Liu Zhang has no ambition worthy of the name. In time he will transfer his allegiance to you." Xuande pressed his head to the ground to show his respect.

By this single interview Kongming, who had never left his thatched cottage, demonstrated his foreknowledge of the tripodal balance of power—truly an incomparable man in any generation! A poet of later times has recorded his admiration:

Governor Liu, cast adrift, alone,
By fortune found Nanyang's Sleeping Dragon.
He sought to know the shape of things to be;
Smiling, the master mapped his strategy.

Xuande humbly petitioned Kongming: "Though my name be inconsiderable, my virtue meagre, I beg you not to spurn me as a vulgar man of little worth. Come out from these hills to lend us your aid, and I will listen obediently to your enlightening instruction." Kongming replied, "Here I have long been content, with my plow and mattock, and hesitate to respond to the demands of the world. Forgive me if I am unable to accept such service." Xuande began to weep. "If you remain here," he said, "what of the living souls of this land?" Xuande's tears wet the sleeves of his war gown and soaked his lapel. Kongming, moved by the sincerity of his intent, said, "If you will have me, then, General, I shall serve you like a hound or horse."

Elated by Kongming's answer, Xuande called in Lord Guan and Zhang Fei. They offered the gifts Xuande had prepared, but Kongming adamantly declined until Xuande assured him, "Think of this not as a formal petition to a man of great worth, but simply as a humble expression of personal feeling." At last Kongming received the gifts. Xuande and his brothers stayed at the farm overnight. The next day Kongming told Zhuge Jun, who had come back, "I am accepting the kind generosity of Imperial Uncle Liu, who has favored me with three calls. I am obliged to go. Remain at your labors and do not let our acres go fallow. When my work is done, I shall return to resume my life of seclusion." A wistful poem, written in later times, goes:

About to soar, he felt himself drawn back;
His task complete, he'll think of this farewell.
Only for the monarch, who pleaded and pleaded again:
The "falling star," the "autumn winds" —the "last campaign."⁷

There is another ballad in the old style:⁸

Han's founding king drew his snow-white sword
And slew the silver serpent in the Mang-Dang Hills;
He quelled Qin, smote Chu, and claimed Xianyang.
Ten score passed; the line would have expired,
But mighty Guang Wu revived its fortunes in Luoyang;
The throne remained secure till Huan and Ling:
Court rule broke down; Xiandi was moved to Xuchang.
Bold spirits now arose at every turn:
Cao Cao seized power; the times were in his favor;
In the south, the Sun house founded its estate.
Lost and sorely tried, Xuande roamed the realm;
Off in Xinye, he took to heart the people's woes.
Nanyang's Sleeping Dragon dreamed great dreams;
In his mind deep strategies took form.
If Shan Fu had not spoken Kongming's name,
Could Xuande's triple quest have ever been?
So Kongming at an age of three times nine
Packed his books and lute and quit his fields.

"Take Jingzhou first and then take the west!"

Here was a plan to alter destiny.

Across the realm his words created storms.

Juggling stars that held men's fate, he smiled.

Dragons ramped, tigers stalked, sky and land stood calmed;

Time itself can never waste his name.

After bidding Zhuge Jun good-bye, Xuande returned to Xinye with his brothers and Kongming. Xuande treated Kongming as his mentor. They ate together and slept together and spent the days analyzing events in the empire. Kongming observed: "Cao Cao has built the Pool of the Dark Tortoise to train his fighters for naval warfare. That means he intends to invade the south. We ought to send agents south to find out what is happening." And it was done.⁹

. . . .

After the death of Sun Ce,¹⁰ Sun Quan had consolidated his hold on the Southland and extended the patrimony founded by his late father and brother. He brought into his government scholars of merit, and established a guesthouse in Kuaiji in Wuxian, commissioning Gu Yong and Zhang Hong to receive worthy guests from all regions. Over the years the following scholars came by mutual recommendation: Kan Ze (Derun) of Kuaiji; Yan Jun (Mancai) of Pengcheng; Xue Zong (Jingwen) of Pei county; Cheng Bing (Deshu) of Ruyang; Zhu Huan (Xiumu) and Lu Ji (Gongji) of Wujun; Zhang Wen (Huishu) of Wu; Luo Tong (Gongxu) of Wushang; Wu Can (Kongxiu) of Wucheng. These men received generous and courteous treatment in the Southland. A number of important military leaders came too: Lü Meng (Ziming) of Runan; Lu Xun (Boyan) of Wujun; Xu Sheng (Wenxiang) of Langye; Pan Zhang (Wengui) of Dongjun; Ding Feng (Chengyuan) of Lujiang. Sun Quan's civil and military officials worked in close cooperation, and the Southland gained a reputation as a land that fostered talent.

In the seventh year of Jian An, Cao Cao, having vanquished Yuan Shao, ordered his representative to the Southland to demand that Sun Quan send a son to the capital to serve the Emperor. Sun Quan could not decide whether or not to comply. His mother, Lady Wu, summoned Zhang Zhao and Zhou Yu. Zhang Zhao advised, "Cao Cao's attempt to get one of our lord's sons in his court is a traditional device for keeping the feudal barons under control. If we do not comply, he could raise an army and subjugate the Southland."

Zhou Yu, however, argued, "General Sun has inherited the task his father and brother began. He has brought together the population of the six districts.¹¹ His army is elite, his grain supplies ample. His officers and men are responsive to command. Why should we send hostages to anyone? Once we do, it will lead to an alliance with Cao Cao, and whenever he calls on us, we will have to go. Rather than become subject to his authority, I think it best to send no hostage but to observe how things develop and prepare a sound defense." "Zhou Yu is correct," Lady Wu decided. Sun Quan, in deference to his mother, cordially dismissed Cao Cao's representative and refused to send a son. After that Cao Cao was determined to subdue the Southland, but disturbances in the north gave him no respite for a southern campaign.¹²

In the eleventh month of the following year¹³ Sun Quan attacked Huang Zu. They fought on the

Great River, and Huang Zu's forces were demolished. But Sun Quan's commander, Ling Cao, racing ahead on a skiff into Xiakou, was shot down by Gan Ning, Huang Zu's commander. The slain man's son, Ling Tong, a lad of fifteen, took a desperate chance and recovered his father's body. Seeing that the situation was unfavorable, Sun Quan brought his forces back to the Southland.

• • • •

Sun Quan's younger brother, Sun Yi, governor of Danyang, was an inflexible, hard-drinking man whose excesses had been known to drive him to beat his men.¹⁴ The district military inspector, Gui Lan, and the assistant governor, Dai Yuan, had long desired to murder Governor Sun Yi. Together with one of the governor's attendants, Bian Hong, the two officials decided to conspire against him.

Sun Yi had prepared a grand banquet on the occasion of a gathering of the generals and county prefects in the capital town of Danyang. On the day of the feast Sun Yi's wife, Lady Xu, a beautiful and intelligent woman, skilled at divination, cast a hexagram in the *Book of Changes* signifying dire misfortune. She urged her husband not to attend the reception, but he ignored her pleas and joined the festivities. Afterward, as the guests were dispersing, Bian Hong, armed with a knife, followed Sun Yi out the gate and cut him down.

The principal conspirators, Gui Lan and Dai Yuan, then charged their fellow plotter, Bian Hong, with the crime, and he was publicly beheaded. The murderers proceeded to plunder the governor's household, seizing his property and female attendants. Gui Lan found himself attracted to Sun Yi's wife and said to her, "I have avenged your husband's death, and you will have to live with me or die." "With my husband dead so recently," Lady Xu said, "I cannot bear to serve another yet. Would it be asking too much to wait until the last day of the month? Then, after I make the offerings and remove my mourning robes, we can solemnize the relationship." Gui Lan agreed.

Lady Xu summoned two confidants of the late governor's, Sun Gao and Fu Ying. Tearfully she appealed to them: "My husband often spoke of your loyalty and honor. Those two villains, Gui Lan and Dai Yuan, murdered my husband, then blamed Bian Hong and punished him for it, all the while helping themselves to our property and servants. Gui Lan even tried to possess me. I pretended consent to allay his suspicions. Now if you two could get word to Sun Quan and devise a plan to take care of the villains, my husband's death would be avenged and my honor redeemed; I would be eternally grateful." With that, Lady Xu flung herself to the ground.

Tears stood in the men's eyes. "We two," they said, "have ever been grateful for the late governor's generosity. We did not follow him in death only because we were trying to avenge him. What you command is ours to perform." And they sent secret messages to Sun Quan.

On the day appointed for the ceremony Lady Xu concealed her husband's two commanders behind the curtains in an inner chamber and commenced the sacrificial ritual in the main hall. That done, she removed her mourning attire, bathed and perfumed herself, and dressed seductively. She spoke to everyone with artful ease and gracious self-possession. Gui Lan was elated when informed of her behavior.

That night Lady Xu invited Gui Lan to her quarters, where she had prepared a feast. After he had drunk deeply, she led him to the inner chamber. Intoxicated as he was, the delighted guest went in. "Commanders, come forth!" Lady Xu cried out. Gui Lan had no time to defend himself. The two armed men leaped into view. Fu Ying felled Gui Lan with a single stroke of his blade, Sun Gao

followed up with another cut, and Gui Lan lay dead. Lady Xu then sent Dai Yuan an invitation to the banquet; he too was killed when he arrived at the hall. All the followers and family members of the two slain murderers were executed. Lady Xu resumed her mourning attire and sacrificed the heads of her enemies before the altar of her dear lord, Sun Yi.

Before long Sun Quan himself arrived in Danyang with a party of soldiers. Since the two criminals had already been dispatched by Lady Xu, Sun Quan appointed Sun Gao and Fu Ying garrison commanders, put them in charge of Danyang, and took the widow, his sister-in-law, home with him that he might care for her for the rest of her life. The Southland celebrated Lady Xu's strength of character. A later poet wrote:

So able and so chaste—in this world all too rare!—
The widow lured two villains into her cunning snare.
Vassals base chose treachery, vassals loyal chose death;
To this Southland heroine does any man compare?¹⁵

Now all the rebels in the Southland had come under Sun Quan's control. And he had more than seven thousand war-boats on the Great River. At Sun Quan's behest Zhou Yu became supreme commander of the Southland's land and sea forces.

In winter, the tenth month of Jian An 12, Sun Quan's mother, Lady Wu, fell gravely ill. She called for Zhang Zhao and Zhou Yu and said to them, "Though originally a woman of Wu, I lost my parents when young and, following my younger brother, Wu Jing, settled among the Viets. Later I married Sun Jian and bore him four sons. At the birth of Ce, my eldest, I dreamed that the moon was coming into my body. When Quan, my second, was born, I dreamed that the sun had entered me. The diviners said, 'Such dreams portend great rank for your sons.' Alas, the eldest died too young, and now our patrimony passes to the second son. If I can count on you two gentlemen to concert your efforts to support him, I shall not die in vain."

Lady Wu then spoke her final charge to Sun Quan: "I want you to serve Zhang Zhao and Zhou Yu as if they were your teachers, without lapse or negligence. Remember, my younger sister was given in marriage with me to your father. She is your mother as well. Serve her as you would have served me. Care for your younger sister, too, and marry her well." With these words she passed away. Sun Quan wailed in grief. He duly fulfilled the ceremonies of mourning and interment.

In the spring of the following year, Sun Quan raised the question of attacking Huang Zu.¹⁶ Zhang Zhao counseled caution: "We are still in the first year of the mourning period. It is not the time for military action." But Zhou Yu countered, "Avenging a humiliation brooks no waiting period." Sun Quan was brooding over the matter when District Commander Lü Meng was announced. "I was guarding Dragon's Gorge," he said, "when Gan Ning, one of Huang Zu's lieutenants, unexpectedly surrendered. Gan Ning's style is Xingba, and he comes from Linjiang in Bajun. On close questioning I found him to be a man of considerable learning, quite vigorous, and something of an 'honorable adventurer.' It seems he once led a gang of desperadoes who were active all over the region. Gan Ning always carried a brass bell at his waist. The sound of it put people to flight. He earned the nickname Bandit of the Colored Sails because he used Riverlands imported silk in his sails. Eventually he came to regret his earlier excesses, changed his ways, and entered the service of Liu Biao.

"Soon enough Gan Ning realized that Liu Biao would accomplish nothing, and he now desires to join us. At Xiakou, however, Huang Zu detained him. The last time we defeated Huang Zu he retook Xiakou only by the efforts of Gan Ning. Even then Huang Zu treated him most stingily. The chief of guards, Su Fei, tried several times to recommend Gan Ning to Huang Zu, but Huang Zu always answered, 'Ning is a criminal who has preyed upon the people all along the river. I can't give him an important position.' So Gan Ning's resentment burned hotter and hotter.

"At this point Su Fei invited Gan Ning to dine at his home and said to him, 'Lord Liu Biao has refused you a fitting appointment despite my recommendations. The years are passing and life is short. It's time to plan ahead. I am going to set you up as a magistrate in Zhu county. You can look for a new lord from there.'¹⁷

"And that, my lord," Lü Meng concluded, "is how Gan Ning came to surrender to us. At first he was fearful that his having rescued Huang Zu and killed Ling Cao would be held against him, but I assured him that Your Lordship thirsted for worthy men and would never bear him a grudge, especially since he had acted out of loyalty. He has crossed the river with his men to present himself to you. I beg to know your will."

Sun Quan was jubilant. "This defection ensures Huang Zu's defeat," he said and had Gan Ning brought before him. After Gan Ning's formal salutations, Sun Quan told him, "Your coming wins our good will. There can be no thinking of old grudges. Be assured of that. We only hope you will show us the way to destroy Huang Zu." To this Gan Ning responded, "The sacred Han throne is in imminent danger. Cao Cao's ministry is bound to end in a usurpation, and Jingzhou is the place he will fight for. Its protector, Liu Biao, makes no provision for the future, and his two sons are clumsy mediocrities who could never keep what he has built up. My lord, make his territory yours—before Cao Cao makes it his. First, Huang Zu must be captured. He is old and apathetic, absorbed in profit and gain. He infringes upon the interests of his officials and exacts much from the populace. This has led to widespread disaffection. His military equipment is in disrepair; his army has no discipline. He will fall if you attack. And then—sound the drum and march west. Hold the Chu pass and aim for the Riverlands. Your hegemony can be achieved." "Precious advice," Sun Quan responded.

Sun Quan had made Zhou Yu supreme commander of all land and naval forces. He now made Lü Meng leader of the vanguard of the front unit and Dong Xi and Gan Ning, deputy commanders. Sun Quan himself took charge of the main army, which numbered one hundred thousand. Thus the expedition against Huang Zu began.

Huang Zu summoned his counselors as spies and scouts reported these developments back to Jiangxia.¹⁸ He appointed Su Fei his chief general, assigned Chen Jiu and Deng Long to the vanguard, and mobilized the entire district. The two van leaders led a squad of war-boats and blocked the passage near Miankou.¹⁹ Each boat held a thousand archers and crossbowmen. Heavy ropes linked the craft to steady them. When they sighted the Southlanders, the defenders rolled their drums and let fly volleys of arrows, driving the invaders back several *li*.

Gan Ning said to Dong Xi, "Having come this far, we can't turn back." They put five thousand crack troops on one hundred small craft; each carried twenty rowers and thirty men in armor. Steel swords in hand, braving the oncoming bolts, the sailors of the south drove toward the long junks. Drawing alongside, they severed the heavy ropes, causing the junks to drift away from each other. Gan Ning leaped onto the main ship and cut down Deng Long. Chen Jiu abandoned his ship.

Lü Meng sprang at once into a small boat, rowed directly into the enemy fleet, and set the junks

afire. Chen Jiu struggled ashore, but Lü Meng, heedless of all risk, raced ahead of him and felled him with one stroke through the chest. By the time Su Fei arrived at the bank to assist, the Southlanders had already gained the shore in overpowering force. Huang Zu was routed. Su Fei took to his heels but was captured handily by Pan Zhang and brought to Sun Quan's ship. Sun Quan had him caged pending the capture of Huang Zu so that he could execute the two together. He then hastened on to Xiakou in full force. Indeed:

Slighted by Liu Biao, the Bandit of the Colored Sails
Blasted apart the war-junks of Huang Zu.

Huang Zu's fate hung in the balance.

READ ON.



Jingzhou's Heir Pleads Three Times for Advice; The Director General Makes His Debut at Bowang

THE ATTACK SUN QUAN DELIVERED against Xiakou had wiped out Huang Zu's whole force. Huang Zu abandoned Jiangxia and fled west toward Jingzhou.¹ Anticipating his line of flight, Gan Ning had posted an ambush outside the eastern gate of Jiangxia. When the defeated commander hurried through with a few dozen mounted followers, he found Gan Ning's men massed across the way, shouting in unison. From horseback Huang Zu said to Gan Ning, "I always did right by you in the old days. Why do you threaten me now?" Scowling, Gan Ning replied, "All I ever got for my service was the title River Bandit. Do you have anything else to say?" Denied mercy, Huang Zu wheeled about and galloped off. Gan Ning pursued him.

A fresh commotion signaled the arrival of another Southland commander, Cheng Pu. Gan Ning suspected Cheng Pu had come to take credit for the capture of Huang Zu, so he drew his bow, felled Huang Zu, and severed his head. He subsequently rejoined Cheng Pu, and the combined force rode back to Sun Quan. Gan Ning presented the enemy commander's head, and Sun Quan stored it in a wooden box until he could return to the Southland and offer it at his father's altar.² The leader of the Southland rewarded his army handsomely and elevated Gan Ning to district commander. Then he had to decide whether to hold the city captured from Huang Zu.

"Jiangxia is too far from our bases to defend," Zhang Zhao argued. "Pull the men back. Liu Biao will attack us the moment he hears of Huang Zu's fate. Let him come. His overextended troops will soon yield to our well-rested soldiers, and then we can carry our counterattack as far as Jingzhou's capital and capture it." Sun Quan approved Zhang Zhao's advice and withdrew all units to the south.

Meanwhile, Su Fei was in the prisoner's cage. He appealed through someone for Gan Ning's help. "Su Fei did not even have to mention it," Gan Ning told the emissary. "I could never forget how he helped me." The Southland forces returned and Sun Quan ordered Su Fei executed so that his head could be placed with Huang Zu's on Sun Jian's altar.

Gan Ning came before Sun Quan to plead for his former patron: "Without Su Fei, I'd be a pile of bones underground and never would have come to serve under you, General. His offense, I grant, is capital. But in view of his past kindness to me, I beg to redeem him with the office and rank you have so generously granted." "For your sake only," Sun Quan said, "I pardon him—but what if he escapes?" "He would be too grateful to do that," Gan Ning assured him. "But if he does, I will answer for it with my head." Thus Su Fei was spared, and Huang Zu's head alone was offered at the sacrificial altar.

After the ritual, a feast was held to congratulate the civil and military officials. As the wine was circulating one man rose, uttered a cry, and went for Gan Ning with drawn sword. Gan Ning used a chair to parry the attack. Sun Quan recognized the assailant as Ling Tong. Gan Ning had shot and

killed his father, Ling Cao, while still in the service of Huang Zu at Jiangxia. Now Ling Tong wanted revenge.³ Intervening, Sun Quan said, "When Gan Ning killed your father, he was bound to another lord. He was doing what he had to do. Now that we are all in the same family, old grudges must be forgotten—for my sake." "Blood debts must be paid!" Ling Tong shouted, pressing his forehead to the ground in front of Sun Quan, who, along with the officials present, tried to talk Ling Tong round. But the young warrior kept staring angrily at Gan Ning. Sun Quan made a quick decision to reassign Gan Ning to Xiakou with five thousand men and one hundred war-junks.⁴ Gan Ning thanked him and left. At the same time Sun Quan appointed Ling Tong District Commander, Filial and Heroic, an offer the indignant son reluctantly accepted.⁵

The defense of the Southland was now begun in earnest, with a great boatbuilding campaign and the deployment of troops along the banks of the Great River. Sun Quan assigned his brother, Sun Jing, to guard Wujun while he positioned the main army at Chaisang.⁶ Zhou Yu directed maneuvers on the Poyang Lakes daily, preparing his marines for the next invasion of Jingzhou.



The spies that Xuande had sent south now returned to Xinye with the following intelligence: "The southerners have struck. Huang Zu is dead. They're digging in at Chaisang." Xuande was discussing the new developments with Kongming when he was summoned by Liu Biao. Kongming said, "Since the Southland has routed Huang Zu, Liu Biao will want to see you to help plan his revenge. I'll go along to weigh the possibilities and advise you accordingly." Xuande agreed. He left Xinye in Lord Guan's hands and, joined by Kongming, went to the capital of the province. Zhang Fei and five hundred men escorted him.

As they rode, Xuande asked Kongming, "What should I say to Liu Biao?" "First of all," Kongming advised, "you must apologize for the incident at Xiangyang when you fled the banquet. Then, if he orders you to undertake a punitive expedition against the Southland, decline—no matter what he says. Tell him you need time to go back to Xinye and get your forces into condition."⁷ Xuande approved. In Jingzhou the two men settled into a government guesthouse while Zhang Fei stood guard outside the city.

Liu Biao received Xuande and Kongming. The necessary formalities performed, Xuande expressed regret for his offense. "I am well aware, worthy brother," Liu Biao said, "of the mortal danger you were in. I was fully prepared to behead Cai Mao then and there to satisfy you but was induced by many appeals to forgive him. Will my worthy brother kindly not take offense?" "It was not really General Cai's doing," Xuande replied. "I assume the plot was hatched by his subordinates."

"Now that we have lost Jiangxia," the protector of Jingzhou continued, "and Huang Zu has met his death, I have called you here to take part in planning our retaliation." "Huang Zu was a violent sort," Xuande responded, "quite incapable of using men."⁸ That's how he brought on this catastrophe. Now if we mobilize and march south, Cao Cao could strike from the north. What then?" "The years weigh on me," Liu Biao said. "My ailments multiply. I cannot cope with the affairs of this province. Worthy brother, if you come to assist me, you will become ruler of Jingzhou after I pass away." "Elder brother," Xuande cried out, "do not say that nor imagine that I would presume to undertake such a responsibility."

At this point Kongming eyed Xuande, who continued, "We must allow more time to devise a

sound strategy." Xuande excused himself and returned to his lodgings. "My lord," Kongming said to him, "Liu Biao was ready to put the province in your hands. Why did you decline?" "The Protector," Xuande replied, "has treated me with consummate consideration and etiquette. To exploit his moment of peril by seizing his estate is the last thing I could bring myself to do." "What a kindhearted lord," Kongming said with a sigh.

While this discussion was going on, Liu Qi, the eldest son of Liu Biao, entered and tearfully importuned Xuande and Kongming. "My stepmother will suffer my existence no longer," he said. "I may be killed at any moment. Rescue me, uncle, for pity's sake." "This is a family matter, nephew," Xuande replied. "You cannot come to me with it." Xuande turned to Kongming, who was smiling faintly. "Yes," he said, "this is a family matter, with which I would not presume to acquaint myself." Afterward Xuande escorted the lad out and whispered to him, "Tomorrow I shall have Kongming return your call. Make sure to say thus and so ..." Xuande proposed a ruse to obtain Kongming's advice, adding, "He should have some ingenious suggestions for you." Liu Qi thanked Xuande and left.

The next day Xuande put off all obligations, claiming a stomach ailment, and persuaded Kongming to repay Liu Qi's call alone. Liu Qi received Kongming in his private apartment. When they had finished tea, Liu Qi said, "My stepmother has no use for me. Master, favor me with a word to relieve my plight." "I am here as a guest," Kongming replied. "If people found out I had meddled for no good reason in a conflict among kinfolk, it could do us great harm." So saying, Kongming rose to leave. Liu Qi appealed to him: "You have honored me with your presence here. I must see you off with more ceremony than this." He led Kongming into another chamber and served him wine. "My stepmother," he reiterated, "has no use for me. I implore you to speak the word that can save me." "I may not give counsel in such matters," was the reply. Again Kongming asked to leave. "Master," Liu Qi went on, "if you will not speak, then there is nothing more to say. But must you leave so precipitately?"

Kongming returned to his place. "I have an ancient text," Liu Qi said, "that I would like you to examine." He guided his guest up to a small attic. "Where is the book?" Kongming asked. Bowing tearfully, Liu Qi said, "My stepmother has no use for me. My death is imminent. Do you mean to be so cruel as to deny me a single word of help?" Kongming rose angrily and tried to leave, only to find that the ladder they had ascended was gone. "I need a sound plan," Liu Qi appealed. "Your fear of discovery makes you reluctant to speak. Well, here we are, alone between Heaven and earth. Your voice can reach no ear but mine—therefore, bestow your wisdom." "'Strangers never meddle among kin,' as the saying goes," Kongming replied. "I cannot give counsel." "If you are so resolved," Liu Qi said, "my life cannot be preserved. Let me end it before your eyes." With those words he drew his sword.

Kongming moved to restrain him, saying, "There is a way. You must remember the ancient story of the brothers Shensheng and Chong Er? The former stayed home and lost his life; the latter went into exile and saved himself.⁹ Now, with Huang Zu's defeat, Jiangxia stands unguarded. Why not petition your father for a company of men to hold Jiangxia? That might save you." Liu Qi thanked Kongming profusely and had the ladder replaced. Kongming returned to Xuande and informed him of the disposition of Liu Qi's problem. Xuande was delighted.

Liu Qi's petition for a defense force put Liu Biao in a dilemma. For advice he turned to Xuande. "Jiangxia is a crucial location," Xuande said. "You cannot have just anybody guarding it. Your son is the right man. And while your son takes care of the southeast, let me handle the northwest."¹⁰ "I'm

told," Liu Biao said, "that Cao Cao has built an artificial lake to train his forces for a southern expedition. We must be prepared." "We already know this," Xuande replied. "Do not be anxious, brother." Xuande returned to his base at Xinye, and Liu Biao assigned Liu Qi three thousand men to secure Jiangxia.¹¹

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It was at this time that Cao Cao terminated the duties of the three elder lords and attached their functions to his own office.¹² He made Mao Jie and Cui Yan his staff supervisee, and Sima Yi his chief of the Bureau of Documents. Sima Yi (Zhongda) came from Wen county in Henei district. He was the grandson of Sima Juan, governor of Yingchuan; the son of Sima Fang, governor of the western capital district Jingzhao; and younger brother of Sima Lang, chief of the advisory staff.¹³ Having thus brought his civil staff up to full strength, Cao Cao held discussions with his generals on the southern campaign against Jingzhou. Xiahou Dun proposed: "We have been informed that Liu Bei has been steadily developing his fighting force in Xinye. We should plan to attack him before he becomes a serious problem." Cao Cao directed Xiahou Dun to take command of a hundred-thousand-man force, and Yu Jin, Li Dian, Xiahou Lan, and Han Hao to serve as his deputy generals. Their orders were to march to Bowang and keep Xinye under close watch.¹⁴

The adviser Xun Wenruo objected, however: "Xuande is one of the greatest heroes of our time and, with Kongming as his director general, is not to be recklessly confronted." "Xuande is a mouse that won't escape me," Xiahou Dun retorted. Then Shan Fu spoke: "General, do not underestimate Xuande. He is a tiger to whom Zhuge Liang gives wings." "Who is Zhuge Liang?" Cao Cao interjected. "His style is Kongming," Shan Fu replied, "his Taoist sobriquet, Master Sleeping Dragon. He is one of the rarest talents of the age. He can plot the motions of sky and land and design plans of divine perfection. On no account should you belittle him." "And how does he compare with you?" Cao Cao asked. "No comparison," Shan Fu said. "I am a firefly; he, the full-risen moon." "How absurd!" Xiahou Dun cried. "He's a straw reed to me. I fear him not. If in a single engagement I fail to capture Xuande and take this Kongming alive, the prime minister is welcome to my head." "Well then," Cao Cao replied, "send us an early report of victory and dispel our qualms." Filled with energetic determination, Xuahou Dun took his leave and commenced the operation.

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Xuande's ritual acknowledgment of Kongming as his teacher caused his two brothers no little consternation. "Kongming is so young," they said to him, "what knowledge or ability could he have? Brother, you have obliged him beyond all reason—before even putting him to the test." But Xuande closed the matter by saying, "He is to me as water to the fish. Say no more, brothers." Rebuffed, Lord Guan and Zhang Fei silently withdrew.

One day someone presented Xuande with a yak's tail, and he wound it into a headdress. When Kongming saw it, he said severely, "My illustrious lord must be forgetting his aspirations if this is all he has to devote himself to." Xuande tossed the yak's tail away and apologized. "I was only killing time, trying to forget my troubles," he said. "In your judgment," Kongming continued, "how do you and Cao Cao compare?" "I fall short," Xuande answered. "Your soldiers," Kongming went on, "number in

the thousands. How would you deal with Cao's army if it appeared?" "That very question has been consuming me," Xuande admitted, "but I have not found a good answer." "You had better recruit a militia as quickly as possible," Kongming urged. "I will train them myself." On this advice Xuande called for volunteers. Three thousand men of Xinye joined the army, and Kongming instructed them intensively in field tactics.

Word of Cao Cao's approaching invasion force of one hundred thousand reached Xinye. Zhang Fei said to Lord Guan, "We'll have Kongming deal with it, and that will be that." When Xuande summoned his brothers to counsel, Zhang Fei said, "How about sending the one you call 'water'?" "For brains," Xuande retorted, "I have Kongming; for courage, you two. Don't bandy responsibilities!" The brothers left, and Xuande called Kongming to him. "My main concern," Kongming said, "is that Zhang Fei and Lord Guan obey my orders. If you wish to have me as your military executive, empower me with your sword and seal." Accordingly, Xuande turned these articles over to Kongming, who then assembled the commanders. "We might as well go along, too," Zhang Fei said to Lord Guan, "if only to see how he runs things."

Before the commanders Kongming issued his orders: "Left of Bowang are the Yu Hills; to the right, the forest of An—two good places for concealing men and horses. Lord Guan, you hide in the hills with a thousand fighters and let the enemy pass unopposed. Their equipment and food supplies will be in the rear. The moment you see fire on the southern side, unleash your men and burn the enemy's grain and fodder. Zhang Fei, you hide in the ravines behind the forest. When you see fire, head for the old supply depot at Bowang and burn it. I want Liu Feng and Guan Ping to take five hundred men with combustible materials and wait on either side of the area behind the slope of Bowang itself. At the first watch, when the enemy troops will be arriving, set fires." Kongming also ordered Zhao Zilong recalled from the town of Fan to lead the forward army, but with specific instructions to feign defeat. He concluded: "Our lord should lead one contingent as a rear support. All must act according to the plan without the slightest deviation."

Lord Guan's reaction was sharp. "So," he said, "we are all to go forth and engage the enemy. And when will we have the opportunity of reviewing your own role as director general?" "My role is simply to stay and guard our base," was Kongming's reply. Zhang Fei guffawed. "We all go to the slaughter," he cried, "while you sit home, perfectly content and comfortable!" "I have the sword and seal," Kongming said. "Whoever violates my orders will die." "Brothers," Xuande said, "have you forgotten? 'Plans evolved within the tent decide victories a thousand *li* away.' You must obey his orders." Smiling coldly, Zhang Fei left. "We shall see," Lord Guan said, "whether his ideas work. There will be time enough to confront him if they don't." With that, he followed Zhang Fei out. The commanders, uncertain about Kongming's strategy, remained doubtful but followed their orders.

Kongming said to Xuande, "My lord, station your troops at the foot of Bowang Hill. Tomorrow evening when the enemy arrives, abandon camp. At the fire signal, turn back upon them. I shall hold Xinye with Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, and five hundred guards." Kongming then ordered Sun Qian and Jian Yong to prepare the victory feast and ready the honor rolls. Now complete, Kongming's orchestration had even Xuande perplexed.

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Cao Cao's commanders, Xiahou Dun and Yu Jin, neared Bowang. They assigned half their troops

to the front, half to guard the grain wagons. It was autumn. Strong winds began to blow. As the soldiers rushed ahead, their leaders noticed dust flying in the distance. Xiahou Dun drew up his forces and asked his guide to describe their position. "Ahead lie the slopes of Bowang," was the reply, "behind, the mouth of the River Luo."

Xiahou Dun had Yu Jin and Li Dian call a general halt while he rode in front of the line to scan the horizon. A force of cavalry was approaching them. Laughing loudly, Xiahou Dun said to his commanders, "Before the prime minister himself Shan Fu extolled Kongming as a divine strategist. Now look how he uses his troops! Sending such puny forces in the van is like sending sheep and dogs against tigers and panthers. I told His Excellency I would take Xuande and Kongming alive, and I shall make good my claim." So saying, he charged forward.

Zhao Zilong rode forth, and Xiahou Dun reviled him: "You and your men follow Xuande like lost souls chasing a ghost." Zilong gave his horse its head, and the two warriors closed. After several passages Zhao Zilong retreated, and Xiahou Dun chased him twenty *li*. Zilong turned and fought, then retreated again.

Cao's commander, Han Hao, raced up and warned Xiahou Dun that he was being drawn into an ambush, but he received a contemptuous answer: "Let them set a ten-sided ambush. I still have nothing to fear!" He pressed on to the slope. Thereupon, Xuande ordered his bombards to pound the enemy as he joined the battle. Engaging the new opponent, Xiahou Dun said derisively to Han Hao, "Is this the ambush you warned me about? I shall not halt again until we reach Xinye." And he moved forward, driving Xuande and Zhao Zilong in full retreat before him.

The sky was darkening. Thick clouds stretched across it. There was no moon. It had been gusty all day, and now the night winds were rising. Xiahou Dun was intent on the kill. His commanders, Yu Jin and Li Dian, reached a narrow point where dry reeds crowded the road on both sides. Li Dian said to Yu Jin, "'Despise your enemy and you will lose.' To the south the roads narrow, and the hills and river hem us in. The foliage is dense and tangled. What if they use fire?" "Of course!" Yu Jin exclaimed. "I'll go and warn the general-in-command. You go and halt the rear at once." But Li Dian could not arrest the forward momentum of the army. Yu Jin dashed ahead. "Stop the march!" he cried to Xiahou Dun. "They could use fire on these tight roads. The hills and the river have us hemmed in, and the undergrowth crowds us." How real the danger was now dawned on Xiahou Dun, but by the time he turned back to stop the advance, he caught the sound of fire hissing and rising in crescendo as arms of flame reached up through the dry reeds hugging the road. In moments the blaze, whipped by the wind, roared on all sides of them. Panic ensued. Cao Cao's soldiers trampled one another, adding to the incalculable losses. Zhao Zilong then returned to take a further toll on the enemy. Xiahou Dun, braving heat and smoke, broke through the walls of fire and fled.¹⁵

Li Dian, who had been watching this disastrous turn of events, raced for Bowang. But another contingent, illuminated in the fires, barred his way; at its head was Lord Guan. After a spell of confused and desperate fighting, Li Dian managed to escape; and Yu Jin too, seeing the wagons consumed in the flames, fled for his life. Xiahou Lan and Han Hao tried to save the grain and fodder; but Zhang Fei intercepted them, made short work of Xiahou Lan, and sent Han Hao into headlong flight. The slaughter went on until dawn. Corpses littered the land, and the blood ran in rivers. This poem commemorates the victory:

With fire he broke the battle at Bowang,

All smiles and small talk, giving each his cue.
Striking fear deep into Cao Cao's soul,
Thus Kongming scored a coup at his debut.

Xiahou Dun rounded up the survivors and returned to Xuchang.

Kongming recalled all units. Lord Guan and Zhang Fei said to one another, "He is a true hero, a champion!" The brothers had ridden only a short distance when they saw Mi Zhu and Mi Fang leading a party of soldiers. In their midst was a small carriage. A man, perfectly poised, sat inside. Lord Guan and Zhang Fei dismounted and bowed low before the carriage in acknowledgment of the director general's ability. Moments later Xuande, Zhao Zilong, Liu Feng, Guan Ping, and others arrived. The men regrouped into their companies, and the captured spoils were shared among officers and men. Afterward all marched back to Xinye. Along the road the townspeople prostrated themselves before the victors, exclaiming, "We are saved thanks to Lord Liu, who has won the service of an able man."

Back in the county seat, Kongming said to Xuande, "Xiahou Dun has beat a retreat, but Cao Cao himself will return in force." "What are we to do?" Xuande asked. "I think I know how to hold him off," Kongming replied. Indeed:

After the victory neither man nor mount may rest:
A perfect strategy is needed to avoid the next attack.

What was Kongming's plan?

READ ON.



Lady Cai Proposes Ceding Jingzhou to Cao Cao; Zhuge Liang Burns Cao's Men in Xinye

XUANDE ASKED KONGMING HOW TO COUNTER CAO CAO, and Kongming said, "We cannot stay in a small town like Xinye. The latest news is that Liu Biao may be dying. The time has come to establish ourselves in Jingzhou and put ourselves in position to throw Cao Cao back." "It sounds sensible," Xuande said, "but I will not conspire against the man who has hosted us so kindly." "If you fail to take the province now," Kongming warned emphatically, "you will soon regret it." "I would rather die than do this dishonorable deed," Xuande responded. "This matter is going to come up again," Kongming said.

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Xiahou Dun returned to Xuchang and presented himself in bonds before the prime minister. Touching his head to the ground, the defeated general offered to atone with his life for the losses at Bowang. But Cao Cao undid the ropes. "I fell afoul of Zhuge Liang's treacherous scheme," Xiahou Dun explained. Cao Cao said, "How could a man who has waged war all his life forget to guard against fire on those narrow pathways?" "Li Dian and Yu Jin tried to warn me," Xiahou Dun admitted, "but I did not heed them." Cao Cao rewarded the two commanders.¹

"Xuande grows bolder," Xiahou Dun warned. "Action must be taken now." "Yes, Liu Bei and Sun Quan are our first concern," Cao Cao replied. "The others are not worth worrying about. The time has come to make the south submit." So saying, he ordered the mobilization of half a million soldiers into five equal contingents: the first, led by Cao Ren and Cao Hong; the second, by Zhang Liao and Zhang He; the third, by Xiahou Yuan and Xiahou Dun; the fourth, by Yu Jin and Li Dian; the fifth, by Cao Cao himself and his staff commanders. The expedition was scheduled to set out in the seventh month of Jian An 13.²

Imperial Mentor³ Kong Rong opposed the expedition. "Liu Bei and Liu Biao," he argued, "are members of the imperial clan; imperial sanction is required before taking military action against them. Sun Quan has a powerful hold on the six districts of the Southland, and the Great River affords his territory a formidable natural defense. It is not an easy place to capture. Putting an army into the field without the justification such an enterprise must have will cost Your Excellency the confidence of the realm." Cao Cao responded angrily, "Liu Bei, Liu Biao, and Sun Quan have disobeyed imperial decrees. Their chastisement is both necessary and proper." With that, he dismissed Kong Rong harshly and ordered any further protest punished by execution.

Kong Rong left Cao Cao's residence, lifted his eyes to Heaven, and sighed as he said, "How can the most inhumane of men succeed in war against the most humane of men? The former cannot win."⁴ A household retainer of Imperial Censor Chi Lü overheard the remark and reported it to his master.

The censor, whom Kong Rong held in disdain, deeply resented the scholar and gladly called the matter to Cao Cao's attention. "Day after day," Chi Lü added, "Kong Rong belittles you and slanders you. Moreover, he was friendly with Mi Heng. Mi Heng praised him as a second Confucius, and Kong Rong returned the compliment, calling Mi Heng another Yan Hui.⁵ That time Mi Heng stripped himself at the drum concert and shamed you so—Kong Rong put him up to it." Shaking with fury, the prime minister ordered security officers to arrest the imperial mentor.

At the time Kong Rong's two young sons were at home playing chess. Their attendants said, "They've taken your father to be executed. Get away at once." "When the nest falls," the boys replied, "the eggs will break." Moments later the security officers swept in, seized all members of the household, including the two boys, and put them to death.⁶

Soon after, the imperial mentor's corpse was publicly displayed. Zhi Xi of Jingzhao knelt over the body and wept. Cao Cao would have had him killed too, but Xun Wenruo dissuaded him, saying, "I have been told that Zhi Xi often warned Kong Rong that his obstinacy would ruin him. His mourning is no more than a token of his personal loyalty. I would spare him." Xun Wenruo's words carried weight, and Cao Cao took no action against Zhi Xi. Zhi Xi arranged a suitable burial for Kong Rong and his sons. A later verse sang the imperial mentor's praises:

When Kong Rong Beihai district ruled,
His mighty spirit spanned the sky.
His house was always filled with guests;
Their cups were always filled with wine.

By rhetoric he held his age in awe;
His wit put kings and dukes to shame.⁷
Historians call him loyal and true
In annals that preserve his rightful name.

After the execution of Kong Rong, Cao Cao ordered the five armies to commence their southern expedition. Xun Wenruo alone remained to protect the capital.

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In Jingzhou, Liu Biao's illness had worsened. He called for Xuande, intending to entrust him with the care of his sons. Xuande, attended by his brothers, came before the protector. "My condition is incurable, worthy brother," Liu Biao began. "Before I die, I intend to place my sons in your charge. They are not fit to succeed me. After my death you should assume control of Jingzhou yourself." Xuande bowed and wept. "I shall give my utmost support to my nephews," he said. "I have no higher ambition." As the two kinsmen spoke, the approach of Cao Cao's armies was reported. Xuande took his leave and hastened back to Xinye. Liu Biao, severely shaken, decided that his rule should pass to his eldest son, Liu Qi, whom he placed in Xuande's protection. Lady Cai, infuriated at the decision, had the inner gates sealed and the outer gates guarded by her men, Cai Mao and Zhang Yun.

Liu Qi had already positioned himself at Jiangxia⁸ when he learned that his father was near death. He hurried back to Jingzhou, only to find Cai Mao barring his entrance. "Young master," Cai Mao

declared, "you were commissioned by your father to defend Jiangxia and have no authority to abandon your duties. What if the Southland soldiers strike? Your appearance here could only annoy the protector and aggravate his condition, which would be most unfilial. You should return at once." Liu Qi stood helplessly outside the gates; after a spell of lamentation he returned sadly to Jiangxia.

Liu Biao continued to fail. At last, despairing of his heir's arrival, he groaned loudly and passed away in the eighth month of Jian An 13 on the forty-fifth day of the chronological cycle. A poet of later times lamented the fate of Liu Biao:

The Yuans held the Yellow River north,
And Liu Biao the middle Yangzi.
Till women's rule dragged their houses down,
And without a trace they were gone.

With the provincial protector dead, Lady Cai, Cai Mao, and Zhang Yun forged a will appointing Liu Zong heir.⁹ Then they commenced mourning and announced the funeral. Liu Zong, a shrewd lad though only fourteen, said to the assembled advisers: "My father has departed this world. My elder brother, Qi, is presently in Jiangxia. And my uncle, Liu Xuande, is in Xinye. You have chosen me to succeed my father, but they may well challenge my succession by force of arms. How are we to justify ourselves?"

Before anyone could reply, Li Gui, a military adviser, stepped forward and said, "Our young master speaks good sense. We must dispatch a letter to Jiangxia announcing the mourning and inviting the elder son to govern us. At the same time we should have Liu Xuande share the administrative duties. In that way we will be able to withstand Cao Cao to the north and repel Sun Quan to the south. This plan provides for all contingencies."

Cai Mao turned on the speaker. "Do you dare to subvert the late protector's will?" he demanded sharply. But Li Gui stood firm and denounced Cai Mao: "After conspiring with your cohorts, you published a false will and then instated the junior son and deposed the senior. We will soon see the nine districts of our province fall into enemy hands. If our late lord's ghost be present, let him punish this crime." Cai Mao angrily ordered the officer removed and beheaded. Li Gui's curses ended only with his life.

Cai Mao set up Liu Zong as ruler of Jingzhou, and key members of the Cai clan assumed control of the province's military. He ordered Deng Yi, secretary to the protector, and Liu Xian, assistant protector, to guard the capital. Lady Cai and her son, Liu Zong, stationed themselves at Xiangyang to check any move by Liu Qi or Liu Xuande. Then, without informing Liu Qi or Xuande, Cai Mao had Liu Biao interred in the hills south of the River Han, east of Xiangyang.

Lady Cai and Liu Zong had hardly settled into Xiangyang when they discovered they were directly in the line of Cao Cao's march. Panicked, Liu Zong called Kuai Yue and Cai Mao for counsel. One of their staff supervisors, Fu Xuan, said to Liu Zong, "Cao Cao is not the only danger. Neither your elder brother in Jiangxia nor Xuande in Xinye has been informed of the funeral. If they move against us, Jingzhou could be lost. I have a plan, however, that will make our people as secure as Mount Tai and save your own rank and office as well." "What do you have in mind?" Liu Zong asked. "I advise you to offer the province to Cao Cao," Fu Xuan said. "He will surely treat you generously, my lord."

"What!" Liu Zong exclaimed. "Do you expect me simply to surrender the patrimony I have only

now made mine?" Kuai Yue broke in: "Fu Xuan is right. The choice between rebellion and submission has to be made in broad perspective. The disparity between the strong and the weak cannot be overcome. Cao Cao has undertaken his expeditions north and south in the name of the imperial court. By resisting him, my lord, you win no name for obedience. Moreover, you are newly instated. Your hold on the territory is not firm. Problems abroad give us no peace, and problems at home are beginning to brew. Our people quail at the news of Cao's advance before a single battle has been fought. How can we make a stand with frightened men?" "My lord," Liu Zong conceded, "there is merit in your arguments, and I would be ruled by them, but to turn my late father's estate over to a stranger is bound to make me the mockery of the realm."

At this point someone strode boldly into the chamber and declared: "Fu Xuan and Kuai Yue have advised you well. You must act accordingly." All eyes turned to Wang Can (Zhongxuan), a man from Gaoping in Shanyang. Wang Can had a frail appearance and was short of stature. In his youth he had been received by the famed imperial courtier, Cai Yong. On that occasion, Cai Yong did Wang Can the honor of rising eagerly to greet him, even though he had many distinguished guests to meet. This gesture caused Cai Yong's startled retainers to ask him, "Why does the master single out this lad for such honor?" "Wang Can has extraordinary gifts," Cai Yong replied, "far beyond any I may have." Wang Can was widely informed and had a prodigious memory. He once recited the entire text of a roadside inscription after a single viewing. Another time he reconstructed perfectly a complex chess game after it had been played. He was also skilled in arithmetic, and he surpassed his contemporaries in rhetoric and poetry. At the age of seventeen he was advanced by the Emperor to attendant in the Inner Bureau, but he did not assume the post. Some time after that, to avoid the civil wars in the northeast, he came to Jingzhou, where Liu Biao had received him as an honored guest.

Now Wang Can asked Liu Zong, "How do you compare with Cao Cao, my lord?" "There is no comparison," he replied. "Cao Cao," Wang Can continued, "has a powerful army, brave commanders, and a staff of able tacticians. He captured Lü Bu at Xiapi; put Yuan Shao to flight at Guandu; chased Liu Xuande to Longyou; defeated the Wuhuan in the White Wolf Hills; and no man can count the others he has beheaded, eliminated, and swept aside, or the cities he has taken. If he comes in force, we cannot hold him off. Follow the proposal of Fu Xuan and Kuai Yue or suffer the consequences." "Excellent advice," Liu Zong answered, "but I shall have to inform my mother." At these words Lady Cai appeared from behind a screen and said, "That will not be necessary, since these three have agreed that you should tender the province to Cao Cao."

Having chosen his course, Liu Zong secretly sent his letter of surrender. The bearer, Song Zhong, was received in the city of Wancheng and richly rewarded by the prime minister. Cao Cao instructed Song Zhong to have Liu Zong welcome him in front of the city gate of Jingzhou; in return he would confirm Liu Zong's rule for all time.

Song Zhong was on his way back to Jingzhou with Cao Cao's answer when, nearing a river, he spied a party of soldiers under Lord Guan's command. Song Zhong tried to slip away but was called to a halt. Initially he evaded Lord Guan's questions, but persistent interrogation eventually forced him to disclose the nature of his mission. Astonished, Lord Guan took his prisoner back to Xuande, who wept at the story Song Zhong told.

"Under the circumstances," Zhang Fei said, "we have to behead the courier, take Xiangyang, do away with the Cai clan and Liu Zong, and go to war with Cao Cao." "Enough," Xuande retorted, "I will keep my own counsel on this." He then turned to Song Zhong and demanded, "If you knew of

these moves, why didn't you inform me at once? I could have your life, but what good would it do? Get out!" Reiterating humble thanks for this reprieve, Song Zhong scurried off.

At this moment of deep dilemma for Xuande, Liu Qi's envoy, Yi Ji, arrived. Xuande was grateful to Yi Ji for having saved his life, so he descended the steps, welcomed him personally, and thanked him profusely.¹⁰ "My master, Liu Qi," the envoy began, "was in Jiangxia when he learned of his father's death. Lady Cai and Cai Mao did not announce the funeral and colluded to establish Liu Zong. My master has verified this. Thinking Your Lordship might not have heard, my master sent me to convey his expression of grief and to request that Your Lordship march to Xiangyang with your finest troops and make the Cais answer for their crime."

Xuande read Liu Qi's letter. "Your information about Liu Zong's usurpation is correct," he said to Yi Ji, "but do you know that they have offered the province to Cao Cao?" "Who told you that, my lord?" Yi Ji asked aghast. Xuande then described the capture of Liu Zong's messenger. "In that case," Yi Ji said, "hasten to Xiangyang on the pretext of attending mourning ceremonies for Liu Biao. Lure Liu Zong out to receive you, seize him, and wipe out his clique, and Jingzhou will be yours, my lord." "Good advice," Kongming remarked. But Xuande began to sob. "In his last hours," he said, "my elder brother entrusted his son to me. How could I face him in the netherworld if I laid hands on the other son and his estate?" "If you won't do it," Kongming said, "how do you propose to fight off Cao Cao when his troops are even now at Wancheng?" "We shall retreat to Fan," Xuande answered.¹¹

The advance of Cao Cao's army to Bowang was announced. Xuande sent Liu Qi's envoy back to Jiangxia with instructions to prepare for battle. He then sat down with Kongming to discuss tactics. "Put your mind at ease," Kongming said. "Last time we burned out half of Xiahou Dun's army at Bowang. This time we'll make another trap for him. But Xinye is no place for us now. We must hasten to Fan." Proclamations of the impending move were posted at the four gates of Xinye. The text read:

Without regard to age or sex, let all those willing to follow us proceed directly to Fan for temporary refuge. Do not endanger yourselves by remaining.

Sun Qian arranged to move the populace across the river, and Mi Zhu escorted the families of the officials to Fan. At the same time Kongming assembled the body of commanders. His first instruction was to Lord Guan: "Hide a thousand men at the upper end of the White River and provide each one with bags of sand to dam the waters. Tomorrow, after the third watch, the moment you hear men and horses downstream, pull the bags out of the river and flood the enemy. Then hurry down to reinforce us."

Next, Kongming instructed Zhang Fei: "Hide a thousand men at the Boling crossing, where the river runs slow. If Cao's men are in danger of drowning, that's where they'll try to escape. I want you to join the battle at that point of vantage."

He then gave orders to Zhao Zilong: "Divide three thousand men into four contingents. Take one yourself and hide outside the eastern gate to Xinye. Have the other three contingents cover the remaining gates. Before you leave the city, place plenty of sulphur and saltpeter on the house roofs. When Cao enters, his soldiers will want to rest in the people's homes. Tomorrow evening the wind should be strong. The moment it starts blowing, have the men covering the three other gates shoot flaming arrows into the town. As the fire peaks, let those three contingents raise a great commotion—but leave the east gate open for the enemy to exit through. When they come through, attack from

behind. Then catch up with Lord Guan and Zhang Fei and bring your three thousand, along with their men, over to Fan."

Finally, Kongming instructed Mi Fang and Liu Feng: "Station two thousand on Magpie Tail Hill, thirty *li* from Xinye: one thousand under blue flags, one thousand under red. When Cao's army comes up, have the red group flee left, the blue group right. This will confuse their leaders and prevent pursuit. Next, deploy an ambush and fall on the foe as soon as you see flames over Xinye. After you're finished, come to the upper end of the river and help us out." All parts of their plan now in place, Kongming and Xuande climbed to an observation point to await reports of victory.

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In the lead of Cao Cao's army was the hundred-thousand-man force commanded jointly by Cao Ren and Cao Hong. Its three-thousand-man shock force fit out in iron armor and under the command of Xu Chu was sweeping toward Xinye. Around midday Xu Chu reached the slopes of Magpie Tail and saw soldiers massed under blue and red flags. As he advanced, Liu Feng and Mi Fang began their prearranged maneuvers. Xu Chu called a brief halt. "There must be an ambush ahead," he said. "We'll hold here." He then hastened back to inform Cao Ren, who was leading the main force. "It's only a decoy," Cao Ren said to him. "There's no ambush there. Press on. We will follow."

Xu Chu returned to his forward position and resumed the advance. The contingent reached a small wood and stopped. The place looked deserted. The sun had set. As Xu Chu prepared to move forward again, the hilltops seemed to speak with the blaring of horns and the beating of drums. Xu Chu looked up into a field of flags and banners surrounding two umbrellas, one over Xuande, the other over Kongming. They were seated face-to-face enjoying something to drink. Maddened, Xu Chu sought a way up, but his ascent was prevented by the stone and wooden missiles that came pelting down. As thunderous shouts from behind the hill rang in the air, Xu Chu struggled to get his forces into action, but the light of day had already left the sky.

When Cao Ren's main force arrived, he ordered Xinye occupied in order to shelter and rest the horses. He reached the walls, had all four gates flung wide, and entered the evacuated city unchallenged. "As you see," Cao Hong remarked, "having neither strength nor strategy to oppose us, they have scurried off, followed by the entire population." Spent and famished, the invaders settled into whatever lodgings were at hand and began preparing their meals. Cao Ren and Cao Hong entered the *yamen*, there to enjoy the respite from war.

After the first watch strong winds blew up. Guards at the gates reported minor fires, but Cao Ren dismissed the danger, saying, "Take it easy. They must have been caused by our army's cooks." But more reports kept coming in, followed by the news that three of the city's gates were on fire. Frantically, Cao Ren ordered his commanders to mount, but the whole city was already ablaze. Flames covered the ground and reached into the sky—a conflagration that dwarfed the one that had foiled Xiahou Dun at Bowang. As a later poet wrote,

The evil genius of the northern plain
Marched his legions to the River Han.
Within Xinye's walls he felt the wind god's wrath,
And down from blazing Heaven the fire god ran.

Cao Ren led his men through the smoke and fire, dashing for any avenue of escape. Someone called out that the east gate was not burning, and everyone bolted for it in a mad rush that left many trampled to death. Cao Ren had barely made it out of the burning city when he heard voices roaring behind him. Zhao Zilong was charging up. In the melee the beaten invaders—too demoralized to fight—fled for their lives. Then Mi Fang hit them hard, inflicting more casualties. Cao Ren continued his flight. Again he was attacked, this time by Liu Feng. By the fourth watch the bulk of his force had been crushed. The remnant reached the edge of the White River, thankful that the water was low enough to cross. Men and horses waded in and drank their fill amid great clamor and neighing.

Upstream Lord Guan had dammed the current. At dusk he had seen the flames over Xinye. Now at the fourth watch he heard the men and horses downstream and ordered his troops to pull the sandbags from the river. The pent-up water burst forth, drowning men and mounts in its powerful surge. In order to cross, Cao Ren led the survivors to Boling, where the current was slower, only to be confronted by another party of soldiers. Suddenly their shouts filled the night, and before him stood Zhang Fei. "Cao, you bastard, I'll have your life!" he cried to the astonished enemy. Indeed:

In the city Cao Ren witnessed the belching flames;
At the river a new menace confronted him.

Would Cao Ren survive?[12](#)

READ ON.



***Liu Xuande Leads His Flock over the River;
Zhao Zilong Rescues Master Liu Single-handedly***

AS LORD GUAN RELEASED THE TORRENTS of the White River upstream, Zhang Fei joined the battle downstream, intercepting Cao Ren with a powerful offensive. Zhang Fei and Xu Chu suddenly came face-to-face, but Xu Chu had lost his taste for combat; he fled. Zhang Fei caught up with Xuande and Kongming, and all together they marched upriver to the boats that Liu Feng and Mi Fang had waiting to take them to Fan. After the crossing Kongming ordered the ships and rafts burned.

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Cao Ren collected the battered remnants of his troops and stationed them in Xinye, sending Cao Hong to Cao Cao with a full report. "Zhuge, the bumpkin! How dare he!" Cao Cao raged. He then mobilized his entire force and blanketed the region around Xinye. He ordered the hills scoured, the White River blocked, and his host divided into eight field armies. His objective was to take Fan in a concerted attack.

"My lord," Liu Ye said, "you have barely arrived in Xiangyang and must win the affections of the people before all else. Liu Bei has moved the entire population of Xinye over to Fan; a direct attack would wreak havoc on both counties. I suggest sending an envoy to offer Liu Bei the opportunity to submit. If he refuses, we will have made plain our wish to spare the people. If he accepts, Jingzhou will be ours without a fight." Cao Cao approved and asked whom to send. "Shan Fu is close to Liu Bei. Why not send him?" Liu Ye suggested. "What if he does not return?" Cao Cao countered. "And make himself a laughingstock?" Liu Ye responded. "Have no fear of it, my lord."

On this advice Cao Cao summoned Shan Fu and said, "My original thought was to crush Fan. But I hesitate to put the common people through such suffering. If you can convince Liu Bei to surrender, I shall forgive his offenses and grant him rank. If he clings to his delusions, soldier and civilian alike will perish, and not a stone will be left unscathed. I know you for a loyal and honorable man. That is why I delegate you. I trust you will not fail me." Shan Fu set out.¹

Liu Xuande and Kongming received Shan Fu at Fan, and the three shared memories of former times. Then Shan Fu said, "Cao Cao sent me to call for your surrender, my lord. But it is only a pretext for winning popular approval. He has formed eight armies and filled in the bed of the river for his advance. I fear this city cannot be defended. You must find a way to leave as soon as possible." Xuande wanted Shan Fu to stay, but the former adviser said, "I would be universally scorned. Be assured, my mother's death burns fresh in my heart. Though I stay with Cao in body, I am sworn never to devise a stratagem for him. With Sleeping Dragon's help you need not despair. I must go back. Please forgive me." Xuande did not press the matter. Shan Fu reported that Xuande had no intention

of submitting, and Cao Cao, began the southern campaign in a great show of anger that very day.

Xuande turned to Kongming, who said, "We have to leave at once. We can take Xiangyang and rest there temporarily." "These common folk have stayed by us so long," Xuande said, "are we to abandon them now?" "Send round word," Kongming said, "that those who wish to may follow you." He sent Lord Guan to the river to prepare the boats, and ordered Sun Qian and Jian Yong to issue the following proclamation: "Cao Cao's army is approaching. Our city cannot hold out. Those who wish to will have to follow us across the river." The people of Fan as well as those of Xinye shouted out in unison, "We will go with Lord Liu—even if we must die."

That same day, amid cries and tears, the exodus began. Bracing up elders, taking the young in hand, leading sons and daughters, the human tide traversed the water like great waves rolling on and on. Unabating cries rang out from the shores. On his boat surveying the scene, Xuande was profoundly shaken. "If I have made these good people suffer this for my sake, what will be left to live for?" He attempted to throw himself into the river but was restrained by those around him. His words pierced all who heard him with sorrow. After reaching the south shore, Xuande looked back to those still waiting anxiously and tearfully to cross. He had Lord Guan urge the boatmen to greater efforts. Then at last he mounted.

Xuande led the mass march to the east gate of Xiangyang. He found the top of the wall crowded with banners, the moat below thick with sharp staves and barbed branches. Xuande reined in and shouted, "Liu Zong, worthy nephew, I seek but the succor of these people. Open the gates for us—and quickly!" But Liu Zong was afraid to show himself. Cai Mao and Zhang Yun raced to the tower and urged the archers to unleash their volleys on the human throng outside the wall. Staring upward, the people voiced their appeal. One commander inside the town raced to the tower with several hundred guards and bellowed, "Cai Mao! Zhang Yun! Traitors to the Han! How dare you reject Governor Liu, a man of humane character who comes seeking refuge for the people in his care!"

Who was this man, eight spans tall, with a face swarthy as dark dates? It was Wei Yan (Wenchang) of Yiyang. Then and there Wei Yan cut down the gate guards with broad sweeps of his sword, threw open the gates and let down the drawbridge. "Imperial Uncle Liu," he shouted, "lead your men into the city and let us slay these tyrants together." Without hesitation Zhang Fei started forward, but Xuande checked him. "Don't create panic," he warned.

Wei Yan was doing his utmost to induce Xuande to enter the city, when another soldier rode forth and denounced him: "Wei Yan, common footslogger! Will you incite sedition? It's I, General Wen Ping!" Outraged, Wei Yan raised his spear and rode forth to engage his challenger. The men of both sides then fell upon one another at the base of the city wall in a wild mutual slaughter that made the ground shake. "I have brought the people the harm I meant to spare them," Xuande said. "We shall not enter Xiangyang!" "Jiangling is another strategically located town," Kongming said. "Let's take it and settle in." "My idea, exactly," Xuande responded. And with that he turned the throng away from Xiangyang and on toward Jiangling. In the commotion many people from Xiangyang slipped out and joined Liu Xuande.

Meanwhile, the fight between Wei Yan and Wen Ping continued. By afternoon Wei Yan's force had been decimated. He finally rode from the field, hoping to locate Xuande but ended up taking refuge with Han Xuan, governor of Changsha.

More than one hundred thousand soldiers and commoners, thousands of carts and carriages, and innumerable carriers and bearers came together in the procession. When they came upon Liu Biao's

grave, Xuande led his commanders in ritual worship. In a trembling voice he declared, "Elder brother, I, wanting in virtue and lacking in talent, have failed to fulfill the heavy charge you laid on me. This shameful offense is mine alone and does not touch these good people. Brother, let your splendid spirit descend and save the people of Jingzhou."² Xuande's voice conveyed such sad intensity that neither soldier nor civilian could contain his emotions.

A scout reported: "Cao Cao's main force is camped at Fan. They're gathering boats and rafts to cross over here today." "We can defend ourselves from Jiangling," the commanders assured Xuande, "but with such a multitude on our hands we're barely covering ten *li* a day. Who knows when we will make Jiangling? And how could we engage Cao's army if it found us now? Wouldn't it be expedient to leave the people behind for now and go on ahead ourselves?" Xuande replied with deep feeling, "The human factor is the key to any undertaking. How can we abandon those who have committed themselves to us?" These words became known, and all were deeply moved. Much later a poet left these lines commemorating the desperate flight across the waters:

In mortal straits, good of heart, he kept his flock from harm;
Riverborne, the tearful leader won his army's love.
And still today men mark the site with solemn piety;
And older folks keep Lord Liu in cherished memory.

Xuande advanced slowly in the midst of his multitude. "They will overtake us soon," Kongming warned. "Dispatch Lord Guan to Jiangxia. Have him ask young Liu Qi for boats to meet us at Jiangling." Accordingly, Xuande put this request in a letter, which Lord Guan and Sun Qian, guarded by five hundred riders, carried to Liu Qi. Xuande had Zhang Fei watch the rear, Zhao Zilong protect the members of his family, and the remaining leaders take care of the commoners. On they marched. In the course of one day they covered little more than ten *li*.

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From Fan, Cao Cao sent a messenger across the river to summon Liu Zong. Liu Zong was afraid to appear before the prime minister, and so Cai Mao and Zhang Yun asked permission to go in his stead. Wang Wei secretly urged Liu Zong, "You, General, have surrendered, and Xuande is gone. Cao Cao's guard will be down. Why not organize your men, place them strategically, and surprise Cao Cao? Once he is captured, you will command the empire's respect and a general call to arms in your name would bring peace to the whole of the northern heartland. Such an opportunity rarely arises. Don't miss it!" Liu Zong took this proposal to Cai Mao, who berated Wang Wei and said, "How absurd! What do you know of the Mandate of Heaven?" To this, Wang Wei retorted, "Traitor! What I wouldn't give to devour you alive!" At this point Kuai Yue intervened to prevent Cai Mao from killing Wang Wei.

Cai Mao and Zhang Yun traveled to Fan and presented themselves in a most ingratiating manner before Cao Cao. "Tell me," the prime minister asked, "what are Jingzhou's resources in men, horses, cash, and grain?" "Fifty thousand horse soldiers," Cai Mao replied, "one hundred and fifty thousand foot soldiers, eighty thousand marines. Most of the coin and grain is in Jiangling; the rest is stored in various places—a year's supply." "How about the war-boats?" Cao Cao continued. "And who are the

naval commanders?" "All told," Cai Mao answered, "seven thousand boats. Myself and Zhang Yun here are in command."

Then and there Cao Cao conferred on Cai Mao the title of Lord Who Controls the South and named him superintendent of the Naval Forces, and he made Zhang Yun Lord Who Upholds Obedience and lieutenant superintendent of the Naval Forces. Delighted with their new positions, the two men expressed respectful gratitude. The prime minister said, "I shall report to the Emperor Liu Biao's death and his son's submission, so that the proper heir may rule Jingzhou permanently." The two commanders withdrew, highly pleased with the outcome of their interview.

Xun You said to Cao Cao, "Why did you grant such exalted titles to those craven toadies? And why make them naval superintendents into the bargain?" "Do you think I don't know them for what they are?" Cao Cao replied. "Don't forget, we have an army of northerners unused to naval warfare. Those two can be of help at the moment. When we have accomplished what we want, they will be dealt with as they deserve!"

Cai Mao and Zhang Yun returned to Jingzhou and appeared before Liu Zong. "Cao Cao," they said, "has assured us that he will recommend your permanent control of Jingzhou to the Emperor." Liu Zong was delighted. The next day he and his mother, Lady Cai, prepared the seal of office and the tally of command and crossed the river to welcome Cao Cao and do him the honor of presenting the instruments of government personally.

Cao Cao offered words of comfort to the young prince. Then, to prepare his entrance, he directed the generals of the expeditionary army to station troops by the walls of Xiangyang. Cai Mao and Zhang Yun ordered the residents to welcome the prime minister with burning incense. Again, Cao Cao spoke kind and reassuring words to one and all. He entered the city and seated himself in the governmental hall. First, he summoned Kuai Yue and said to him, "Acquiring your services means more to me than the whole province." He made Kuai Yue governor of Jiangling and lord of Fan. Next, he made Fu Xuan and Wang Can honorary lords, and Liu Zong imperial inspector of Qingzhou, with orders to report to his post forthwith. Startled, Liu Zong declined, saying, "I have no wish to become governor of another province, only to remain on my parents' native soil." Cao Cao replied, "Qingzhou is close to the capital. I am making you an official attached to the court lest you come to harm here." Cao Cao overcame Liu Zong's objections, and the youth set off for Qingzhou, as required, with Lady Cai. They were accompanied only by the former general Wang Wei. The other members of Liu Zong's court returned after seeing him to the river.

Cao Cao called Yu Jin aside and said, "Take a few riders; overtake Liu Zong and his mother, and do away with them. That should prevent further trouble." Yu Jin soon overtook the little party. "I bear the prime minister's command," he declared. "Prepare to die!" Lady Cai cradled the boy and cried bitterly as Yu Jin's men set to work. Wang Wei put up a fierce struggle but was finally slain. Lady Cai and Liu Zong were subsequently killed swiftly. Yu Jin reported the success of his mission to Cao Cao, who rewarded him richly.³ Cao Cao also searched for Kongming's family in Longzhong, but on Kongming's instructions they had long since moved to Three Rivers—to Cao Cao's great frustration.

After Cao Cao had Xiangyang under his control, Xun You counseled him, "Jiangling, with its ample supplies of money and grain, is one of the keys to the province. Xuande will be well positioned if he gets hold of that town." "The thought has never left my mind," Cao Cao said and ordered that one of his generals in Xiangyang be selected to spearhead a move to Jiangling.

The planning session, however, was not attended by Wen Ping, and Cao Cao demanded to know

the reason. When Wen Ping finally appeared, Cao Cao asked him, "Why are you late?" "A loyal subject who has failed to protect his master's lands cannot show his face," Wen Ping said and began to sob and weep. "A loyal follower and true," Cao Cao said. He promoted Wen Ping to governor of Jiangxia, granted him the title of honorary lord, and ordered him to lead the expedition to Jiangling.

At this moment spies reported: "Liu Bei is accompanied by a multitude of common folk. They're only three hundred *li* from here and moving at barely ten *li* a day." Cao Cao ordered five thousand crack horsemen to overtake Liu Bei within one day. The force set out that night, followed closely by Cao Cao's main army.

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Xuande was now at the head of more than a hundred thousand common folk and three thousand cavalry, all struggling to reach Jiangling. Zhao Zilong had charge of Xuande's two wives and young son. Zhang Fei was defending the rear. "We have heard nothing of Lord Guan," Kongming said, "since we sent him to Jiangxia. I wonder what came of his mission." "Perhaps we could trouble you to go there yourself," Xuande responded. "Liu Qi will never forget the good advice you once gave him, and if he sees you in person, we should get what we want." Kongming agreed and, joined by Liu Feng and five hundred men, set out for Jiangxia in quest of aid.

Liu Xuande pressed on. With him were Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, and Mi Fang. Suddenly a violent gale scooped up the dust in front of the horses and sent it skyward, blotting out the sun. "What does this signify?" Xuande asked in alarm. Jian Yong, who had some insight into the laws of *yin* and *yang* that govern all, took augury and said uneasily, "Great ill fortune should strike tonight, my lord. Abandon these people with all speed and be gone." "They have followed from as far as Xinye," Xuande replied. "I cannot abandon them." "If you continue like this, disaster is imminent." "What lies ahead?" Xuande asked. "Dangyang county," his attendants answered, "site of Scenic Mountain." Xuande ordered camp pitched at the mountain.

Autumn was passing into winter. Chill winds pierced the marchers' bones. As the day darkened, wailing voices filled the wilderness. By the fourth watch, the dead of night, the encamped multitude began to hear them—out of the northwest—the shouts of men that shook the ground as they came. Xuande leaped to his horse and led two thousand of his own crack troops to meet them. But Cao Cao's force had the advantage of numbers. Opposition was impossible. Xuande was fighting for his life. At just this juncture of mortal extremity Zhang Fei arrived with a body of men and cut a route for Xuande, enabling him to escape eastward. Wen Ping challenged Xuande, but Xuande denounced him: "Faithless traitor! To dare to stand before men!" Wen Ping, his face suffused with shame, turned away and headed northeast.

Zhang Fei stayed beside Xuande. They fought as they fled. By dawn the hue and cry of war had receded. For the first time Xuande rested his horse. Only a hundred riders remained with him. He had become hopelessly separated from the mass of his followers, from Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, Jian Yong, and Zhao Zilong, and also from his family. "One hundred thousand living souls," he lamented, "have borne these woes for remaining with us. Of the fate of our commanders and of my family we know nothing. Even a man of clay or wood would have to grieve."

In this moment of despair Xuande saw Mi Fang, his face pierced through with arrows, stumble toward him, crying, "Zhao Zilong has defected to Cao!" "So old a friend would not betray me,"

Xuande said heatedly. "He sees our position is hopeless," Zhang Fei said, "our strength spent, and probably expects wealth and rank from Cao Cao." "He has stayed with us through our worst tribulations," Xuande answered. "He has a will of iron; wealth and rank would not move him." "I saw him heading northwest," Mi Fang said. "I will find him," Zhang Fei said. "And when I do, this spear will do the rest." "Mistrust him not!" Xuande cautioned. "You should remember how our second brother, whom you likewise suspected, made short work of Cao's generals Yan Liang and Wen Chou. Zhao Zilong must have good reason for his absence. I cannot believe he has abandoned us."

Zhang Fei would not be reasoned with. He took twenty horsemen to Steepslope Bridge. A wood to the east gave him an idea: "If I cut some branches, tie them to the horses' tails, and trot the beasts back and forth in the wood, the dust they raise will suggest numbers that should deter the enemy's approach." Having thus instructed his men, Zhang Fei, spear ready, mount poised, rode onto the bridge and scoured the west for any sign of Zhao Zilong.

During Cao Cao's raid Zhao Zilong had attacked the enemy at the fourth watch and continued battling until daybreak. But he had become separated from Xuande's family and was unable to find them again. He thought: "Lord Liu placed his two wives, Lady Gan and Lady Mi, in my care, along with his child, Master Ah Dou. Having lost them in the fighting, I cannot show myself before my lord again. The least I can do is die in battle trying to locate his loved ones." With only thirty or forty riders behind him, Zhao Zilong charged into the tangle of fighters.

The common people of two counties, Xinye and Fan, shook Heaven and earth with their wails as they fled the scene of battle. Beyond all numbering, pierced by arrows, lanced by spears, they abandoned their young. Zhao Zilong, in search of his charges, came upon Jian Yong lying in the brush. "Have you seen our mistresses?" Zilong asked. "They abandoned their carriages," Jian Yong answered, "and fled on foot with Ah Dou. I was rounding a hill, racing after them, when one of Cao's captains stabbed me. I fell, and he took my horse. I could not move, much less fight." Zilong gave him the mount of one of his followers. He also detailed two men to help Jian Yong get to Xuande and report that he meant to seek high and low for Xuande's wives and son, or die on the field.

Zhao Zilong was galloping toward Steepslope Bridge when a soldier hailed him. "Where to, General Zhao?" "Who are you?" Zhao Zilong countered, reining up. "I was escorting our lord's wives," the man replied, "when an arrow knocked me down." Zilong asked for details. "Just now," the soldier said, "I saw Lady Gan, disheveled and barefoot, fleeing south with a group of women, commoners." At once Zhao Zilong turned away and raced south. He passed hundreds of civilians, men and women, helping each other make their way. "Is Lady Gan among you?" Zilong cried. To the rear of the crowd Lady Gan spotted Zilong and called out. Zilong dismounted and planted his spear in the ground. "Letting you slip from my sight was a dreadful crime," he said tearfully. "Where are Lady Mi and the young master?" "When Cao's troops chased us," Lady Gan said, "we quit the escort and fell in with these refugees. Another troop attacked us. We scattered, and I was separated from them. Somehow I escaped alive."

At that instant a fresh outcry announced another troop charging the crowd. Zhao Zilong flourished his spear and remounted to observe. In front of him was Mi Zhu, a prisoner in bonds. Just behind him, at the head of a thousand men, was Chunyu Dao, Cao Ren's corps commander, waving his sword. He had captured Mi Zhu and was going to claim his reward. With a short, sharp cry Zilong, spear leveled, went straight for Chunyu Dao. Chunyu Dao, unable to counter, was lanced and thrust under his horse. Zhao Zilong then rescued Mi Zhu and made off with two horses. He sat Lady Gan on one

and, cutting a bloody swath, brought her to Steepslope Bridge.

Zhang Fei, poised on the bridge with leveled sword, confronted him. "Zhao Zilong!" he called at the top of his voice, "explain why you betrayed our brother!" "I couldn't find our mistresses or the young master," Zilong answered, "so I dropped back. What do you mean by 'betrayed'?" "If Jian Yong had not already vouched for you, you would not pass!" Zhang Fei said. "Where is our lord?" Zilong asked. "Ahead, not far," Zhang Fei replied. Zhao Zilong turned to Mi Zhu and said, "Go on with Lady Gan. I'm going back to look for Lady Mi and the young master." He took a few riders and left.

Along the way Zilong saw a captain with an iron spear in his hand and a sword strapped to his back. Behind him a dozen horsemen advanced at a gallop. Without wasting words, Zilong challenged the leader and dropped him in a single engagement. The dozen riders fled. The slain man was Xiahou En, Cao Cao's personal attendant and sword bearer.

Now, Cao Cao had two swords of exceptional value. One was called Heaven's Prop, the other Black Pommel. Cao wore the first himself, Xiahou En the second. Its blade could slice through iron as if it were mud, and its point was dagger sharp. Before he crossed Zhao Zilong, Xiahou En had let himself become separated from Cao Cao, for he never doubted his skill. Intent only on what he and his men could plunder, Xiahou En had little expected to lose his life, let alone the treasured weapon. Zhao Zilong, examining the sword, saw the words "Black Pommel" engraved in gold on the handle and realized the value of the weapon. He thrust it into his belt, raised his spear, and resumed his assault on the enemy ranks. Looking back, he could no longer see his riders behind him.

Undaunted, Zilong continued searching for Lady Mi, questioning any civilian he passed. Finally, someone pointed ahead, saying, "The mistress has the child. Her left leg is wounded, and she can't walk. She's sitting there in a crevice in the wall." Zhao Zilong hastened to the spot and found a dwelling with an earthen wall that had been damaged by fire. Lady Mi was sitting at the base, near a dry well, weeping. Zilong dismounted and pressed his palms and head to the ground.

"With you here, General," Lady Mi said, "I know Ah Dou will live. I pray you, pity the father who, after half a lifetime of being tossed hither and roaming thither, has nothing in this world but this scrap of blood and bone. Guard him well, General, that he may see his father once again—and that I may die without regret." "My negligence is responsible for the ordeals you have suffered," Zhao Zilong said. "Say no more, but take this horse. I intend to fight on, on foot and bring you safely through the enemy's lines." "I will not have it that way," Lady Mi responded. "You must keep the horse. You are the child's only protection. My wounds are heavy, and my death is of no moment. I pray, General, take the child on ahead, and quickly. Do not delay for my sake." "I hear pursuers," Zhao Zilong said. "Mount the horse." "No," she said. "Do not lose two lives." She held Ah Dou out to Zhao Zilong and added, "His life is in your hands." Steadfastly, she refused his offers. The enemy was closing in. Their shouts were everywhere. Zilong's tone grew more anxious. "My lady, what will you do when they come?" Without answering again, Lady Mi set Ah Dou on the ground, turned, and threw herself into the well. A poet of later times honored her sacrifice in these lines:⁴

The embattled captain had to have his steed;
On foot he could not save the little prince.
Her death preserved the Liu dynastic line:
For bold decision mark this heroine.

To prevent the enemy from taking his mistress's corpse, Zhao Zilong pushed over the earthen wall, burying the well. He then loosened his armor straps, lowered his breastplate, and placed Ah Dou against his bosom. Hefting his spear, Zilong remounted.

By this time one of Cao Hong's corps commanders, Yan Ming, had brought up a body of foot soldiers. Wielding a two-edged sword with three prongs, he set on Zhao Zilong. After a brief clash Zilong ran him through. He dispersed Yan Ming's squad, killing several, and broke open a path. But another unit—commanded by a general—arrived and blocked Zilong. Their standard bore the words, large and clear, "Zhang He of Hejian." Without a word, Zilong raised his spear and joined battle. After more than ten passes Zilong had to break off the contest. He fled, and Zhang He gave chase.

Zhao Zilong applied the whip, but unfortunately his horse went crashing into a ditch, and Zhang He approached for the kill. Suddenly, a beam of reddish light formed an arc from the ditch, and the horse, as if treading on thin air, leaped out of the hole. The rescue of the prince is described in this verse of later times:

The cornered dragon bathed in red took wing
And cleaved the enemy lines by Steepslope Bridge.
In two score years and two the babe will reign;
Zhao's superhuman might thus earned his fame.

Zhang He fell back at the miraculous sight.

Zhao Zilong was in full flight when he heard two voices behind him: "Halt, Zhao Zilong!" Two more commanders before him, displaying weapons, blocked his way. Bringing up the rear were Ma Yan and Zhang Yi; blocking the way in front were Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan: all four had served Yuan Shao before surrendering to Cao Cao. Zhao Zilong fought them mightily. Cao Cao's men came trooping up. Zilong drew the sword Black Pommel and began slashing wildly. Wherever he struck, the blade cut through the armor, drawing blood. In this manner he slowly drove back the swarm of commanders and got through the encirclement.

From his vantage on Scenic Mountain, Cao Cao observed the general whom none could best and asked his attendants who it was. Cao Hong sped down the hill to find out, shouting: "Let the fighter speak his name!" "Zhao Zilong of Changshan!" was the instant reply. Cao Hong relayed the news to Cao Cao, who said, "There's a tiger-warrior for you! Try and get him here alive." He sent swift riders to inform various stations: "If Zhao Zilong comes your way, deliver him to the prime minister alive. No potshots!" And so, Zhao Zilong was able to get away. Was this too not the result of Ah Dou's good fortune?

After cutting through the encircling troops, the baby prince still on his breast, Zhao Zilong downed two standards and captured three spears. The sum total of noted captains speared or slashed by Zilong amounted to more than fifty. His exploits are remembered in these lines written long after the events:

In bloodsoaked battle gown and armor bloody red,
He faced down every foe at Dangyang town.
Of all who ever fought to keep a king from harm,
Who excels Zhao Zilong, hero of Changshan?

Zhao Zilong, his surcoat drenched in blood, had brought Ah Dou safely away from the main battleground when two armed companies intercepted him by the foot of the slope. They were led by two brothers, Zhong Jin and Zhong Shen, corps commanders under Xiahou Dun. Zhong Jin was wielding a giant axe; Zhong Shen, a figured halberd. "Dismount and submit, Zhao Zilong!" they shouted. Here was an instance, indeed,

Of facing the waves in the dragon's pool
Moments after escaping from the tiger's lair.

Would Zhao Zilong manage to get free?

READ ON.



Zhang Fei Makes an Uproar at Steepslope Bridge; Xuande, Defeated, Flees to the Han River Ford

ZHAO ZILONG WORKED HIS SPEAR against the two attackers. Zhong Jin came on first, swinging a giant battle-axe. The riders tangled. Zilong downed his man neatly and rode on. Zhong Shen gave chase, halberd in hand, drawing close enough for his horse to touch the tail of Zilong's mount. The reflection of his halberd flashed in the back of Zilong's armor. Suddenly Zilong pulled up short and lurched around, confronting his pursuer: to the left, Zilong's spear checked the halberd; to the right, he swung Black Pommel, cutting through Zhong Shen's helmet and cleaving his skull in two. Shen's escort quickly vanished.

Riding unhindered, Zilong headed for Steepslope Bridge. Suddenly he felt the ground trembling behind him. Wen Ping was leading a company in pursuit. Man and mount spent, Zilong reached the bridge and saw Zhang Fei upon it, lance raised, horse steady. Zilong hailed him: "I need help, Yide!" "Hurry across!" Zhang Fei said. "Leave the pursuers to me!" Zilong guided his horse over the bridge and rode another twenty Zi. Finally he found Xuande resting under a tree, surrounded by a group of men. Zilong dismounted and placed his head and hands to the ground. Lord and vassal wept.

Still breathing hard, Zilong said, "Ten thousand deaths could not redeem my offense. Lady Mi was wounded so badly that she refused my horse and threw herself down a well. I could do nothing but knock over an earthen wall to cover her body. Then, holding the young master on my chest, I broke through the enemy's lines, and by the favor Heaven bestows on you, my lord, I survived. A moment ago the young master was crying. But he's stopped moving now, and I fear ..." Zilong untied his armor and looked inside. The infant was asleep. "Safe and sound," he announced happily. "Fortune smiles." He handed Ah Dou carefully to Xuande, who flung him to the ground the instant he received him. "For the sake of a suckling like you," Xuande cried, "I risked losing a great commander!"¹ Zilong swept the child off the ground and prostrated himself, saying through his tears, "If I cut my heart out here, I could not repay your kindness to me." A poet of later times described the scene:

The tigers sprang from Cao Cao's fighting line;
Safe on Zhao Yun's breast the little dragon curled.
How did the liege requite his liege man's love?
Down before the horse, Xuande his own son hurled!

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Wen Ping, meanwhile, had tracked Zilong to the bridge. There he found Zhang Fei, tiger-whiskers upcurled, eyes two rings of fury, snake-lance in hand. Mounted and poised, Zhang Fei looked out from

the bridge. Wen Ping spotted dust rising out of the adjacent copse to the east. Suspecting an ambush, he reined in. Soon Cao Cao's leading generals joined him—Cao Ren, Li Dian, Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Yue Jin, Zhang Liao, Zhang He, Xu Chu, and others. Cao's commanders contemplated Zhang Fei's menacing glare and leveled lance. And, too, they remembered Kongming's clever traps. They dug in west of the bridge, therefore, and posted a man back to Cao Cao. News of the standoff decided Cao Cao to hurry to the scene.

Zhang Fei's probing eye made out Cao Cao's blue silk umbrella in the distance, his feathered battle-axe and fringed banner. "So he came to see for himself," Zhang Fei thought. He called out: "I am Zhang Fei of Yan! Have you a man who'll fight it out to the death?" The power of Zhang Fei's voice unnerved Cao Cao's men. Cao Cao ordered the command umbrella removed. Turning to his attendants, he said, "Once Lord Guan told me that Zhang Fei had taken the head of a chief general before the eyes of his own legions as easily as removing an object from a sack. Today we have crossed his path and must take care." As Cao Cao spoke, Zhang Fei widened his eyes and shouted again: "Here he stands! Zhang Fei of Yan, who'll fight to the death any man that dares!" But Cao Cao, daunted by the warrior's indomitable spirit, was content to draw back.²

Zhang Fei watched the rear lines of Cao Cao's army shuffling about. He lifted his spear and bellowed: "What's it to be? Don't want to fight? Don't want to leave?" The mighty voice still commanded the air when Xiahou Jie, right beside Cao Cao, collapsed and fell from his saddle, panic-stricken. Cao Cao turned and rode back, followed by his commanders. Indeed, what suckling babe can bear the peal of thunder; what injured woodsman can stand the roar of tigers and leopards? At that moment Cao Cao's soldiers threw down their spears and helmets and trampled one other as they fled—a tide of men, an avalanche of horses. Later a poet expressed his awe:

Zhang Fei's war blood rose at Steepslope Bridge:
Spear leveled, horse poised, eyes round-fixed.
With a single thunderous cry that shook the ground,
Alone he turned Cao's mighty host around.

Zhang Fei's awesome presence had terrified Cao Cao. Dashing west, he let his cap and hairpin drop, and his hair streamed out behind him. Zhang Liao and Xu Chu overtook him and seized his horse's bridle. Cao Cao had lost control. "Do not panic, Your Excellency," Zhang Liao said. "Is one Zhang Fei so fearsome? Turn the army round again and fight. Liu Bei can be taken!" At these words Cao Cao got hold of himself and sent Zhang Liao and Xu Chu back to the bridge to find out what they could.

Zhang Fei dared not pursue Cao Cao's withdrawing army. He summoned his original retinue of twenty riders, had them remove the branches from their horses' tails, and ordered them to pull down the bridge. He then reported back to Xuande. Xuande said, "Your bravery, brother, is beyond question, but not your tactics." Zhang Fei began to protest. "Cao Cao is a man of many schemes," Xuande continued. "You should have let the bridge stand. Now he's sure to be back." "If a single shout sent him reeling several *li*," Zhang Fei argued, "he won't be back for more." "Had you let it stand," Xuande explained, "fear of ambush would have continued to deter him from attacking. Now that it's down, he'll know we were afraid, having no troops around. His million-man host could ford the Han and the Great River simply by filling them in! How could razing one bridge stop him?" With

that, Xuande set out at once on the side roads, moving diagonally toward Mianyang by way of Hanjin.

Zhang Liao and Xu Chu examined the bridge and reported back to Cao Cao: "Zhang Fei destroyed it and left." "So he was afraid," Cao Cao said and decided to cross the river that same night. He ordered ten thousand men to set up three floating spans. "This could be one of Zhuge Liang's tricks," Li Dian warned. "Do not be reckless." "Zhang Fei's a foolhardy warrior. He knows no tricks," Cao Cao retorted and commanded his men to advance swiftly.

Approaching Hanjin, Xuande saw dust rising in the air behind him. Drumbeats filled the air, and war cries shook the ground. "The Great River lies ahead," he said, "the enemy behind. What can we do?" He ordered Zhao Zilong to prepare a defense.

Cao Cao instructed his men: "Liu Bei's a fish in our pot, a tiger in our trap. If we don't take him, here and now, we'll be letting the fish back into the sea, setting the tiger free in the hills. Press forward and spare no effort." With renewed vigor Cao's men started off one by one to get their man. But suddenly they heard a burst of drumming as a body of men and riders dashed forth from behind a hill. "We've been waiting for you a long time," the leader called out. It was Lord Guan, sitting astride Red Hare and gripping his Green Dragon. He had borrowed ten thousand men from Liu Qi in Jiangxia. Hearing of the great battles at Dangyang and Steepslope Bridge, he had come to intercept Cao Cao's band of pursuers. The moment Cao Cao sighted Lord Guan, he cried in despair, "Another of Zhuge Liang's traps!" and called a swift retreat.

Lord Guan chased Cao Cao's army for many *li* before he rode back to see Xuande safely to Hanjin, where boats had been readied. Lord Guan bade Xuande and Lady Gan seat themselves in one of them and had Ah Dou placed securely inside. He asked, "Why don't I see my other sister-in-law?" Xuande told him of Lady Mi's death in Dangyang. "Had you let me kill Cao Cao on the hunting field at Xuchang," Lord Guan said with emphasis, "you might have spared yourself these woes." "I had to consider how such an act could injure us," Xuande replied.³

War drums from the southern shore intruded on their conversation. Boats were swarming across, sails to the wind. On the lead craft Xuande saw a man in white battle gown and silvery armor standing on the prow. "Uncle," he called out, "have you been well since we parted? I fear I have failed to serve you as a nephew should." It was Liu Qi. He boarded Xuande's boat and, tearfully prostrating himself, said, "I heard Cao Cao was closing in, uncle, so I have come to relieve you." Xuande was overjoyed. He merged the forces and continued his journey by water.

Xuande was describing the recent events for Liu Qi when a line of war-boats, stretching across the water from the southwest, came smartly up, borne by a full wind. "All my Jiangxia forces are here," Liu Qi said anxiously. "These must be Southland ships coming to cut us off—if they're not Cao Cao's! What are we to do?" Xuande surveyed the approaching craft. Seated in the front was Kongming, robed like a Taoist hermit with a band round his head. Behind him stood Sun Qian. Xuande excitedly hailed Kongming and asked how he had managed to turn up here. "As soon as I reached Jiangxia," Kongming explained, "I sent Lord Guan by land to meet you at Hanjin. I expected that Cao Cao would chase you, and that you, my lord, would cut over to take Hanjin rather than go on to Jiangling. That's why I had Master Qi here reinforce you. Then I went to collect the soldiers at Xiakou and lead them here."

Xuande could not have been more delighted. With all his forces reunited, he started planning to defeat Cao Cao. Kongming said, "Xiakou enjoys natural defenses and has ample cash and grain. It can be held indefinitely. I advise you, my lord, to station yourself there. Let Master Qi return to Jiangxia,

work his navy into fighting condition, and prepare his weapons. We can hold Cao Cao off by thus placing our forces in pincer formation. For us to return to Jiangxia together would leave us isolated." "Wise counsel," Liu Qi said. "However, uncle, I thought I would invite you to stop at Jiangxia first and put your forces in shape. After that there'll be time enough for you to proceed to Xiakou." "My worthy nephew has a point," Xuande said and, after dispatching Lord Guan to Xiakou with five thousand men, he headed for Jiangxia with Kongming and Liu Qi.

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Lord Guan's intervening land force had deterred Cao Cao from pursuing Xuande. Fearing an ambush, Cao Cao marched directly to Jiangling lest Xuande, traveling by water, take it before him.

In Jiangling the provincial secretary Deng Yi and the assistant inspector Liu Xian had already learned that Liu Zong had surrendered Xiangyang to Cao Cao. Unable to offer any defense against Cao Cao, the two officials led their armed forces out past the walls of the capital and submitted to the prime minister. Cao Cao entered the city and, after calming the populace, freed Han Song and put him in charge of protocols.⁴ Other officials were given fiefs and handsome gifts.

Cao Cao said to his generals, "Xuande has fled to Jiangxia. If he forms an alliance with Sun Quan, our problems will multiply. What is the best way to defeat him?" "Now that we are in the field on a grand scale," Xun You advised, "send a messenger to the Southland summoning Sun Quan to join you in Jiangxia for a hunting party—with Xuande as the quarry! Offer Sun Quan half of Jingzhou to seal your amity. He will be too frightened, too confused not to submit. Our cause will thrive." Cao Cao approved this advice and sent an envoy south. At the same time he called up a force of eight hundred and thirty thousand—infantry, cavalry, and marines—which he rumored numbered a full million. Cao Cao's host advanced by land and sea. The cavalry rode along the Great River parallel to the long line of war-boats stretching westward back as far as Jiangling and the gorges, and eastward as far as Qichun and Huangzhou. The encampments extended for three hundred *li*.

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In the Southland Sun Quan, stationed at Chaisang, heard that Cao Cao had accepted Liu Zong's submission and was marching on Jiangling double time. He therefore assembled his counselors to discuss the defense of the Southland. Lu Su said, "Jingzhou adjoins our territory. Rivers and mountains protect it. Its people are prosperous. If we can seize and hold the province, we will acquire the resources to establish our rule over the empire. I propose that you send me to Jiangxia to offer your official condolences on the occasion of Liu Biao's death. I believe I can persuade the newly defeated Liu Bei to encourage Liu Biao's commanders to make common cause with us against Cao Cao. Liu Bei's cooperation would provide a firm basis for our grand strategy." Sun Quan adopted the proposal and dispatched Lu Su to Jiangxia with mourning gifts.

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At Jiangxia, Xuande, Kongming, and Liu Qi were conferring. "Cao Cao is too powerful. We cannot oppose him," Kongming said. "The best we can do is turn to Sun Quan for support. If the south keeps Cao Cao at bay to the north, we can pluck advantage from between them—and why not?" "The

Southland is well endowed with worthy men," Xuande said. "They are bound to have their own long-range plans and have little need of us." With a smile Kongming responded, "Cao leads a million-man host. He's perched like a tiger on the Great River and the Han. You can be sure the south will be sending someone to find out about his strengths and weaknesses. And when he comes, I'll take a little sail south down the river. Trust my three inches of limber tongue to induce the south and the north to devour each other. If the southern armies are prevailing, we'll join them, settle Cao, and retake Jingzhou. If the northern armies are prevailing, we will have the possibility of taking the Southland itself!" "A profound estimation of the situation," Xuande said. "But how do we get a Southlander to come here?"

That very moment Lu Su was announced. He had arrived by boat bearing Sun Quan's condolences for the death of Liu Biao. "Our plans will carry," Kongming said with a smile. Turning to Liu Qi, he asked, "When Sun Ce died, was anyone sent to the services?" "There was deep enmity between our houses," Liu Qi replied, "for we had slain his father, Sun Jian. Exchanging ceremonial embassies would have been unthinkable." "Then," Kongming said, "Lu Su comes for no obsequies, but to sound out the military situation." Turning to Xuande he went on, "My lord, if Lu Su questions you concerning Cao's movements, simply plead ignorance. If he persists, send him to me." His analysis completed, Kongming had Lu Su escorted into the city.

After accepting the ritual gifts for the bereaved, Liu Qi bade Lu Su present himself to Xuande. After the formal introduction Xuande invited the envoy to a private chamber, where wine was served. "Long has the imperial uncle's great name been known to me," Lu Su began, "though I have never had occasion to pay the man himself due homage. Our fortunate meeting today now satisfies that wish. They say you have joined battle with Cao Cao. I presume, therefore, that you know something about his strengths and vulnerabilities, and I venture to ask the approximate number of his forces." "Our own numbers," Xuande replied, "are insignificant, our generals few. No sooner do we hear of his approach than we make off. So, actually, I am unable to answer your question." "But I'm told," Lu Su pressed, "Zhuge Kongming twice succeeded in burning out Cao Cao and that Cao Cao twice lost his nerve. Your answer is difficult to accept." "If you must know the details," Xuande replied, "you will have to put your questions to Kongming himself." "Where would I find him?" Lu Su asked. "A meeting is what I desire." Xuande bade Kongming come forth and meet Lu Su.

The introduction concluded, Lu Su spoke: "Your talents and your virtue have ever been the objects of my esteem. But I have not had the honor of being presented to you. Now that fortune has made it possible, I would learn your view of the present state of affairs." Kongming replied, "I am well informed of Cao Cao's cunning devices. But, alas, our strength falls far short of his, and we have been avoiding engagement."⁵ "Will the imperial uncle be remaining here, then?" Lu Su asked. "Lord Liu," Kongming answered, "has an old friend, Wu Ju, governor of Changwu, south of Jingzhou, in northern Jiaozhou. He will entrust himself to his care." "Wu Ju hasn't enough grain or men to protect himself, let alone someone else," Lu Su said. "It will do for now, until we can make other plans," was Kongming's reply.

"General Sun Quan," Lu Su said earnestly, "holds the six districts of the Southland firmly in his hands. His soldiers are keen, his grain abundant. And because he shows the utmost courtesy to men of worth, heroes from all along the Great River have joined his cause. What could better serve your interest than to send a man you trust to the south for the purpose of forging an alliance with us to plan the conquest of the realm?" "Lord Liu and General Sun," Kongming said, "had no ties in the past.

Your lord would turn a deaf ear to us, I fear. And we have no one to send." "Your own elder brother," Lu Su responded, "presently serving the Southland as an adviser, looks forward daily to seeing you. I myself have nothing to contribute. But I beg to go with you, sir, to see General Sun, so that we can confer on the future of the empire."

Finally, Xuande intervened. "Kongming is my mentor," he said. "I cannot spare him, even for a brief time. He may not go." Xuande feigned resistance to Lu Su's repeated appeals until Kongming said, "Matters are urgent. If you will authorize it, there's no harm in seeing what might come of a visit down there." At these words Xuande granted permission. Lu Su bade Xuande and Liu Qi good-bye and, together with Kongming, boarded his boat for the sail to Chaisang. Indeed:

Because Kongming traveled south,
Cao Cao's armies would taste sudden defeat.

The following chapter tells what Kongming meant to do.⁶

READ ON.



Kongming Debates the Southern Officials; Lu Su Rejects the Consensus

LU SU AND KONGMING BADE XUANDE AND LIU QI good-bye and sailed for Chaisang. On board they reviewed the situation. "When you see General Sun, sir," Lu Su emphasized, "be sure to avoid mentioning how large and well-commanded Cao Cao's army is." "There is no need, Su, to keep reminding me of this," responded Kongming. "I will make my own replies to him." When their boat docked, Lu Su invited Kongming to rest at the guesthouse while he went ahead to see Sun Quan.

Sun Quan was already in council with his officers and officials. Informed of Lu Su's return, Quan summoned him and asked, "What did you learn in Jiangxia about the state of Cao Cao's forces?" "I have a general idea," replied Su, "but I will need time to report in full, sire." Quan showed him Cao Cao's summons and said, "Cao Cao had this delivered yesterday. I have sent the envoy back while we debate our response." Cao's note said:

Under a recent imperial mandate, I have authority to act against state criminals. Our banners tilted southward; Liu Zong bound his hands in submission. The populace of Jingzhou, sensing the direction of events, has transferred its allegiance to us. We have one million hardy warriors and a thousand able generals. We propose that you join us, General, in a hunting expedition to Jiangxia in order to strike the decisive blow against Liu. Then, sharing the territory between us, we may seal an everlasting amity. Please do not hesitate but favor us with a speedy reply.

After he had read the document, Lu Su said to Sun Quan, "What is your most honored view, my lord?" "A decision has yet to be reached," he responded. The adviser Zhang Zhao joined the discussion, saying, "Commanding a host of one million, cloaked in the Emperor's authority, Cao Cao has campaigned the length and breadth of the land. To resist is to rebel. Moreover, your major advantage was the Great River—until Cao Cao took Jingzhou. Now we share the river's strategic benefits with him. Really, there is no opposing him, and in my poor estimation we would do better with the total security which submission will afford." "Zhang Zhao's views," the counselors declared in unison, "conform to the wishes of Heaven itself." But Sun Quan pondered in silence. "Have no doubts, my lord," Zhang Zhao continued. "If we submit to Cao, the people of the region will be protected and the six districts of the Southland preserved."¹ Sun Quan lowered his head and said nothing.

A moment later Sun Quan rose to go to the privy. Lu Su followed. Aware that Su did not share the views of Zhang Zhao, Quan turned to him and asked, "But what is your mind on this?" "The majority's view, General, will be your ruin," Su replied. "They can submit to Cao, but you cannot" "What are

you saying?" Quan asked. "For someone like me," Su went on, "submission means being sent home to my clan, my village. Eventually I'll regain high office. But what have you to go home to? A minor estate? A single carriage? A single mount? A handful of followers? And what of your claim to royalty? Your advisers all consider only themselves. You must not heed them. It is time to make a master plan for yourself."

At these words Sun Quan sighed. "Their counsel fails my hopes," he said. "But the point you make—the master plan—accords well with my thinking. You come to me by Heaven's favor.² Cao Cao, however, has Yuan Shao's legions as well as the troops of Jingzhou. He seems impossible to resist." "I have brought back with me," Su went on, "Zhuge Jin's younger brother, Liang. Put your questions to him, my lord, and he will explain how things stand." "Master Sleeping Dragon is here?" exclaimed Quan. "Resting in the guesthouse," answered Lu Su. "It's too late to see him today," Quan said. "Tomorrow I shall gather my civil and military officers so he can get acquainted with the eminent men of the south before we proceed to formal discussion." Lu Su went to arrange things accordingly.

The following day Lu Su came for Kongming. Again he warned the guest not to mention the size of Cao Cao's army. "Let me respond as I see fit," Kongming said with a smile. "Nothing shall go amiss, I assure you." Lu Su conducted Kongming to the headquarters of General Sun, where he was introduced to Zhang Zhao, Gu Yong, and some twenty other officials and officers of the first rank. As they sat erect in full dress, with their high formal caps and broad belts, Kongming was presented to each in turn. The formalities concluded, Kongming was shown to the guest's seat.

From Kongming's air of self-assurance and dignified, confident carriage, Zhang Zhao and the others understood that he had come to exert his powers of persuasion. Zhao initiated the discussion with a provocative comment: "I, the least of the Southland's scholars, have been hearing for some time how you, ensconced in Longzhong, have compared yourself to the great ministers of antiquity, Guan Zhong and Yue Yi. Have you actually made such claims?" "There could be some slight basis for the comparison," was Kongming's reply. "I have also heard that Liu Xuande,³ protector of Yuzhou, solicited you three times at that thatched hut and, considering himself fortunate to get you—a fish finding water' was how he put it—expected to roll up Jingzhou in the palm of his hand. Now that the province belongs to Cao Cao, we await your explanation."

Aware that Zhang Zhao was Sun Quan's foremost adviser—the man he had to confound or else lose all hope of convincing Quan himself—Kongming replied, "In my view that province on the River Han could have been taken as easily as one turns one's palm. But my master, Lord Liu, precisely because he conducts himself humanely and honorably, could never bear to steal a kinsman's estate and refused to do so. The adolescent Liu Zong, the victim of insidious counsel, secretly surrendered himself, giving Cao Cao a free hand in the region.⁴ My master, however, with forces stationed at Jiangxia, has promising prospects of his own, not to be lightly dismissed."

"Then your words and deeds do not agree," said Zhang Zhao. "For the men with whom you are wont to compare yourself helped their lords win fame and power. The patriarch Huan dominated the feudal lords and kept the realm together during Guan Zhong's tenure as minister; and Yue Yi helped the feeble state of Yan subdue the seventy cities of mighty Qi. Those two had the talent to set the empire to rights. But you, sir, have dwelled in a thatched hut, delighting yourself with the breeze and moon, profoundly absorbed in meditation. After you entered Lord Liu's service, we expected you to promote the welfare of the living souls of the realm and to root out and destroy treason and sedition.⁵

"Before Lord Liu obtained your services, he was already a force to be reckoned with wherever he went, seizing this or that walled town. Now that he has you, people are saying that the ferocious tiger has grown wings and that we will witness the restoration of the Han and the elimination of the Caos. Old servants of the court and recluses of the mountains and forests have begun rubbing their eyes in expectation, imagining that the sky will clear, that the sun and moon will shine again. They hope to see the salvation of the people and the deliverance of the empire in their time.

"One can only wonder why, then, after you had committed yourself to him, Lord Liu scurried for safety the moment Cao Cao stepped into the field, abandoning his obligations to Liu Biao for the security of the people of Jingzhou, and failing to sustain Liu Zong in the defense of his land. And what followed? Lord Liu quit Xinye, fled Fan, lost Dangyang, and bolted to Xiakou for refuge. But no one will have him! The fact is that Lord Liu was better off before you came. How does that measure up to what Guan Zhong and Yue Yi did for their lords? Kindly forgive my simple frankness."

Kongming broke into laughter. "The great roc ranges thousands of miles," he said. "Can the common fowl appreciate its ambition? When a man is gravely ill, he must be fed weak gruel and medicated with mild tonics until his internal state is readjusted and balanced and his condition gradually stabilizes. Only then can meat be added to his diet and powerful drugs be used to cure him. Thus is the root of the disease eradicated and the man's health restored. If you do not wait until breath and pulse are calm and steady but precipitately use powerful drugs and rich food, the attempt to cure the patient is sure to fail.

"When Lord Liu suffered defeat at Runan, he threw himself on Liu Biao's mercy. He had less than a thousand men and no generals at all, except for Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Zilong. He was like a man wasted by disease. Xinye, a small town off in the hills, with few people and scant grain, was no more than a temporary refuge, hardly a place to hold permanently. And yet, despite our poor weapons, weak city walls, untrained forces, and day-to-day shortages of grain, we burned Cao out at Bowang, flooded him out at the White River, and put his leading generals, Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren, in a state of panic and dismay. I am not sure that Guan Zhong and Yue Yi surpassed us in warfare.

"As for Liu Zong's surrender to Cao Cao, the truth is that Lord Liu knew nothing about it. Nor could he bear to exploit the treason of the Cais to steal a kinsman's estate—such is his great humanity and devotion to honor. In the case of the Dangyang defeat, Lord Liu had several hundred thousand subjects, including the elderly and many young people, who were determined to follow him. Could he leave them to their fate? He was moving a mere ten *li* each day but never thought of racing ahead to capture Jiangling. He was content to suffer defeat with his people if he had to—another instance of his profound humanity and sense of honor.

"The few cannot oppose the many, and a warrior learns to endure his reverses. The founder of the Han, Gao Zu, was defeated over and over by Xiang Yu, but the final victory at Gaixia was the result of Han Xin's good counsel, was it not? The same Han Xin who, in his long history of service to Gao Zu, had compiled no impressive record of victories! For the grand strategy of the dynasty, the security of our sacred altars, truly there is a master planner, one utterly different from the boasting rhetoricians whose empty reputations overawe people, who have no peer in armchair debate and standing discussions, of whom not even one in a hundred has any idea how to confront a crisis or cope with its rapid development. What a farce to amuse the world!"

To this oration Zhang Zhao had no reply, but another rose to the challenge. "Cao Cao has in place one million men and a roster of a thousand commanding officers. He can prance like a dragon while

they glare down on us like tigers who could swallow Jiangxia with ease. What then?" Kongming eyed the speaker narrowly. It was Yu Fan. "Cao Cao did indeed bring into his fold the swarming hosts of Yuan Shao," Kongming replied. "And he stole the ill-organized soldiers of Liu Biao. But even his million are not that much to worry about!" With an icy smile Yu Fan countered: "Your forces were ruined at Dangyang. Your plans came to naught at Xiakou. You're desperate for any scrap of support and yet would boastfully deceive us by saying, 'Don't worry.'"

"And how," Kongming responded, "was Lord Liu to hold off a million murderous men with a few thousand troops dedicated to humanity and honor? We retired to Xiakou to bide our time. In the Southland the men are well trained and grain is plentiful. The Great River is your natural defense. And yet, giving no thought to the disgrace or to the mockery it would incur, you would have your lord crook his knee and submit to a traitor! By your standards it's not Lord Liu who fears the villain Cao!"

To this speech Yu Fan made no reply. But Bu Zhi rose to challenge Kongming, saying, "Are you not playing the part of those seductive diplomats of ancient times, Zhang Yi and Su Qin, striving to prevail upon our country to serve your ends?" Kongming turned his gaze to the speaker; then he responded: "You take those two for mere rhetoricians, forgetting their distinguished achievements. Su Qin held the highest office in six different kingdoms, while Zhang Yi twice served as chief minister to the state of Qin. Both men gave counsel that enlightened and strengthened their ruler, and are hardly to be put in a category with those who cringe before the mighty, victimize the weak, and cower before the sword. You gentlemen, hearing Cao Cao's empty threats, urged surrender with craven dispatch. Are you the ones to mock Zhang Yi and Su Qin?" Bu Zhi fell silent.

"What is your view of Cao Cao the man?" another asked. Kongming eyed the questioner, Xue Zong. "A traitor to the Han," he replied. "Is there any doubt?" "You are in error, sir," Xue Zong went on. "The mandate of the Han has devolved from sovereign to sovereign down to this day; now the dynasty's Heaven-ordained period draws to its close. Already Cao Cao possesses two-thirds of the empire, and all men tender him allegiance. Lord Liu, however, refuses to recognize the season of history, and in forcing the issue will fail as surely as an egg dashed against a rock."

Kongming answered harshly: "So, then, you mean to deny both king and father? In man's short life between Heaven and earth, loyalty and filial devotion are the foundation of personal integrity. Since, sir, you are a subject of the Han, when you see a man who disavows his duty as a subject, you are pledged to help destroy him—for such is a true subject's obligation. Cao Cao, far from honoring his debt to the Han for sustaining his forebears in office, bears within him a seditious usurper's heart, to the indignation of all. In tendering him allegiance on grounds of 'Heaven-ordained numbers,'⁶ you deny both king and father and render yourself unfit to speak in the company of men." Xue Zong was too humiliated to reply.

Another from the council picked up the argument. "Though Cao Cao enjoins the nobles through coercion of the Emperor, yet he is himself a descendant of the Supreme Ancestor's prime minister, Cao Shen. Lord Liu claims descent from Prince Jing of Zhong-shan, but that has never actually been verified. As far as anyone can tell, he is a mere mat-weaver, a sandal merchant, hardly a worthy contender with Cao Cao." Kongming regarded this speaker, Lu Ji. A smile crossing his face, he asked, "Didn't you once steal an orange at one of Yuan Shu's banquets? I'd like you to sit still while I tell you something. If Cao Cao is the descendant of the great minister Cao Shen, then the Caos have been the subjects of the Han from that day to this. For him to monopolize power and recklessly wield it, deceiving and abusing the sovereign, is more than negation of the emperor, it is nullification

of his own sacred ancestor. This makes Cao Cao more than a seditious subject; it makes him a traitorous son. Lord Liu has the dignity of an imperial scion. He is a man to whom the present Emperor has granted recognized status in accordance with the official genealogy. How can you say there is no verification? Consider further that the Supreme Ancestor, who began his career as a precinct magistrate, in the end took possession of the empire. And what is there to be ashamed of in mat-weaving or selling sandals? Your puerile point of view makes you an unworthy participant in the discussions of distinguished scholars." Lu Ji was confounded.

Suddenly, another man rose and spoke: "Kongming's rhetoric is bereft of reason. His distorted judgments are not worth consideration. I beg to inquire, what classics have you mastered?" Kongming turned to the speaker, Yan Jun, and said, "How can the text-bound pedant revive our nation or further our cause? And what of the ancient sages—Yi Yin, who tilled the soil in Shen, or Jiang Ziya, who fished the River Wei? What of men like Zhang Liang and Chen Ping, Zheng Yu and Geng Yan? These worthies sustained their kings in time of peril. What canons did they master? Do you really think they simply spent their days confined between the pen and the inkstone like schoolmen arguing over texts, flourishing words, wielding brushes?" Deflated by Kongming's denunciation, Yan Jun lowered his head and made no reply.

Yet another protested loudly: "You, sir, are certainly given to exaggeration. I am not so sure that there is any real learning in you, that you won't end up as the butt of scholars' ridicule." The speaker was Cheng Deshu of Runan. Kongming answered the man so: "There are scholars of noble character and scholars with petty interests. The former are loyal to their sovereign and devoted to his government; they preserve their integrity and detest renegades—for they are intent on making their influence felt in their time and making their names known to later ages. But the latter bend their efforts to polishing rhymes, knowing no skill but that of trivial composition. Authors of grandiose odes in their youth, by old age they've digested the classics. In one sitting a thousand words may flow from their pens, but inside of them not a single useful idea is to be found. Take the scholar Yang Xiong who made a great reputation in his time only to disgrace himself by serving Wang Mang—for which he jumped to his death from the upper story of a building. He is an example of the petty scholar.⁷ Let him produce a ten-thousand-word rhapsody every day. What value does it have?" Cheng Deshu, like the others, was too confounded to reply. The assembly was unnerved at Kongming's exhibition of mastery in debate.

Two others, Zhang Wen and Luo Tong, were about to raise their objections when someone entered the chambers and cried, "Kongming is one of the rarest talents of our age. Belaboring these issues is hardly the way to show due respect to our guest. With Cao Cao, backed by a huge army, looking hungrily across our borders, what's the point of sterile polemics? We should be considering instead how to drive the enemy back." The assembly turned to see Huang Gai (Gongfu), a man from Lingling, presently serving as a commissariat officer in Dongwu.

"With your permission," Huang Gai said to Kongming. "Sometimes one carries the day by holding one's peace. Save your invaluable opinions for our lord rather than continuing this debate." "These gentlemen," said Kongming, "are unaware of the exigencies of our age, and their objections had to be answered." With that, Huang Gai and Lu Su took Kongming to see Sun Quan. At the entrance to the government hall they encountered Zhuge Jin, Kongming's elder brother, and saluted him. "Worthy brother," said Jin, "since you are in the Southland, why haven't you come to see me?" "For one in the service of Lord Liu," Kongming replied, "it is only fitting that public concerns take precedence

over private ones. As long as these require my attention, I must beg your forgiveness." "Worthy brother," said Zhuge Jin, "come over and catch up on things after you have seen the lord of the Southland."

After Jin had departed, Lu Su said, "What I cautioned you about before—let there be no slip." Kongming nodded. As they reached the official chambers, Sun Quan himself appeared and descended the stair to welcome them, offering his highest regards. After the exchange of salutations he showed Kongming to a seat. Quan's officials stood in attendance, civil officials in one row, military in another. Lu Su watched as Kongming conveyed Liu Xuande's good wishes. Kongming stole a glance at Sun Quan. Jade green eyes and a purplish beard—an imposing presence. "His appearance is extraordinary," Kongming mused. "A man to be incited, not won over by argument. But I must wait for him to question me."

After the presentation of tea Sun Quan spoke: "Lu Su has told me of your great abilities. Now that we have the good fortune to meet you, I make bold to seek the benefit of your teaching." "One unfit and unlearned as I," Kongming responded, "could never do justice to your enlightened questions." "Recently," Sun Quan went on, "you assisted Lord Liu on strategic decisions in the war with Cao Cao. This must have given you profound knowledge of the enemy's military position."

"Lord Liu," answered Kongming, "is hardly in a position to resist Cao Cao. His forces are paltry, his generals all too few; on top of this, Xinye is a small town without grain supplies." "But how large a force does Cao have?" Sun Quan asked. "Mounted, foot, and naval, all told, over one million troops," replied Kongming. "This has to be a trick!" exclaimed Sun Quan. "No trick," Kongming went on. "He had the Qingzhou army of two hundred thousand when he took charge of Yanzhou. When he vanquished Yuan Shao, he added another five or six hundred thousand to that. Recently he recruited another three or four hundred thousand from the north-central plains. And now he has gained two or three hundred thousand more from the conquest of Jingzhou. It adds up to no less than one and a half million. I said 'one million' for fear of scaring off your warriors."

Stunned, Lu Su paled and tried to catch Kongming's eye. But Kongming pretended not to notice. "And how many military commanders?" Sun Quan asked. "He has competent, inventive advisers and hardened, seasoned leaders—over a thousand or two, easily," Kongming stated. "Now that he has conquered Jingzhou," Quan pressed, "has he greater ambitions?" "At the moment," replied Kongming, "he is making his way down the Great River, leaving a trail of camps in preparation for naval action. What other territory could his ambition lead him to, if not the Southland?" "If he means to swallow and assimilate us," said Quan, posing his question, "must we fight or not? I crave your judgment on this." "I do have an opinion," Kongming conceded, "but I am afraid you would be reluctant to accept it." "I would know your esteemed view," was Quan's reply.

At this invitation Kongming began to speak: "When the realm was in turmoil, you formed a state in the south and Lord Liu rallied his hosts below the River Han in order to contest the empire with Cao Cao. Now Cao has freed himself of his greatest difficulties and has stabilized his position to a certain degree. This fresh triumph in Jingzhou has made him feared throughout the land, and whatever heroes would oppose him lack the base for waging war. That is why Lord Liu made good his removal to this region. I would urge you to weigh your strength and address the problem. If you can lead the forces of the south in contention with the north for mastery of the area, then break with Cao Cao at once. Otherwise, why, follow your advisers' judgment, lay down your arms, face north, and submit to his rule."

Before Sun Quan could respond, Kongming continued: "General, you have let it be known that you incline toward submission, but I know how torn you are. The situation is precarious. Act before disaster strikes." "If all you say is true," Sun Quan said, "why hasn't Lord Liu submitted?" "Tian Heng," answered Kongming, "the stalwart loyalist of Qi, held fast to his honor and refused to disgrace himself. A scion of the royal house, renowned in his time, looked up to by men of learning everywhere, how could Lord Liu do less? His failures are ordained and not of his own making. He will not be humiliated."⁸

His composure breaking, Sun Quan swept his robes about him and retired to his private apartments. The assembly dispersed, snickering. Lu Su berated Kongming: "What was the point of saying such things? My sovereign's temper is too liberal, fortunately, to censure you directly. But what you said has demeaned him." Kongming tilted his head and laughed. "Why is he so excitable?" he said. "I have my own plan for destroying Cao Cao. But he did not ask, so I did not mention it." "If you actually have a sound strategy," said Lu Su, "I will ask my lord to seek your instruction." "To me," Kongming rejoined, "Cao's host is like a million ants waiting to be pulverized with one swipe of the hand!" At these words Lu Su went to the rear chamber to talk to Sun Quan.

Quan's anger had not subsided, and he said pointedly to Lu Su, "His insolence is insufferable !" "I rebuked him for it," Lu Su responded, "but he only said that you were too 'excitable,' and that he was reluctant—on his own initiative—to broach the subject of Cao Cao's destruction. Why not solicit his plan, my lord?" Sun Quan's consternation passed, and his tone softened. "So he had a strategy all along. That's why he incited me. I was not thinking clearly at the moment and nearly spoiled everything." So saying, Sun Quan reappeared in the hall together with Lu Su and invited Kongming to resume discussions. Quan received Kongming with an apology: "Just now I recklessly sullied your high name. Kindly overlook the offense." Kongming conveyed his regrets too: "It was I who spoke offensively, and I beg your forgiveness for it." Sun Quan bade Kongming join him in his private apartments, where he had wine set out.

After several rounds Sun Quan began: "Cao Cao's lifelong enemies were Lü Bu, Liu Biao, Yuan Shao, Yuan Shu, Lord Liu, and myself. The first four heroes are no more. Lord Liu and I remain. I cannot give the Southland into another's control, not even to preserve it. That is certain. And none save Lord Liu can oppose Cao Cao. But after his recent defeats how can he continue to hold firm in adversity?" "Lord Liu's defeats notwithstanding," Kongming began, "Lord Guan commands ten thousand elite troops, and Liu Qi's fighters from Jiangxia number no less. Cao Cao's host is exhausted, having come so far. In their recent pursuit of Lord Liu, their light cavalry was covering three hundred *li* a day—clearly a case of 'a spent arrow unable to pierce fine silk.' Consider too that the northerners are unused to naval warfare and that the officers and men from Jingzhou follow Cao by coercion, not by choice. General, if you can unite hand and heart with Lord Liu, the destruction of Cao's army and his return to the north can be guaranteed. Then with the strengthening of the Southland and Jingzhou, a tripodal balance of power will come into being in the empire. The means to shape the outcome are in your hands today. It is for you to use them."

Sun Quan was exhilarated. "Hearing you, master, is like breaking out of a thicket and into a clearing. My mind is made up. I have no further doubts. Discussion of joint action to wipe out Cao Cao shall begin this very day." With these words Sun Quan commanded Lu Su to inform all officials of his intentions and escort Kongming to the guesthouse.

When Zhang Zhao heard the news, he said to the counselors, "We have fallen into Kongming's

trap." He rushed to Sun Quan and said: "We have heard, my lord, that you mean to meet Cao Cao on the battlefield. How do you think you compare to Yuan Shao, whom Cao conquered with a roll of the drums when his own forces were still relatively weak? Do you think you can oppose him today when he has one million in his command? Listen to Kongming and undertake this ridiculous mobilization, and you will be carrying kindling to put out the fire."

Sun Quan lowered his head and said nothing. Another adviser, Gu Yong, added his arguments: "Because he suffered defeat at Cao Cao's hands, Liu Bei wants to use our forces to drive him back. Why should we serve his ends? I pray you will heed Zhang Zhao's advice." Sun Quan pondered and lapsed into indecision. Zhang Zhao and his party left, and Lu Su reentered to plead further: "Zhang Zhao and his faction oppose the mobilization and favor submission because they fear for the safety of themselves and their families. I beg my lord to ignore such self-interested calculations." Sun Quan continued to ponder his dilemma. "If you delay, my lord," Lu Su said, "you will be ruined by them." "Retire for now, my good vassal," Quan said, "and let me reflect." Lu Su withdrew. The military officers were divided, but the civil officials all advocated submission. All sorts of conflicting opinions were expressed.

Sun Quan retired, his mind deeply divided. He was unable to eat or sleep. His mother, Lady Wu,⁹ offered a sympathetic ear. "Cao Cao is camped on the river," he said to her, "intent on subduing our land. I have put the question to our civil and military advisers. Some would capitulate, some would wage war. If we risk battle, I fear our fewer numbers will not be able to stand against their greater. If we risk submission, I fear Cao Cao will not accommodate us. I waver, therefore, unable to act resolutely." "Have you forgotten my elder sister's dying words?" his mother asked. This question woke Sun Quan from his quandary. Indeed:

Because Sun Quan remembered his mother's last words,
Zhou Yu would do great deeds of war.

What had she said?

READ ON.



Kongming Cunningly Moves Zhou Yu to Anger; Sun Quan Decides on a Plan to Defeat Cao Cao

TO SOLVE HER NEPHEW'S DILEMMA Lady Wu said, "My late sister passed on to us your brother's dying words: 'Consult Zhang Zhao on domestic difficulties, Zhou Yu on external ones.' Isn't Zhou Yu's counsel wanted now?" Pleased with Lady Wu's suggestion, Sun Quan sent a messenger to the Poyang Lakes where Zhou Yu was directing naval exercises, inviting him to join in the discussions. But even before the messenger left, Cao Cao's arrival at the River Han had compelled Zhou Yu to go to Chaisang for a military conference. There Lu Su was the first to meet Zhou Yu and brief his close friend. "No need to worry," Zhou Yu reassured Lu Su, "I think I know what we have to do. But you must get Kongming here for a meeting right away." Lu Su rode off to find him.

As Zhou Yu settled into his lodgings, a delegation of four was announced: Zhang Zhao, Gu Yong, Zhang Hong, and Bu Zhi. Zhou Yu showed them in, and the five men seated themselves. The amenities concluded, Zhang Zhao began: "Commander, do you know the trouble the Southland is in?" "I have not been informed," was his reply. "Cao Cao has one million men on the River Han. Yesterday he summoned our lord to join his 'hunting party' at Jiangxia. Though he means to swallow us up, he has made no overt move. We are advocating submission to spare the Southland a debacle; we never expected that Lu Su would bring back Liu Bei's military director, Zhuge Liang. Liang has his own scores to settle and will make sure to stir our lord with his all-too-convincing points, while Lu Su clings stubbornly to his illusions, refusing to recognize reality. We turn to you, Commander, to make the final decision." "Do you have a consensus, gentlemen?" asked Zhou Yu. "We have conferred and we concur," Gu Yong responded. "Such has been my own wish for some time," Zhou Yu said. "I beg you all to return to your quarters. Early tomorrow I am to present myself before our lord, when the debate will be settled accordingly." Zhang Zhao and his delegation excused themselves and left.

Soon Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang, representing the military faction, came to see Zhou Yu. After he had received them and greetings had been exchanged, Cheng Pu began: "Have you heard, Commander, that soon the Southland must lose its independence and be annexed to another power?" "I have not been so informed," was the reply. "We have followed General Sun," Cheng Pu went on, "in the founding of this domain through hundreds of battles, great and small. Thus we have come into possession of the towns and cities of our six districts. What shame we would suffer, what regret, if our lord should heed the advocates of surrender. But we who choose death before disgrace count on you to convince him to muster the troops—a cause to which we dedicate our all." "Is there consensus among you, Generals?" asked Zhou Yu. Huang Gai rose and, striking his palm to his forehead, said hotly, "This shall roll before I submit." The group echoed his oath. "To decide the issue by combat," said Zhou Yu, "is precisely what I desire. How could I acquiesce in surrender? I beg you, Generals, return. After I meet with our lord, the debate will be settled accordingly." Cheng Pu and his party took

their leave.

Soon afterward a party of civil officials led by Zhuge Jin and Lü Fan was welcomed in. Greetings exchanged, Zhuge Jin began: "My younger brother Liang has come downriver to tell us that Lord Liu seeks our cooperation in operations against Cao Cao. Our civil and military officials remain locked in debate. Since my own brother is Lord Liu's representative, I have stood aside, biding my time until you would arrive to settle the question." "What is your own assessment?" Zhou Yu asked him. "Surrender means cheap security," replied Jin. "War puts all at risk." "I have some ideas of my own," Zhou Yu responded with a smile. "Join us tomorrow in the council hall, where we shall settle things."

As Zhuge Jin and his party withdrew, another group, this led by Lü Meng and Gan Ning, was announced. Zhou Yu invited them in and they expressed their views. Some insisted on surrender, some were determined to fight. They argued back and forth until Zhou Yu said, "This is enough discussion for now. Join us tomorrow in the council hall, where we shall settle things." Long after the group had departed, a cynical smile remained on Zhou Yu's face.

That evening Lu Su brought Kongming to pay his respects. Zhou Yu came from the central gate to escort them inside. After the formalities they seated themselves as host and guest. Lu Su began with a question to Zhou Yu: "Cao Cao has launched an offensive against the Southland, and between the two courses, war or peace, our lord cannot decide. In this matter he is yours entirely. I would inquire what your own view is." "Cao Cao acts in the name of the Son of Heaven, the Emperor himself," said Zhou Yu. "His host cannot be driven back. His power has grown to the point where it would be futile to risk engagement. If we fight, defeat is certain. If we surrender, security is cheaply bought. I have made my decision. Tomorrow before our lord I shall advocate sending a representative to convey our submission."

Lu Su was appalled. "But this is most misguided!" he responded. "The estate we have founded now spans three generations. How can we abandon it to strangers on the spur of the moment? The last words of Lord Sun's brother, Sun Ce, charged us to entrust external matters to you. What will befall us if you follow the counsel of cowards now, at the very moment we must rely on you—as if you were the great Mount Tai itself—to preserve the house of Sun?" To this appeal Zhou Yu replied: "The living souls in the six districts of the Southland are more than can be numbered. If we bring upon them the disasters of war, they will lay their grievance to us. That is why I have decided to sue for peace." "How wrong that would be!" cried Lu Su. "With a general of your mettle and the sure defensibility of the land, Cao is far from assured of fulfilling his ambitions." The two men argued round and round while Kongming looked on, detached, smiling with sangfroid.

"What makes you smile so disdainfully?" Zhou Yu asked him. "Your antagonist Lu Su, of course, who refuses to recognize the exigencies of the occasion," said Kongming. Lu Su snapped back, "Now you're mocking me for 'refusing to recognize the exigencies of the occasion'?" Kongming replied, "Zhou Yu advocates submission. It seems perfectly reasonable." "Any scholar who recognizes realities—and Kongming is surely one—must be of the same mind," said Zhou Yu. "You too argue this way?" Lu Su asked Kongming. "Cao Cao is a master of warfare," Kongming explained, "whom none in the empire dares engage. Those who did—Lü Bu, Yuan Shao, Yuan Shu, and Liu Biao—have been annihilated. And no such men remain in the empire—save Lord Liu, who has refused to 'recognize the exigencies of the occasion' and struggles with Cao for mastery. But Lord Liu stands alone in Jiangxia, his very survival in question. The general's plan to submit to Cao ensures his family's safety and protects his wealth and status. What if the sacred throne of the house of Sun is

transferred to another house? Why, ascribe it to the Mandate of Heaven. What do we need these things for?" Lu Su was moved to wrath. "You would see our sovereign crook his knee and endure disgrace before a treasonous rogue?" he exclaimed.¹

Kongming went on: "I have thought of another possibility that might well save the ritual gifts of sheep and wine as we transfer our lands and render up the seals of state. You would not even need to cross the river yourself, but merely to send a solitary representative to escort two persons to the river. If Cao Cao can get hold of these two, his million-man host will discard their armor, furl their banners, and retire from the field." Zhou Yu spoke: "And with what two persons do you propose to effect this reversal?" "The Southland's parting with these two," Kongming continued, "may be likened to an oak shedding a leaf, a granary diminished by a grain of millet. Yet if he gets them, Cao Cao will depart content." Again Zhou Yu asked, "Well, what two persons?"

"When I was in residence at Longzhong," Kongming continued, "I heard that Cao was building a new tower on the banks of the Zhang. It is called the Bronze Bird Tower—an absolutely magnificent edifice, and elegant. He has searched far and wide for beautiful women to fill its chambers. Cao Cao, who is basically inclined to wantonness, has known for some time that the Southland patriarch Qiao has two daughters, beauties whose faces would make fish forget to swim or birds to fly, abash the very blossoms and outshine the moon. He has vowed: 'First, I'll sweep the realm and calm it and build an empire; next, I'll possess the Southland's two daughters Qiao and install them in the Bronze Bird Tower so that I may have pleasure in my later years and die without regret.' Cao Cao may lead his million-fold host to menace the Southland, but in reality he comes for the sake of these two women. General, why not seek out the patriarch Qiao, procure his girls with a thousand pieces of gold, and dispatch someone to deliver them to Cao? Once he has them, he will be content and return to the capital. Long ago Fan Li of Yue succeeded with a similar plan when he presented the beauty Xi Shi to the king of Wu. Why not act at once?"²

"Can you verify Cao's desire to possess these two women?" asked Zhou Yu. "He once commissioned his son, Zhi (styled Zijian), a writer of great genius, to compose a rhapsody. The result was the 'Bronze Bird Tower Rhapsody.' Its theme is the fitness of his house for sovereignty and his vow to wive the daughters Qiao."³ "Can you recall it?" Zhou Yu asked. "Infatuated with its gorgeous language, I committed it to memory," Kongming replied. "May I request a recitation?" said Zhou Yu. Then and there Kongming recited:

A pleasant promenade beside His Majesty:
They mount the tiered tower, delight their spirits,
And view the teeming richness of the realm,
The sphere his sagely virtue rules.
These gates he built pierce the mid-sky;
The double pylons float to the crystalline.
Splendid viewing rooms sit suspended there,
Linked chambers seem to hang above the western wall.
They peer down on the ever-flowing Zhang,
Whose gardens give promise of teeming glory.⁴

Aloft on either side, twin towers—

Left, Jade Dragon; right, Golden Phoenix—
To hold his brides, the Southland daughters Qiao,⁵
With whom he will take his pleasure, morning, evening.
Look down on the royal city's spacious elegance;
Behold the shimmering tints of distant clouds.
Rejoice in the confluence of many talents;
Auspicious dreams of aid will be fulfilled.⁶

Look up! The gentle solemnity of spring;
And hear! the lovelorn cries of every bird.
May these proud towers stand till Heaven's end.
Our house has gained a twin fulfillment.
Our benevolent influence spreads across the realm,
Winning universal homage for our capital.⁷
Even the splendor of Huan and Wu, ancient hegemons,
Pales beside his sagely grace and wisdom.
Most blessed! Most marvelous!
His generous favor, extending far and wide.
Lend the sovereign house your aid
That unto the four corners peace may reign.
Our king is on a scale with Heaven and earth,
Radiant as the light of sun or moon,
Ever honored as the ultimate principle,
Immortal as the sky's sovereign star.⁸

Driving the dragon banners round the royal circuit,
Guiding the phoenix chariot round the realm:
His clement influence bathes the kingdom's corners;
Prize offerings to him heap high—the people prosper.
May these towers stand firm for all time,
For pleasure never failing and without end.

When Kongming's performance was done, Zhou Yu started violently from his seat and pointed north.⁹ "Old traitor! Rogue!" he cried. "You abuse us past endurance." Kongming rose too, swift to check him. "Remember when the khan, chief of the Xiongnu, encroached on our border," he said, "and the Emperor of Han granted him a princess to forge amity through kinship? Can we not now spare two female commoners?" "There is something you are not aware of," Zhou Yu replied. "The elder daughter of the patriarch Qiao was the first wife of the late general Sun Ce. The younger is my own wife." "Truly, I did not know," said Kongming, feigning astonishment. "I have said something unforgivable and offended you most gravely. A thousand pardons!" "Cao, old traitor," Zhou Yu went on, "you and I cannot share footing on this earth. So I swear." "The situation calls for careful consideration," Kongming cautioned, "lest our actions entail regret." But Zhou Yu continued, "I had our late lord Sun Ce's solemn trust and could never crook the knee to Cao. I only meant to test you.

When I left the Poyang Lakes I resolved to take up arms against the north. The executioner's axe upon my neck could not alter my resolve. I hope for your stout aid, Kongming, that together we may smite the traitor Cao." "If you would accept my humble efforts, I would toil unsparingly, like a dog or a horse, entirely at your service." "Tomorrow," Zhou Yu responded, "I will present myself to our lord to debate the mustering of the troops." With that, Kongming and Lu Su bid Zhou Yu good-bye and left.

On the morning of the next day Sun Quan ascended the assembly hall: to his left, some thirty civil officials led by Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong; to his right, thirty or more military officials led by Cheng Pu and Huang Gai. The caps and robes of the officials rustled against each other, and the swords and pendants of the officers jostled and clanked. All stood at attention in their respective lines. Moments later Zhou Yu appeared.

After formal salutations and a few kind words from Sun Quan, Zhou Yu said, "I have been told that Cao Cao has marched south, stationed his forces along the River Han, and sent us a letter. I wonder, my lord, what your own honorable wishes might be?" Sun Quan passed the letter to Zhou Yu, who read it and smiled. "The old traitor," he said, "must imagine we have no men worthy of the name in the Southland, to approach us so insolently!" "What is your own view?" Quan asked. "Have you discussed the matter thoroughly with your officers and officials, my lord?" responded Zhou Yu. "For days on end," replied Quan. "Some advocate submission, some war. Because I have not yet reached a final decision, I appeal to you to resolve it once and for all." "Who are those urging submission?" asked Zhou Yu. "Zhang Zhao and his party," said Sun Quan. Turning to Zhang Zhao, Zhou Yu said, "I beg to hear your reasons."

"Cao Cao controls the Emperor," Zhao began, "and his campaigns across the land enjoy the sanction of the court. His recent victory in Jingzhou makes his power all the more formidable. The Great River was the Southland's only hope of blocking him. But now he has thousands of light attack craft and war-boats; a combined advance by land and sea could never be stopped. It is better to submit for now and live to plan another day."

"The twisted reasoning of a pedant!" cried Zhou Yu. "Now, in the third generation since the founding of the Southland, how could we bear to throw it all away overnight?" "So then," Quan said to Zhou Yu, "what is your grand strategy to be based on?"

Zhou Yu replied: "Posing as prime minister of the Han, Cao Cao is in reality a traitor to the dynasty. But you, General, true heir to your father and your brother, have possession of this territory. Your martial skill is godlike, your troops are keen, and your grain stores are ample. Now is the time to make your might felt the length and breadth of the empire and eliminate a cruel and violent enemy for the sake of the ruling house. How can we submit! Furthermore, by coming here, Cao has broken the most sacred rules of military science. While the north is still untamed and while Ma Teng and Han Sui threaten his rear, he is losing time on this campaign. That's the first rule broken. With troops unused to naval warfare, Cao has put away his saddles and steeds and taken to boats to contest for this land of mariners. That's the second rule broken. Now the height of winter is upon us, and his horses want for hay. That's the third rule broken. He has driven his northerners far afield to unfamiliar rivers and lakes, into a strange clime where disease is rife. That is the fourth rule broken. However numerous his men, they will be defeated. This is the moment to make Cao Cao your captive. I appeal to you: grant me between fifty and a hundred thousand crack troops to place at Xiakou,¹⁰ and I will destroy the invaders for you."

Eyes flashing, Sun Quan stood up. "Long, too long," he cried, "has the traitor sought to remove the

Han and establish his own house. Four of those he had to fear—Yuan Shao, Yuan Shu, Lü Bu, and Liu Biao—are gone. I alone remain. One of us—the old traitor or I—must fall. That is my oath. Good vassal, your voice for war meets my own thoughts. You must have come to me by Heaven's grace. "" I am resolved upon the bloody course and shrink from no extremity. Yet I fear, General, that you remain undecided," Zhou Yu responded. Sun Quan drew his sword and sheared off a corner of the table at which he received the petitions of his ministers." Any officer or official who advocates submission will be dealt with so! " he declared and, handing the sword to Zhou Yu, honored him as first field marshal. Cheng Pu was made second field marshal, and Lu Su consulting commander.

In giving his sword, Sun Quan had empowered Zhou Yu to execute any officer or official who disobeyed. Zhou Yu accepted the weapon and addressed the assembly: "I am authorized to lead you in battle to destroy Cao Cao. Tomorrow all commanders and subordinate officers are to assemble at my headquarters on the riverbank to receive further orders. Anyone who delays or interferes with our mission will be punished in accordance with the Seven Prohibitions and the Fifty-four Capital Offenses."¹¹ With these words, Zhou Yu took leave of Sun Quan and left the building. The officials adjourned without further comment.

Back at his quarters Zhou Yu summoned Kongming. "Now that the debate is settled," Zhou Yu began, "what would you consider a sound plan for defeating Cao Cao?" "General Sun's resolve is weak. We cannot make any decision," Kongming answered. "What do you mean, 'his resolve is weak'?" responded Zhou Yu. "The sheer size of Cao Cao's army still intimidates him," Kongming went on. "He wonders if the few can withstand the many. Before our cause can succeed, General, you will have to reassure him by making an analysis of the enemy's numerical strength." "Your judgment, master, is correct," said Zhou Yu, and he went back to see Sun Quan.

"Only a matter of some importance," said Sun Quan, "would bring you back so late at night." "My lord," replied Zhou Yu, "are you still in doubt about beginning the expedition tomorrow?" "My only concern," said Sun Quan "is the numerical imbalance between our forces." With a smile Zhou Yu reassured him: "I have come to set your mind at ease on precisely this point, my lord. Your fears and uncertainties arise from mention in Cao's letter of his million-man land and sea force. And you have taken his claim at face value. Let us lay out the facts: Cao Cao is leading no more than one hundred and fifty or sixty thousand northern troops, who are almost entirely exhausted. The soldiers he took over from Yuan Shao number some seventy or eighty thousand, the greater part of whom have little trust in their new leader and consequently little commitment. You have little to fear from one long-wearied army and another with no fixed purpose, whatever their numbers. Fifty thousand men are all I need to break them. Let Your Lord-ship worry no further." Sun Quan placed his hand gently on Zhou Yu's shoulder and said, "You have allayed my fears. Zhang Zhao has no sense¹² and has deeply disappointed me. Only you and Lu Su share my view. You two and Cheng Pu should pick your forces at once and advance. I will reinforce you with more soldiers and plenty of supplies. If your vanguard runs into difficulties, come back to me at once, and I will meet the traitor Cao in combat personally. My doubts are dispelled."

Zhou Yu expressed his gratitude and left, observing inwardly, "Kongming divined my lord's state of mind before I did! In strategy, too, he excels me. In the long run such brilliance bodes danger to our land; we would be well rid of him now." That night Zhou Yu sent for Lu Su and confided his thoughts to him. Lu Su responded, "Never! To kill a valuable ally before Cao Cao falls would be self-defeating." "The man is an asset to Liu Xuande, not to us," retorted Zhou Yu. "He will cause the

Southland trouble." "Zhuge Jin is his elder brother," said Lu Su. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if Jin could induce Kongming to come over to the Southland?" Zhou Yu approved the suggestion.

As dawn broke the following morning, Zhou Yu entered his riverside headquarters and ascended the commander's seat in the main tent of the central army. Left and right stood swordsmen and axemen. Officials and officers crowded below to hear his instructions. But Cheng Pu, the second marshal, was resentful at having to serve under Zhou Yu, who was his junior in age and now his superior in rank. Cheng Pu excused himself on grounds of illness and sent his eldest son, Cheng Zi, in his place.

Zhou Yu issued his commands to the assembly; "The king's law favors no man; let each of you good men perform his duty. Cao Cao's tyranny exceeds even Dong Zhuo's: he holds the Emperor prisoner in Xuchang; and now his ruthless army stands poised at our borders. Today by our sovereign's authority I mean to bring him to justice. I call on you to give your all to this action. Wherever you march, the population is not to be disturbed. Rewards and punishments will follow the strictest standards."

Having delivered the charge, Zhou Yu dispatched the vanguard, Han Dang and Huang Gai, to take command of the naval force and proceed to Three Rivers,¹³ there to establish camp and await further orders. The second brigade was led by Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai; the third, by Ling Tong and Pan Zhang; the fourth, by Taishi Ci and Lü Meng; and the fifth, by Lu Xun and Dong Xi. The first marshal further assigned Lü Fan and Zhu Zhi to facilitate and supervise land and sea operations of all units and assure their strict coordination. When these assignments had been made, the various commanders put their boats and armaments in order and set out.

Cheng Zi reported to his father that Zhou Yu's measures were the model of military procedure. Cheng Pu, greatly impressed, said, "I mistook Zhou Yu for a coward, a man unworthy to lead. But if he can do this, he is a true general, and I must not show disrespect." He then presented himself at Zhou Yu's headquarters and apologized for his conduct. Zhou Yu accepted his apology graciously.

The next day Zhou Yu said to Zhuge Jin, "Your brother has the talent to be a king's minister. It is beneath him to serve Liu Xuande. His fortunate arrival in the Southland offers the occasion for persuading him to stay, if I might trouble you to undertake the mission. Our lord would then have a valued adviser and you would be reunited with your brother. What could be more desirable? Be so kind as to pay him a little visit." "I have accomplished nothing, I regret to say, since coming to the Southland, but I shall do all that I can to carry out the field marshal's command." So saying, Jin rode directly to see Kongming. Receiving him at the guesthouse, Zhuge Liang prostrated himself tearfully and the two brothers gave vent to their deep love for one another.

"Dear brother," Zhuge Jin began, sobbing, "surely you remember the tale of Bo Yi and Shu Qi?"¹⁴ "Hmm," thought Kongming, "Zhou Yu must have sent him to win me over." He answered, "You mean the worthy sages of antiquity?" "Though they died of hunger at the foot of Mount Shouyang, the two brothers stayed together," Zhuge Jin continued. "You and I came from the same womb, suckled at one breast. But now we serve different lords and lead divergent lives. Reflecting on the character of Bo Yi and Shu Qi, can you help feeling a pang of shame?" "What you speak of, brother," Kongming replied, "pertains to the realm of sentiment. What I must preserve is in the realm of honor. You and I are men of the Han. Imperial Uncle Liu is a scion of the royal house. If you could leave the Southland and join me in serving the imperial uncle, then you would have no 'pang of shame' as a true subject of the Han, and we, as brothers, would be reunited. In this way, neither the principle of sentiment nor of honor would be impaired. I venture to inquire how you view this proposal." "I came

to ply him," thought Zhuge Jin, "and end up being plied." He had no answer to make, so he rose and took his leave.¹⁵

Zhuge Jin returned to Zhou Yu and related all that Kongming had said. "How do you feel about it?" asked Zhou Yu. "I have received General Sun Quan's grace and generosity. I could never leave him." "Good sir," responded Zhou Yu, "if you will serve our lord with loyal heart, there is no need to say more. I think I know the way to make Kongming give in." Indeed:

When wits are matched, it's best if they agree;
But when talents clash, it's hard for them to yield.

Would Zhou Yu outwit his rival yet?

READ ON.



Cao Cao Suffers Casualties at Three Rivers; Jiang Gan Springs a Trap at the Congregation of Heroes

ZHUGE JIN RECOUNTED HIS CONVERSATION with Kongming. As Zhou Yu listened, his hostility deepened, and he made up his mind that he would have to dispose of Kongming.

The following day, after reviewing his commanders, Zhou Yu went to take leave of Sun Quan. "You proceed," said Quan, "I will bring up the rear with another force." Zhou Yu withdrew and, together with Cheng Pu and Lu Su, commenced the expedition. He also invited Kongming, who accepted eagerly. With the four on board, the ship hoisted sail and began tacking toward Xiakou. Some fifty *li* from Three Rivers the convoy halted. Zhou Yu, commanding the center, established his headquarters and ordered a ring of camps built along the shore around the Western Hills. Kongming betook himself to a little boat of his own.

His arrangements completed, Zhou Yu called Kongming to his tent. After the formalities, Zhou Yu said, "In an earlier campaign Cao had far fewer troops than Yuan Shao; but he won all the same by following Xu You's advice and cutting off Shao's food supply at Wuchao. Now Cao has eight hundred and thirty thousand men to our fifty or sixty thousand. How can we resist? Only by cutting off his supplies. According to information I have already gathered, everything is stored at Iron Pile Mountain. Since you have lived on the River Han and are familiar with the terrain, I wonder if I could prevail upon you, together with Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Zilong—as well as the thousand men that I will give you—to go at once to the mountain and sever their supply line. This would be in the interest of both our lords. I hope you will accept." Kongming mused: "He is scheming to murder me because I will not agree to leave Lord Liu. Rather than look foolish, I'll go along and figure out later what to do." And so, to Zhou Yu's satisfaction, Kongming accepted the assignment enthusiastically.

After Kongming had left, Lu Su said privately to Zhou Yu, "What's behind this sending Kongming to steal their grain?" "Killing Kongming would only invite ridicule," Zhou Yu explained. "Let Cao Cao be the one to save us future trouble." Lu Su then went to Kongming to find out what he knew. But Kongming, betraying no anxiety, was gathering his forces for roll call, preparing to set out. The kindhearted Lu Su said pointedly, "What chance does this mission have, good sir?" With a smile Kongming replied, "I have mastered the fine points of every form of warfare, naval, foot, horse, and chariot. I fear no failure—unlike Southland leaders like you, sir, or Zhou Yu, who have only one specialty." "What do you mean?" answered Lu Su. Kongming replied: "Isn't there a children's rhyme going around the south, 'To ambush a trail or hold a pass, Lu Su's the man to trust; / For marine war, Commander Zhou Yu's a must'? So it seems that you're not good for more than a roadside ambush or guarding a pass and that Zhou Yu can fight on water but not on land."

Lu Su reported this conversation to Zhou Yu, who exclaimed angrily, "So he thinks I can't fight on land! Fine. Let him stay here. I'll raid Cao's supplies myself with ten thousand men." Lu Su carried

this new development back to Kongming, who smiled as he said, "All Zhou Yu really wanted was for Cao Cao to kill me. So I teased him with that remark. He is touchy, though. This is a critical moment. My only wish is for Lord Sun and Lord Liu to work together, for then we may succeed. Plotting against one another will undo our cause. The traitor Cao has plenty of tricks. In his career as a general he's made a specialty of severing enemy supply lines; his own storage is sure to be well prepared for raids: if Zhou Yu goes they'll only capture him. What is called for now is a decisive engagement on the river to blunt the enemy's mettle while we try to work out a plan for their defeat. It's up to you to explain this to Zhou Yu in a reasonable way."

As Lu Su recounted Kongming's words that night, Zhou Yu shook his head and stamped his feet, crying, "He is ten times my better. If we don't destroy him now, he will destroy this land of ours." "At this critical time," Lu Su argued, "I hope you will consider the Southland above all. There will be time enough for such schemes after Cao Cao is defeated." Zhou Yu had to agree.

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Liu Xuande charged Liu Qi with the defense of Jiangxia, while he and his commanders moved ahead to Xiakou. In the distance they saw flags and banners shadowing the river's southern shore, and row upon row of spears. Surmising that the Southland had already mobilized, Xuande shifted all the Jiangxia troops across the Great River and east to Fankou. He then addressed his followers: "We have had no word from Kongming since he went south, and no one knows how things stand. Who will find out for us and report back?" Mi Zhu volunteered, and Xuande, having provided him with sheep, wine, and other gifts, instructed him to go to the Southland and learn what he could while pretending to feast the southern troops.

Mi Zhu piloted a small boat downriver and arrived in front of Zhou Yu's camp. After being received, Mi Zhu prostrated himself, conveyed Xuande's respects, and presented the articles he had brought. Zhou Yu accepted the gifts and called a banquet to welcome Mi Zhu. "Kongming has been here too long," Mi Zhu declared. "I would like to bring him back with me." "But he is consulting with us on the campaign against Cao Cao," said Zhou Yu, "he can't simply leave. I, for my part, desire to see Lord Liu in order to confer with him. But, alas, I am personally directing the army and cannot leave the scene. How gratifying it would be, though, if Lord Liu would consider traveling here to visit me." Mi Zhu assented and returned to Xuande.

Lu Su said to Zhou Yu, "Why do you want to see Xuande?" "He's the craftiest owl on earth," responded Zhou Yu. "I must be rid of him. This is my chance to lure him here and kill him, and save our house future grief." Lu Su argued over and over against such measures—to no avail. Zhou Yu issued a secret order: "If Xuande comes, I want fifty armed men hidden behind the wall curtains. I'll throw a cup to the ground as the signal to strike."

Mi Zhu returned to Xuande and relayed Zhou Yu's invitation. Xuande called for a swift boat and set out. Lord Guan objected: "Zhou Yu is a schemer; moreover, we have no letter from Kongming. I see treachery in this. Let's think it over some more." "But they are our allies in the struggle against Cao Cao," said Xuande. "Not to go when they call violates the spirit of the alliance. Constant mutual suspicion will ruin our cause." "If you insist on going, brother," said Lord Guan, "I shall join you." "And I too," added Zhang Fei. "No. Let Lord Guan accompany me," Xuande replied. "You and Zhao Zilong can guard the camp, and Jian Yong can guard Exian. I will return soon."

Xuande and Lord Guan boarded a light craft and, with a small guard of some twenty men, sped downriver to the Southland. Xuande viewed the cutters and war-boats of his ally, their flags and armored men, their orderly array, with mounting excitement. His arrival was swiftly reported to Zhou Yu, who asked, "With how many boats?" "Just one," he was informed, "and about twenty men." "His life is mine," said Zhou Yu, smiling. He deployed his men and went forth to greet his guest. Xuande, with Lord Guan and his guards, followed his host to the main tent. Salutations exchanged, Zhou Yu saw Xuande to the seat of honor. "General," Xuande protested, "you are renowned throughout the empire. I am a man of no talent. Do not trouble so much over ceremony." They partook of a banquet as host and guest.

At the riverside Kongming discovered that Xuande and Zhou Yu were having a meeting. Anxiously entering the main tent to see what was afoot, he noted a murderous look in Zhou Yu's eye and the armed guards behind the wall curtains. "What am I to do about this?" he said to himself in alarm. He turned and observed Xuande chatting and laughing, completely at ease, while Lord Guan stood behind him, hand on his sword. "He is safe," Kongming thought and left to return to the river.

Host and guest had savored several rounds of wine when Zhou Yu stood up, cup in hand. Observing Lord Guan, hand on sword, Yu inquired who he was. "My younger brother, Guan Yunchang," replied Xuande. "Not the one who cut down generals Yan Liang and Wen Chou?" Zhou Yu asked nervously. "The same," Xuande answered. Zhou Yu, alarmed, broke into a sweat. He poured a cup for Lord Guan and drank with him. Moments later Lu Su came in. "Where's Kongming?" Xuande asked him. "Could you bring him here?" "There'll be time enough for meeting when Cao Cao is defeated," said Zhou Yu, closing the subject. Lord Guan eyed Xuande, who sensed his brother's intent and rose. "I shall bid you farewell for now," Xuande told Zhou Yu, "but I will return expressly to celebrate with you the defeat of Cao Cao." Zhou Yu made no effort to detain his guest and escorted him out the main gate.

Xuande and Lord Guan reached the edge of the river, where they found Kongming in his boat. Xuande was elated. "My lord," said Kongming, "you were in more danger than you knew!" Aghast, Xuande said, "No!" "He would have killed you, but for Lord Guan," Kongming remarked. Xuande, only then realizing the actual situation in the Southland, begged Kongming to return with him to Fankou. But Kongming said, "Here in the tiger's mouth I am as secure as Mount Tai. What you have to do is prepare your forces for action. On the twentieth day, first of the cycle, of the eleventh month, send Zhao Zilong in a small boat to wait for me at the south shore. There must be no slip-up." Xuande asked what he was planning, but Kongming simply replied, "Look for a southeast wind. That's when I'll come back." Xuande wanted to know more, but Kongming hurried him aboard and returned to his own boat.

Xuande, Lord Guan, and their followers had sailed but a few Zi when they saw fifty or sixty boats speeding downriver toward them; in the lead was General Zhang Fei, spear at the ready. Fearing some mishap to Xuande, he had come to back up Lord Guan. And so the three brothers returned to their camp together.

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Zhou Yu, having seen Xuande off, returned to camp. Lu Su asked, "You lured Xuande here. Why didn't you strike?" "Lord Guan is the fiercest of generals. He never leaves Xuande's side. If I had

acted, he would have slain me," Zhou Yu explained. Lu Su was astounded at the awe Lord Guan had inspired.

At that moment an emissary from Cao Cao arrived, bearing an envelope with the words "The prime minister of the Han authorizes Field Marshal Zhou to open this." Zhou Yu angrily tore the envelope, unopened, into pieces and threw them to the ground. He then ordered the bearer put to death. "Two kingdoms at war don't kill each other's envoys," Lu Su urged. "I do so to show my confidence in our strength," answered Zhou Yu. The envoy was executed, and his head was given to his attendants to carry back to Cao Cao. Zhou Yu then commanded Gan Ning to lead the van, Han Dang to lead the left wing, and Jiang Qin to lead the right, reserving for himself the task of relief and reinforcement. The next day they breakfasted at the fourth watch and sailed out at the fifth, drums and battle cries heralding their advance.

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The news that Zhou Yu had destroyed his letter and beheaded his messenger infuriated Cao Cao. At once he organized a vanguard led by Cai Mao, Zhang Yun, and other Jingzhou commanders who had submitted to him. Cao Cao himself took command of the rear and supervised the transfer of the fleet to Three Rivers. Soon he saw the approaching war-boats of the southerners spread across the length and breadth of the river. Their lead general, seated in the prow of one boat, shouted out, "Gan Ning comes! Who dares oppose?" Cai Mao sent his younger brother, Xun, to meet him. The two boats drew near. Gan Ning steadied his bow and toppled Xun with one shot. Gan Ning pressed ahead, his archers massing their bolts; Cao Cao's forces reeled before the assault. Following up, Jiang Qin sailed from the right and Han Dang from the left, straight into the center of the northerners' position. Most of Cao's soldiers, coming from the provinces of Qing and Xu, were unused to naval warfare and lost their balance on the rolling ships. This gave the southerners—now augmented by Zhou Yu's force—control of the waterway. Thousands of Cao Cao's men fell by bombard or arrow in a battle that lasted from midmorning to early afternoon. But despite his advantage, Zhou Yu, still wary of Cao Cao's greater numbers, beat the gong recalling his boats.

After his defeated troops had returned, Cao Cao appeared in his land headquarters and directed the reordering of his forces. He rebuked Cai Mao and Zhang Yun: "The troops of the Southland, though few, have defeated us—because you lack commitment." Cai Mao protested, "We were defeated because the Jingzhou sailors have been off their training and because the Qingzhou and Xuzhou troops have no experience in naval warfare. The thing to do now is to establish a naval camp, placing the Qingzhou and Xuzhou troops inside, the Jingzhou troops outside, and train them every day until they are fit for combat." To this Cao replied, "You are already the chief naval commander and can perform your duties at your discretion. There's no need to petition me."

Cai Mao and Zhang Yun undertook the training of a navy. Along the river they set up a row of twenty-four water lanes for communication; the larger boats formed the outer rim, enclosing the smaller like a city wall. At night the torches lit up the sky and river, while on land the camps, which stretched for three hundred *li*, sent up smoke and fire day and night.

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The triumphant Zhou Yu had returned to camp, rewarded his troops, and sent news of the victory

to Sun Quan. After nightfall Zhou Yu surveyed the scene from a height: the glow in the west reached the horizon. "The fires and torches of the northern army," his aides said. Shocked, Zhou Yu decided to investigate Cao's naval encampment himself the following day. He ordered a two-tiered boat outfitted with drums and other instruments. Accompanied by his ablest commanders, all armed with longbows or crossbows, he boarded and set out.

The craft threaded its way upriver. When it reached the edge of Cao Cao's camp, Zhou Yu dropped anchor. The instruments began playing, and Zhou Yu observed how the camp responded. "They have mastered the finest points of naval warfare," he exclaimed. "Who's in general command?" "Cai Mao and Zhang Yun," his assistants reported. "Longtime residents of the Southland, they're skilled in naval tactics," Zhou Yu mused. "I'll have to put them out of the way before I can defeat Cao." At that moment Cao Cao was informed of the spy ship's presence and ordered it captured. Zhou Yu saw Cao Cao's signal flags in motion and had the anchor raised; the oarsmen had pulled the two-tiered vessel more than ten *li* into open water by the time Cao Cao's boats came forth. Finding the Southland vessel out of range, the captains returned and reported to Cao Cao.

Cao Cao conferred with his commanders. "Yesterday," he said, "we lost a battle and our momentum. Now they've sailed in again, close enough to spy on our camp. How can we defeat them?" As he spoke, one man stepped forward and said, "Zhou Yu and I have been close since childhood when we were students together. Let me try my powers of persuasion on him and see if I can get him to surrender."¹ Cao Cao turned a grateful eye on the man. It was Jiang Gan (Ziyi) of Jiujiang, a member of his council. "You are on good terms with Zhou Yu?" Cao Cao asked. "Your troubles are over, Your Excellency, said Jiang Gan." "When I go south, I shall not fail." "What will you need?" asked Cao. "A page to accompany me, two servants to row me across." Cao Cao, immensely pleased, regaled Jiang Gan with wine and saw him off. The envoy, dressed in hempen scarf and plain weave robe, sped downriver, straight to Zhou Yu's camp. His arrival was announced—"An old friend comes to pay a call"—just when Zhou Yu was in conference. Delighted by the news, he turned to his commanders and said, "The 'persuader' has come." Then he told each of them what to do, and they left to perform their duties.

Zhou Yu adjusted his cap and garb and, surrounded by several hundred in brocade clothes and decorated hats, came forth. Jiang Gan approached boldly and alone, save for his one young attendant who was dressed in plain black. Zhou Yu received him with low bows. "You have been well since we parted, I trust," said the visitor. "My friend, you have taken great trouble, coming so far to serve as Cao Cao's spokesman," Zhou Yu responded.² Taken aback, Jiang Gan said, "We have been apart so long, I came especially to reminisce. How could you suspect me of such a thing?" With a smile Zhou Yu answered, "My ear may not be so fine as the great musician Shi Kuang's, but I can discern good music and good intentions too."³ "Dear friend," Jiang Gan replied, "if this is how you treat an old friend, I must beg my leave." Still smiling, Zhou Yu took Jiang Gan by the arm and said, "I was afraid, brother, that you were working for Cao, that's all. If you have no such purpose, there is no need to rush. Please stay." And so the two of them went into the tent. After the ritual greetings they seated themselves, and Zhou Yu summoned the notables of the south to meet his friend.

Chief officials and generals in formal dress and subordinate officers and commanders clad in silvered armor entered shortly in two columns. Zhou Yu had each dignitary introduced to Jiang Gan and seated in one of two rows to the side. A great feast was spread and victory music performed. Wine came too, round after round. Zhou Yu addressed the assembly: "Here is one of my schoolmates,

a close friend. Although he has come from north of the river, he is not serving as a spokesman of Cao Cao's cause. Set your minds at ease on that score." He then removed the sword at his side and handed it to Taishi Ci, saying, "Wear the sword and supervise the banquet. We will speak of friendship today and nothing else. If anyone so much as mentions the hostilities between Cao Cao and the lord of the Southland, take off his head!" Taishi Ci acknowledged the order and sat at the feast, his hand resting on the sword. Terror-stricken, Jiang Gan said little.

"Since taking command of the army," Zhou Yu declared, "I have drunk no wine. But today, in the company of an old friend, with no lack of trust, let us have our fill and then some." With that, he laughed loudly and drank deeply. The toasts came thick and fast. When they had grown flushed and mellow, Zhou Yu took Jiang Gan by the hand, and the two friends strolled outside the tent. To the left and right of them stood soldiers in complete outfit, armed with dagger and halberd. "Formidable, are they not?" Zhou Yu asked. "Ferocious as bears, fierce as tigers," Jiang Gan agreed. Then Zhou Yu led his guest around behind the headquarters where hills of grain and fodder were stored. "Enough for any eventuality, don't you think?" Zhou Yu asked his guest. "'Crack troops and full bins.' Your high reputation is not for nothing," Jiang Gan agreed again.

Feigning intoxication, Zhou Yu laughed heartily. "To think we were once students together!" he said. "Who would have foreseen a day like today?" "Brother," said Jiang Gan, "with your supreme abilities, such accomplishment is only too fitting." Gripping Jiang Gan's hand, Zhou Yu said, "As a man of honor all my life and one having the good fortune to serve a lord who appreciates me, I am as obligated to that honored bond between liege and liege man as I am by my kinsmen's love. What I say, he does. What I propose, he approves. His misfortunes and his blessings are mine as much as his. Were the great rhetoricians of old—Su Qin, Zhang Yi, Lu Jia, Li Yiji⁴—were they to walk the earth again, delivering speeches like cascading streams and wielding their tongues like sharp swords, they could not move me!" Having spoken, Zhou Yu burst into laughter. Jiang Gan's face was ashen. Zhou Yu led his guest back into the tent, and the general carousing resumed. Zhou Yu pointed to his commanders and said, "These are the flower of the Southland. And this gathering today shall be known as the Congregation of the Heroes." The company kept on drinking until it was time to light the lamps. Then Zhou Yu rose and performed a sword dance, singing:

In this life a man must make his name:
A good name is a comfort all life long.
A lifelong comfort: Oh, let me feel the wine,
And flushed with wine, I'll sing my wildest song.

When he finished, the whole table laughed gaily. As the night advanced, Jiang Gan prepared to take his leave. "The wine was too much for me," he said. Zhou Yu dismissed the guests, and the commanders departed. "We have not shared a couch for many a year, my friend," Zhou Yu said. "Tonight we share a bed foot-to-foot." Again feigning intoxication, he led Jiang Gan arm in arm into his bedchamber and there collapsed, sprawling into bed fully dressed and vomiting copiously. How could Jiang Gan sleep? He lay on his pillow, listening. The drum sounded the second watch. Lifting his head, he saw the wasted candle still giving light. Zhou Yu was snoring heavily. On the table Jiang Gan noticed a sheaf of documents. He rose and stealthily looked through them: among the correspondence was a letter from Cao Cao's two naval commanders, Cai Mao and Zhang Yun. He

peeked at the contents:

We surrendered to Cao by dint of circumstance, not for wealth or rank. We have tricked the northern army by enclosing it inside the large ships. The moment we have the chance, we will deliver the traitor Cao's head to you. Someone will come with further information. Have no doubts. Herein our respectful reply.

Jiang Gan said to himself, "So Cai Mao and Zhang Yun are in league with the Southland!" and stowed the letter in his clothes. He was going to look at some of the other papers, but Zhou Yu turned over in bed. Jiang Gan extinguished the lamp and lay down. Zhou Yu began to mumble, "My friend, wait a few days and you'll see the head of that traitor Cao!" Jiang Gan managed a reply. Again Zhou Yu said, "Do stay a while . . . you'll see Cao Cao's head . . ." Jiang Gan tried to question him, but saw that he had fallen fast asleep.

Jiang Gan lay on the bed. The fourth watch was near. He heard someone come into the tent and call out, "Is the marshal awake yet?" Zhou Yu, giving the appearance of a man startled from his dreams, asked the man, "Who is this sleeping on my bed?" "Marshal," was the reply, "you invited Jiang Gan to share your bed. Can you have forgotten?" In a repentant tone, Zhou Yu said, "I never allow myself to get drunk. I was not myself yesterday. I don't remember if I said anything." "Someone came from the north," said the man. "Lower your voice!" said Zhou Yu urgently. He then called Jiang Gan, but Gan feigned sleep. Zhou Yu slipped out of the tent. Gan listened intently. Outside someone was saying, "Zhang Yun and Cai Mao said, 'We are not able to take quick action . . .'" The remainder was spoken too low for Jiang Gan to make out.

Moments later Zhou Yu reentered the tent and called his friend again. Jiang Gan continued the pretense by pulling the blanket over his head and making no response. Zhou Yu took off his clothes and lay down. Jiang Gan thought, "Zhou Yu is a shrewd man. He is sure to kill me in the morning when he discovers the letter is gone." Jiang Gan rested until the fifth watch, then rose and called Zhou Yu. No answer. He put on his hood and slipped out of the tent, called his young companion and headed for the main gate. "Where to, sir?" the guard asked. "I'm afraid I have been keeping the field marshal from his work, so I am saying good-bye for now." The guard made no attempt to stop them.⁵

Jiang Gan boarded his boat and sped back to see Cao Cao. "How did it go?" the prime minister asked. Jiang Gan said, "Zhou Yu is too high-minded to be swayed by speeches." Angrily Cao replied, "The mission failed. And we end up looking like fools!" "Though I could not persuade him to join us, I did manage to find out something of interest for Your Excellency. Would you ask the attendants to go out?" So saying, Jiang Gan produced the stolen letter and related point by point all that had happened in the bedchamber. "That's how the villains repay my kindness!" roared Cao Cao and summoned Cai Mao and Zhang Yun to his quarters at once. "I want you two to begin the attack," Cao Cao said to them. "The training is still unfinished. It would be risky," they replied. "And when the training is completed, will my head be delivered to Zhou Yu?" said Cao. Cai Mao and Zhang Yun could make no sense of this and were too confused to respond. Cao Cao called for his armed guards to put them to death. But the moment the two heads were brought in, Cao Cao realized he had been tricked.⁶ A poet of later times left these lines:

Cao Cao, a master of intrigue,

Fell for Zhou Yu's cunning ruse.
Cai and Zhang betrayed their lord
And fell to Cao Cao's bloody sword.⁷

Cao Cao's commanders wanted to know the reason for the executions. But Cao Cao was unable to admit his mistake. "They flouted military rules; therefore, I had them killed," he said. The stunned commanders groaned and sighed. Cao Cao chose Mao Jie and Yu Jin to serve as the new chief naval commanders.

Meanwhile, spies reported the executions to Zhou Yu. "I feared those two the most," he said with satisfaction. "With them out of the way, I have no problems." "Commander," said Lu Su, "if you can wage war this well, we will have nothing to worry about. Cao will be beaten." "My guess is that none of our commanders knows what happened," said Zhou Yu, "except for Kongming, who knows more than I do. I doubt if even this plan fooled him. Try to sound him out for me. Find out if he knew. And tell me right away." Indeed:

His success in dividing his rivals would not be complete
Until he knew what the stony-eyed observer on the side was thinking.

Once again Lu Su went to see Kongming for Zhou Yu. Could he keep the alliance from breaking up?⁸

READ ON.



***Kongming Borrows Cao Cao's Arrows Through a Ruse;
Huang Gai Is Flogged Following a Secret Plan***

ZHOU YU SENT LU SU to find out if Kongming had detected the subterfuge. Kongming welcomed Lu Su aboard his little boat, and the two men sat face-to-face. "Every day I am taken up with military concerns and miss your advice," Lu Su began. "Rather, I am the tardy one, having yet to convey my felicitations to the chief commander," answered Kongming. "What felicitations?" asked Lu Su. "Why," replied Kongming, "for that very matter about which he sent you here to see if I knew." The color left Lu Su's face. "But how did you know, master?" he asked. Kongming went on: "The trick was good enough to take in Jiang Gan. Cao Cao, though hoodwinked for the present will realize what happened quickly enough—he just won't admit the mistake. But with those naval commanders dead, the Southland has no major worry, so congratulations are certainly in order. I hear that Cao Cao has replaced them with Mao Jie and Yu Jin. One way or another, those two will do in their navy!"

Lu Su, unable to respond sensibly, temporized as best he could before he rose to leave. "I trust you will say nothing about this in front of Zhou Yu," Kongming urged Lu Su, "lest he again be moved to do me harm." Lu Su agreed but finally divulged the truth when he saw the field marshal. Astounded, Zhou Yu said, "The man must die. I am determined." "If you kill him," Lu Su argued, "Cao Cao will have the last laugh." "I will have justification," answered Zhou Yu. "And he will not feel wronged." "How will you do it?" asked Lu Su. "No more questions now. You'll see soon enough," Zhou Yu replied.

The next day Zhou Yu gathered his generals together and summoned Kongming, who came eagerly. At the assembly Zhou Yu asked him, "When we engage Cao Cao in battle on the river routes, what should be the weapon of choice?" "On the Great River, bow and arrow," Kongming replied. "My view precisely, sir," Zhou Yu said. "But we happen to be short of arrows. Dare I trouble you, sir, to undertake the production of one hundred thousand arrows to use against the enemy? Please favor us with your cooperation in this official matter." "Whatever task the chief commander assigns, I shall strive to complete," replied Kongming. "But may I ask by what time you will require them?" "Can you finish in ten days?" asked Zhou Yu. "Cao's army is due at any moment," said Kongming. "If we must wait ten days, it will spoil everything." "How many days do you estimate you need, sir?" said Zhou Yu. "With all respect, I will deliver the arrows in three days," Kongming answered. "There is no room for levity in the army," Zhou Yu snapped. "Dare I trifle with the chief commander?" countered Kongming. "I beg to submit my pledge under martial law: if I fail to finish in three days' time, I will gladly suffer the maximum punishment."

Elated, Zhou Yu had his administrative officer publicly accept the document. He then offered Kongming wine, saying, "You will be well rewarded when your mission is accomplished."¹ "It's too late to begin today," said Kongming. "Production begins tomorrow. On the third day send five

hundred men to the river for the arrows." After a few more cups, he left. Lu Su said to Zhou Yu, "This man has to be deceiving us." "He is delivering himself into our hands!" replied Zhou Yu. "We did not force him. Now that he has publicly undertaken this task in writing, he couldn't escape if he sprouted wings. Just have the artisans delay delivery of whatever he needs. He will miss the appointed time; and when we fix his punishment, what defense will he be able to make? Now go to him again and bring me back news."

Lu Su went to see Kongming. "Didn't I tell you not to say anything?" Kongming began. "He is determined to kill me. I never dreamed you would expose me. And now today he actually pulled this trick on me! How am I supposed to produce one hundred thousand arrows in three days? You have to save me!" "You brought this on yourself," said Lu Su. "How can I save you?" "You must lend me twenty vessels," Kongming went on, "with a crew of thirty on each. Lined up on either side of each vessel I want a thousand bundles of straw wrapped in black cloth. I have good use for them. I'm sure we can have the arrows on the third day. But if you tell Zhou Yu this time, my plan will fail." Lu Su agreed, though he had no idea what Kongming was up to, and reported back to Zhou Yu without mentioning the boats: "Kongming doesn't seem to need bamboo, feathers, glue, or other materials. He seems to have something else in mind." Puzzled, Zhou Yu said, "Let's see what he has to say after three days have gone by."

Lu Su quietly placed at Kongming's disposal all he had requested. But neither on the first day nor on the second did Kongming make any move. On the third day at the fourth watch he secretly sent for Lu Su. "Why have you called me here?" Su asked. "Why else? To go with me to fetch the arrows," Kongming replied. "From where?" inquired Lu Su. "Ask no questions," said Kongming. "Let's go; you'll see." He ordered the boats linked by long ropes and set out for the north shore.

That night tremendous fogs spread across the heavens, and the river mists were so thick that even face-to-face people could not see each other. Kongming urged his boats on into the deep fog. The rhapsody "Heavy Mists Mantling the Yangzi" describes it well:

Vast the river! Wide and farflung! West, it laps the mountains Mang and E. South, it grips the southern shires. North, it girdles the nine rivers, gathers their waters, and carries them into the sea, its surging waves rolling through eternity.

Its depths hold monsters and strange forms: the Lord of the Dragons, the Sea Thing, the river goddesses, the Ocean Mother, ten-thousand-span whales, and the nine-headed centipede. This redoubt of gods and spirits, heroes fight to hold.

At times the forces of *yin* and *yang* that govern nature fail, and day and darkness seem as one, turning the vast space into a fearful monochrome. Everywhere the fog, stock-still. Not even a cartload can be spotted. But the sound of gong or drum carries far.

At first, a visible gloom, time for the wise leopard of the southern hills to seclude itself. Gradually darkness fills the expanse. Does it want the North Sea leviathan itself to lose its way? At last it reaches the very sky and mantles the all-upbearing earth. Grey gloomy vastness. A shoreless ocean. Whales hurtle on the waves. Dragons plunge and spew mist.

It is like the end of early rains, when the cold of latent spring takes hold: everywhere, vague, watery desert and darkness that flows and spreads. East, it blankets the shore of Chaisang. South, it blocks the hills of Xiakou. A thousand war-junks, swallowed between the river's rocky steeps, while a single fishing boat boldly bobs on the swells.

In so deep a fog, the deep-domed heavens have gone dark. The countenance of dawn is dull: the day becomes a murky twilight; the reddish hills, aquamarine jade. Great Yu, who first controlled the floods, could not with all his wisdom sound its depths. Even clear-eyed Li Lou could not use his measures, despite his keen vision.

Let the water god calm these waves. Let the god of elements put away his art. Let the sea creatures and those of land and air be gone. For now the magic isle of Penglai is cut off, and the gates of the polar stars are shrouded.

The roiling, restless fog is like the chaos before a storm, swirling streaks resembling wintry clouds. Serpents lurking there can spread its pestilence, and evil spirits can havoc wreak, sending pain and woe to the world of men, and the storms of wind and sand that plague the border wastes. Common souls meeting it fall dead. Great men observe it and despair. Are we returning to the primal state that preceded form itself—to undivided Heaven and earth?

By the fifth watch Kongming's little convoy was nearing Cao Cao's river base. The vessels advanced in single file, their prows pointed west. The crews began to roar and pound their drums. Lu Su was alarmed. "What if they make a sally?" he asked. Kongming smiled and replied, "I'd be very surprised if Cao Cao plunged into this fog. Let's pour the wine and enjoy ourselves. We'll go back when the fog lifts."

As the clamor reached Cao Cao's camp, the new naval advisers Mao Jie and Yu Jin sent reports at once. Cao Cao issued an order: "The fog has made the river invisible. This sudden arrival of enemy forces must mean an ambush. I want absolutely no reckless movements. Let the archers and crossbowmen, however, fire upon the enemy at random." He also sent a man to his land headquarters calling for Zhang Liao and Xu Huang to rush an extra three thousand crossbowmen to the shore. By the time Cao's order reached Mao Jie and Yu Jin, their men had already begun shooting for fear the southerners would penetrate their camp. Soon, once the marksmen from the land camp had joined the battle, ten thousand men were concentrating their shots toward the river. The shafts came down like rain.

Kongming ordered the boats to reverse direction and press closer to shore to receive the arrows while the crews continued drumming and shouting. When the sun climbed, dispersing the fog, Kongming ordered the boats to hurry homeward. The straw bundles bristled with arrow shafts, for which Kongming had each crew shout in unison: "Thanks to the prime minister for the arrows!" By the time this was reported to Cao Cao, the light craft, borne on swift currents, were twenty *li* downriver, beyond overtaking. Cao Cao was left with the agony of having played the fool.

Kongming said to Lu Su, "Each boat has some five or six thousand arrows. So without costing the Southland the slightest effort, we have gained over one hundred thousand arrows, which tomorrow we can return to Cao's troops—a decided convenience to us!" "Master, you are indeed supernatural," Lu Su said. "How did you know there would be such a fog today?" "A military commander is a mediocrity," Kongming explained, "unless he is versed in the patterns of the heavens, recognizes the advantages of the terrain, knows the interaction of prognostic signs, understands the changes in weather, examines the maps of deployment, and is clear about the balance of forces. Three days ago I calculated today's fog. That's why I took a chance on the three-day limit. Zhou Yu gave me ten days to finish the job, but neither materials nor workmen. He plainly meant to kill me for laxity. But my fate is linked to Heaven. How could Zhou Yu have succeeded?" Respectfully, Lu Su acknowledged

Kongming's superior powers.

When the boats reached shore, five hundred men sent by Zhou Yu had already arrived to transport the arrows. Kongming directed them to take the arrows—upward of one hundred thousand of them—from the boats and to deliver them to the chief commander's tent. Meanwhile, Lu Su explained in detail to Zhou Yu how Kongming had acquired them. Zhou Yu was astounded. Then, with a long sigh of mingled admiration and despair, he said, "Kongming's godlike machinations and magical powers of reckoning are utterly beyond me!"² A poet of later times left these lines in admiration:

That day thick fog covering the river
Dissolved all distance in a watery blur.
Like driving rain or locusts Cao's arrows came:
Kongming had humbled the Southland's commander.

Kongming entered the camp. Zhou Yu came out of his tent and greeted him with cordial praise: "Master, we must defer to your superhuman powers of reckoning." "A petty subterfuge of common cunning," Kongming replied, "not worth your compliments." Zhou Yu invited Kongming into his tent to drink. "Yesterday," Zhou Yu said, "Lord Sun urged us to advance. But I still lack that unexpected stroke that wins the battle. I appeal to you for instruction." "I am a run-of-the-mill mediocrity," replied Kongming. "What kind of unique stratagem could I offer you?" "Yesterday I surveyed Cao's naval stations," Zhou Yu continued. "They are the epitome of strict order, all according to the book, invulnerable to any routine attack. I have one idea, but it may not be workable. Master, could you help me to decide?"³

"Refrain from speaking for a moment, Chief Commander," Kongming said. "We'll write on our palms to see whether we agree or not." Zhou Yu was delighted to oblige. He called for brush and ink, and, after writing on his own masked hand, passed the brush to Kongming, who wrote on his own. Then the two men shifted closer to one another, opened their hands, and laughed. The same word was on each: fire. "Since our views coincide," said Zhou Yu, "my doubts are resolved. Protect our secret." "This is our common cause," answered Kongming. "Disclosure is unthinkable. My guess is that even though Cao Cao has twice fallen victim to my fires, he will not be prepared for this."⁴ It may be your ultimate weapon, Chief Commander." After drinking they parted. None of the commanders knew of their plan.

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Cao Cao had lost a hundred and fifty or sixty thousand arrows with nothing to show for it, and a surly temper ruled his mind. Xun You put forward a plan: "With Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang framing strategy for the Southland, there is little hope of defeating them in a quick strike. Rather, send a man to the Southland claiming to surrender, one who can serve as our spy in their camp. Then we will have a chance." "I was thinking much the same thing," said Cao. "Whom would you choose for the mission?" "We've executed Cai Mao. His clansmen are all in the army: Cai Zhong and Cai He are now lieutenant commanders. Bind those two to you, Your Excellency, with suitable favors and then send them to declare their submission to the Southland. They will not be suspected." Cao Cao agreed.

That night the prime minister secretly called the two into his tent and gave them their instructions:

"I want you to take a few soldiers south and pretend to surrender. Send covert reports of all you observe. When your mission is done, you will be enfeoffed and amply rewarded. Do not waver in your loyalties." "Our families are in Jingzhou," they replied. "How could our loyalties be divided? Rest assured, Your Excellency. We will secure the heads of Zhou Yu and Zhuge Liang and place them before you." Cao Cao paid them handsomely. The next day Cai Zhong and Cai He sailed south in several boats, accompanied by five hundred men and headed for the southern shore on a favorable wind.

Zhou Yu was working on preparations for his attack when it was reported that the ships approaching from the north shore were bringing two defectors, kinsmen of Cai Mao's, Cai He and Cai Zhong. Zhou Yu summoned them into his presence, and the two men prostrated themselves, weeping as they spoke: "Cao Cao has murdered our elder brother, an innocent man. We want to avenge him. So we have come to surrender in the hope that you will grant us a place. We want to serve in the front line." Delighted, Zhou Yu rewarded them handsomely and ordered them to join Gan Ning in the vanguard. The two men gave their respectful thanks, believing their plan had worked.

Zhou Yu, however, secretly instructed Gan Ning: "This is a false surrender. They have not brought their families. Cao Cao has sent them here to spy. I want to give him a taste of his own medicine by giving them certain information to send back. Be as solicitous of them as possible, but on your guard. The day we march, we will sacrifice them to our banners. Take the strictest precautions against any slip-up." Gan Ning left with his orders.

Lu Su said to the chief commander, "The surrender of Cai Zhong and Cai He is undoubtedly a pretense. We should not accept it." Zhou Yu rebuked him: "They have come to avenge their brother whom Cao Cao murdered. What 'pretense' are you talking about? If you are so full of suspicions, how are we going to open our arms to the talents of the realm?" Silently, Lu Su withdrew and went to inform Kongming, who smiled but said nothing. "What are you smiling at?" Lu Su demanded. "At your failure to detect Zhou Yu's plan. Spies cannot cross the river so easily. Cao Cao sent them to defect so that he could probe our situation. Zhou Yu is fighting fire with fire and wants them to transmit certain information. 'There is no end of deception in warfare'—Zhou Yu's plan exemplifies the adage." And so Lu Su left enlightened.

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One night Zhou Yu was sitting in his tent, when Huang Gai stole in. "You must have a fine plan to show me, coming in the night like this," said Zhou Yu. "The enemy is too numerous," said Huang Gai, "for us to maintain this standoff long. Why don't we attack with fire?" "Who told you to offer this plan?" Zhou Yu asked. "No one," he replied. "It's my own idea." "Well, it's exactly what I mean to do," said Zhou Yu. "That's why I'm keeping those two false defectors: to convey false information to Cao's camp. But I need a man to play the same game for us." "I am willing to do it," Huang Gai answered. "What credibility will you have," said Zhou Yu, "if you show no sign of having suffered?" "To requite the favor and generosity that the house of Sun has bestowed on me," Huang Gai answered, "I would freely and willingly strew my innards on the ground." Bowing low, Zhou Yu thanked him, saying, "If you are willing to carry out this trick of being flogged to win the enemy's confidence, it will be a manifold blessing to the Southland." "Even if I die, I will die content," was Huang Gai's reply. He took leave of Zhou Yu and departed.

The next day Zhou Yu sounded the drums, convening a general assembly of his commanders outside his tent. Kongming too was in attendance. Zhou Yu began: "Cao Cao's million-strong horde, deployed along a three-hundred-*li* stretch of land and shore, will not be defeated in a single day. I am ordering the commanders to take three months' rations and prepare to defend our line." Huang Gai came forward, interrupting him. "Never mind three months'—thirty months' rations won't do the job," he said. "If we can beat them this month, then let's do it. If not, what choice have we but to go along with Zhang Zhao's advice, throw down our weapons, face north, and sue for peace?"⁵

Zhou Yu exploded in fury. "I bear our lord's mandate," he cried, "to lead our troops to destroy Cao Cao. The next man to advocate surrender dies! Now at the very moment of confrontation between the two armies, how dare you weaken our morale? If I spare you, how will I hold my men?" Roughly, he barked orders to his guards to remove Huang Gai, execute him, and report back when done. Huang Gai turned to denounce him: "My service to Lord Sun's father, General Sun Jian, has taken me the length and breadth of the Southland through three successive reigns. Where do the likes of you come from?" Zhou Yu ordered immediate execution.

Gan Ning rushed forward and made an appeal: "Huang Gai is one of the Southland's elder leaders. I beg you to be lenient." "What are you trying to do, destroy the rules of the army?" Zhou Yu shouted back and barked orders to his guards to drive Gan Ning from the assembly with their clubs. At this point the entire assembly got on their knees, attempting to intercede: "No doubt Huang Gai deserves to die for his offense, but that would not be in the interests of the army. Let the chief commander be lenient and simply make note of his act for the present time. There will be time enough to dispose of him after we have beaten Cao Cao." Zhou Yu would not relent, but in the face of the strenuous protests of his commanders, he said, "If not for my consideration for your views, he would lose his head. But I shall spare him for now." Then, turning to his attendants, he added, "Throw him to the ground. One hundred strokes across the back should teach him a proper lesson." The commanders renewed their appeals for Huang Gai, but Zhou Yu overturned his table, silenced them with a gesture, and ordered the whipping carried out.

Huang Gai was stripped and forced facedown to the ground. After fifty blows of the rod the officers once again appealed for mercy. Zhou Yu jumped to his feet and, pointing at Huang Gai, said, "You have dared to show your disrespect! The other fifty will be held in reserve. Any further insults will be doubly punished." Still muttering angrily, he reentered his tent. The officers helped Huang Gai to his feet. His skin was broken everywhere and his oozing flesh was crossed with welts. Returning to his camp, he fainted several times. All who came to express their sympathy wept freely. Among the callers was Lu Su.

Afterward Lu Su went to Kongming's boat. "Zhou Yu made Huang Gai pay for it today," Lu Su said. "As his subordinates, we couldn't plead too hard and incur Zhou Yu's displeasure. But you, sir, are a guest. Why did you stand by so apparently unconcerned?" Kongming smiled and answered, "Don't mock me, Lu Su." "Since crossing the river together," Lu Su protested, "when have I mocked you? Do not say such things!" "Don't tell me, my friend," Kongming went on, "you didn't know today's beating was all a trick. What would be the point of having me oppose it?" These words awakened Lu Su to the meaning of what had happened. "Without the 'battered-body trick,'" Kongming remarked, "how could Cao Cao be taken in? Zhou Yu will be sending Huang Gai over to 'defect,' so he wants Cai Zhong and Cai He to report today's events to Cao Cao. But it is imperative that Zhou Yu not know that I know. Tell him simply that I too resented the beating."

After leaving Kongming, Lu Su went to Zhou Yu, and the two men conferred privately. "Why did you condemn Huang Gai so bitterly today?" Lu Su asked. "Did the commanders resent it?" responded Zhou Yu. "Most of them were disturbed," answered Lu Su. "And Kongming?" Zhou Yu asked. "He too expressed unhappiness at your extreme intolerance," replied Lu Su. "This time around I have deceived him," said Zhou Yu. "What?" Lu Su asked. "The beating was a ruse," Zhou Yu explained. "I wanted Huang Gai to feign defection, and his body had to be badly bruised to make it convincing. While Huang Gai is in their camp, we will attack with fire; victory will be ours." Lu Su marveled to himself at Kongming's insight but dared not breathe a word.⁶

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Huang Gai lay in his tent. All the commanders came to sympathize. Gai moaned but did not speak. When the military counselor Kan Ze arrived to pay his respects, Huang Gai dismissed his attendants. "I can't believe you have made an enemy of the chief commander," Kan Ze said. "I haven't," Huang Gai replied. "Then your punishment must be a trick to win the enemy's confidence," Kan Ze said. "How did you know?" asked Huang Gai. "I was watching Zhou Yu's every move," Kan Ze responded, "and guessed the truth pretty much." "The house of Sun has been my benefactor under three masters," said Huang Gai. "I proposed this plan for destroying Cao because of my appreciation, and I submitted to this beating willingly. But there is no one in the army I could trust to help me, except for you, who have a loyal and honorable mind and the courage to serve our lord without question." "Do you mean," Kan Ze said, "that you want me to deliver the letter of surrender?" "That is my wish. Are you willing?" Huang Gai asked. Eagerly, Kan Ze accepted. Indeed:

A brave general requites his lord without a thought for his own safety;
A counselor serves his land with the selfsame devotion.

What would Kan Ze say next?

READ ON.



Kan Ze's Secret Letter Offering a Sham Surrender; Pang Tong's Shrewd Plan for Connecting the Boats

KAN ZE (DERUN) CAME FROM SHANYIN COUNTY in Kuaiji district. His family was poor, but he was a devoted student and performed menial chores in exchange for the loan of books. Kan Ze could grasp a text in one reading and was eloquent in argument. Even as a youth he had the courage of his convictions. When Sun Quan summoned Kan Ze to serve as a consultant, Huang Gai, impressed by his ability as well as his mettle, befriended him; and this is how Huang Gai came to choose Kan Ze to present his sham appeal to Cao Cao.

Kan Ze responded eagerly to Huang Cai's proposition: "The man of honor will decay and vanish like a plant unless he can make his mark in this world. Since your life is pledged to requite your lord, can I begrudge my own worthless self?" Huang Gai rolled down from his bed and prostrated himself in gratitude. "This matter brooks no delay," Kan Ze said. "Let's start at once." "The letter is written," Huang Gai said and handed it over.

Disguised as a fisherman, Kan Ze guided a small craft to the north shore that very night under a winter sky filled with stars.¹ At the third watch he reached Cao's camp. The river patrol who captured him reported to Cao Cao. "A spy for sure," he said. "Only a fisherman," said the guard, "but he claims to be Kan Ze, consultant to Sun Quan, with something confidential to present to you." Cao Cao had Kan Ze brought before him. In Cao's tent, lit by flaming candles, Kan Ze could see Cao Cao sitting rigidly at his desk. "If you are an adviser to Sun Quan," Cao said, "what brings you here?"

"People say," Kan Ze began, "that Your Excellency yearns for men of ability. But your question belies your reputation. Oh, Huang Gai, you have miscalculated once again!" "I am about to go to war with Sun Quan," Cao Cao said, "and you come stealing over here! How can I not ask?" "On Zhou Yu's orders," Kan Ze went on, "Huang Gai, who has served three rulers of the house of Sun, was brutally and gratuitously beaten today in front of all the generals. Outraged and vengeful, he wants to defect and has placed his case in my hands, for he and I are as close as flesh and blood. I have come directly to present his secret letter. I wish to know if Your Excellency is willing to take him in." "Where is the letter?" Cao asked. Kan Ze passed it up to the prime minister. Cao slit the envelope and read the letter beneath the burning candles. It said in essence:

As a beneficiary of the Suns' generous favor, I should never waver in my loyalty. But it is evident to all that the soldiers of the six southern districts have no chance whatsoever of stopping the north's million-fold host. All the southern generals and officials, even the most obtuse, recognize the impossibility of it—except for that rascal Zhou Yu, who, out of shallow willfulness and an exaggerated sense of his own ability, seems determined to "smash a rock with an egg." He has, moreover, assigned rewards and punishments without reason so that the

blameless suffer and the deserving are ignored. And I, humiliated without cause after long years of service to the house of Sun, feel heartfelt hatred. Believing that Your Excellency handles all situations with true sincerity and welcomes men of ability with true humility, I have decided to lead my men in surrender to you, both to establish my merit and to erase my shame. Provisions and equipment will be offered in accompanying ships.² Weeping bitter blood, I speak bent to the ground. Never doubt me!³

Seated there, Cao Cao read the letter over and over. Suddenly he struck the table and, eyes widening in anger, cried, "It's the old trick of being flogged to win the enemy's confidence! Huang Gai had you carry a letter of sham surrender, fishing for advantage in the confusion. You dare trifle with me, do you?" He ordered Kan Ze removed and executed. But Kan Ze's expression did not alter as the guards hustled him off. He simply looked to the sky and laughed. Cao Cao had him dragged back and said viciously, "I have seen through your scheme. What are you laughing at?" "Not at you," replied Kan Ze, "but at Huang Gai for thinking he knows men." "Meaning?" asked Cao. "Kill me and be done with it," said Ze. "Why bother with questions?" "From my youngest days," said Cao, "I have studied manuals of warfare and am well acquainted with the ways and means of deception. This trick of yours might have fooled someone else, but not me." "Where do you find trickery in this letter?" Kan Ze responded. "I'll tell you so that you may die content," Cao said. "If this surrender were genuine, the letter would specify a time. Can you talk your way out of that?" Kan Ze laughed out loud again. "What a shame! And all that bragging about your knowledge of manuals. You'd better take your forces home as soon as you can, for if you fight, Zhou Yu will capture you. Know-nothing! More's the pity that I should die at your hands." "Why 'know-nothing'?" Cao demanded. "Because you know nothing of strategy or principles," answered Kan Ze. "All right, then," said Cao, "point out my errors." "You mistreat the worthy—why should I say it?" said Ze. "Let me die and be done." "If you talk sense," said Cao, "of course I will show you due respect."⁴ Kan Ze continued, "You must know the adage, 'There's no set time for betraying one's lord.' Were Huang Gai to set a time and then at the crucial moment find himself unable to act while the other side was already making its move, why, the whole thing would be exposed. One can only wait for the convenient moment. How can such a thing be arranged ahead of time? If you don't understand even this basic principle and are determined to kill a well-meaning friend, that is indeed the height of ignorance."⁵

On hearing this speech, Cao Cao relaxed his expression, came down from his seat, and apologized to Kan Ze, saying, "To be sure, I have been blind, and I have offended your dignity, too. But do not hold it against me." "Huang Gai and I," said Ze, "are coming over to your side with full hearts, like infants turning to their parents. There is no deception in this." Delighted, Cao Cao said, "If the two of you can achieve real merit, you will be rewarded far above all others." "It is not for rank or emolument that we come," answered Ze. "We are doing what Heaven ordains and men approve." Cao poured wine to entertain him.

In a little while someone entered the tent and whispered to Cao, who said, "Bring me the letter." The man presented a secret missive, which seemed to give Cao great satisfaction. Kan Ze said to himself, "This must be Cai Zhong and Cai He's report on the beating of Huang Gai. Cao looks pleased because this verifies that my surrender is genuine." "I will trouble you, sir," Cao Cao said to Kan Ze, "to return south to complete the arrangements with Huang Gai. Let me know when he will be coming, and my men will help him." "I cannot go south now that I have left," Kan Ze said. "I beg Your

Excellency to send another trusted man." "If I do," Cao said, "our plans will be discovered." Kan Ze held back until at long last he said, "Then I must return here swiftly."

Refusing Cao Cao's parting offer of gold and silk, Kan Ze sailed back to the Southland, where he saw Huang Gai and related the details of his mission. "If not for your clever replies," Huang Gai said, "I would have suffered for naught." "I am going to Gan Ning's camp to find out what Cai Zhong and Cai He have been up to," Kan Ze said. "A good idea," replied Huang Gai.

Kan Ze was received at Gan Ning's camp. "Yesterday, General," Ze said, "you were humiliated by Zhou Yu for trying to save Huang Gai. I am outraged at the injustice done you."⁶ Ning smiled and made no reply. At that moment Cai Zhong and Cai He entered. Ze eyed Ning, who caught his meaning and said, "Zhou Yu is all too confident of his own abilities and takes us for granted. I have been humiliated, disgraced before the notables of the south." So saying, he clenched his teeth, slammed the table, and shouted. Kan Ze then spoke softly into Gan Ning's ear. Ning lowered his head but only uttered a few sighs. Cai He and Cai Zhong, sensing their discontent, asked pointedly, "General, what vexes you? And you, good sir, what injustice have you suffered?" "How could you know the bitterness in our hearts?" Kan Ze said. "Could it be that you wish to turn from Sun Quan to Cao Cao?" asked Cai He. Kan Ze paled. Gan Ning drew his sword and stood up. "We are discovered!" he cried. "We must kill them lest they betray us." The two Cais said urgently, "Fear us not, gentlemen. We have something to confess."

"Out with it," said Gan Ning. "Cao Cao sent us as false defectors," said Cai He. "If you gentlemen are minded to give allegiance to the rightful ruler, we can arrange it." "Is what you say true?" asked Gan Ning. In unison the two Cais replied, "How could we falsify something like this?" Feigning pleasure, Gan Ning said, "Then Heaven sends this opportunity." "The disgrace that you and Huang Gai suffered has already been reported to the prime minister," the two Cais assured them. Kan Ze said, "I have already delivered to His Excellency a letter of surrender from Huang Gai. I have come to Gan Ning today to ask him to join us." "When a man of action meets a wise lord," said Gan Ning, "he should put himself wholeheartedly at his disposal." After these words the four men drank together and spoke in tones of deepest confidentiality. The two Cais informed Cao Cao at once of these developments, adding in their letter, "Gan Ning will be working with us from within." Kan Ze penned a separate letter, to be sent by secret courier, informing Cao Cao that "Huang Gai desires to come and awaits the opportunity. Look for a boat with a blue-green jack at the prow. That will be him."⁷

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Meanwhile, Cao Cao, having received the two letters, had yet to reach a decision. He summoned his advisers. "Gan Ning of the Southland," Cao began, "disgraced by Zhou Yu, has decided to collaborate with us. Huang Gai, condemned by Zhou Yu, has sent Kan Ze to negotiate his surrender. I remain dubious about both. Can anyone here get into Zhou Yu's camp and find out what's going on?" Jiang Gan proposed, "I still feel a sting of shame for the failure of my last visit to Sun Quan. I'd like to try again now, whatever the risk, in order to bring some solid information back to Your Excellency." Delighted, Cao Cao had Jiang Gan provided with a boat. Jiang Gan reached the camp on the river's southern shore and sent someone to announce him. Zhou Yu was overjoyed. "This man will bring me success again," he said. Zhou Yu also told Lu Su: "Now I want to see Pang Tong ..."

Pang Tong (Shiyuan), originally from Xiangyang, had earlier come south to escape the disorders

in the north,⁸ and Lu Su had recommended him to Zhou Yu. Though Pang Tong had not yet presented himself, Zhou Yu, through Lu Su, had solicited Pang Tong's advice on how to defeat Cao Cao. "You must use fire," Pang Tong had privately told Lu Su. "But on the river if one boat burns, the others will scatter unless someone can convince Cao to connect up his ships—you know, the 'boat-connecting scheme.' That's the only way it will work." Impressed with this advice, Zhou Yu had told Lu Su, "Only Pang Tong can get that done for us." "Cao Cao is too cunning," said Lu Su. "He won't succeed."

So things stood, with Zhou Yu brooding over the possibilities, when the announcement of Jiang Gan's arrival roused the chief commander to action. He ordered Pang Tong to carry out his plan. Remaining in his tent, Zhou Yu had his men receive the guest. Jiang Gan, uneasy because Zhou Yu had not met him personally, ordered his boat tied up at an out-of-the-way spot before appearing.

"Why have you deceived me so dreadfully?" Zhou Yu, looking wrathful, said to Jiang Gan. Jiang Gan smiled. "I was just thinking," he said. "You and I are brothers from way back. I have come to reveal something of particular import. Why do you speak of deception?" "You want to talk me into surrendering," said Zhou Yu, "or else the ocean has dried up and the mountains have melted. Last time, mindful of our long-standing friendship, I invited you to drink with me and share my couch. But you stole a personal letter, left without saying good-bye, and betrayed me. Cao put Cai Mao and Zhang Yun to death and thereby ruined my plans.⁹ Now you come again, but what for? You certainly don't mean me well. Were it not for our old friendship, I'd have you cut in two! I was going to send you back, but we expect to attack the traitor Cao in a day or two. And I can't keep you here, either, or my plans will get out." Zhou Yu ordered his aides: "Escort Jiang Gan to the Western Hills retreat to rest," adding, "After Cao's defeat we'll send you home."

Jiang Gan tried to speak, but Zhou Yu had already walked away. The aides provided Jiang Gan with a horse to ride to the retreat, where two soldiers attended him. Inside, Gan found himself too depressed to sleep or eat. Stars filled the sky; dew covered the ground. Alone he stepped outside and behind the dwelling. Somewhere someone was reading aloud. He walked on and saw by the cliffside several thatched huts, lit from within. Jiang Gan went over and peeked into one: a man sat alone, sword hanging in front of the lamp, intoning the military classics of Sunzi and Wu Qi.¹⁰ "He must be someone extraordinary," thought Jiang Gan. And he knocked on the door, seeking an interview.

An unusual-looking man came out and met Jiang Gan. Gan asked his name, and he replied, "Pang Tong." "Not Master Young Phoenix!" exclaimed Jiang Gan. "The same," he said. "Your great name has long been known to me," Jiang Gan went on. "But what has brought you to this remote spot?" "Zhou Yu has the greatest confidence in his own ability," replied Pang Tong, "but he is too intolerant, so I have hidden myself here. Who are you, sir?" "Jiang Gan," he replied. Pang Tong invited him into his dwelling, where they sat and spoke freely. "A man of your talents," Jiang Gan said, "could prosper wherever he went. If you would consider serving Cao Cao, I could arrange it." "I have wanted to leave the Southland for a long, long time," Pang Tong said. "If you are willing to arrange the introduction, I will make the trip now. If I delay, Zhou Yu will hear of it and I will be killed."

And so Pang Tong left the hill that same night with Jiang Gan. They reached the shore and found the boat that had brought Jiang Gan south. Swift rowers brought them to the north shore. At Cao's camp Jiang Gan came before Cao first and related the events of the past days. Cao Cao, hearing of Master Young Phoenix's arrival, came out of his tent to escort him in personally. When they had seated themselves as host and guest, Cao Cao said, "Zhou Yu is immature. Overconfident of his abilities, he oppresses his followers and rejects sound strategy. Your great name has long been

familiar to me, and we welcome your gracious regard. May I hope that you will not deny us advice and instruction?"

Pang Tong replied, "People have always said that Your Excellency's use of military forces sets the standard. But I would like to look over the features of your deployment for myself." Cao called for horses and invited his guest to review his land bases. From an elevation they viewed the scene below. Pang Tong said, "Backed up against woody hills, easy signaling from front to rear, exits and entries, labyrinthine passages—if the ancient masters of the art of war, Sunzi, Wu Qi, Sima Rangju, were reborn they could not surpass it."¹¹ "You should not overpraise me, master," said Cao, "I still look to you for improvement."

Next, they reviewed the naval stations. There were twenty-four openings facing south, and in each the attack boats and warships¹² were laid out like a city wall, within which clustered the smaller craft. For passage there were channels, and everything proceeded in good order. Smiling delightedly, Pang Tong said to Cao Cao, "Excellency, if your use of forces is like this, your reputation has not preceded you for naught!" So saying, Pang Tong pointed across the river and cried, "Zhou Yu, Zhou Yu, the day of your doom is fixed!"

Immensely pleased, Cao returned to camp and invited Pang Tong into his tent to share his wine and talk of military machinations. Pang Tong spoke with profundity and eloquence. Cao Cao felt his admiration and respect deepen, and treated his guest with solicitous hospitality. Feigning intoxication, Pang Tong said, "You have good medical services for the troops, no doubt?" "Of what use would that be?" Cao asked. "There is much illness among the sailors," responded Pang Tong, "and good physicians are needed to cure them."

The truth was that at this time Cao's men, unable to adjust to the southern clime, had been seized with nausea and vomiting, and many had died. Cao Cao was preoccupied with the problem and was naturally receptive to Pang Tong's remark. "Your Excellency," Pang Tong went on, "your methods for training a navy are superb—only, unfortunately, something is missing." Cao Cao importuned him until Pang Tong replied, "There is a way to free the sailors of their ailments, to make them steady and capable of success." Cao Cao was delighted and eager to learn.

"On the Great River the tide swells and recedes," Pang Tong continued, "and the wind and the waves never subside. These northern troops, unaccustomed to shipboard, suffer from the pitching and rolling. This is the cause of their ailment. Reorganize your small and large vessels: marshal them in groups of thirty or fifty and make them fast with iron hoops, stem to stem and stern to stern. Then, if wide planks are laid so that horses as well as men can cross from ship to ship, however rough the waves or steep the swells, what will you have to fear?"

Cao Cao quit his seat to express his deep gratitude: "But for your sound advice, master, I could never destroy Sun Quan." "My uninformed views," responded Pang Tong, "are for Your Excellency to use as he sees fit." Cao Cao issued an immediate order for all blacksmiths in the army to manufacture hoops and large nails to bind the boats. The news cheered the men. In the words of a later poet,

In Red Cliffs' bitter trial, they fought with fire:
Fire's the perfect weapon, all agreed.
But it was Pang Tong's boat-connecting scheme
That let Zhou Yu accomplish his great deed.

Pang Tong turned to Cao Cao and added, "In my view, most of the great families of the south have deep grievances against Zhou Yu. Let me use my limber little tongue to persuade them on Your Excellency's behalf to join our side. If Zhou Yu can be isolated, he will be yours. And once Zhou Yu is defeated, Liu Bei will have nowhere to turn." "Master," replied Cao Cao, "if you can indeed accomplish so much, I will personally petition the Emperor to honor you as one of the three elder lords." "I do not care for wealth and status," Pang Tong answered. "My one concern is the common people. When you cross the river, Your Excellency, spare them, I pray you." "I act for Heaven," said Cao, "to promote the rightful way of government. How could I bear to do anything cruel?"

Pang Tong next requested a letter to ensure the safety of his own clan. "Where are the members of your family, now?" Cao asked. "They're all near the river," Tong answered. "Your letter will ensure their safety." Cao Cao ordered an official document for which Pang Tong thanked him saying, "After I go, advance quickly. Waste no time, lest Zhou Yu realize what is up." Cao Cao agreed.

Pang Tong departed. He had reached the riverbank and was about to embark, when he spied someone on shore wearing a Taoist priest's gown and a hat of bamboo. With one hand the Taoist grabbed Pang Tong and said, "Your audacity is remarkable! Huang Gai works the 'battered-body scheme,' Kan Ze delivers the letter announcing Huang Gai's sham defection, and now you submit the plan for linking the boats—your only concern being that the flames might not consume everything! Such insidious mischief may be enough to take in Cao Cao, but it won't work on me." This accusation terrified Pang Tong, who felt as if his heart and soul would flee his body. Indeed:

Can the southeast ever prevail in victory
When the northwest holds men of genius, too?

Who challenged Pang Tong?

READ ON.



*Feasting on the Great River, Cao Cao Sings an Ode;
Linking Its Boats, the North Prepares for War*

ASTOUNDED BY THE STRANGER'S WHISPERED WORDS, Pang Tong turned and found himself looking at his old friend Xu Shu.¹ Tong became calm at once and, sure of their privacy, said, "If you reveal my plan, the inhabitants of the Southland's eighty-one departments will suffer disaster." "And what of the lives and fate of the eighty-three legions over here?" Xu Shu asked with a grin. "You don't mean to give me away?" Pang Tong pleaded. "I will always be grateful for Imperial Uncle Liu's kindness, and I intend to repay it. Cao Cao sent my mother to her death; I promised then I would never frame strategy for him. Of course I am not going to expose your very effective plan. The problem is, I am here with Cao Cao's army, and when they are destroyed, the jewel won't be distinguished from the rock. How do I avoid disaster? Suggest some device to save me, and I will sew up my lips and remove myself." Smiling, Pang Tong said, "Someone as shrewd and far-seeing as you should have no difficulty." "I crave your guidance," Xu Shu insisted, and so Pang Tong whispered a few vital words into his ear and received his heartfelt thanks. Thus Pang Tong left his friend and sailed back to the Southland.

That night Xu Shu secretly had a close companion spread rumors through Cao's camps. The following day the rumors were on everyone's lips. Soon informants reported to Cao Cao: "The whole army is talking about Han Sui and Ma Teng, saying they have rebelled and are on their way from Xiliang to seize the capital." Alarmed, Cao Cao summoned his advisers. "My greatest concern when I undertook this expedition," he said, "was the danger from the west, Han Sui and Ma Teng. Whether the current rumors are true or not, we must take measures."

Xu Shu came forward with a proposal; "I have the honor of being in Your Excellency's employ, but to my dismay have not in any way justified your confidence. I wish to request three thousand soldiers to take at once to San Pass to seal this key point of access against invasion from the west. In the event of an emergency, I will report immediately." Delighted, Cao said, "With you at the pass, I need not worry. Take command of the troops already there. I will give you three thousand more, mounted men and foot soldiers, and Zang Ba to lead the vanguard. Leave without delay." Xu Shu bid Cao Cao good-bye and set out with Zang Ba.² Thus Pang Tong saved Xu Shu's life. A poet of later times wrote:

Cao's southern march—every day a trial,
As rumors spread of fresh calamity.
Pang Tong counseled Xu Shu what to do:
Once let off the hook, the fish swims free.

After dispatching Xu Shu to the north, Cao Cao's mind was easier. He rode to the riverbank to

review the army camps and the naval stations. Boarding one of the larger ships, he planted in its center a banner marked "Supreme Commander." To his left and right the naval stations stretched along the river; aboard the ship a thousand crossbowmen lay in wait. Cao Cao stood on the deck. It was the thirteenth year of Jian An, the fifteenth day of the eleventh month (December 10, A.D. 208). The weather was clear and bright, the wind calm, the waves still. Cao Cao ordered a feast and entertainment for the commanders that evening. The complexion of the heavens reflected the advancing night as the moon climbed over the eastern mountains and beamed down, turning night to day. The Great River lay slack, like a bolt of white silk unrolled.

Aboard ship, Cao Cao was surrounded by several hundred attendants in damask coats and embroidered jackets. They all shouldered lances and each man held a halberd. The officers and officials were seated in order. Cao Cao took in the picturesque Southern Screen Hills. To the east he could see the boundary marked by Chaisang. To the west he contemplated the course of the Great River before it reached Xiakou. To the south he looked out on Mount Fan; and to the north he peered into the Black Forest of Wulin. Wherever he turned, the view stretched into infinity, gladdening his heart. He spoke to the assembly; "We have raised this loyalist force to purge evil and dispel threats to the ruling family, for I have sworn to scour the realm, to calm the empire by my sure sword. The Southland alone remains outside our sphere. Today I possess a million heroic fighters. And with you to apply our commands, need we fear for our success? When we have received the submission of the Southland and the empire is at peace, we shall share with you the enjoyments of wealth and station to celebrate the Great Millennium."³ The audience rose as one to give their leader thanks: "May the song of victory soon be on your lips! May we live by Your Excellency's favor all of our days. "

Cao Cao was gratified and ordered the wine sent round. The night of drinking wore on, and Cao Cao was well in his cups when he pointed south and said, "Zhou Yu! Lu Su! How little you know the appointments of Heaven. These defectors to our cause will be your ruin. You see, Heaven itself lends us aid." "Say no more, Your Excellency," Xun You warned, "lest the wrong people hear." Cao laughed and said, "Every man here— whether attendants or companions of our table—is in our deepest trust. Let us be free with one another." He turned toward Xiakou and, pointing again, said, "Liu Bei! Zhuge Liang! You have failed to measure your antlike strength in attempting to shake Mount Tai. What folly!" To his generals he said, "Now I am fifty-four. If we take the Southland, I shall have my humble wish. Long ago I befriended the patriarch Qiao, knowing that his two daughters were the beauties of the empire. To think that Sun Ce and Zhou Yu would take them to wife before me! Recently I built the Bronze Bird Tower on the River Zhang. If I win the Southland, I will take these women to wife and install them in the tower to pleasure me in my advanced years. And all my wishes will be satisfied!" With that he burst into laughter. The Tang dynasty poet Du Mu wrote these lines:

Half-rusted, broken in the sand, this halberd,
Scraped and cleaned, calls up an era past.⁴
Had that east wind not done Zhou Yu a turn,
Two Qiaos in spring would have gone to the tower.

Cao Cao was still laughing and talking when they all heard a raven cawing as it flew southward. "Why does the raven cry in the night?" Cao asked. Those around him replied, "It supposes the

brilliance of the moon to be the dawn. That is why it has left its tree and cries." Cao laughed again. Already drunk, he set his spear in the prow of the boat and offered wine to the river. Then he quaffed three full goblets and, leveling his spear, said to his commanders, "Here is the weapon that broke the Yellow Scarves, took Lü Bu, eliminated Yuan Shu, subdued Yuan Shao, penetrated beyond the northern frontier, and conquered the east as far as Liaodong. In the length and breadth of this land no man has withstood me. My ambitions have always been those of a man of action, a leader among men. And now the scene before us fills my soul with profound passion. I shall perform a song, and you must join me." Cao Cao recited:

Here before us, wine and song!
For man does not live long.
Like daybreak dew,
His days are swiftly gone.

Sanguine-sou led we have to be!
Though painful memory haunts us yet.
Thoughts and sorrows naught allays,
Save the cup Du Kang first set.⁵

"Deep the hue of the scholar's robe;
Deeper, the longing of my heart."⁶
For all of you, my dearest lords,
I voice again this ancient part.

Nibbling on the duckweed,
"Loo! Loo!" the lowing deer.⁷
At our feast sit honored guests
For string and reed to cheer.

The moon on high beckons bright,
But no man's ever stayed it.
Heart's care rises from within,
And nothing can deny it.

Take our thanks for all your pains;
Your presence does us honor.
Reunited on this feasting day,
We well old loves remember.

The moon is bright, the stars are few,
The magpie black as raven.
It southbound circles thrice a tree
That offers him no haven.

The mountaintop no height eschews;
The sea eschews no deep.
And the Duke of Zhou spat out his meal⁸
An empire's trust to keep.⁹

As Cao Cao finished, the assembly took up the singing amid general enjoyment, until someone stepped forward and said, "Great armies stand opposed. Our officers and men are ready for action. Why does Your Excellency utter ominous words at such a time?"

Cao Cao turned to the speaker, imperial inspector of Yangzhou, Liu Fu (Yuanying) from Xiang in the fief of Pei, Cao Cao's home district. Liu Fu had started his career at Hefei where he established the provincial seat of government. He collected those who had fled or scattered, established schools, expanded the "soldier-tiller" acreage, and revived orderly administration. During his long service to Cao Cao he had many accomplishments to his credit.

On this occasion Cao Cao leveled his spear and asked, "And what do you find 'ominous' about my words?" Liu Fu replied, " You sang,

The moon is bright, the stars are few,
The magpie black as raven.
It southbound circles thrice a tree
That offers him no haven.

These are ominous words. "" You dare to wreck our delight and enthusiasm! "Cao cried angrily. With a single heave of his spear Cao Cao pierced Liu Fu through, killing him. The assembly was aghast. The banquet was dismissed. The following day, sobered and wracked with remorse, Cao Cao wept as he told Liu Xi, the son who had come to claim the body, " Yesterday while drunk I did your father a terrible injustice, for which I can never atone. He shall be interred with the highest honors, those reserved for the three elder lords. " Cao Cao sent soldiers to escort the coffin for burial in Liu Fu's native district.

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The next day the new naval commanders, Mao Jie and Yu Jin, informed Cao Cao: "The large and small boats have been joined together. All flags and weapons are in order. Everything is at Your Excellency's disposal. We await your command to launch the attack." Cao Cao took up his position on a large ship in the center of the fleet and called his commanders together for their instructions. Naval and land forces were divided into units under flags of five colors: yellow for the naval center, commanded by Mao Jie and Yu Jin; red for the forward, under Zhang He; black for the rear, under Lü Qian; green for the left, under Wen Ping; white for the right, under Lü Tong. The forward cavalry and infantry unit, under Xu Huang, flew a red flag; the rear, under Li Dian, a black flag; the left, under Yue Jin, a green flag; the right, under Xiahou Yuan, a white flag. Serving as reinforcement for naval and land forces were Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong. Protecting communications and overseeing the battle were Xu Chu and Zhang Liao. The remainder of Cao Cao's brave commanders returned to their

respective squads.

When these arrangements were complete, three rounds of drumbeats thundered through the naval camp; Cao Cao's navy steered through the station gates and onto the river. The wind gusted sharply out of the northwest. The ships let out their sails, beating upon wave and billow yet steady as if on flat ground. On board the northerners, bounding and vaulting to display their courage, thrust their spears and plied their swords. The various units maintained ranks under the discipline of signal flags. Some fifty small craft patrolled the great floating war camp, monitoring its progress. Cao Cao stood in the command tower and surveyed the exercise, immensely pleased, thinking he had found the secret of certain victory. He ordered sails dropped, and all ships returned to the camps in good order.

Cao Cao proceeded to his tent and said to his advisers, "Divine decree has come to our aid in the form of Young Phoenix's ingenious plan. With iron bonds linking the ships, we can actually cross the river as if we were walking on land." To this Cheng Yu replied, "Though the linked ships are level and stable, if the enemy attacks with fire it will be hard to escape. This we must be prepared for." "Cao Cao laughed loudly." Despite your provident view, "he said," there are still things you do not know. "" Cheng Yu's point is well taken, "Xun You added." Why is Your Excellency making fun of him? "" Any attack with fire, "Cao explained," must rely on the force of the wind. Now at winter's depth, there are only north winds and west winds—how could there be a south wind or an east wind? Our position is northwest; their troops are all on the southern shore. If they use fire, they will only burn out their own troops. What have we to fear? If it were the season for a late autumn warm spell, I would have taken precautions long ago. "The commanders bowed respectfully." Your Excellency's insight, "they said," is more than we can match. "Cao turned to his commanders and added," The men from Qing, Xu, Yan, and Dai lack naval experience. If not for this expedient, how could they negotiate the treacherous Great River? "Just then two commanders rose and said," Though we are from the north, we have some skill at sailing. To prove it, we volunteer to take twenty patrol craft direct to Xiakou, seize their flags and drums, and return. "

Cao Cao eyed the two: Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan, formerly under Yuan Shao's command. "You men," said Cao, "born and raised in the north, may find shipboard hard to take. The southern soldiers, accustomed to moving by water, have honed their sailing skills. If I were you, I would not trifle with my life." "If we fail," the two replied, "we are content to accept what martial law decrees." "The larger boats have already been made fast," said Cao. "There are only small ones free. They hold twenty men each. Too few, perhaps, to engage the enemy." Jiao Chu said, "If we were to use the large ships, we would not impress the enemy. Let us have twenty small ones: ten for me and ten for Zhang Nan. Before the day is out, we will hit their camp and return with their standard and a general's head." Cao Cao said, "Then I shall give you twenty boats and five hundred crack troops, experts with long spears and crossbows. Tomorrow morning the flotilla will make a show of force from the main camp, and Wen Ping will escort you back with thirty patrol boats." Gratified and eager for battle, Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan withdrew.

Early the next day at the fourth watch the men were fed; by the end of the fifth they were ready, and drums and gongs sounded in the naval camp. The main fleet emerged and fanned out on the water, their blue and red flags forming a pattern above the Great River. Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan led their twenty scouting craft through the camp and onto the river. Then they raced south.

During the night the beating of drums and the din of battle preparation had reached the southern shore, where the defenders watched Cao Cao's navy maneuvering in the distance. The Southland's

intelligence brought word to Zhou Yu. He went to a hilltop to observe, but the force had already pulled back. The next day the same sounds from the north rent the sky. The southern warriors climbed quickly to a viewing place, from where they saw the twenty small boats moving south, breasting the waves. The news was sped to Zhou Yu, who called for volunteers. Han Dang and Zhou Tai stepped forward. Well pleased by their offer, Zhou Yu ordered a strict vigil at all camps as Han Dang and Zhou Tai led their five-boat squadrons from the left and the right out onto the river.

Now Cao's volunteers, Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan, were relying on little more than raw nerve. As their swift-oared boats approached the southern craft, Han Dang, wearing a breastplate, stood on the prow of his boat, a long spear in hand. Jiao Chu arrived first and ordered his archers to shoot, but Han Dang defended himself with his shield. Next, Jiao Chu crossed spears with Han Dang, but Dang slew him with a single thrust. Then Zhang Nan came forth, shouting, and Zhou Tai darted out from the side. Zhang Nan stood at the prow, his spear leveled. Arrows flew in volleys and counter-volleys. Plying his shield with one arm, his sword with the other hand, Zhou Tai leaped onto Zhang Nan's approaching boat and handily cut him down. Zhang Nan's body sank in the river, as Zhou Tai slashed wildly at his crew. The other attackers rowed swiftly back to the north shore. Han Dang and Zhou Tai gave chase but were checked in the middle of the river by Wen Ping. The boats of both sides took battle formation and set about the slaughter.

Zhou Yu and his commanders stood on the hilltop surveying the fighting craft and warships deployed along the river's northern shore. The flags and emblems were in perfect order. The southerners watched as Cao's commander Wen Ping met the furious attack of Han Dang and Zhou Tai, then fell back, reversed course, and fled. The two southern commanders gave swift chase, but Zhou Yu feared they might sail too far into the enemy's strength; and so he raised the white flag summoning them to return while the gongs were struck.¹⁰

Han Dang and Zhou Tai swung their boats around and rowed south. From his hilltop Zhou Yu watched Cao's warships across the river crowding into the camp. Turning to his commanders, Zhou Yu said, "Their ships are as dense as reeds. And Cao Cao is a man of many schemes. What plan do we have for defeating them?" Before anyone could answer, they saw the tall pole in the center of the enemy camp snap in the wind and its yellow flag drift into the river. With a hearty laugh Zhou Yu said, "Not a good sign for them!" Then erratic winds blew up and whipped the waves against the shore. Caught by a gust, a corner of Zhou Yu's own flag brushed his face. Suddenly a dreadful thought came to Zhou Yu. With a loud cry he fell over backwards, blood foaming up in his mouth. The commanders rushed to his assistance, but their leader had lost consciousness. Indeed:

One moment laughter, the next a cry of pain;
What hope did the south have in its battle with the north?

What happened to Zhou Yu? Would he survive?¹¹

READ ON.



*On Seven Star Altar Kongming Supplicates the Wind;
At Three Rivers Zhou Yu Unleashes the Fire*

AFTER ZHOU YU HAD BEEN CARRIED to His tent, the southern commanders came inquiring about his condition. Agitatedly they said to one another, "A million-strong host, set to pounce and devour us, holds the north shore. With our chief commander stricken, how can we cope with Cao Cao's army?" They sent a report to Sun Quan and called for a physician to treat Zhou Yu.

The turn of events caused Lu Su great anxiety. He went to Kongming, who asked, "What is your view?" "A blessing for Cao, a catastrophe for us," was Lu Su's reply. Kongming smiled and said, "Such an illness even I could cure!" "What a boon that would be!" Lu Su responded, and the two men went to see Zhou Yu. Lu Su, entering the tent first, found the chief commander on his back, bedclothes pulled over his head. "Commander, how is your condition?" Su inquired. "My insides feel unsettled and tender, and the fits return from time to time," he answered. "What medicines have you been taking?" Lu Su wanted to know. "I reject everything, can't keep the medicine down," was his reply. "I have just seen Kongming," Lu Su said. "He says he can cure you, Commander. He's outside now. Should we trouble him to try his remedy?" Zhou Yu ordered Kongming admitted and had himself propped up to a sitting position on the bed.

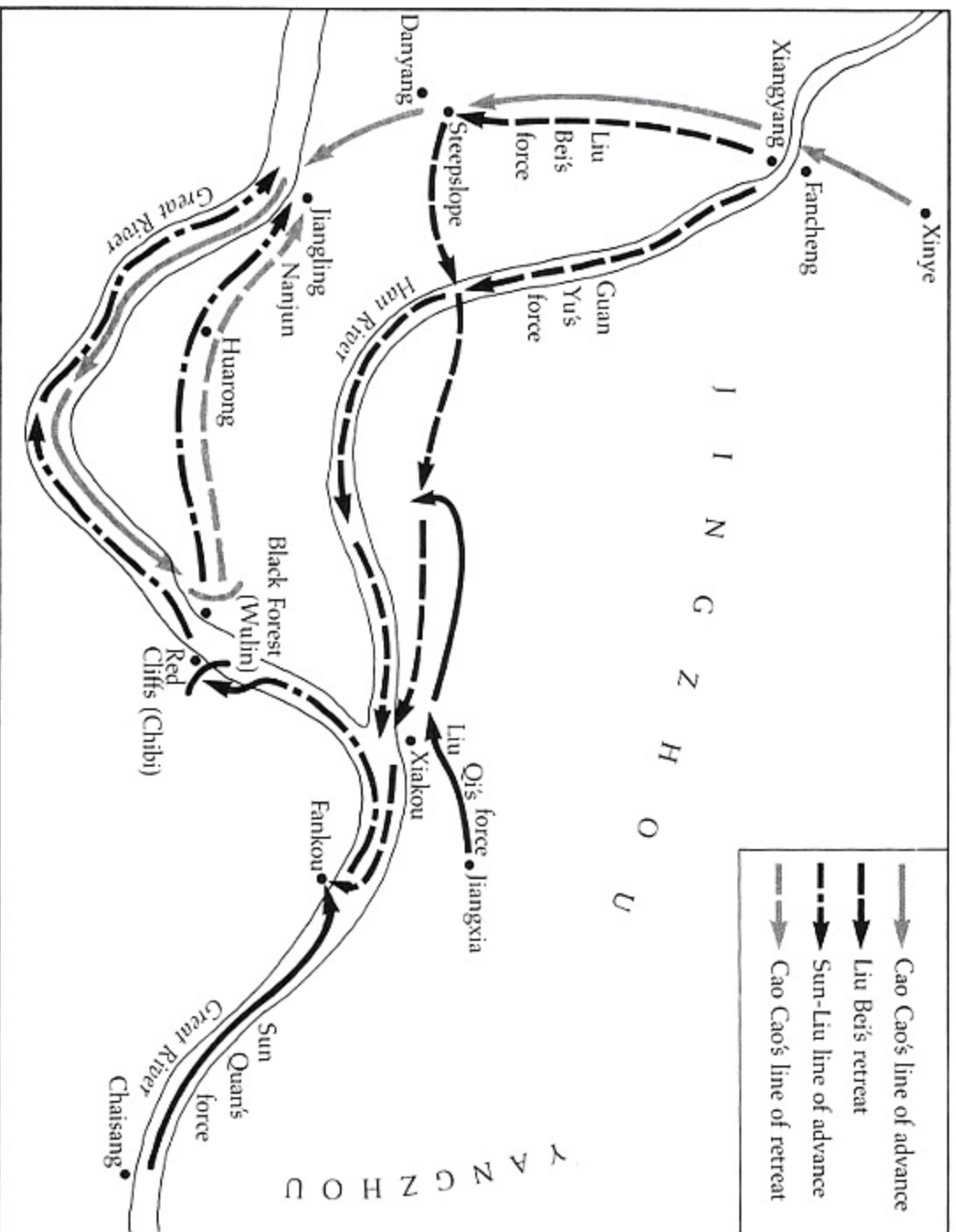
"It is many days since we last met, my lord," Kongming began. "But I never imagined that your precious health was failing." "A man may have good luck when the day begins, bad luck when it ends. Who can tell beforehand?" Zhou Yu replied. "And the winds and the clouds above come when least expected," Kongming said, smiling. "You never can tell." At these words Zhou Yu lost his color and moaned. "Commander," Kongming continued, "do you seem to feel vexation gathering inside you?" Zhou Yu nodded. "You must take a cooling tonic to dispel it," Kongming advised. "I have," was Zhou Yu's reply, to no effect. "You must first regulate the vital ethers," Kongming explained. "When the vital ethers are flowing smoothly and in the proper direction, then in a matter of moments your good health will naturally be restored." Zhou Yu, sensing that Kongming must know his unspoken thought, tested him by saying, "What medicine would you recommend to get the vital ethers flowing in the proper direction?" "I have a prescription to facilitate this," said Kongming, smiling still. "I shall benefit from your advice," said Zhou Yu. Kongming called for writing brush and paper and, waving away the attendants, wrote sixteen words for Zhou Yu's eyes alone:

To break Cao's back
With fire we attack.
Everything is set, save
The east wind we lack!

Kongming handed the note to Zhou Yu, saying, "This is the source of the chief commander's illness." Zhou Yu was astounded and thought, "Truly beyond all belief. He realized my problem at once. I'll simply have to tell him the truth." And so with a chuckle he said, "Master, since you already know the cause of my suffering, what medicine shall we use to cure it? The situation is moving swiftly to a crisis, and I look for your timely advice." To this appeal Kongming answered, "Though I myself have no talent, I once came upon an extraordinary man who handed on to me occult texts for reading the numerology of the heavens. Their method can be used to call forth the winds and rains.² If the chief commander wants a southeast wind, erect a platform on the Southern Screen Hills, call it the Altar of the Seven Stars.³ It should be nine spans high, threetiered, surrounded by one hundred and twenty flag bearers. On the platform I will work certain charms to borrow three days and three nights of southeast wind to assist you in your operations. What do you say? "" Never mind three days and three nights, "Zhou Yu cried, "with one night's gales our endeavor can be consummated! But time is of the essence. Let there be no delay. "" On the twentieth day of the eleventh month, the first day of the cycle, we will supplicate the wind, "Kongming said." By the twenty-second day, third of the cycle, the winds will have died away." Elated, Zhou Yu sprang to his feet. He ordered five hundred hardy soldiers to begin work on the altar, and he dispatched one hundred and twenty guards to hold the flags and await further instructions. Kongming then took his leave.⁴

Accompanied by Lu Su, Kongming rode to the Southern Screen Hills to take the lay of the land. He commanded the soldiers to build the altar of the ruddy earth of the southeast. It was a structure of some two hundred and forty spans all around, with three three-span tiers. On the lowest tier were twenty-eight flags representing the twenty-eight zodiacal mansions. Along the eastern face were seven blue-green flags for the eastern mansions—Horn, Neck, Root, Room, Heart, Tail, Basket—arrayed in the shape of the Sky-blue Dragon. Along the northern face were seven black flags for the northern mansions—Southern Dipper, Ox, Girl, Void, Rooftop, Dwelling, Wall—laid out in the form of the Dark Tortoise. On the western side flew seven white flags for the western mansions—Straddling Legs, Bonds, Stomach, Bridge, Net, Turtle, Triaster—in the menacing crouch of the White Tiger. On the southern side flew seven red flags for the southern mansions—Well, Ghost, Willow, Star, Drawn Bow, Wings, Axle—making the outline of the Vermillion Bird.⁵

The second tier was encompassed by sixty-four yellow flags, one for each set of oracular lines in the *Book of Changes*, divided into eight groups of eight. On the top tier stood four men, hair tightly bound and heads capped, wearing black robes of thin silk, wide sashes emblematic of the phoenix, vermilion shoes, and squared kilts. At front left, one man held up a long pole fledged at the tip with chicken feathers to catch any sign of the wind. At front right, another held up a long pole with the banner of the Seven Stars fastened to the top to show the direction of the wind. At the left rear, a man stood respectfully holding a prized sword; at the right rear, a man held a cresset. On the outside, the platform was surrounded by twenty-four men holding, severally, emblomed flags, ceremonial canopies, large halberds, long dagger-axes, ritual gold battle-axes, white yak-tail banners, vermilion pennants, and black standards.



MAP 4. The battle at Red Cliffs. Source: Liu Chunfan, *Sanguo shihua* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), p. 101.

On the twentieth of the eleventh month, an auspicious day, Kongming performed the required ablutions, fasted, and assumed the sacred vestments of a priest of the Tao. Barefoot, hair flowing behind, he came to the front of the altar and instructed Lu Su: "Return now and help Zhou Yu with the deployment. Blame me not if my prayer draws no response." After Lu Su's departure Kongming instructed the guards: "No one here is to leave his position without authorization. The men are forbidden to engage in conversation or to make any irregular remarks or react as if anything were out of the ordinary. Whoever disobeys will be executed."⁶ The men acknowledged the order. Having surveyed all stations, Kongming ascended with deliberate steps, lit incense, and poured water into a vessel. Staring into the heavens he uttered a silent incantation, after which he descended and entered his tent for a brief respite, allowing the soldiers to eat in shifts. That day Kongming ascended and descended three times, but of a southwest wind no sign was seen.

. . . .

Cheng Pu, Lu Su, and other military leaders joined Zhou Yu in his tent, where they waited to start the offensive the moment a southeast wind arose. Zhou Yu also reported developments to Sun Quan, who was to direct the reinforcement. Huang Gai had already prepared twenty fireboats, whose prows were studded with nails. Each boat was packed with reeds and kindling soaked in fish oil and covered with an inflammable compound of sulfur and saltpeter. The materials were wrapped with black oilcloth. At the boats' prows, notched banners of the Green Dragon of the East;⁷ to the stern, light craft.⁸ Before the chief commander's tent Huang Gai and his men awaited the order to move. Gan Ning and Kan Ze kept Cai He and Cai Zhong snug and secure in their water camp and plied them with wine day after day, never permitting a single northern soldier on shore. The Southland guards made sure that not an iota of information got through to them. Everyone was watching for the command tent's signal.

Zhou Yu was with his advisers when a liaison man reported: "Lord Sun Quan's boats are moored eighty-five *li* away, ready for the chief commander's word." Zhou Yu sent Lu Su to inform all commanders, officers, and men under him: "Keep your craft, weapons, and rigging in readiness. Once the order comes down, the slightest delay will be punished with the severity of martial law." The troops prepared themselves, rubbing their hands in anticipation of battle. That day everyone watched the sky intently as evening drew on, but the heavens held clear and no wind stirred. Zhou Yu turned to Lu Su and said, "How absurd are Kongming's claims! There can be no east wind in the dead of winter." "I can't believe Kongming would make absurd claims," replied Lu Su. Toward the third watch they heard, as if from nowhere, the sound of wind. The banners and pennons began to loll to and fro, and when Zhou Yu came out to look, the fringes of the flags were actually fluttering to the northwest. Within moments a stiff gale was coming up out of the southeast.

In consternation Zhou Yu said, "This man has snatched some method from the creative force of Heaven and earth, some unfathomable technic from the world of departed spirits. Why allow him to remain among us and cause trouble, when his elimination would save such great grief?" Zhou Yu immediately called two military commanders, Ding Feng and Xu Sheng, into his presence and told them: "Take a hundred men each— Xu Sheng on the river, Ding Feng on the shore—and go to the Altar of the Seven Stars in the Southern Screen Hills. Take Kongming's head—no questions asked—and bring it to me for your reward." The two commanders left to carry out their assignment. Xu Sheng

embarked with one hundred swordsmen working the oars; Ding Feng rode to his destination with one hundred archers astride battle mounts. Both companies moved against the rising southeast wind. In the words of a poet of later times,

Sleeping Dragon stood on Seven Star Altar,
As all night eastern winds roiled the Jiang.
Had Kongming not devised his artifice,
Could Zhou Yu have played the strategist?

Ding Feng's land force arrived first. He saw the flag bearers on the altar, standing into the wind. Ding Feng dismounted, drew his sword and climbed the platform. Kongming was not there. Distressed, he asked a guard, who said, "He stepped down just moments ago." As Ding Feng descended the platform, Xu Sheng was arriving by water, and the two men met at the shore. A soldier reported to them: "Last night a light craft stopped at that shallow stretch ahead of us. I saw Kongming, his hair all unbound, get into it a short while ago. Then the boat sailed upriver."

Ding Feng and Xu Sheng gave chase by land and sea. Xu Sheng ordered his sails raised in an attempt to catch the wind. The boat was not too far ahead. Xu Sheng stood in the bow and hailed Kongming across the water: "Do not depart, Director. The chief commander sends his invitation." And there was Kongming, standing in the stern of his boat, laughing. "Tell the commander for me," he shouted, "to use his forces well. I am returning to Xiakou for now, but the time will come for us to meet again." "Stay a moment," Xu Sheng pleaded, "I have something urgent to say." Kongming replied, "I realized long ago that the chief commander could never abide me. I've been expecting him to try to kill me and arranged some time ago for Zhao Zilong to meet me here. You had best turn back."

Xu Sheng saw that Kongming's boat had no sail, so he pressed ahead despite the risk. As he pulled nearer, Zhao Zilong drew his bow and rose from the stern. "I am Zhao Zilong of Changshan," he cried, "sent to receive the director general. How dare you pursue us? A single arrow would serve to cut you down and signal the end to our two houses' amity. Instead, let me give you a demonstration of marksmanship." Zilong fitted an arrow and shot away Xu Sheng's sail cord, causing the sheet to drop into the water and the boat to veer sideways. Zilong then ordered his own sail raised and rode the strong wind west. His boat, hardly touching the water, could not be overtaken. From the shore Ding Feng called Xu Sheng back: "Kongming is a wizard of matchless ingenuity, and Zilong a warrior of peerless courage. Remember his performance at Steepslope in Dangyang? There's nothing we can do but return and make our report." And so the two men presented themselves to Zhou Yu and described how Kongming had escaped. The astonished Zhou Yu cried in despair, "How weary I am of his endless schemes!"⁹ "Why not wait until after Cao Cao has been defeated before taking further measures against him?" Lu Su suggested.

This met with Zhou Yu's approval. He called together his commanders to receive their orders. First he told Gan Ning: "Take Cai Zhong and the surrendered soldiers along the southern shore. Fly only the flag of the northern troops. Capture the area around the Black Forest, directly opposite Cao Cao's grain depot. Penetrate his camp, then signal with fire. Leave Cai He here, outside my tent. I have a particular use for him." Next, he called Taishi Ci and instructed him: "Take three thousand men to the Huangzhou boundary to intercept Cao's reinforcement from Hefei. Attack immediately and

signal us by fire. Look for the red flag: it will mean that Lord Sun Quan is coming to your aid."

Gan Ning and Taishi Ci had to travel farthest, and so they went off first.

The third to receive orders was Lü Meng, who was told to take three thousand men to the Black Forest to back up Gan Ning and to burn down Cao's fortifications. Ling Tong, fourth, was ordered to cut off all traffic from Yiling and then shift to the Black Forest area with his three thousand men when he saw flames shooting skyward. Zhou Yu gave Dong Xi, fifth, three thousand troops for a direct assault on Hanyang; he was also told to attack Cao's camp from the River Han on seeing white flags. Zhou Yu told Pan Zhang, sixth, to take three thousand men under white flags to Hanyang and there to support Dong Xi. The six marine squads departed to perform their separate missions.

Following these assignments, Zhou Yu ordered Huang Gai to ready the fireboats and speed word to Cao that he would surrender that very night. At the same time he directed four squads of warships to cover Huang Gai from the rear; the first under Han Dang; the second, Zhou Tai; the third, Jiang Qin; the fourth, Chen Wu. Each unit included three hundred warships and was preceded by twenty fireboats.

Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu oversaw the preparations from the deck of a large attack boat while Xu Sheng and Ding Feng stood guard on either side. Lu Su, Kan Ze, and a few advisers were the only ones left to hold the camp. Cheng Pu was deeply impressed by the order and logic of Zhou Yu's disposition of forces. At this point an envoy from Sun Quan appeared with military credentials, saying that Lord Sun had sent Lu Xun with the vanguard to attack the area around Jichun and Huangzhou with Sun Quan himself in support. In addition, Zhou Yu sent men to the Western Hills to release fire rockets and to the Southern Screen Hills to raise signal flags. All preparations now in order, they waited for dusk.

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In Xiakou, Liu Xuande eagerly awaited Kongming's return. He spotted a squad of boats arriving, but it turned out to be Liu Qi coming for news.¹⁰ Xuande invited him to the observation tower and said, "The southeast wind has been blowing for some time. Zilong went to meet Kongming, but so far no sign. I'm very worried." A petty officer pointed toward the harbor at Fankou and said, "There's a single sail coming in on the wind. It has to be the director general." Xuande and Liu Qi climbed down to meet the boat, and moments later Kongming and Zilong came ashore. Xuande was elated.

After formal greetings Kongming said, "Let us put all else aside for now. Are the land and sea forces we called up before I left now ready?" "Ready long ago," Xuande said, "and awaiting your deployment." Kongming, Xuande, and Liu Qi seated themselves in the main tent, and Kongming began assigning battle stations. First he said to Zilong, "Take three thousand men across the river and seize the trails and bypaths in the Black Forest. Where the trees and reeds are thickest, place your men in ambush. Tonight after the fourth watch Cao Cao is sure to flee that way. When they pass, use your torches. You may not get them all, but you'll get half." "The Black Forest has two roads," said Zilong, "one to Jiangling, the other to Xiangyang. Which one will he use?" "Jiangling is unsafe," replied Kongming. "He'll head for Xiangyang and then repair to Xuchang with his main force." Zilong departed with his assignment.

Next Kongming summoned Zhang Fei: "Yide," he said, "you take three thousand across the river, cut off the road to Yiling, and set your ambush at Gourd Valley. Cao Cao wouldn't dare flee by South

Yiling, only by North Yiling. After tomorrow's rain passes they will set their pots in the earth to prepare a meal. The moment you see smoke, start fires on the hillside. I doubt that you will capture Cao Cao, but your accomplishment should be considerable." Zhang Fei left with his assignment. Then Kongming instructed Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, and Liu Feng¹¹ to cover the river by boat and capture the defeated troops and their weapons. They too left to carry out their orders.

Kongming rose and said to Liu Qi, "The area in sight of Wuchang is absolutely vital. Please go back there with your own men and deploy them at all points up and down the more. Some fugitives from Cao's defeat are bound to come, and you should be there to seize them—but do not risk leaving the city walls without good reason." So instructed, Liu Qi took leave of Xuande and Kongming. Then the director general turned to Xuande.

My lord, "he said," station your men at Fankou, find yourself a high vantage point, then sit back and watch Zhou Yu do great deeds tonight! "

All the while, Lord Guan had been waiting at the side, but Kongming spared him not even a glance. Unable to endure it further, Lord Guan cried out, "I, Guan, have followed in elder brother's wake through long years of war, and have never been left behind. Today we close with a great enemy, but the director has given me no assignment. What does this mean?" Kongming smiled. "Do not take offense, Yunchang," he said. "My intention was to trouble you to hold an absolutely crucial pass, but—forgive me—something held me back, and I was reluctant to ask." "What 'held you back'?" Lord Guan replied. "I want an explanation here and now."

"Once," Kongming went on, "Cao Cao treated you most generously, and you are bound somehow to repay him.¹² When his host is defeated, Cao will take the road to Huarong. If we ordered you there, I was certain, you would let him pass. That is what held me back." "How mistrustful of you!" Lord Guan responded. "True, Cao Cao treated me well. But did I not repay him when I beheaded Yuan Shao's general, Yan Liang, and put to death General Wen Chou? And again when I broke the siege at Baima? Do you think I'd let him go today?" "But if you should, then what?" Kongming said, pressing the point. "Let military law be applied to my misdeed!" said Lord Guan. "Well and good," Kongming answered. "Now put it in writing." Lord Guan executed the document, saying, "And if Cao Cao does not take that route?" "I give you a formal commitment that he will!" Kongming answered, to Lord Guan's complete satisfaction, and then added, "But why don't you pile up dry brambles around the trails and hills by Huarong? At the right time, set them afire. The smoke should draw Cao Cao that way."

"Smoke would make Cao Cao think there's an ambush," Lord Guan protested. "It would keep him away." "Have you forgotten," Kongming responded, "the tactic of 'letting weak points look weak and strong points look strong'? Cao may be an able strategist, but this should fool him. The smoke will make him think we are trying to create an impression of strength where we are weak and thus draw him to this route. But I must remind you again, General, to refrain from showing him any mercy." Lord Guan accepted this assignment and taking his son Ping, Zhou Cang, and five hundred practiced swordsmen, headed for Huarong Pass to set up the ambush.

When Lord Guan had left, Xuande said to Kongming, "His sense of honor is very strong. If Cao Cao actually takes that route, I am afraid my brother will let him pass in the end." "Last night I surveyed the constellations," Kongming replied. "The traitor's doom is not written there. And to leave a good turn for Lord Guan to do is a rather nice touch, after all." "Master," Xuande said, "your superhuman calculations are more than any man could match." Kongming and Xuande then set out for

Fankou to observe Zhou Yu's assault, leaving Sun Qian and Jian Yong to guard Xiakou.

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Cao Cao and his advisers were in the main tent awaiting news of Huang Gai's defection. That day the southeast wind blew strong. Cheng Yu went in and said, "We should be taking measures against this wind." But Cao Cao smiled and replied, "The winter's *yin* phase is spent; the *yang* now begins its cycle. A southeast wind is quite normal. There is nothing to be alarmed about." At that moment soldiers reported the arrival of a small craft from the south bringing a secret letter from Huang Gai. Cao Cao immediately had the bearer shown into his presence. The letter said in part:

Zhou Yu has held me under tight surveillance, and so I have had no means to get away. Now we have a new grain shipment from the Poyang Lakes. Zhou Yu has put me on patrol, and opportunity presents itself. I will find a way to cut down one of our eminent commanders and present his head with my submission. Tonight at the second watch, look for a boat with the Green Dragon jack—that will be the shipment.

Delighted, Cao Cao and his generals went to the great ship to watch for Huang Gai.

It was almost night. In the Southland Zhou Yu ordered Cai He brought before him, bound, and thrown to the ground. "I have committed no crime," Cai He cried. "Who do you think you are," said Zhou Yu, "pretending to come over to our side? Today we lack the ritual articles suitable for sacrifice to the flags. Your head will have to serve instead." Cai He, unable to deny the charge, shouted, "Your own Kan Ze and Gan Ning were in on it!" "As arranged," answered Zhou Yu. To what avail were Cai He's regrets now? Zhou Yu ordered him brought to the riverbank beneath the black standard, where they offered libations and burned paper. Cai He was beheaded, and his blood was poured in sacrifice to the flag. After that, the ships set sail.

Huang Gai was in the third fire vessel, wearing a breastplate and holding a sharp sword; on his banner, four large characters: "Vanguard Huang Gai." Riding the favoring wind, he set his sights for the Red Cliffs. By now the gale was in full motion. Waves and whitecaps surged tumultuously. Cao Cao scanned the river and watched the rising moon. Its reflections flickered over the waters, turning the river into myriad golden serpents rolling and sporting in the waves. Cao faced the wind and smiled, thinking he would achieve his ambition. Suddenly a soldier pointed out: "The river is serried with sails from the south bank riding in on the wind!" As Cao strained his eyes from the height, the report came: "They fly the Green Dragon jack; among them, a giant banner, 'Vanguard Huang Gai.'" Cao Cao smiled. "Huang Gai's defection is Heaven-sent." But Cheng Yu studied the approaching boats and warned, "It's a ruse. Don't let them near our camp." "How do you know?" asked Cao. "If they held grain," Cheng Yu answered, "they would be low and steady in the water. But the boats coming on are so light, they are practically skimming the surface. Besides—with the force of this southeast wind, could you evade a trap?"

Then the truth dawned on Cao Cao, and he called for a volunteer to stop the oncoming boats. "I have experience as a mariner," said Wen Ping. "Let me go." He leaped into a small craft and went forth, followed, at a signal from his hand, by a dozen patrol boats. Standing in the prow of his ship, Wen Ping shouted: "By the prime minister's authority, the ships from the south are to approach no farther but to anchor in midriver!" Wen Ping's warriors cried out in unison: "Lower your sails!"

These words were hanging in the air when an arrow sang, and Wen Ping, struck in the left arm, toppled over in his boat. There was commotion on board, and the squad raced back to the naval station.

The ships from the south were now only two *li* from Cao's fleet. At the signal from Huang Gai's sword, the first line of onrushing ships was torched. The fire was sped by the might of the wind, and the boats homed in like arrows in flight. Soon smoke and flame screened off the sky. Twenty fiery boats rammed into the naval station. All at once Cao's ships caught fire and, locked in place by their chains, could not escape. Catapults sounded from across the river as the burning ships converged. The face of the water where the three rivers joined could scarcely be seen as the flames chased the wind in piercing currents of red that seemed to rise to the heavens and pass through the earth.

Cao Cao looked back to his shoreside camps; several fires had already broken out. Huang Gai sprang into a small boat and, followed by a few men, braved smoke and fire to find Cao Cao. Desperate, Cao Cao was about to jump back on shore, but Zhang Liao steered a small cutter toward Cao and helped him down from the large ship, already on fire. Zhang, with some dozen men protecting Cao Cao, raced for a landing point. Huang Gai had spotted someone in a scarlet battle gown lowering himself into a boat and, surmising it was Cao Cao, made for him. "Go no farther, traitor!" he cried, sword in hand. "Huang Gai has come!" A series of angry cries broke from Cao Cao's throat. Zhang Liao hefted his bow and fitted an arrow, squinting as Huang Gai drew nearer. Then he let fly. The wind was roaring. Huang Gai, in the center of the firestorm, could not hear the twang of the bowstring. The arrow struck him in the armpit, and he fell into the water. Indeed:

When fatal fire reached its height, he met his fate in water;

When wounds from wooden clubs had healed, he fell to a metal arrow.

Would Huang Gai survive the victory he had made possible?¹³

READ ON.



***Kongming Foresees the Outcome at Huarong;
Lord Guan Releases, and Obligates, Cao Cao***

AFTER HIS SHOT HAD KNOCKED HUANG GAI into the water, Zhang Liao brought Cao Cao safely ashore, where they found horses and fled. Cao's army was in utter disorder.

The southern commander Han Dang, steering through smoke and fire, attacked the naval station. Suddenly a soldier reported: "Someone hanging onto the rudder is calling you." Han Dang, straining, heard his name: "Dang, save me!" Recognizing Huang Gai's voice, Han Dang had him pulled aboard. He saw the wound and yanked the shaft out with his teeth, but the arrowhead remained in Huang Gai's flesh. He then removed Gai's soaked garments, dug the metal head out with his sword, and bound Gai's arm with a strip of his flag. Wrapping his own battle gown around Huang Gai, Han Dang sent him back to the main camp for treatment. Huang Gai was used to the water, so he managed to survive the experience even though it was midwinter and he wore armor.

That day fires rolled across the river like waves, and the cries of men shook the earth. On the left, boat squads led by Han Dang and Jiang Qin attacked from the west of the Red Cliffs; to the right, Zhou Tai and Chen Wu guided in their craft from the east; in the center, Zhou Yu, Cheng Pu, Xu Sheng, and Ding Feng arrived in force. Their fighters spared not what the fires had spared, and the fires lent the fighters added strength. Such indeed was the naval battle at Three Rivers and the bloody trial of war at Red Cliffs. On Cao Cao's side, those who fell to spear or arrow, or burned to death or drowned were beyond numbering. A poet later wrote:

Wei and Wu waged war to rule the roost;
The northland's towered ships—to smoke reduced.
Spreading flames illumined cloud and sea:
Cao Cao went down; 'twas Zhou Yu's victory.

Another verse reads:

High hills, a tiny moon, waters vague and vast—
Look back and grieve: what haste to carve the land!
The Southland had no wish for Cao's imperium;
And the wind had a mind to save its high command.

• • • •

While the sea war raged, on land Gan Ning ordered Cai Zhong to bring him deep into Cao's camp.

Then he struck Zhong a single blow, and he fell dead from his horse. Gan Ning began setting fires at once. Southland commander Lü Meng, seeing flames above Cao Cao's central camp, set his fires in response. Pan Zhang and Dong Xi did the same, and their troops made a great uproar, pounding their drums on all sides.

Cao Cao and Zhang Liao had little more than one hundred horsemen. Fleeing through the burning wood, they could see no place free of fire. When Mao Jie rescued Wen Ping, another dozen riders caught up with them. Cao Cao demanded that they find an escape route. Pointing to the Black Forest, Zhang Liao said, "That's the only area that seems free and clear," so Cao Cao dashed straight for the Black Forest. A troop of soldiers overtook him as their leader shouted, "Cao Cao! Stand, traitor!" Lü Meng's ensign appeared in the fiery glare.

Letting Zhang Liao deal with Lü Meng, Cao pushed on, only to be confronted by a fresh company charging out of a valley, bearing torches. A shout: "Ling Tong is here!" Cao Cao felt his nerve fail, his courage crack. Suddenly a band of soldiers veered toward him. Again, a shout: "Your Excellency, fear not, it's Xu Huang!" A rough skirmish followed. Cao Cao managed to flee some distance north before he encountered another company stationed on a slope ahead. Xu Huang rode over and found Ma Yan and Zhang Kai, two of Cao's commanders, formerly under Yuan Shao, with their force of three thousand northerners arrayed on the hill. They had seen the night sky full of flames and had hesitated to move. Now they were perfectly positioned to receive Cao Cao. He sent the two commanders ahead with one thousand men to clear a path and reserved two thousand as his personal guard.

Fortified by this fresh body of men, Cao's mind was easier. Ma Yan and Zhang Kai rode swiftly on, but within ten *li* voices rent the air, and another band of soldiers materialized. Their commander cried, "Know me for Gan Ning of the Southland!" Ma Yan tried to engage him, but Ning cut him down with one stroke. Zhang Kai raised his spear and offered combat. Whooping, Ning struck again with his sword, and Zhang Kai fell dead. Soldiers in the rear raced to inform Cao Cao.

Cao had been counting on support from troops in Hefei, unaware that Sun Quan already controlled all routes to the east. Assured of victory by the conflagration on the river, Sun Quan had Lu Xun signal Taishi Ci with fire. The moment he saw it, Taishi Ci joined Lu Xun and raced toward Cao, forcing him to flee toward Yiling; on the way Cao met up with Zhang He, whom he ordered to guard the rear.

Cao Cao whipped his horse into a dead run. At the fifth watch he looked back: the great fire had receded into the distance, and he felt steadier. "Where are we?" he asked. "West of the Black Forest," his attendants said, "and north of Yidu." Cao looked at the tangled woods and steep hills. He raised his head and laughed without stopping. "What does Your Excellency laugh so hard at?" the commanders asked. "At nothing. Nothing but the folly of Zhou Yu and the shallowness of Kongming. If I had been in their place, I would have laid an ambush right here. I, Cao Cao, would've been done for." Even as he spoke, drums thundered from both sides and flames shot upward. Cao nearly fell from his horse. A band of soldiers appeared. Then, a shout; "Zhao Zilong, here! On orders from the director general! And waiting a long time too!" Cao had Xu Huang and Zhang He engage Zilong together, while he turned into the smoke and flame and fled. Zilong made no attempt to pursue, intent only on capturing the flags. Again, Cao Cao made good his escape.

The night sky was beginning to grey. Dark clouds spread out above. The southeast wind had not let up. Suddenly torrential rains came down, soaking everyone. Cao Cao braved the downpour and

pressed on. His men were wan with hunger. Cao ordered food seized from nearby villages and some embers gathered for cooking fires. Before they could start, a company of men arrived at the rear. Cao Cao despaired, but it was only Li Dian and Xu Chu guarding the prime minister's advisers. Delighted, Cao Cao ordered his men to continue advancing. "What's the area just ahead?" he asked. "On one side is the South Yiling road; on the other, the North Yiling road," he was told. "Which one runs to Nanjun's seat, Jiangling?" "The easiest way," the soldiers said, "is to take the southern road through Gourd Crossing." Cao ordered them to take it and soon they reached the crossing.

Cao's men, famished, could barely march on. The horses, too, were fatigued, and most of them had fallen. Cao called a brief halt. Some horses carried cauldrons; others, grain seized in the villages. Near a hillside they found a dry spot, set their pots in the earth, and began cooking. They fed on horseflesh; then they stripped and hung their clothes in the breeze to dry. The mounts were unsaddled, left to roam free and graze. Cao Cao sat in a sparse wood, threw back his head, and laughed loudly. His officials said, "The last time Your Excellency laughed at Zhou Yu and Kongming, it brought Zhao Zilong down on us, and we lost plenty of men and mounts. What are you laughing at now?" "At Kongming and Zhou Yu, whose knowledge and planning is in the end rather deficient," he replied. "Had I been in command, I would have set an ambush right here to meet our exhausted troops with their well-rested ones. Even if we had escaped with our lives, we'd have been mauled. But they did not see that far. And that's why I am laughing." At that moment shouts rang out, ahead and behind.

Terrified, Cao Cao flung aside his armor and mounted. But most of his soldiers, with smoke and fire closing in, had no time to get to their horses. Before them an enemy troop had control of the pass through the hills. Their commander, Zhang Fei of Yan, spear leveled, poised on his mount, bellowed at Cao, "Where goes the traitor?" Officers and men quaked at the sight of Zhang Fei, but Xu Chu mounted bareback and made ready to fight, and Zhang Liao and Xu Huang converged on Zhang Fei. Then the horsemen on both sides jammed together in close action. Cao broke free first. Others followed. Zhang Fei pursued hotly. Cao fled in a meandering pattern, slowly leaving the enemy behind.

Cao Cao observed that most of his commanders bore wounds. One soldier respectfully asked, "There are two roads ahead; which one does Your Excellency think we should take?" "Which is shorter?" Cao asked in response. "The main road is fairly flat, but more than fifty *li* longer. The trail toward Huarong is fifty *li* shorter, but narrow and treacherous and hard-going." Cao Cao ordered some men to climb a hill and survey the roads. "Smoke is rising from several places along the trail," one reported back. "But there seems to be no activity on the main road." Cao Cao ordered the front ranks on to the Huarong Trail. "Those smoke signals mean soldiers," the commanders protested. "Why go down there?" "Don't you know what the military texts say?" Cao said. "'A show of force is best where you are weak; where strong, feign weakness.' Kongming is a man of tricks. He purposely sent his men to some nooks in the hills to set fires to deter us from going that way, while placing his ambush on the main road. That's my judgment I won't fall into this trap!" "Your ingenious calculations are beyond compare," the commanders agreed and directed their troops toward the Huarong Trail.

By now the men were staggering from hunger. The horses could barely move. Some men had burns; others bore wounds from spear or arrow. On they plodded with walking sticks, dragging themselves painfully along, their clothing and armor drenched. No one had escaped unscathed, and weapons and standards were carried in no semblance of good order. Few mounts had had gear since the rout north of Yiling, when saddles and bridles had been cast aside. It was midwinter, and the cold

was severe. Who can fairly describe their sufferings?

Cao Cao saw the front line come to a halt and asked why. The report came back: "The hills ahead are rarely crossed; the paths are too narrow, and the horses have bogged down in the ditches after the morning's rains." In an exasperated tone Cao Cao said, "Are you telling me that an army that forges through mountains and bridges rivers can't get through a little mud?" Then he sent down the command: "Let the old, the weak, and the wounded follow as best they can; the able-bodied are to carry earth, wood, grass, and reeds to fill in the road. The march must resume, and whoever disobeys dies." As ordered, the soldiers dismounted and cut trees and bamboo by the roadside to rebuild the road. Cao Cao, fearing pursuit, had Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, and Xu Huang lead a hundred riders with swords bared to cut down slackers.

At Cao Cao's order the troops, starved and exhausted, trudged ahead, trampling over the bodies of the many who had fallen. The dead were beyond numbering, and the sound of howls and cries on the trail did not cease. Angrily, Cao said, "Fate rules life and death. What are all these cries for? I'll behead the next to cry." One third of the men fell behind; another third lay in the ditches; one third stayed with Cao Cao. They passed a treacherous slope. The road began to flatten out. Looking behind, Cao saw that he was left with a mere three hundred mounted followers, not a one with clothing and armor intact. Cao urged them forward. The commanders said, "The horses are spent; they need a short rest." "Push on. There'll be time for that in Jiangling," Cao answered.

They rode another *li* or two. Cao Cao raised his whip and laughed again. "Why is your Excellency laughing?" the commanders asked. "Everyone thinks Zhou Yu and Kongming are such shrewd tacticians," he replied. "But as I see it, neither is especially capable. If they had set an ambush here we could only have surrendered quietly." That moment a bombard echoed. Five hundred expert swordsmen flanked the road. At their head, raising his blade Green Dragon, sitting astride Red Hare, the great general Lord Guan Yunchang checked Cao's advance. Cao's men felt their souls desert them, their courage die. They looked at one another helplessly.

"It is the last battle, then," said Cao, "and we must fight it." But the commanders replied, "Even if the men will fight, their horses lack the strength. We cannot fight again." "Lord Guan," said Cheng Yu, "is known to disdain the high and mighty but to deal with the humble. He gives the strong short shrift but never persecutes the weak. He knows clearly the difference between obligation and enmity, and he has ever demonstrated good faith and honor. In times past, Your Excellency showed him great kindness; now, on your personal appeal to him, we might be spared."

Cao Cao approved and guided his horse forward. Bowing, he addressed Lord Guan: You have been well, I trust, General, since we parted? "Lord Guan bowed in return and said, "I bear orders from the director general and have been awaiting Your Excellency for some time. "" My army is defeated and my situation critical, "Cao Cao said." At this point I have no way out. But I trust, General, you will give due weight to our old friendship. "" Though I benefited from your ample kindness, "Lord Guan replied, "I fulfilled the debt when I destroyed two enemy generals and relieved the siege at Baima. In the present situation I cannot set aside public duty for personal considerations. "

"You still recall, do you not," Cao went on, "how you slew my commanders at five passes when you left my service? A man worthy of the name gives the greatest weight to good faith and honor. With your profound understanding of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, you must be familiar with the story of the apprentice Yugongzhisi who pursued his archery instructor, Zizhuoruzi, only to release

him, unwilling to use the man's own teachings to destroy him."¹ And Lord Guan, whose sense of honor was solid as a mountain, could not put Cao Cao's many obliging kindnesses or the thought of the slain commanders from his mind. Moved, despite himself, at the sight of Cao's men distracted and on the verge of tears, Lord Guan softened. He swung away his mount and said to his soldiers, "Spread out on all sides," clearly signaling his intent to make way. When Cao Cao saw Lord Guan turn aside, he and his commanders bolted past, and when Lord Guan came back, they were gone.

Lord Guan gave a powerful shout. Cao's soldiers dismounted, prostrated themselves, and wept. Lord Guan's sense of pity seemed to grow on him, and he hesitated. Then Zhang Liao came racing up, and Lord Guan was reminded of their old friendship.² With a long sigh, he let all the remaining troops pass.³ A poet of later times has written:

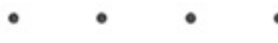
Cao Cao fled along the Huarong Trail,
But Lord Guan barred his passage hardily.
Then, weighing obligation once incurred,
He slipped the lock and let the dragon free.

Cao Cao rode on to the mouth of the gorge. Looking back, he saw all of twenty-seven riders behind him.

It was dark when he neared Jiangling. Masses of torches lit up the area, and a cluster of troops blocked his path. "This is the end," Cao Cao cried in fear. But he was relieved to find a patrol under Cao Ren, who greeted him saying, "I knew of the defeat but chose to keep to my post so that I could meet you on your return." "I might never have seen you again," Cao Cao said and gathered everyone into Jiangling for the night.

Soon Zhang Liao rode up and told Cao Cao of Lord Guan's kindness. Cao Cao checked his commanders and lieutenants. Many were wounded. Cao ordered them all to rest. Cao Ren set forth wine to dispel Cao Cao's sorrow, and his advisers joined him. Suddenly Cao Cao lifted his head and cried out in grief. His advisers said, "Your Excellency, when you escaped the tiger's den you showed neither fear nor anxiety. Yet now that we are safe inside these walls, the men fed, the horses provisioned, the time come to reorganize ourselves for counterattack, you cry out in grief. Why?" "I mourn for Guo Jia. He could have prevented this dreadful defeat," Cao said. He beat his breast and howled: "I grieve for you, Guo Jia. Oh, what a loss, what a loss!" His advisers remained quiet, shamed.

The next day Cao Cao told Cao Ren, "I am going back to the capital briefly to replenish my forces for the counterattack. Keep guard here over Jiangling. I have a plan to leave with you, but you must keep it sealed—except in emergency. Should you have to use it, the Southland will never succeed with its designs on Jiangling." "Who will guard Hefei and Xiangyang?" asked Cao Ren. "Jingzhou is in your hands," Cao replied. "And I've tapped Xiahou Dun to hold Xiangyang. The most critical point is Hefei. Zhang Liao will be in charge there, assisted by Yue Jin and Li Dian. The moment something arises, inform me." His arrangements completed, Cao Cao rode back to Xuchang, the capital, taking with him the remainder of his army as well as those originally under Liu Biao's administration who had subsequently submitted to him. Cao Ren sent Cao Hong to defend Yiling and Jiangling against Zhou Yu.



Before Lord Guan brought his men home, the other commanders assigned by Kongming had already returned to Xiakou with their booty of horses, grain, money, and equipment. Only Lord Guan came back empty-handed, having taken neither man nor mount. Kongming was in the midst of congratulating Xuande when Lord Guan's return was reported. Kongming rushed forth from his place, bearing the cup of congratulation, to greet him. "It is time to rejoice, General," he said, "in your epoch-making achievement—ridding the empire of a monstrous evil. I really should have made the effort to receive you on the road." Lord Guan was silent. "General," Kongming continued, can it be that you are displeased because we did not come far enough to meet you? "He turned to his attendants and added, " Why did you not report his approach before he arrived? "

"I come only to request capital punishment," Lord Guan said. "You do not mean to tell me that Cao Cao did not take the Huarong Trail?" Kongming asked. "He did, in fact, come that way," Lord Guan answered. "But I was so inept, he got away from me." What commanders and soldiers have you captured, then? "Kongming went on. None," came the reply. "That means," said Kongming, "that you purposely released him, mindful of his past generosity. Nonetheless, since you made a formal commitment, we have no choice but to enforce it under martial law." Kongming shouted for the guards to execute him. Indeed:

Lord Guan risked his life to thank a benefactor;
And men forever after held his name in honor.

Cao Cao had escaped his doom; would Lord Guan?

READ ON.



*Cao Ren Battles the Southland Troops;
Kongming Spoils Zhou Yu's Victory*

KONGMING WAS ABOUT TO EXECUTE LORD GUAN, but Xuande intervened, saying, "When my brothers and I pledged mutual faith, we swore to live—and die—as one. Now Yunchang has broken the law, but I haven't the heart to go against our former covenant. I hope you will suspend the rule this time and simply record his fault, allowing him to redeem his offense by future merit." With that, Kongming pardoned Lord Guan.

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Zhou Yu recalled his forces, reviewed his commanders' accomplishments, and reported them to Sun Quan. He also sent all surrendered northerners back across the river. After feasting and rewarding his southern troops, Zhou Yu mounted an attack on Nanjun.

His first echelon camped at the edge of the river, in five sites from van to rear. Zhou Yu occupied the central site. He was in the midst of conferring on the tactics of the campaign when a report came in: "Liu Xuande has sent Sun Qian to congratulate the chief commander." Invited into Zhou Yu's presence, Sun Qian performed the ritual salute and said, "My lord, Liu Xuande, has commanded me to convey his respectful gratitude for your magnanimity, and to tender these poor courtesies." "Where is Xuande?" Zhou Yu asked. "As far as I know," Sun Qian replied, "he has moved his troops into position at the mouth of the You River."¹ Startled, Zhou Yu asked, "Is Kongming there too?" "He is with Lord Liu," Sun Qian answered. "Then please return; I shall go there myself, later, to express my gratitude."

Zhou Yu accepted the gifts and sent Sun Qian back ahead of him. Lu Su asked Zhou Yu, "Whatever made you lose your composure just now, Commander?" "If Xuande is at the River You," Zhou Yu answered, "it means he plans to take Nanjun! We are the ones who expended so many men and horses, who consumed so much coin and grain—and now Nanjun is ours for the plucking. But if they harbor such ruthless ambition as to snatch our prize, they'll have to reckon with the fact that I am still around." "What strategy could force them back?" Lu Su wanted to know. "I'm going to talk with Xuande myself. If all goes well, fine. If not, I'll not wait for him to take Nanjun; I'll finish him off first!" "I should go with you," said Lu Su. With three thousand light cavalry the two men headed for Xuande's camp on the You River.

When Sun Qian told Xuande that the Southland commander was on his way, Xuande asked Kongming, "What is he coming for?" Kongming smiled. "Hardly for trivial courtesies," he said. "He is coming for Nanjun." "If he comes with troops, what do we do?" Xuande asked. Kongming suggested certain replies for Xuande to make to Zhou Yu, and then ordered the warships arrayed on

the river and the land forces along the shore.

The arrival of Zhou Yu and Lu Su and their battalion was announced. Kongming had Zhao Zilong take a few riders and greet them. Zhou Yu observed uneasily the strength and vigor of Xuande's military position. Soon he was taken to the main tent where he was well received by Xuande and Kongming. When the formalities were done with, a banquet was spread. Xuande raised his wine cup to thank Zhou Yu for his part in the difficult campaign. After several rounds, Zhou Yu began, "Lord Liu, are we to understand that in moving your forces here, you intend to take Nanjun?" "I had heard, Commander," Xuande replied, "that you wished to take it, and so I have come to lend my assistance. If YOU do not take it, of course, I shall." Zhou Yu smiled. "We in the Southland have long wished to assimilate the area around the Great River and the Han," he said. "Now Nan-jun is within our grasp. How could we not take it?"

"The outcome of any engagement is hard to foretell," Xuande said. "Before returning north, Cao Cao assigned Cao Ren to defend Nanjun and other neighboring points. He is sure to have left some surprises for us, not to speak of Cao Ren's unchallengeable bravery. My only concern is whether you will be able to capture the city, Commander." "In the event that we fail," Zhou Yu answered, "you are welcome to try." To this, Xuande replied, "Lu Su and Kongming are here as witnesses. Do not go back on your word, Commander." Lu Su hemmed and hawed without answering, but Zhou Yu said, "When a man worthy of the name gives his word, there is no going back." "Your position, Commander, is certainly fair-minded," Kongming commented.² "Let Lord Sun Quan go to take Nanjun first. If he does not subdue it, my Lord Liu will try. What objection can there be to that?"

After Lu Su and Zhou Yu had departed, Xuande asked Kongming, "All the same, those replies you had me make seem unjustified now that I think it over. I am isolated and destitute, without a place to set my feet. I sought Nanjun as an expedient refuge. If Zhou Yu takes the city for the Southland, where am I supposed to go?" Kongming laughed heartily. "Remember, my lord," he said, "when I tried to get you to take Jingzhou? How you ignored me? But today you yearn for it!" "Then it was Liu Biao's land," Xuande replied. "I could not bear to take it. Now that it is Cao Cao's, I'd be justified." "Never mind fretting and worrying, my lord," said Kongming. "Let Zhou Yu do a bit of the fighting now, and I will have you sitting in power within Nanjun's walls soon enough." "And how will you manage that?" asked Xuande. Kongming whispered a few phrases that dispelled Xuande's anxiety. He consequently held his troops in tight check at the mouth of the River You.

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Zhou Yu and Lu Su returned from their mission to Xuande. "Commander," Lu Su asked, "how could you consent to Xuande's capture of Nanjun?"³ "I can take it with a snap of the fingers," said Zhou Yu. "I have simply granted them a favor that will cost us nothing." Then he called for a volunteer to lead the attack. His call was answered by Jiang Qin. "You will have the vanguard," said Zhou Yu. "Xu Sheng and Ding Feng will be your lieutenants. Select five thousand of our finest soldiers and cross the river. I will bring up the rear."

In Nanjun, Cao Ren had sent Cao Hong west to guard Yiling and create a pincer defense. When the crossing of the river by southern troops was reported, Cao Ren said, "Defend stoutly but do not give battle." Valiant Commander Niu Jin protested energetically: "To refuse to fight an enemy at our walls is cowardice. More than ever we need to put new heart in our men after our recent defeats. I

volunteer to take five hundred and destroy them or die trying." Cao Ren approved and granted Niu Jin the fighters. Ding Feng raced forward to meet him. After four or five bouts Feng feigned defeat, and Niu Jin chased him beyond his own line. At a signal from Feng, Niu Jin was surrounded. He charged the encircling enemy right and left but to no avail.

From the city wall Cao Ren could see Niu Jin trapped in the enemy camp. He donned his armor, mounted, and rode out, followed by several hundred horsemen. Cao Ren tore into the enemy line, his blade wheeling. Xu Sheng went forth but broke before the assault. Cao Ren fought his way to the center of the camp and rescued Niu Jin. A few dozen riders were still trapped, so he turned again and did bloody slaughter until he had brought them out of the encirclement—only to find Jiang Qin barring his way. Cao Ren and Niu Jin fought with might and main to break up the enemy lines. Cao Ren's brother, Chun, came to their aid, and a melee ensued. The southern troops fell back and Cao Ren returned victorious. Jiang Qin, standing before an angry Zhou Yu, escaped punishment of death only through the commanders' intercession.

Zhou Yu tallied his forces for the struggle with Cao Ren himself. But Gan Ning said, "Let the chief commander not be so impetuous. Cao Ren has put Cao Hong in charge of Yiling as one point of a pincer. I would like to have three thousand men to seize Yiling: then you can seize Nanjun." Zhou Yu was persuaded, and Gan Ning set out. Cao Ren was quickly informed of these moves and conferred with Chen Jiao. "If anything goes wrong at Yiling," Jiao warned Ren, "we won't be able to hold Nanjun. Reinforce it immediately." Cao Ren therefore sent Cao Chun and Niu Jin quietly over to Yiling to support Cao Hong.

Cao Chun had sent a man ahead to inform Hong and have him leave the city as an enticement to the enemy. When Gan Ning came before the walls in force, Cao Hong went forth to engage him. After twenty bouts, Cao Hong fled in defeat, and Ning took possession of Yiling. Then, at dusk, Cao Chun and Niu Jin arrived and swiftly laid siege to Yiling.

The reports that Gan Ning was trapped in Yiling stunned Zhou Yu. Cheng Pu said to him, "We must send more men there at once." "Our own position is at the center of things. We can't spare troops. What if Cao Ren attacks us here?" Zhou Yu countered "Gan Ning is one of our top generals. We can't leave him there," said Lü Meng. "I would go myself," said Zhou Yu, "but who would take my place?" "Let Ling Tong stand in for you here," said Lü Meng. "I will take the van. You cover the rear, Commander. And inside of ten days, we will be celebrating a victory." "We have yet to hear if Ling Tong is willing," Zhou Yu said. "For ten days, yes," Ling Tong responded. "But longer than that—the responsibility would be too much." Delighted, Zhou Yu left Ling Tong with about ten thousand troops and struck out for Yiling that same day.

On the way Lü Meng said to Zhou Yu, "At the southern edge of Yiling is a little road the easiest way to Nanjun. Send five hundred men there to fell trees and block it off. The northerners will have to take that road if they are defeated; and when they find they have to flee on foot, they'll leave us their horses." Zhou Yu approved and sent the soldiers to carry out the scheme.

When the main body of southern troops approached Yiling, Zhou Yu called for someone to break through the siege and rescue Gan Ning. Zhou Tai volunteered. Bracing his sword and giving his horse free rein, he hewed a bloody track through Cao Hong's ranks until he reached the city wall. Gan Ning emerged to greet him. "The chief commander himself is coming," said Zhou Tai. Gan Ning sent out an order for his men to dress for rattle and eat their fill, that they might be ready to coordinate with the rescuers.

Cao Hong, Cao Chun, and Niu Jin soon learned of the approach of Zhou Yu's force and sent a messenger to Nanjun to inform Cao Ren. At the same time they assigned a portion of their army to hold off the attackers. The southerners arrived, and Cao's troops met them in battle. At that moment Gan Ning and Zhou Tai came out of the city and joined in the fighting. Cao's army disintegrated, and the southerners bore down on the foe from every side. As predicted, the three leaders, Cao Hong, Cao Chun, and Niu Jin, fled Yiling by the small road. Blocked by heaps of timber, they fled on foot, abandoning to the southerners some five hundred mounts. Zhou Yu pressed hotly on to Nanjun—only to encounter Cao Ren's rescue force. The armies fell upon each other and fought wildly until dark. Then they returned to their respective positions.

Cao Ren went back into Nanjun and conferred with his commanders and counselors. We have lost Yiling, "Cao Hong said," and we are in great peril. We should have a look at the secret plan the prime minister left before he went to Xuchang. "" My thought exactly, " replied Cao Ren. Reading the secret instructions, Cao Ren's anxiety lifted. He ordered mess to be served at the fifth watch and all units to abandon the city at dawn. Around the wall he left his colors waving as a false show of force. Then his army vacated the city through its three gates.

Having rescued Gan Ning, Zhou Yu ranged his troops before the walls of Nanjun. He observed the evacuation from his general's platform. He saw the flags sticking up from the unguarded battlement; and he noted the sacks tied to the waists of the retreating soldiers. Surmising that Cao Ren must have prepared this move well ahead of time, Zhou Yu descended from his observation post and split his army into two wings. He commanded the forward unit, if successful, to press on no matter what, retreating only when the gong sounded. Then he commanded Cheng Pu to supervise the rear army, while he himself prepared to take possession of the city.

To the powerful beating of drums Cao Hong rode out to challenge the southerners. Zhou Yu directed Han Dang to meet him in combat. After thirty clashes Hong retreated. Cao Ren himself joined the battle, and Zhou Tai went forth to engage him. After ten clashes, Cao Ren retired. As Cao's line was breaking apart, Zhou Yu summoned his two wings into action. It was fast becoming a rout. Zhou Yu led his riders to the wall of Nanjun. Cao Ren, instead of entering the city, turned northwest and fled. Han Dang and Zhou Tai swept mightily after him. Seeing the main gate open and the walls deserted, Zhou Yu ordered his men to seize the city. A few dozen horsemen went in first, with Zhou Yu behind, racing forward, right into the space between the outer and inner walls.

In the archer's tower Chen Jiao watched Zhou Yu entering and muttered to himself, The prime minister's brilliant schemes are almost miraculous. " At the signal of a watchman's rattle, his crossbowmen let fly from both sides. Bolts pelted the field like heavy rain. Those who managed to struggle into the city fell head over heels into ditches and pits. Zhou Yu tried desperately to turn back, but a quarrel from a crossbow struck him squarely in the left side, knocking him from his horse. Niu Jin then came out slashing, bent on capturing Zhou Yu. Xu Sheng and Ding Feng sped to his rescue, throwing caution to the wind.

Cao's army now thrust forward from the city, pushing back the southern soldiers. As they trampled each other, many fell into the moat. Cheng Pu desperately called for retreat. But Cao Ren and Cao Hong turned the columns they had led out of the city back into the fray. The southerners, though badly mauled, were not routed only because Ling Tong, charging in from an angle, managed to hold off the northerners. Cao Ren led his victorious soldiers back into Nanjun, and Cheng Pu took his defeated troops back to their camp. Ding Feng and Xu Sheng carried Zhou Yu to his tent and called for an army

surgeon to extract the arrow with forceps. He applied medication for wounds caused by metal, but the pain was unbearable. Zhou Yu could take neither food nor drink. The medical officer said, "The tip was poisoned. There can be no swift recovery. Fits of cholera will only reopen the wound."⁴

Cheng Pu ordered the southern army to make no move and permitted no one to give battle. Three days later, Niu Jin came to denounce the southern foe, but Cheng Pu would not respond. Niu Jin hurled taunts until sunset and resumed them the following day, but Cheng Pu did not inform Zhou Yu lest his condition worsen. The third day, Niu Jin rode directly to the camp gate to rail upon the southerners, declaring in every word his intention to capture Zhou Yu. Cheng Pu decided on a temporary retreat until Sun Quan could be consulted.

Despite his physical suffering, Zhou Yu was aware of what was going on: that Cao's army had come before the camp to denounce him and that his commanders were holding something back. One day Cao Ren came as usual, his army beating drums, truculently demanding to fight. Cheng Pu held fast and would not go forth. Zhou Yu called his commanders into his tent and asked them, "Where is the drumming and shouting coming from?" "We're training the troops," was the reply. "Don't try to fool me!" Zhou Yu declared angrily. "I know full well Cao's men are in front of the camp abusing us. Cheng Pu shares military authority with me. Why has he done nothing?" He called for Cheng Pu and asked him the same question.

"Seeing that you were ill from the wound and that the doctor said you were not to be angered," replied Cheng Pu, "I didn't report the enemy's provocations." "What is your purpose in refusing to fight?" Zhou Yu asked. "The commanders," Cheng Pu answered, "want to take the army back to the south and wait for your recovery before undertaking further action." At these words Zhou Yu started from his couch. "A man worthy of the name, who takes his sustenance in the service of his lord, considers it a boon to die on the battlefield, to be sent home wrapped in horsehide. You can't bring our cause to naught on my account." So saying, he put on his battle dress and mounted, leaving his commanders in a state of shock.

Zhou Yu led several hundred fighters to the front of the camp. Cao's troops were already positioned for combat. Cao Ren sat poised on his horse under the commanding general's banner. He raised his whip and shouted, "Zhou Yu, you baby! I thought you'd die in your cradle and never again dare to look upon my men." Cao Ren was still shouting when Zhou Yu shot forward from the soldiers massed around him, crying, "Cao Ren you scum, can you see me?" Cao Ren's men looked in fear. Ren turned to his commanders and said, "Curse him!" And the army raised its voice in a thunderous outcry.

Roused to fury, Zhou Yu sent Pan Zhang to give battle. But before the warriors had engaged, the Southland's chief commander cried out sharply and toppled from his horse blood rushing from his mouth. Cao's men advanced swiftly. The southern commanders held them back, and, after brief but violent fighting, brought Zhou Yu back to his tent. Cheng Pu asked him, "Commander, what ails you?" "It's a ruse," Zhou Yu whispered. "How will it work?" Cheng Pu asked. Zhou Yu continued: "There's nothing wrong. I want them to think I'm dying so that they will drop their guard. Have some of our trusted men pretend to surrender; tell them I have died. Cao Ren is sure to raid our camp this night—but we will have soldiers on all sides ready for them. Cao Ren will be ours in a single roll of the drums!" "A brilliant plan!" Cheng Pu exclaimed and, leaving the tent, raised the cry of mourning. Fear swept the southerners as word spread that the chief commander had died from his reopened wound. Everyone in camp wore the white of mourning.

Cao Ren was conferring with his counselors, discussing Zhou Yu's fall from his horse and his expected death from the reopened wound, when the announcement came: "Over ten southern soldiers have come to submit, two of them our own, previously captured by the south." Cao Ren hurriedly summoned them for questioning. The soldiers said, Zhou Yu's wound burst when he was at the front today, and he died back at camp. The commanders are dressed in white and have raised the cry of mourning. All of us, here, have come to surrender and report the news because Cheng Pu mistreated us." Cao Ren was overjoyed, and began planning a night raid to carry off Zhou Yu's corpse so that he could send the chief commander's head to the capital.

Chen Jiao said, "This calls for speed. Let us not delay." Cao Ren put Niu Jin in the van, himself in the center, and Cao Hong and Cao Chun in the rear. Chen Jiao was left guarding the city with a handful of men. All the rest joined the attack force. They left the city after the first watch and made straight for Zhou Yu's camp. On reaching the gate, they saw not a single soul, only a few pennoned spears idly stuck in the ground. Sensing a trap, they strove to pull back, but the Southland's bombardments were already homing in.

From the east came Han Dang and Jiang Qin; from the west, Zhou Tai and Pan Zhang; from the south, Xu Sheng and Ding Feng; from the north, Chen Wu and Lü Meng. They closed in for the kill, knocking Cao Ren's entire army to pieces; van and rear could not aid each other. Ren and a dozen riders broke the encirclement and met up with Cao Hong; the two fled with what remained of their forces. The slaughter continued into the fifth watch. The fleeing commanders were close to Nanjun when, to the pounding of drums, Ling Tong checked their passage. A sharp clash ensued. Cao Ren and his men fled off at an angle, only to meet Gan Ning, who took another heavy toll. Afraid to return to Nanjun, Cao Ren headed down the main route to Xiangyang. The southerners pursued briefly, then returned.

Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu regathered their troops and set out for Nanjun. Reaching the walls of the city, they saw a host of flags and banners, and a general calling to them from the wall tower: "My apologies, Chief Commander. On orders from our director general, I have taken possession of the city. I am Zhao Zilong of Changshan." In a fury, Zhou Yu ordered his men to attack. Arrows rained down from the wall. Zhou Yu withdrew and, after conferring with his commanders, decided to send Gan Ning with several thousand troops to take Gong'an, and Ling Tong to take Xiangyang, before renewing the assault on Nanjun.

As Zhou Yu was making these assignments, scouts raced in to report: "After Zhuge Liang seized Nanjun, he used captured military credentials to deceive the guard at Jingzhou into coming to help. Then he had Zhang Fei seize the city." This was followed by another report: "Xiahou Dun was holding Xiangyang when Zhuge Liang sent someone with credentials claiming that Cao Ren needed his help. Dun was lured out of the city, and Lord Guan captured it. The two cities have come into Liu Xuande's possession without the least effort on his part." "How did Zhuge Liang get hold of the military tallies?" asked Zhou Yu. "When Chen Jiao was captured, he had all the tallies on him," was the explanation. Zhou Yu cried out, and his wound reopened. Indeed:

The walls and moats of several districts—not a one for me?
Campaigns and bitter fighting—for whose sake all that toil?

The conflict between Sun Quan and Liu Xuande had taken a new turn.⁵

READ ON.



Zhuge Liang Temporizes with Lu Su; Zhao Zilong Captures Guiyang

AFTER KONGMING CAPTURED NANJUN AND XIANGYANG, Zhou Yu passed out from exasperation, rupturing his wound. When he came to himself, his commanders tried to soothe him, but Zhou Yu said, "Nothing less than the life of Zhuge Bumpkin will quell my discontent. Cheng Pu can help me retake Nanjun for the Southland." At this point Lu Su entered, and Zhou Yu said, "I am going to assemble an army to recover our cities and have it out with Xuande and Kongming. Will you help me?" "Nothing doing," replied Lu Su. "With our struggle against Cao Cao undecided and with Lord Sun's advance on Hefei stalled, we become easy prey for Cao Cao if we turn on one other. Our whole position will crumble. What's more, Liu Xuande was once Cao Cao's good friend. If we push him into tendering his cities to Cao Cao and the two of them unite against us—then what?"¹ "It is insufferable," cried Zhou Yu. "Our strategy, our casualties, our costs in coin and grain—and for what? A ready victory for them!" "Bear with it, my friend," Lu Su urged. "I shall go and reason with Xuande myself. If I fail to make him see things our way, there will be time enough for hostilities." Zhou Yu's commanders welcomed this idea.

Lightly attended, Lu Su headed for Nanjun. He came to the city gate and shouted up to be admitted. When Zhao Zilong came out, Lu Su said, "I have something to say to Liu Xuande." Zilong replied, "Lord Liu and the director general are over in Gong'an." Lu Su turned and headed there. At Gong'an he found the flags and banners in brilliant array and the appearance of the army magnificent. To himself he admitted boundless admiration for Kongming. The visitor's arrival was reported. Kongming ordered the city gate opened wide and ushered Lu Su into the *yamen*. Formal greetings completed, they seated themselves as host and guest.

After tea had been served, Lu Su began: "Lord Sun Quan and his chief commander, Zhou Yu, have sent me to communicate their emphatic view to the imperial uncle. When we first undertook this campaign, Cao Cao had command of a million men and threatened to descend on the Southland. His real objective, however, was the imperial uncle, whom by fortune's grace the Southland saved in a massive campaign that drove back the northerners. Jingzhou's nine imperial districts should now properly become part of the Southland. But the imperial uncle has used a subterfuge to seize and hold the area, handily reaping a benefit for which the Southland has vainly expended its coin, grain, and men. I doubt that this is consonant with accepted principles."

"My friend," Kongming said, "on what grounds does a high-minded and enlightened scholar like yourself make such statements? It is commonly agreed that 'things belong to their owners.' Jingzhou's nine districts are not the Southland's territory, but rather the estate of Liu Biao,² and Lord Liu, as everyone knows, is his younger brother. Though Liu Biao himself is dead, his son is still alive. For an uncle to support a nephew in taking Jingzhou—what can there be to object to?"³ "If in fact the

patriarchal son were holding the territory," Lu Su conceded, "I might understand. But he is in Jiangxia; he is obviously not here."

"Would you care to see him?" asked Kongming. He motioned to his attendants, and before Lu Su's very eyes, steadied by two supporters, Liu Qi came out from behind a screen and spoke to Lu Su: "My ill health prevents me from performing the proper courtesies; please forgive my offense." Lu Su swallowed his amazement and kept silent for some time. Then he said, "And if the patriarch's son were to die . . ." "He lives from day to day," Kongming replied. "Should he die, there will be something to negotiate." "When he dies," said Lu Su, "the territory reverts to the Southland." "I think your position is correct," Kongming said finally. A banquet was then prepared to fete Lu Su.

Lu Su bore the news to his own camp that night. Zhou Yu said, "Liu Qi is in the prime of youth and unlikely to die. When will we ever get Jingzhou back?" "Chief Commander," Lu Su replied, "rest assured that the responsibility is mine alone. I will see to it that Jingzhou is restored to the Southland." "You have something up your sleeve?" Zhou Yu asked. Lu Su replied: "Anyone could see how dissipated in vice and luxury Liu Qi is. Disease has penetrated his vitals. His face looks feeble and wasted. His breathing is troubled, and he spits blood. The man cannot live beyond six months. At that time I shall go to claim Jingzhou, and Liu Bei should have no excuses whatsoever to put me off."

Lu Su's assurances gave Zhou Yu little comfort. But an unexpected messenger from Sun Quan resolved the matter. "Lord Sun," he announced, "has surrounded Hefei. Unable to subdue it after many battles, he now orders the chief commander to shift his forces over there." Zhou Yu had no choice. He withdrew to Chaisang to allow his wound time to heal and sent Cheng Pu in command of a naval force to serve Sun Quan.

. . . .

Liu Xuande, overjoyed with the acquisition of the key cities of Gong'an, Nanjun, and Xiangyang, began considering how they could be held permanently. Suddenly, a man entered his reception chamber to offer counsel. It was Yi Ji.⁴ In recognition of his earlier help in saving his life, Xuande showed him great courtesy and invited him to be seated. Then Yi Ji spoke: "If you seek a plan to keep Jingzhou for good, why not solicit the advice of the worthy scholars of the region?" "Where are they?" Xuande asked. "There is the Ma family of Jingzhou," Yi Ji replied. "The five brothers are noted for their talent: the youngest is Ma Su (styled Youchang); the most able, Ma Liang (styled Jichang), famous for the white hairs between his eyebrows. As a popular saying has it: 'Of the Mas' five Changs, the best is white-browed Liang.' This is the man to consult."

Accordingly, Ma Liang was invited. Xuande treated him with high courtesy and asked him how to maintain his hold on Jingzhou. Ma Liang responded: "The province, exposed to attack from four directions, cannot hold out long. Keep young master Liu Qi here nursing his illness, summon former leaders to guard the place, then petition the Emperor to make Liu Qi imperial inspector of Jingzhou. This will relieve the anxieties of the population. Once that is done, you can march south on the four districts Wuling, Changsha, Guiyang, and Lingling to gather coin and grain and build a base area. This is how to make the province yours for good."⁵ Delighted with this advice, Xuande asked, "Which of the four should we capture first?" "Lingling," he replied, "west of the River Xiang, is closest. It should be first, followed by Wuling. Then, east of the river, take Guiyang, and finally Changsha."⁶

After this conference Xuande appointed Ma Liang an assistant to the imperial inspector and Yi Ji,

his deputy. Xuande called on Kongming to arrange Liu Qi's return to Xiangyang and to bring Lord Guan back to Gong'an. Next, he directed his troops to capture Lingling. He sent Zhang Fei in the van and Zilong in the rear, while he and Kongming made up the center. In all they had fifteen thousand men. Lord Guan was left to guard Gong'an; Mi Zhu and Liu Feng defended Jiangling.⁷

The governor of the district of Lingling was Liu Du. Informed of the approach of Xuande's army, he took counsel with his son, Liu Xian. "There is no need to worry, Father," Liu Xian said. "Although Xuande has brave warriors like Zhang Fei and Zhao Zilong, we have in Xing Daorong a top general who can withstand legions. He will be able to hold them off." The governor then ordered Liu Xian and Xing Daorong to lead ten thousand men some thirty *li* out of the city, there to camp hard by a stream, their back to the hills.

Scouts brought word that Kongming was approaching with a company of men, and Daorong went forth to battle. The opposing lines moved into position. Daorong charged out, wheeling a great mountain-cleaving axe. "Renegade! Traitor!" he shrieked. "You dare violate our territory?" Suddenly a group of yellow flags came into view, and where they parted a four-wheeled carriage emerged. On it sat a single figure wearing a garment of crane feathers, a plaited band wrapped around his head in the Taoist fashion. He held a feathered fan, with which he motioned to Xing Daorong. "I am Zhuge Kongming of Nanyang," he said. "With a few little tricks I wrecked Cao Cao's million-man host. You are no match! I come today to offer you amnesty. The sooner you surrender, the better for you."

In response Daorong laughed out loud. "Zhou Yu's genius," he shouted, "won the day at Red Cliffs. You had no hand in it. Begone with your absurd claims." Wheeling his great battle-axe, he charged. Kongming withdrew into the open center of his line, which closed behind him. Daorong hurtled forward. The line quickly split into two as either half peeled away from the field. In the distance Daorong saw the cluster of yellow flags and, thinking to find Kongming there, charged again.

Sweeping past the foot of the hills, Daorong found the yellow flags, but from their midst a mounted warrior bounded forth, spear raised, and went for Daorong with a shout. It was Zhang Fei. Daorong held high his axe and advanced; but after several clashes he felt his powers fail, so he fled. Zhang Fei came pounding after him, and his troops came forth from hiding. The air rang with warcries. Daorong plunged on for his life. Another warrior blocked his passage. "Ever hear of Zhao Zilong of Changshan?" he cried. Unable to resist or flee, Daorong dismounted and submitted. Zilong took him, bound, to Xuande and Kongming.

Xuande ordered the prisoner beheaded, but Kongming quickly stopped him. He said to Daorong, "Capture Liu Xian for us, and we will accept your surrender." Daorong assented eagerly. "How will you do it?" Kongming asked him. "If the director general will release me," he replied, "I have an idea. This evening have your men raid the camp. I will work from within, capture Liu Xian alive, and deliver him to you. After that Governor Liu Du's surrender will be a matter of course." Xuande mistrusted the man, but Kongming released him, saying, "The commander is not fooling."

After being sent home, Daorong informed Liu Xian truthfully of all that had passed. "What are we to do?" asked Xian. "Fight fire with fire," was Daorong's reply. "Place our men outside of the camp in ambush. Leave our flags in the camp as a decoy. When Kongming attacks, we can seize him then and there." Liu Xian agreed.

At the second watch a band of men appeared at the camp. Each had a clump of dry straw, which he set afire. Liu Xian and Daorong struck, drove the torch-bearing soldiers back, and pursued them. But after a chase of some ten *li* they could find no one. Frightened, Liu Xian and Daorong hurried

back to their camp, only to find the firebrands blazing there. A warrior dashed out from the camp: Zhang Fei. Liu Xian said to Daorong, "We cannot enter. Let us raid Kongming's camp instead." They retraced their steps; but before they had gone ten *li*, Zhao Zilong led a company out from the side. With one thrust he stabbed Daorong dead. Liu Xian wheeled and tried to flee, but Zhang Fei overtook him from behind, swept him onto his own saddle, and presented him, bound, to Kongming.

Liu Xian pleaded: "Xing Daorong made me do this. It was never my idea." Kongming ordered him freed. He gave him fresh clothes, some wine to calm him, and had him escorted back to the city to persuade his father to submit or face the loss of the city and the extermination of his family. Liu Xian returned to Lingling to see his father, Liu Du. He recounted in detail the kindness of Kongming and urged submission. Liu Du agreed. He raised the flag of surrender on the city wall, opened wide the gate, and, bearing the seal and cord of authority, left his city to present himself at Xuande's camp. Kongming arranged for Liu Du to remain as governor and for his son, Xian, to go to Gong'an and serve in the army. The population of the district of Lingling was universally content with the outcome.

After Xuande had assured the city of its safety and rewarded his army, he took counsel with his commanders. "Lingling is ours," he said. "Who will capture Guiyang?" Zhao Zilong volunteered, but Zhang Fei thrust himself forward and demanded to go. As the two heroes argued, Kongming said, "After all, Zilong volunteered first. Let him be the one." Zhang Fei still would not agree, so Kongming had them draw lots. Zilong was the winner. Angrily, Zhang Fei said, "I need no one to help me. All I want is three thousand men and I will guarantee the capture." Zilong then retorted, "All I want is three thousand; and if I fail, let me suffer the penalty dictated by military law." Elated, Kongming had the document drawn up and sent Zilong off with three thousand picked troops. Xuande gruffly ordered the indignantly protesting Zhang Fei to retire.

Zhao Zilong's advance toward Guiyang was soon reported to the governor, Zhao Fan, who called an urgent meeting of his advisers. Chen Ying and Bao Long, his military commanders, offered to meet the invaders in battle. These two officers came from families of hunters in the Guiyang Hills. Chen Ying was a master in hurling forked weapons, and Bao Long had once killed a pair of tigers with bow and arrow. Both had great confidence in their martial skills. To Zhao Fan they said, "If Xuande comes, we want to be in the front lines." Zhao Fan replied, "They say that Liu Xuande is an imperial uncle of the Emperor of Han, that his chief adviser, Kongming, is a superb strategist, and that Lord Guan and Zhang Fei are the bravest of warriors. The man who leads this invasion is Zhao Zilong, who had no trouble with a million-man enemy at Steepslope in Dangyang. How many can our little Guiyang put in the field? Let us surrender." "Let me go forth," Chen Ying said. "If I fail to capture Zilong, there will be time enough for Your Lordship to submit." Zhao Fan was persuaded to let him try.

Chen Ying, at the head of three thousand, soon saw Zhao Zilong approaching. Drawing his line into formation, Chen Ying raced forward with his flying pike. Zilong appeared, spear braced, and denounced Chen Ying: "The lord I serve is Liu Xuande, younger brother to Liu Biao. We uphold the patriarchal son, Liu Qi, in joint rule of Jingzhou province and we have come to allay the people's fears. How dare you offer battle!" Chen Ying swore back: "We bow to the rule of Prime Minister Cao Cao, not to Liu Bei."

Roused to fury, Zilong hoisted his spear and charged. Ying gripped his weapon. The horsemen locked and fought four or five bouts. Overpowered, Chen Ying wheeled and fled. Zilong gave chase.

Chen Ying looked back at his pursuer and hurled his flying pike, but Zilong caught it and flung it back. As Ying dodged, Zilong drew alongside, plucked him from the saddle, and threw him to the ground. Then he had his men bind him and take him back to camp.

The defeated soldiers scattered. Zilong returned to camp and confronted Chen Ying: "Did you think you could stand up to me?" he said harshly. "I spare you only so you can talk Zhao Fan into surrendering, and the sooner the better." Grateful for his life, Chen Ying hastened to Guiyang and told Zhao Fan how he had been taken. "It was my idea to submit," Zhao Fan said. "You insisted on fighting. Now you see the result." He sent Chen Ying from his presence and, bearing the governor's seal and cord, led a dozen riders to Zilong's camp to surrender.

Zhao Zilong came forth from the camp and received Zhao Fan with full courtesy. They then shared the ritual wine, and Zhao Zilong accepted the seal and cord. After several rounds Zhao Fan said, "General, you have the surname Zhao, as I do. Five hundred years ago we were one family.⁸ You are from Zhending; that is my hometown, too. If it is agreeable to you, I would like to tie the fraternal bond. It would be a great boon." Zhao Zilong was overjoyed, and both men related the precise time of their births. Since Zilong was four months older, Zhao Fan recognized him as his elder brother. The two men rejoiced in the discovery that they shared the same hometown, year of birth, and surname.

They parted late that evening and Zhao Fan returned to his city. The next day Fan called Zilong into the city to reassure the people. Zilong did not mobilize his men, but took only some fifty cavalry. The people welcomed him on the road, some holding incense, some prostrating themselves. Zhao Zilong promised them their safety. Zhao Fan invited him to a banquet in the government headquarters. After they had drunk amply, Zhao Fan invited Zilong to his private chambers to drink further. Zilong was beginning to feel intoxicated.

Suddenly Zhao Fan summoned a woman to serve the wine. Zilong observed that the woman, dressed in white mourning silk, was an extraordinary beauty, the kind that overturns nations and cities. Zilong asked his host who she was. "My sister-in-law from the Fan family," was the reply. Softening his expression, Zilong extended his courtesies to her, and after she had presented his cup, the host ordered her to be seated. But Zilong expressed uneasiness at her joining them, and Lady Fan retired. "Worthy brother," Zilong asked, "why trouble your sister-in-law to present the wine?"

"I have a reason," Zhao Fan replied, all smiles. "I beg you, elder brother, bear with me. Her husband, my elder brother, departed some three years ago. I don't think she should pass the rest of her life a lonely widow; and though I have often urged her to remarry, she says, 'I will marry only the man who fulfills these three criteria: he must be renowned for accomplishment in both letters and martial skills; of noble mien and stature; and of the same surname as my late husband.' Tell me where in the world I might find such a combination of qualities! But now, you, honored elder brother, fulfill the three conditions my sister has set. If you will deign to accept a woman of such common looks, I am willing to provide her dowry so that she may serve you, General, as a wife, and thus bind us in future generations. What do you say?"

Zilong rose angrily, answering in harsh tones, "If you and I have bound ourselves as brothers, then your sister-in-law is as good as my own. How can we violate the laws of morality with this incest?" Zhao Fan, covered with shame and humiliation, said, "I only meant you well. There is no need for such rudeness," and glanced meaningfully toward his guard, intending to have Zilong murdered. But Zilong sensed the danger and struck Zhao Fan down with a blow of his fist. He then strode out of

Zhao Fan's quarters, mounted his horse, and rode out of the city.

Zhao Fan called for Chen Ying and Bao Long at once. After a brief discussion, Ying said, "He left so outraged, we can only fight." "I don't know if we can beat him," responded Zhao Fan. "Let us two pretend to surrender," proposed Bao Long. "Then, Your Lordship, lead the troops out to challenge them, and we will seize him in the battle line." "We'll need to take some troops," Chen Ying added. "Five hundred cavalry should do," Bao Long said. That night the two men and their company surrendered to Zhao Zilong.

Zilong, knowing full well what Chen Ying and Bao Long were up to, allowed them into his camp. The two commanders entered his tent and said, "Zhao Fan was using a woman to deceive you, General. He meant to wait until you were drunk, kill you in his chambers, and send your head to Cao Cao. That's how ruthless he is. When you departed so angrily, we decided to surrender rather than suffer the consequences of our part in the crime." Zilong feigned great pleasure and drank heartily with the two men.

As soon as they were good and drunk, Zilong tied them up and squeezed the truth out of one of their subordinates. He called together their guard of five hundred, gave each man wine and food, and issued a command: "It was Chen Ying and Bao Long who sought my life. None of you is involved. And if you will carry out a plan for me, you will be well rewarded." The soldiers expressed their gratitude.

Zilong had the two leaders beheaded on the spot. Then he had the five hundred lead the way back to Guiyang that same night while he followed with a thousand warriors. At the gates the soldiers said that Chen Ying and Bao Long were returning after having killed Zhao Zilong and that they wanted to confer with the governor. Seeing his own men in the glare of the torches, Zhao Fan hurried out and was seized immediately. Zilong entered the city for the second time, assured the people of their safety, and sped the news back to Xuande.⁹

When Xuande and Kongming came to Guiyang, Zilong welcomed them into the city. He shoved Zhao Fan to the ground before the steps leading up to the main hall of the *yamen*. In answer to Kongming's questions, Fan related the details of the marriage offer he had made Zilong. "Why, this is an excellent thing," Kongming said to Zilong. "Why are you acting this way?" "In the first place," Zilong answered, "marrying my brother's sister-in-law would provoke contempt. Secondly, it is her second marriage; I would be causing her to forsake the life of chastity proper to a widow. And thirdly, it's not easy to read the intentions of someone who has just surrendered. Lord Liu has just taken control of the area around the Jiang and Han rivers, and he is preoccupied with a difficult situation. How could I put aside my lord's great cause for the sake of a woman?" "Today, our cause is secure," Xuande said. "I can arrange for you to marry this woman. What do you say?" "The world is full of women," said Zilong. "I seek fame, not a wife." "Zilong," said Xuande, "you are indeed manly." He freed Zhao Fan and restored him as governor of Guiyang. Zhao Zilong was richly rewarded.

Now Zhang Fei thundered in dismay: "Let Zilong have all the credit! And let me remain a useless man! Oh, give me but three thousand to take Wuling, and I'll bring that governor Jin Xuan back alive!" Kongming was delighted with Zhang Fei's zeal. "There is no reason you should not go, Yide," he said, "but you must promise one thing." Indeed:

Kongming's endless tricks won the day;

And the warriors vied for martial fame.

What did Kongming want to say?

READ ON.



Lord Guan Spares Huang Zhong; Sun Quan Battles Zhang Liao

KONGMING TURNED TO ZHANG FEI. "Before Zilong marched to Guiyang district," he said, "he gave us written oath. Now, Yide, you want to capture Wuling; we will have to ask for the same oath before assigning men to you." Zhang Fei gave his pledge, eagerly took command of his three thousand soldiers, and set out at once for Wuling.

As soon as Governor Jin Xuan learned of Zhang Fei's approach, he gathered his commanders and lieutenants, requisitioned his finest troops and weapons, and went forth from the city to meet the invaders. A staff officer, Gong Zhi, warned him: "Surrender is the best course. Do not go to war with Liu Xuande, imperial uncle of the Han and renowned through the empire for his humanity and honor, nor with Zhang Fei, warrior of peerless courage." "Are you planning to collaborate with these criminals?" Jin Xuan demanded and thereupon ordered Gong Zhi executed. But the assembly interceded. "To kill one of our own," they appealed, "bodes ill for the army." The governor therefore dismissed Gong Zhi gruffly and took personal command of the army.

Jin Xuan met Zhang Fei some twenty *li* from the city. Spear and horse poised for action, Zhang Fei challenged Jin Xuan. The governor's commanders declined to step forward, so he sallied forth himself, flourishing his sword. Zhang Fei roared, and his voice had the power of a thunderclap; Jin Xuan fled in terror. Zhang Fei pursued, his men close behind. As the governor reached the wall around Wuling, arrows hailed down at him and he spied Gong Zhi on the top. "You have brought disaster on yourself," he shouted down, "flouting the course of Heaven. The people of Wuling and I have decided to submit to Liu Xuande." As Gong Zhi spoke, an arrow flew, striking Jin Xuan square in the forehead. He toppled from his horse, and an officer cut off his head to present to Zhang Fei. Gong Zhi then came out and surrendered, and Zhang Fei told him to deliver the seal and cord of authority to Xuande in Guiyang. Delighted with the outcome of the campaign, Xuande directed Gong Zhi to assume the governorship.

Liu Xuande then came to Wuling to reassure the people of their safety. He informed Lord Guan by special messenger that Zilong and Zhang Fei had each taken a district. Lord Guan's reply read: "I hear that Changsha is yet to be taken. If elder brother does not despise my lack of ability, I would be happy to undertake this task." Gratified by Lord Guan's offer, Xuande sent Zhang Fei to relieve Lord Guan in Gong'an.

Lord Guan presented himself to Xuande and Kongming. "Zilong has taken Guiyang," Kongming said, "and Zhang Fei has taken Wuling. Each had three thousand fighters. The governor of Changsha, Han Xuan, poses no problem. But he has a general, Huang Zhong (styled Hansheng), from Nanyang. Before entering Han Xuan's service, as corps commander under Liu Biao, he was responsible for the defense of Changsha together with Biao's nephew, Pan. Though nearly sixty, Huang Zhong is

invincibly courageous. Do not take him lightly. You will need extra troops." Lord Guan retorted, "Why is the director general playing up another's mettle and dampening our own spirits? That old warrior doesn't worry me. Not only do I not need three thousand men, with my own company of five hundred expert swordsmen, I guarantee that the heads of Huang Zhong and Han Xuan will be laid beneath your command flag yet." Xuande objected strenuously, but Lord Guan would not yield and went off with his five hundred followers. Kongming said to Xuande, "Lord Guan is underestimating Huang Zhong. Something is likely to go wrong. You should go, my lord, and support him." On this advice, Xuande set out for Changsha with his own troops.

Han Xuan, governor of Changsha, was widely hated for his unstable temper and an unfortunate tendency to kill whoever displeased him. On hearing of the approach of Lord Guan, he called his veteran general Huang Zhong to counsel. "There is no cause for worry," Huang Zhong said. "With this sword and this bow, if a thousand come, a thousand die!" Huang Zhong was a man who could pull a bow of over two hundred and fifty pounds yet never miss a shot. At that moment someone stepped forward below the governor's platform and said, "Why should the great general have to fight? I have a plan to capture that fellow Guan alive." Governor Han Xuan looked at the speaker. It was his commandant, Yang Ling. Deeply gratified, Han Xuan assigned Ling a thousand men, and Ling swiftly rode into the field.

Yang Ling had traveled some fifty *li* when he saw Lord Guan's company charging through the dust. Yang Ling raised his spear and rode to the front of his line to rail at Lord Guan. In silent rage, Lord Guan waved his sword and came for Yang Ling. Ling leveled his aim and closed with his attacker. The clash was brief. A hand rose, a blade fell, and Yang Ling went down. Lord Guan's company drove on to the city wall, slaughtering Ling's retreating troops.

Astonished at the news, Han Xuan sent Huang Zhong into the field and himself climbed the city wall to observe. Huang Zhong, sword in hand, raced over the lowered drawbridge, followed by his five hundred. Lord Guan recognized the old general. He ranged his five hundred swordsmen in a single line. Then, sword leveled across his saddle, he asked, "Can it be General Huang Zhong?" "If you know my name, what have you to do in my territory?" replied the general. "I come for your head," Lord Guan retorted. The riders grappled. They had struggled through one hundred passes without a victor when Han Xuan, fearing for Huang Zhong, rang the gong calling Zhong and his men back into the town. Lord Guan withdrew ten *li* and camped. He mused, "That old general—he deserves his reputation. In a hundred passes he wasn't nicked once. Tomorrow I'll have to use the 'trailing sword trick' and get him while he gives chase."

The next morning after the early meal Lord Guan appeared to taunt the defenders. Han Xuan, sitting on the wall, sent Huang Zhong out. Once again the old general took his men across the drawbridge and battled Lord Guan to a draw after fifty or sixty bouts carried out to the cheers of the soldiers of both sides. When the drumbeat accelerated, Lord Guan wheeled and fled. Huang Zhong followed close. Lord Guan was preparing to sweep round and strike, when he heard a clatter to the rear. Glancing back, he saw that Huang Zhong had been thrown to the ground. Lord Guan rode back, lifted his sword with both hands, and cried fiercely, "I spare you. Get another horse and let's finish this!" Huang Zhong brought his horse to its feet, remounted, and sped back to Wuling.

To the astonished Han Xuan, Huang Zhong said, "The horse has been out of combat too long. That explains his mishap." "You're a crack archer," said the governor. "Why don't you shoot?" "In tomorrow's battle," replied Zhong, "I'll feign defeat, lure him to the bridge, and shoot him." The

governor provided a black horse from his own stable, and Zhong retired, expressing profound thanks. But another thought came to him: "Where would one find a man so honorable as Lord Guan? Can I bear to shoot down the man who forbore to kill me? Can I disobey an order?" He spent the night in indecision.

The following dawn Lord Guan's arrival was announced, and Huang Zhong led his troops out. Having failed twice to overcome the old general, Lord Guan was chafing with frustration and came to grips with Huang Zhong, making a great show of his confident spirit. After thirty passages-at-arms Zhong feigned defeat and fled. Lord Guan pursued. Huang Zhong, unable to put Lord Guan's act of mercy from his mind, could not shoot. Putting up his sword, he plucked his bowstring. Lord Guan ducked at its strong note but saw no arrow and resumed the chase. Huang Zhong repeated the motion, and Lord Guan bent low, but again, no arrow. "A poor shot," thought Lord Guan, and he rode on securely to the drawbridge. Huang Zhong was already there. He watched Lord Guan get closer. Then he put an arrow on the string and let fly. It lodged at the base of the knob atop Lord Guan's helmet. The defending soldiers roared. Overcome with alarm, Lord Guan rode back to camp, the arrow firmly in place. Finally, aware that Huang Zhong had used his superlative marksmanship to repay the earlier act of mercy, Lord Guan ordered a general retreat.

When Huang Zhong reentered Changsha, Governor Han Xuan ordered him arrested. "I have committed no crime," Zhong shouted; but Han Xuan said angrily, "I have been watching for three days. Do you think you can fool me? Two days ago you didn't put up a real fight. Was it because you had interests of your own? Yesterday your horse slipped and the foe spared you. Was there some understanding between you? Today you snapped an empty bowstring twice, and the third time hit only his helmet. What can explain this except some liaison? If I let you live now, I will only pay the price later on." The governor ordered armed guards to execute Huang Zhong in front of the city gate, and forestalled all pleas by saying, "Whoever appeals for mercy will be taken as his sympathizer."

The executioner had pushed Huang Zhong out of the gate and was about to deal the death blow when from nowhere a commander swooped down, slaughtered the executioners, and carried off Huang Zhong. "This man is the shield of Changsha," he shouted. "To kill Huang Zhong is to kill the people of Changsha. Governor Han is ruthless and violent; he slights the worthy and insults men of learning. He should be put to death by common, concerted action. Those who will, follow me!" Everyone turned to the man. His face was ruddy as a date, his eyes as clear as stars. It was Wei Yan of Yiyang.

Wei Yan had come from Xiangyang in search of Xuande but, unable to find him, sought service with Han Xuan. The governor, however, offended by his easygoing manner and his inattention to ceremonial affairs, chose to let Wei Yan remain idle in the neighborhood rather than give him the position his talents warranted.

That day, after rescuing Huang Zhong and rousing the people against Han Xuan, Wei Yan bared his arm and mobilized hundreds with a single shout. Huang Zhong was powerless to stop them. Wei Yan fought his way to the top of the city wall and cut Han Xuan in half with a single blow. He took the governor's head, led the people out of the city, and offered himself to Lord Guan. Delighted by Wei Yan's surrender, Lord Guan entered Changsha and calmed the populace. He invited Huang Zhong to audience, but Zhong pleaded illness. Then Lord Guan sent for Xuande and Kongming.

Xuande had begun organizing a support detachment the day Lord Guan left for Changsha. It was already on the way when its blue-green standard fell over and rolled up. At the same time a south-

flying crow passed them, croaking three times. "What do these signs mean?" Xuande asked. Kongming took an augury on horseback and replied, "Changsha district is ours! And we have won over important generals. We will learn more this afternoon." Soon a petty officer reported, "General Guan has taken Changsha and received the surrender of generals Huang Zhong and Wei Yan. He awaits the arrival of Lord Liu." Xuande rejoiced and entered the city. Lord Guan welcomed him into the main hall of the government compound and described his encounter with Huang Zhong. Xuande then went to Huang Zhong's home to extend the invitation to submit. Huang Zhong submitted, requesting only permission to have Han Xuan buried east of the city. A poet of later times has memorialized General Huang Zhong:

His martial powers set him high as Heaven,
Yet in the end this greybeard went in bonds.
Resigned to death, he held no man to blame;
Surrender made him hang his head in shame.
His dazzling sword bespoke demonic daring;
His barded mount, wind-breathing, inspired his combat-lust.
This hero's noble name defies oblivion,
Trailing the orphan moon above the Xiang and Tan.

Xuande was generous to Huang Zhong; but when Lord Guan led in Wei Yan, Kongming ordered him executed. "The man has merits and is without fault. Why must he die?" Xuande said anxiously. "To kill the lord that fed you is disloyal; to deliver your homeland is dishonorable. I see treachery in Wei Yan. Eventually, he will turn against us. Kill him now and you will prevent it."¹ Thus Kongming replied. "Why then," said Xuande, "everyone who surrenders will fear for his life. I pray you, relent." Kongming pointed to Wei Yan and said, "I spare you, then. Repay your new lord with all your loyalty and never think to deceive him—or in the end I will have your head." With that, Wei Yan retired, anxiously nodding in agreement.

Huang Zhong recommended to Xuande the nephew of Liu Biao, Pan, presently residing in You county without office. Xuande appointed him governor of Changsha. With four districts now under his control, Xuande marched back to Jingzhou city, also known as Youkou, which he now renamed Gong'an.² From this time forward, Xuande had ample supplies of grain and coin, and many worthy men tendered him their service. He dispatched cavalry commanders to defend all strategic points and passes.

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Chief Commander Zhou Yu, nursing his wound in Chaisang, sent Gan Ning to Baling³ and Ling Tong to Hanyang to defend these two districts with war-junks pending further orders. After that, Cheng Pu took the rest of the commanders and officers to Hefei, where Sun Quan had been battling Cao Cao's forces since the fighting at Red Cliffs. Not daring to pitch camp near the city after a dozen indecisive engagements, Sun Quan camped fifty *li* away.

The news of Cheng Pu's arrival buoyed Sun Quan's spirits, and he personally went out from his encampment to reward the troops. Lu Su was the first to be received. Sun Quan dismounted to

welcome him, and Lu Su flung himself to the ground in ritual prostration. All the commanders were amazed by Sun Quan's extraordinary deference. Sun Quan invited Lu Su to remount and the two rode side by side. Sun Quan asked him softly, "Was greeting you on foot recognition enough?" "No, my lord," Lu Su replied. "What wish remains unfulfilled?" "To see my illustrious lord's awesome virtue prevail throughout the land, to see every province under your sway, to see your imperial enterprise consummated and my name written down in the histories—then and only then will I be satisfied with my 'recognition.'" Sun Quan rubbed his palms together and laughed heartily. The two walked to the command tent for a grand banquet, at which the men and officers of the Red Cliffs campaign were feasted and rewarded. Then Sun Quan and Lu Su took up the question of how to subdue Hefei.

As they spoke, a defiant letter from Zhang Liao was brought in. Sun Quan read it and said angrily, "Now, Zhang Liao, you go too far! You taunt me to combat knowing Cheng Pu has arrived. But I'll send no fresh troops against you. I'll be in the field tomorrow and will give you the fight you're looking for." Sun Quan issued an order for all armies to leave for Hefei at the fifth watch. The march was in progress when Cao's forces intercepted it in midmorning. The opposing sides arrayed their warriors. Sun Quan rode forth in golden helmet and armor: to his left, Song Qian; to his right, Jia Hua. Both commanders bore halberds with twin side blades. The triple drumroll ended. In the center of Cao's army the gate flags parted, and three commanders in full battle gear stood before their line: in the center, Zhang Liao; to the left, Li Dian; to the right, Yue Jin. Zhang Liao charged to the front and called Sun Quan to combat.

Sun Quan set his spear and prepared himself. But from his own line another commander bolted ahead to take the challenger. It was Taishi Ci. Zhang Liao whipped his sword around, and the warriors clashed seventy or eighty times with no decision. Li Dian called out to Yue Jin: "That one, in the golden helmet, is Sun Quan. If we catch him, we'll avenge the eight hundred and thirty thousand lost at Red Cliffs."

At these words Yue Jin angled into the field, a lone rider with a single sword, streaking toward Sun Quan like a bolt of lightning. His hand rose, his sword fell, but the two halberdiers, Song Qian and Jia Hua, blocked his blow. Jin's sword struck off both men's halberd blades; and they reached for their opponent's horse with the bare staves. While Yue Jin swung his horse around, Song Qian seized a spear from a soldier and raced for Yue Jin; but Li Dian put an arrow to his string and shot Song Qian in the breast. The rider went down as the string hummed. Taishi Ci saw the man fall, abandoned Zhang Liao, and headed back to his line. Zhang Liao, seeing the battle turn in his favor, came on strong. The southern forces broke and scattered. Zhang Liao headed for Sun Quan at top speed. Another company, under Cheng Pu, spotted Zhang Liao, and plunged into the fray, intercepting the attack and thus saving Sun Quan. Zhang Liao collected his fighters and went back to Hefei.

Guarded by Cheng Pu, Sun Quan returned to the main camp, his defeated troops to their encampments. The sight of Song Qian's fall caused Sun Quan to give voice to his grief. One of his chief lieutenants, Zhang Hong, said, "My lord, confidence in your own vigor led you to underestimate the enemy and led our men to be disappointed by Your Lordship's rashness. Suppose you had killed a commander and seized a flag, and in so doing had dominated the battleground; it would still have been no more than the service expected of a lower-ranking commander, not of the lord of the land. Let my lord suppress his desire to display the raw valor of a Meng Ben or a Xia Yu⁴ and embrace the strategies of a king or a hegemon. Your disdain for the foe has cost Song Qian his life. Hereafter it will be essential that your person be kept safe." In response Sun Quan acknowledged his fault and

promised to correct it.

Soon Taishi Ci entered the command tent and said to Sun Quan, "I have in my company one Ge Ding, the brother, as it happens, of a groom in Zhang Liao's service. This servant harbors a deep resentment from having suffered continual rebuke. Tonight he has sent word that he will kill Zhang Liao to avenge Song Qian and will signal us with fire when he has completed the deed. I am requesting troops to support him from without." "And where is Ge Ding?" asked Sun Quan. "He has already entered Hefei undetected. I beg you for five thousand men." At this point Zhuge Jin intervened. "Zhang Liao," he argued, "is full of schemes. They may have been forewarned. Do not act rashly." But Taishi Ci was insistent, and Sun Quan, eager for revenge on Song Qian's killers, met Taishi Ci's request for troops.

Ge Ding was a fellow townsman of Taishi Ci. Disguised as a soldier, he had entered Hefei and found his brother. "I have already sent word to General Taishi Ci," Ding told him. "They will coordinate with us tonight. How are you going to work it?" The groom replied, "We are too far from the central camp to get in before nightfall. Let's simply stack some hay here and set it afire. You cry rebellion in front of the city to create a panic among the troops. In the midst of it all I'll stab Zhang Liao, and the rest of the army will disperse." "A perfect plan!" responded Ge Ding.

That night Zhang Liao returned victorious. He rewarded his troops handsomely but forbade them to disarm or sleep through the night. His lieutenants protested, "Today our victory was complete; we drove the enemy far off. Why don't you unhook your armor, General, and rest?" "That would be a mistake," Zhang Liao responded. "In war one must never rejoice in victory nor grieve in defeat. If the enemy thinks we are unguarded and attacks, how will we defend ourselves? Tonight we should be even more alert than usual." As Zhang Liao spoke, fires shot up from behind the camp, and a shrill voice calling for revolt was answered by a battery of others.

Zhang Liao left his tent and mounted his horse, summoning his closest commanders and lieutenants. A dozen of them stood in the roadway. "The voices sound urgent," they said. "We'd better go and look." "How could the whole city rise in revolt?" cried Zhang Liao. "This is the work of troublemakers trying to frighten our men, that's all. Anyone joining the disorder is to be executed." Moments later Li Dian captured Ge Ding and his brother, the groom; and Zhang Liao, as soon as he discovered the truth, had them executed on the spot. Directly, a great clamor of gongs and drums rose outside the city. "That must be the southerners working with the rebels. We'll turn the tables on them." He ordered his men to start a fire inside the main gate and raise the cry of revolt as they opened it and lowered the bridge.

Taishi Ci saw the doors part and, thinking the rebellion had succeeded, raced inside with spear raised. From the wall a bombard crashed and archers raked the ground with arrows. Taishi Ci tried to pull back but was wounded several times. From behind, Li Dian and Yue Jin came out for the kill. More than half of the Southland troops were killed as Cao Cao's commanders pursued them to the edge of their camp. Then Lu Xun and Dong Xi came out fighting and rescued Taishi Ci, and Cao's men went back to Hefei.

Sun Quan grieved at the sight of Taishi Ci's wounds. On Zhang Zhao's appeal he halted the campaign and ordered his warriors to their boats. The expedition returned to Nanxun and Runzhou. By the time the southern army had redeployed, Taishi Ci was near death. Sun Quan sent Zhang Zhao to see him. Taishi Ci exclaimed: "A fighting man, born into an age of trouble, must carry a three-span sword to immortalize his name. Alas, my hopes are defeated. Let death come." With these words he

died; his age was forty-one. A poet of later times has praised Taishi Ci:

Loyal and true, this dedicated son—
Taishi Ci of Donglai earns our praise.
His name lent glory to the far frontiers;
His bow and horse confounded mighty foes.
For Kong Rong, his mother's comforter,
Heartily he fought, requiting courtesy.
His final stand bespoke a sturdy will.
In every age he draws men's sympathy.

Sun Quan mourned Taishi Ci and ordered him richly interred at the foot of Beigu Hill in Nanxu; then he took Ci's son, Taishi Heng, into his own home.

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In Gong'an city Liu Xuande had reorganized his fighting force. Learning of Sun Quan's defeat at Hefei and his retreat to Nanxu, he called Kongming to counsel. "Last night I was watching the heavens," Kongming said. "A star fell to earth in the northwest: a member of the imperial house must have died." That very moment they received a report that Liu Qi had passed away. Xuande wept sorely at the news. "Life and death are predetermined," Kongming said consolingly. "Such grief could injure you, my honored lord. Look at things in perspective for now. We must send someone to guard the city and see to the funeral." "Whom can we send?" Xuande asked. "Guan is the man," replied Kongming. And so Lord Guan was sent to defend Xiangyang. "Now that Liu Qi is dead," Xuande said, "the southerners will claim Jingzhou. How should we respond?" "If anyone comes," Kongming reassured him, "I know what to say." Two weeks later Lu Su arrived to convey his lord's condolences. Indeed:

Once the plan is set,
The claimant can be met.

What would Kongming say to the envoy from the Southland?

READ ON.



*State Mother Wu Meets the Bridegroom in a Temple;
Imperial Uncle Liu Takes His Bride to the Wedding Chamber*

XUANDE AND KONGMING GREETED LU SU outside the city walls and ushered him into the government buildings. After the reception Lu Su said, "My lord Sun Quan, learning of your honored nephew's passing, offers these trifling gifts and sends me to participate in the obsequies. Chief Commander Zhou Yu, moreover, conveys his sincerest respects to Imperial Uncle Liu and Master Zhuge Liang." Xuande and Kongming, rising, expressed thanks for the Southland's gracious sentiments and accepted the gifts. They then set wine before their guest, who continued, "On my previous visit Imperial Uncle Liu said that the province of Jingzhou would be restored to the Southland in the event of Liu Qi's death. Now that the young master has died, we expect its return as a matter of course. Would you inform us when the province can be transferred?" "Enjoy your wine, and we will discuss it," replied Xuande.

Lu Su steeled himself, and after swallowing several cups of wine, he again attempted to broach the subject. Before Xuande could reply, Kongming interrupted. "You're being quite unreasonable," he said with a stern expression, "if I have to speak plainly.¹ The Supreme Ancestor slew the white serpent and rebelled against the Qin to found this great dynasty, which has enjoyed unbroken sovereignty to this very day. Now in these evil times treacherous contenders arise everywhere. Each one seizes a corner of the realm for himself, while the world waits for the rule of Heaven to be restored—under the rightful sovereign. Lord Liu Xuande is descended from Prince Jing of Zhongshan, of the progeny of Emperor Jing the Filial. And he is an uncle of the reigning Emperor. Is he not eligible to be enfeoffed as a feudal lord? All the more so when he is the younger brother of the late Liu Biao! Where do you find impropriety in a younger brother succeeding to an elder's estate? Your lord, son of a minor officer from Qiantang, has rendered no meritorious service to the Han court. At the present time, depending on sheer military power, he has possession of the six districts and eighty-one townships of the Southland. Yet his greed is not satisfied. He wants to devour more Han territory. In a realm ruled by the Liu family, my lord, a Liu himself, has no rightful share, while yours, a Sun, actually means to wrest this land from him. Don't forget that in the battle at Red Cliffs my lord bore the brunt of the fighting, and his commanders risked their lives in the field. Do you mean to tell us that the victory was due to the strength of the south alone? If I hadn't been able to borrow the force of the southeast winds, what strategy would Zhou Yu have used? Had the south fallen, not only would the ladies Qiao have been moved to the Bronze Bird Tower, even the safety of your own family could not have been guaranteed. The reason Lord Liu did not answer you just now is that he regards you as a high-minded gentleman who may be expected to understand such things on his own. How could you be so undiscerning?"

During this tirade Lu Su sat silent. At long last he commented, "There is some truth, I'm afraid, in

what you say. The thing is, it puts me in a most difficult position."² "How is that?" Kongming asked. "When the imperial uncle was in straits in Dangyang," Lu Su answered, "it was I who took Kongming to meet my lord. Later when Zhou Yu wanted to march on Jingzhou, I was the one who stopped him. When you told me you would return Jingzhou after Liu Qi died, once again I committed myself and guaranteed your word. If you do not honor your promise today, what kind of answer would you have me take to my lord, who, as much as Zhou Yu, can well be expected to resent the injury?"³ If I must die for the failure of my mission, so be it. My only fear is that if the southerners are incited to arms, the imperial uncle will not be able to enjoy possession of Jingzhou and—all for naught—will end up the object of ridicule."

To this Kongming replied, "Cao Cao commands a million-man host and acts in the name of the Emperor, yet he causes us no concern. Do you expect us to fear a little boy like Zhou Yu? If it's a bit of face you're afraid of losing, I can have Lord Liu give it to you in writing that we are borrowing the province as our temporary base, and that once Lord Liu has completed his arrangements for taking another, he will return Jingzhou to the Southland. What do you think of that?" "What place do you expect to take over?" Lu Su wanted to know. "The north," Kongming replied, "is too unsettled for us to have hopes there. But the western province of the Riverlands, Yizhou, has in Liu Zhang a governor both foolish and weak. That's where Lord Liu is setting his sights. If we succeed, we will return Jingzhou."

Lu Su had to accept this arrangement. Xuande personally wrote out the document and affixed his seal. And Zhuge Kongming affixed his own, saying, "Since I am in the service of the imperial uncle, it hardly suffices for me to act as guarantor. May we trouble you, sir, to sign as well? I think it will look better when you see Lord Sun again." "I doubt," replied Lu Su, "that a man of humanity and honor like the imperial uncle would betray his commitment." With that, he added his seal and gathered up the document.

The banquet ended, Lu Su bade his hosts good-bye. Xuande and Kongming escorted him to the water's edge. Kongming left him with this parting admonition: "When you see Lord Sun, speak well of us—and do not get any strange ideas. If our document is not accepted, we'll show a different face and your eighty-one townships will be lost. Both sides need good relations or the traitor Cao will make fools of us all." Lu Su made his good-byes and climbed into his boat.

He traveled first to Chaisang to see Zhou Yu. "Well, how did you make out with our claim to Jingzhou?" Zhou Yu asked. "I have the document right here," Lu Su replied, handing it to Zhou Yu. Zhou Yu stamped his foot and cried, "So he's fooled you again! In name he borrows the province; in reality he's reneged. They say they'll give it back when they take the Riverlands. And when will that be? In ten years? Does that mean they'll keep Jingzhou for ten years? A document like this—what use is it? And you actually countersigned it! You will be implicated if they don't return it. Should our lord take offense, then what?" Zhou Yu's words left Lu Su numb. After a time he said, "I don't think Xuande will sell me out." "Oh, what a sincere soul you are," Zhou Yu exclaimed. "Liu Bei is a crafty old owl, and Zhuge Liang a sly and wily sort. They don't think the way you do." "Then what shall we do?" asked Lu Su. "You are my benefactor," Zhou Yu answered, "and I shall always remember your kindness in sharing your grain with us. How could I let you suffer? Just relax and sit tight for a few days, until our spies bring word from the north. I have something else in mind." But Lu Su's agitation did not subside.

Several days later spies reported that Jingzhou city—that is, Gong'an—was all decked out with

ceremonial flags, that a new burial site was being constructed outside the wall, and that the whole army was in mourning. Surprised by the news, Zhou Yu asked, "Who has died?" "Liu Xuande's wife, Lady Gan," was the reply. "They are arranging the funeral and the interment now." Turning to Lu Su, Zhou Yu said, "I have a plan that will deliver Liu Bei and Jingzhou into our hands with no effort at all." "What is that?" asked Lu Su. "If Liu Bei's wife is dead, he'll need another. Our lord has a younger sister, a tough, brave woman with a retinue of several hundred females who normally carry swords and who have chambers filled full of weapons. She is a woman to outman any man. I am going to propose to our lord that he send a go-between to Jingzhou and convince Liu Bei to marry into the family. When he bites the bait and comes to Nanxu, he'll find himself held prisoner instead of getting married. Then we'll demand Jingzhou in exchange for his release. After they hand over the territory, I'll have further plans. You need not be involved in any way." Lu Su expressed his gratitude.

Zhou Yu drafted his proposal and put Lu Su on a fast boat for Nanxu. There Su told Sun Quan the result of his mission to Jingzhou and showed him the agreement with Xuande and Kongming. "What a fool you were!" exclaimed Sun Quan. "What good is an agreement like this?" "Chief Commander Zhou sends this proposal," responded Lu Su, handing him the letter, "with which he says we can recover Jingzhou." Sun Quan read it through and nodded, secretly pleased, and began asking himself whom to send as the go-between. The name that sprang to mind was Lü Fan.

Sun Quan summoned Lü Fan and said to him, "Recently we have had news of the passing of Liu Xuande's wife. I desire to invite him to marry into my family by taking my younger sister to wife. Bound thus in lasting kinship, we can join wholeheartedly in the struggle to defeat Cao Cao and uphold the house of Han. You are my choice for go-between. I count on you to present our case in Jingzhou." Lü Fan accepted the assignment, readied a boat, and, lightly attended, set out.

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Liu Xuande was sorely distressed by the loss of Lady Gan. One day while speaking with Kongming, he was informed of the arrival of Lü Fan from the Southland. Kongming smiled. "Zhou Yu's up to something; he's still after Jingzhou," he said. "I'll just step behind this screen and listen in. Go along with anything he says, my lord, and when he is resting up in the guesthouse, we can talk further."

Xuande invited Lü Fan to enter. Formalities completed, they took their places. After tea had been served, Xuande asked, "Well, what have you come to tell us?" "Imperial Uncle, I heard recently," Lü Fan began, "that Lady Gan's demise has left you a widower. Now, I have the perfect match for you, and even at the risk of arousing your mistrust have come to arrange it. May I ask your own wishes in this matter?" "To lose a wife in one's middle age is a great misfortune," replied Xuande. "I could not bear to talk about marriage, with my late wife still warm in her grave." "A man without a spouse," said Lü Fan, "is a house without a beam. One cannot abandon this fundamental relationship in mid-life. My lord has a younger sister, a woman both beautiful and worthy, who can 'serve you with dustpan and broom.' If the two houses of Sun and Liu ally through matrimony as the ancient states of Qin and Jin once did, the traitor Cao will never again dream of confronting the south. Such a union would benefit both families and both states. Please do not mistrust us, Imperial Uncle. The only thing is, the queen mother, Lady Wu, dotes on her youngest and is loath to send her away. We must request that the imperial uncle come to the Southland instead."

To this proposal Xuande replied, "Has Lord Sun been informed of this?" "Would I dare speak to you on my own without first presenting the idea to Lord Sun?" Lü Fan replied. "I am already fifty," said Xuande. "My temples are streaked with white. Lord Sun's sister is but a young woman, barely nubile. I wonder if she's the right mate for me." "Although still a girl," Lü Fan answered, "Lord Sun's sister has more strength of will than a man. She has often said, 'I will marry only a true hero.' Imperial Uncle, you are known in the four corners of the realm. This is the ideal match of 'the comely lass and the goodly man.'⁴ Why raise questions because of disparity in age?" "Remain with us a while," Xuande said, "and I will sleep on it."

That day a banquet was laid out, and Lü Fan was received in the guesthouse. In the evening Xuande consulted Kongming, who said, "I already know what he's here for, and I have divined great good fortune and prosperity from the *Book of Changes*. So, my lord, you may give your assent. But first have Sun Qian return with Lü Fan to confirm the agreement with Lord Sun face-to-face. Then we can select an auspicious day for the marriage." "Zhou Yu plans to murder me," responded Xuande. "How can I walk lightly into this trap?" Kongming gave a hearty laugh and said, "I doubt if he can outwit me. I have a little 'plan' of my own to make sure Zhou Yu gets nowhere while you make Sun Quan's sister your wife without the slightest risk to Jingzhou." Kongming's boast left Xuande bewildered.

At Kongming's behest Sun Qian accompanied Lü Fan south and presented himself before Sun Quan for the purpose of sealing the marriage alliance. "It is my desire," Sun Quan began, "to welcome Xuande here as my sister's groom. In this we are utterly sincere." Sun Qian bowed down and expressed thanks. He then returned to Jingzhou and declared to Xuande, "The lord of the Southland expectantly awaits Your Lordship's arrival that you may join his family through marriage." Xuande remained hesitant to go. Kongming said to him, "I have settled upon three stratagems, but only Zilong can carry them out." He called Zhao Zilong and whispered a few confidential words: "I leave our lord in your care when you enter the Southland. Take these three brocade sacks. Each contains a useful scheme. Use them in the correct order." Zhao Zilong secreted the sacks on his person. Kongming had already sent an envoy ahead with gifts; everything was ready.

It was the fourteenth year of Jian An (A.D. 209), winter, the tenth month. Xuande, together with Zhao Zilong and Sun Qian, selected ten swift vessels and five hundred followers to accompany them to Nanxu. All affairs in Jingzhou were left in Kongming's hands.

Xuande was unable to compose himself. As they reached Nanxu and his boat came along shore, Zilong said, "It is time to read the first of the director general's stratagems." He opened the first brocade sack and read the enclosed instructions, then gave certain orders to the five hundred warriors, who left to carry out their assignments. After that, Zilong suggested Xuande pay his respects to State Elder Qiao, the father of the two eminent ladies Qiao, who resided in Nanxu.⁵ Xuande got ready sheep and wine, went to the home of the respected elder, and explained the nature of his visit. His guard of five hundred, gaily clad in red, covered Nanxu, purchasing various articles and spreading the news that there would be a new son-in-law in the house of Sun. Soon everyone in the city knew of the affair. Learning of Xuande's arrival, Sun Quan had Lü Fan entertain him and provide for his comfort in the guesthouse.

State Elder Qiao, after receiving Xuande, went at once to offer his congratulations to the state mother, Lady Wu. "And what would be the occasion?" she asked. "Your beloved daughter has been promised to Liu Xuande. He has already arrived," he said. "Are you trying to fool me?" the state

mother said in surprise. "No one told me!" She called for Sun Quan so that she could question him. At this time a man she had sent into town to learn what he could reported back: "The rumor is true. The prospective son-in-law is presently resting in the guesthouse, and five hundred of his soldiers are all over town buying up pigs and sheep and fruit in preparation for the marriage feast.⁶ The go-between on our side is Lü Fan, on theirs Sun Qian. Both of them are being entertained in the guesthouse." The news astonished Lady Wu.

When Sun Quan came to see his mother in her private quarters, she was beating her breast and weeping. "What is the matter, Mother?" Quan asked. "So this is how you regard me," she sobbed, "as a thing of no consequence. Have you forgotten my elder sister's last injunction?" Startled by this outburst, Sun Quan responded, "Speak plainly, Mother. Why are you so distressed?" She replied, "When a man is grown, he must take a wife; and a woman, when grown, must be married. This is how things have been done since most ancient times. I am your mother. For such an event my approval should have been sought first. How could you invite Liu Xuande to join our family behind my back? She is my daughter!" Sun Quan, taken aback, demanded, "What are you saying?" "If you don't want it known, don't let it happen!" The whole city knows, and you're still trying to fool me!" Lady Wu exclaimed. Then State Elder Qiao spoke: "I myself learned of it many days ago. I came here to congratulate the state mother." "You've got it all wrong!" cried Sun Quan in despair. "It was a scheme of Zhou Yu's to retake Jingzhou. We used the pretext of a marriage to trick Xuande into coming here so that we could detain him and then trade him back for Jingzhou, or kill him if they refused. That was the plan. There was no actual marriage intended."⁷

The state mother, angrier than ever, directed her wrath toward Zhou Yu. "You, chief commander of our six districts and eighty-one townships," she cried, "have no better strategy for recovering Jingzhou than to use my daughter in a 'seduction scheme' that would leave her a widow before she ever was a bride? Who will seek her hand after this? Her life will be ruined. You are all preposterous!" "Even if the scheme succeeded," the state elder Qiao added, "we would be the butt of general ridicule. Such a plot could never work." Sun Quan sat glum and silent.

The state mother continued her denunciation of Zhou Yu, but State Elder Qiao said, "Since things have progressed as far as they have, let us not forget that Imperial Uncle Liu is after all related to the imperial house. I would advise making the invitation to marry your sister genuine before we make utter fools of ourselves." "But they are so far apart in age," Sun Quan objected. "Imperial Uncle Liu is one of the eminent men of our day," replied Elder Qiao. "To have him marry your sister is no disgrace to her." "I have yet to see the imperial uncle," the state mother interjected. "Arrange for us to meet in the Temple of Sweet Dew⁸ tomorrow. If he fails to suit me, you are free to do as you like. If he does suit me, I will personally give your sister to him."

Sun Quan, a man of the deepest filial devotion, quickly assented to his mother's demand. On leaving her presence, he instructed Lü Fan to arrange a banquet in the reception hall of the Temple of Sweet Dew so that the state mother could receive Liu Bei. "We could have Jia Hua hide three hundred men in the flanking corridors," suggested Lü Fan. "At the first sign of Her Grace's displeasure, you would have only to say the word and the soldiers would take Liu Bei and his attendants." On this advice Sun Quan summoned Jia Hua and ordered him to await the state mother's view.

State Elder Qiao, returning home after his visit with Lady Wu, sent word to Xuande: "Tomorrow Lord Sun and the state mother will receive you personally. Do be careful!" Xuande took counsel with

Sun Qian and Zhao Zilong. "This meeting tomorrow," Zilong said, "is more ominous than auspicious. I will take our five hundred guards along."

On the following day State Mother Wu and State Elder Qiao arrived first at Sweet Dew Temple and took their seats in the abbot's chamber. Sun Quan arrived next, leading a retinue of counselors, and sent Lü Fan to the guesthouse to escort Xuande. Xuande, dressed in light metal armor under a brocade surcoat, was attended closely by his personal guard, swords slung over their shoulders. The party rode with Lü Fan to the temple. Zhao Zilong was in full battle dress at the head of the five hundred guards. They reached the temple and dismounted. Sun Quan received them first and, noting Xuande's extraordinary bearing and appearance, felt a queasy sensation come over him. The two leaders concluded the formalities and entered the abbot's quarters to present themselves before the state mother.

State Mother Wu was delighted at the sight of Xuande. Turning to State Elder Qiao, she said, "This is the son-in-law for me!" "He has the earmarks of an emperor," he replied.⁹ "A man, moreover, to combine anew humanity and virtue and manifest them throughout the world. You are truly to be congratulated on acquiring so excellent a son-in-law." Xuande prostrated himself and voiced his thanks. The feast began; Zilong came in presently, armed with a sword, and stood by Xuande. "Who is this?" the state mother asked. "Zhao Zilong of Changshan," replied Xuande. "Not the man who rescued your son, Ah Dou, at Steepslope in Dangyang?" the state mother went on. "Yes it is," Xuande answered. "A good and worthy general," she said, ordering wine for him.

At this point Zilong said quietly to Xuande, "I was just looking around the hallways and saw armed men hidden in the rooms. They mean us no good. You'd better inform the state mother." Xuande kneeled in front of Lady Wu and tearfully appealed to her: "If you would have me killed, then let it be here." "What are you saying?" she exclaimed. "Armed men are hidden in the corridors," he said, "what other purpose could they have?" The state mother turned wrathfully on Sun Quan and berated him: "Today Xuande has become my son-in-law; that is to say, he is my child. Why have you placed men in ambush in the corridors?" Feigning ignorance, Sun Quan demanded an explanation of Lü Fan, who put the blame on Jia Hua. The state mother summoned Jia Hua, who bore her denunciation in silence. The state mother would have ordered him executed, but Xuande intervened. "To kill a general," he said, "bodes no good to bonds of kinship. I would not be able to serve you as a filial son for long." State Elder Qiao added his own pleas, and Lady Wu relented, dismissing Jia Hua with a sharp rebuke. His armed followers beat a shamefaced retreat.

Xuande walked outside to wash his hands. There, in front of the temple hall he saw a large rock. Borrowing a sword from an attendant, he raised his eyes to Heaven and pledged, "If I am to return to Jingzhou and complete my hegemon's mission, let this sword cleave this stone. If I am to die here, let the stone not split." So saying, he struck a blow, and the stone broke apart in a shower of sparks. Sun Quan, who had been observing from behind, asked, "Lord Xuande, what grudge do you bear this stone?" "Though nearly fifty," Xuande replied, "I have failed to purge the dynasty of traitors, a matter of acute distress. Now—honored by the state mother as son-in-law—now is the most fortunate moment of my life. So I put a question to Heaven: if we are to destroy Cao and revive the Han, let the stone crack—and it happened!" Sun Quan mused, "Can Liu Bei be trying to put something over on me?" "Gripping his own sword, he said, "I too shall put a question to Heaven! "But to himself he swore, "If I am to regain Jingzhou and if the Southland is to thrive, let the rock split in two." He brought the sword down upon the giant stone, and it broke again. To this day there remains a Rock of

Rue bearing this oath. In later times a poet visiting the site composed these lines in admiration:

The treasured sword, the rock that split in two,
Engendering sparks where two sharp blades struck true:
Two houses' fortune Heaven here ordained;
From this moment, threefold power reigned.

The two men left their weapons and hand in hand reentered the hall. After several more rounds Sun Qian looked meaningfully at Xuande, who announced apologetically, "The wine is too much for me. I beg to retire." Sun Quan escorted Xuande to the front of the temple, where the two men stood side by side contemplating the scenery. "There is no sight to equal it!" Xuande exclaimed. To this day a stele by the temple bears these words, "There is no sight to equal it." A later poet has left these lines of appreciation:

Rain clearing o'er the scape; winecup firm in hand.
Our realm is free of care; content prevails.
Where long ago two heroes fixed their gaze
Stony cliffs still beat back wind-blown waves.

The two leaders looked on as the wind swept the river. Great waves rolled and foamed, and white breakers snatched at the heavens. Among the breakers a slip of a boat was moving as if on flat land. Sighing, Xuande said, "'Southerners steer boats; northerners ride horses.' How true." Sun Quan thought, "He's trying to make fun of my riding," and had his aides bring over a horse. He leaped on and charged down the slope; then laying on the whip, he raced up again. Smiling, he remarked to Xuande, "Southerners can't ride, you say?" At this, Xuande threw off his cloak and sprang to horseback. He flew down and swept back in a swift career. The two men stayed their mounts on the rise and laughed as they swung their whips. Today the spot is known as Halting Hill. A later poet wrote:

What spirit in their charging dragon-steeds!
Mounted side by side, they viewed the hills and vales:
For Wu and Shu—east, west—two hegemons.
And the Halting Hill remains, untouched by eons.

The two men returned riding side by side, and the people of Nanxu voiced their approval to a man.

Xuande went back to the guesthouse. Sun Qian said to him, "My lord, plead with State Elder Qiao to conclude this marriage as soon as possible before something else goes wrong." The next day Xuande was received into the home of Elder Qiao. After the formalities and tea, Xuande stated his desire: "Too many people in your land seek to do me injury. I'm afraid I cannot stay." "Rest easy," replied the elder. "I will speak to the state mother in your behalf and have her see to your safety." Xuande bowed low, thanked him, and returned to the guesthouse.

State Elder Qiao went to see the state mother and told her of Xuande's fears and his anxiousness to return home. The state mother replied angrily, "Who would dare to harm my son-in-law?" and had

him moved into her private study until the wedding day. Xuande informed the state mother that it was not convenient to have his lieutenant Zhao Zilong outside and his soldiers removed from his authority. And so she moved all the visitors from Jingzhou out of the guesthouse and into her residence for their safety. Xuande was delighted.

A few days later a great banquet was held and the young Lady Sun was married to Liu Xuande. It was late at night before the guests dispersed. Xuande went to his chambers flanked by two rows of red candles, in whose light he took note of the many weapons stored within and of the sword-bearing serving maids standing to either side. Xuande was so frightened, he felt his very soul divide from his body. Indeed:

Amazed to find armed maids in the bridal suite,
Liu Bei suspected another Southland trap.

What were they doing there?

READ ON.



***Xuande Incites Lady Sun to Flee the South;
Kongming Riles Zhou Yu for the Second Time***

XUANDE TURNED PALE GLANCING around Lady Sun's chamber; it was well stocked with spears and swords, and armed maidservants lined its walls. The keeper of the princess's quarters said to him, "Fear not, worthy sir. Our mistress is fond of martial arts, and her maids perform combat for her amusement. That explains what you see." "Hardly the proper thing for a lady to be watching," Xuande replied. "It gives me the chills. Send them out for a while." The keeper made a suggestion to Lady Sun; "This array of weapons unnerves our son-in-law. Have them removed for now." Lady Sun laughed. "A man half a lifetime on the battlefield," she said, "and afraid of these?" But she had the weapons taken away and her maids put by their swords before waiting on her and her husband.

That night man and wife consummated their marriage in mutual bliss. Xuande distributed gold and silk to Lady Sun's attendants to win their goodwill. He also sent Sun Qian back to Jingzhou to tell Kongming the glad tidings. Meanwhile, day after day he indulged in wine. The state mother showed him deep love and due respect.

Sun Quan sent a messenger to Zhou Yu in Chaisang with the news: "My sister and Liu Bei are married—at my mother's insistence! It never occurred to me that our ruse would turn into a reality. What are we to do?" Zhou Yu was shocked; he racked his brains until an idea struck him. He then drafted a secret letter to Sun Quan, which he gave the messenger to take back. In essence it said:

It is hard to believe that my plan has turned against us! Given the outcome, however, we must think up another. Liu Bei, the very model of the crafty owl, has three great generals, Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Zilong, and Zhuge for his chief adviser. He won't stay long under anyone's authority. I suggest keeping him with us in congenial confinement. Give him sumptuous quarters to sap his will to fight. Send him plenty of alluring women and amusements to beguile his senses. Try to alienate him from Guan and Zhang and keep him as far as possible from Zhuge Liang. Then we can defeat him militarily and achieve our objective. But once we free him and he reaches the clouds, he will never again be content in a pond. I pray, most wise lord, you will consider this plan carefully.

Sun Quan, having read the letter, showed it to Zhang Zhao, who said, "I am in full agreement with Zhou Yu. Liu Bei is a man of obscure origins, and in all his scuttling around the empire he has yet to have a taste of wealth and dignity. Let him enjoy a luxurious mansion with servants and riches, and divisions are bound to develop. Kongming, Guan, and Zhang will begin to resent him. And then we can plan to retake Jingzhou. Act quickly on Zhou Yu's advice, my lord."

Sun Quan was delighted. He ordered renovation of the eastern palace and its garden richly

planted for his young sister and Xuande. He had the rooms opulently furnished and had scores of female musicians as well as gifts of gold, jade, ornamented silk, and other things sent to the palace for their pleasure. The state mother, who took it to be a gesture of goodwill from Sun Quan, was overjoyed. Xuande himself began to lose his sense of purpose among these enchantments of song and dance and gradually put returning to Jingzhou from his mind.

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Posted at Xuande's new quarters, Zhao Zilong and his five hundred soldiers whiled away their time shooting and racing outside the city wall. Almost unnoticed, the year had come to an end. Zilong thought, "Kongming put three brocade bags in my hands and told me to open the first in Nanxu, the second when the year ended, and the third in a moment of desperation. The third contains some uncanny trick to guarantee the safe return of our lord. Now the year has drawn to a close. I never see my lord anymore, for he indulges his lusts continually: time to open the second bag for a plan of action." Zilong did so and found a marvelous plan.

As directed, Zhao Zilong went immediately to the mansion at the eastern palace and demanded to see Xuande. A serving maid announced him: "Zhao Zilong is here on urgent business." Xuande summoned him and asked his purpose in coming. Putting on an appearance of surprise and apprehension, Zilong said, "My lord, dwelling in such splendid chambers, do you still remember Jingzhou?" "What is the cause of your concern?" Xuande responded. "This morning," said Zilong, "Kongming sent word that Cao Cao means to avenge his defeat at Red Cliffs and is heading for Jingzhou with half a million crack troops. He bids Your Lordship return at once to deal with the emergency." "I must discuss this with my wife," was the reply. But Zilong said, "If you do, she won't let you go. Better to say nothing and set out tonight. Delay and all is lost." "You may leave now," Xuande said. "I know what I am doing." Zilong stressed the urgency of the situation several times before going out.

Xuande went to Lady Sun. Silently, he shed tears. "What troubles you, my lord?" she inquired. Xuande replied, "The fate that has driven me to the ends of the realm and to strange climes has kept me from fulfilling my duties to my parents and from sacrificing to my ancestors. I have failed as a filial son. The coming of another year fills me with boundless sadness." "You needn't bother trying to fool me," Lady Sun responded. "I know full well what Zhao Zilong just reported—that Jingzhou may fall into enemy hands. They want you to return and you are giving me an excuse." Kneeling before her, Xuande pleaded, "Since you know already, my lady, I shall speak openly. If I stay and let the province fall to Cao, the world will have its laugh. But I cannot bear to lose you. This is the dilemma that torments me." "I have married you," she replied, "and shall follow wherever Your Lordship goes." "Though you may feel this way," said Xuande, "I doubt that the state mother and Lord Sun Quan will allow you to leave. If you have any compassion for me, we shall have to part for a while." He finished speaking and wept profusely.

"Stop fretting," Lady Sun urged him. "I'll plead with my mother with all my heart; she will let me go with you." "She may agree," Xuande said. "But Sun Quan will surely stop us." Lady Sun remained silent for a long time; then she said, "When we offer our New Year's respects, I shall tell them we are going to sacrifice to your ancestors at the river. We can leave without announcing it. What do you think?" Xuande knelt again and expressed his thanks: "If you do this for me, I will never forget it,

not in this world nor in the next. But secrecy must be absolute." Thus their plan was made.

Xuande secretly called Zhao Zilong and instructed him: "On New Year's Day lead your men out of the city very early and wait for me on the main road. I will tell them that I am making an ancestral sacrifice and will leave with Lady Sun." Zilong nodded. On the first day of the new year, Jian An 15,¹ Lord Sun Quan held a great congregation in the state hall. Xuande and Lady Sun entered and prostrated themselves to honor the state mother. Lady Sun said, "The resting place of my husband's parents and ancestors, to the north in Zhuo county, has been much in his thoughts, causing him to grieve day and night. Today he wants to go to the river and send his gaze northward to pay homage to that far-off holy site. We take this opportunity to inform you." The state mother replied, "This is filial piety. How could we oppose it? Though you have never met your husband's parents, you should go with him and take part in the ceremony, as befits a daughter-in-law." Husband and wife touched their heads to the ground in gratitude and departed.

Sun Quan was left in the dark. Lady Sun in her carriage, having taken only the barest necessities, and Xuande riding behind, attended by several horsemen, left Nanxu city. They met up with Zhao Zilong, whose five hundred warriors served as the van and brought up the rear; the procession proceeded at a doubled pace.

That day Sun Quan had gotten drunk and had had to be helped back to his private rooms. His counselors and commanders had all returned to their own homes, so it was already evening by the time the disappearance of Xuande and Lady Sun was discovered. Sun Quan slept on till the fifth watch and could not be informed. When he learned of their flight the following day, he summoned his court. Zhang Zhao said, "The departure of Xuande will mean trouble before long. Pursue him immediately." Sun Quan ordered Chen Wu and Pan Zhang to take five hundred crack soldiers and bring back the fugitives as soon as possible. The two commanders departed to perform their duties.

Sun Quan expressed his hatred for Xuande by smashing the jade inkstone on his desk into a thousand fragments. Cheng Pu said, "My lord, your anger is in vain. And I know your two commanders will never capture that fellow." "They would disobey me?" said Sun Quan. "Lady Sun," Zhang Zhao replied, "has fancied the martial arts all her life. She is severe, resolute, firm, and forthright. All the commanders fear her. Since she means to do as Liu Bei bids her, she must have left with him. How could the pursuers carry out your orders once they see her?" Sun Quan gripped his sword and summoned Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai. "Take this sword," he ordered them sharply, "and bring me the heads of my young sister and Liu Bei—or lose your own!" The two commanders, with one thousand men between them, joined the chase.

Xuande laid on the whip and gave his mount free rein. The horses ran well. At night the fugitives stopped to rest in the carriage for two watches. Then they rushed on. But even as they neared the border at Chaisang, telltale dustclouds were rising not far behind them. "We are being pursued," someone reported. "What shall we do?" Xuande asked Zilong in desperation. "You go on, my lord," he replied. "I will take up the rear."

They rounded the foot of a hill to find a body of horsemen blocking their advance. Two commanders shouted stridently, "Dismount, Liu Bei, and submit to arrest! I bear orders from Chief Commander Zhou Yu. We have long been awaiting you."

Earlier, Zhou Yu, anticipating Xuande's escape, had sent Xu Sheng and Ding Feng ahead with three thousand men, and they had camped at this strategic point. Scouts had been sent to watch from a height, because Zhou Yu knew that Xuande had to come this way if he came by land. Xu Sheng and

Ding Feng had sighted Xuande's party in the distance and were brandishing their weapons to block his escape.

Xuande nervously swung his horse around and addressed Zilong: "Soldiers are blocking the road. More are coming from behind. There is no way out. What do we do?" "Steady, my lord," replied Zilong. "The director general placed three stratagems in those brocade bags. The first two proved most effective. I have the third one here. His instructions were to open it as a last resort. I think it is time now to look at it." He opened the little sack and presented the note to Xuande, who, after reading it, rushed to the front of Lady Sun's carriage and appealed tearfully to her, "I have something to tell you." Lady Sun replied, "Do so; hold nothing back." "When Sun Quan and Zhou Yu conspired to call me to the Southland to marry you," Xuande said, "they did not do so for your sake. All they wanted was to confine me so that they could retake Jingzhou, and after that to kill me. Truly, you were but the bait on the hook. But the threat did not deter me; I came, knowing you had a brave and manly heart and would have sympathy for me. Yesterday I heard that Lord Sun Quan intended to murder me, and I pretended there was urgent business in Jingzhou simply as a means to get home. It was my blessing that you chose to stay by me. Now Lord Sun Quan and Zhou Yu's troops are behind and before us, and no one but you can save me. If you are not willing, I prefer to die here before your eyes to requite your kindness."

Lady Sun replied angrily, "If my brother does not know how to treat his own flesh and blood, I have no wish to see him again! This crisis I'll resolve myself." So saying, she sharply ordered her carriage brought forward. Rolling up the front curtain, she shouted to Xu Sheng and Ding Feng: "Are you two in revolt?" The two commanders hurriedly dismounted and threw down their weapons, voicing respectful greetings as they approached. "Would we dare? Chief Commander Zhou Yu posted us here to wait for Liu Bei." "Zhou Yu! That renegade, that traitor!" she cried. "What injury has the Sun family ever done you? Xuande is an imperial uncle of the great Han dynasty. And he is my husband. Both my mother and my brother were informed that I would return to Jingzhou. Does this blockade mean you're going to plunder our goods?"

Xu Sheng and Ding Feng protested their loyalty, saying submissively, "Would we dare? Spare us your wrath, my lady, for this is none of our doing. We act on orders from the chief commander." Lady Sun rebuked them: "So you fear the chief commander more than you fear me! He has the power of life and death over you. But do I not have the power of life and death over him?" She denounced Zhou Yu roundly and then ordered her carriage moved forward. Xu Sheng and Ding Feng reflected: "Who are we underlings to dispute the princess?" And, taking careful note of the fury in Zhao Zilong's face, they finally chose to let the princess's party pass.

The carriage had hardly advanced five or six *li* when the second pair of commanders, Chen Wu and Pan Zhang, arrived. Xu Sheng and Ding Feng gave them a full explanation. "It was a mistake to let them go," Chen and Pan said. "We were authorized by Lord Sun Quan himself to hunt them down and bring them back." The four thereupon formed a single company and raced furiously after Lady Sun and Xuande.

Xuande soon heard the clamor of pursuit. Once more he turned to Lady Sun. "We are being pursued again. What can we do?" "Husband," she replied, "you proceed. Zilong and I will hold the rear." Xuande took three hundred men and headed for the river. Zilong wheeled round and drew up beside the carriage. His men fanned out to await the Southland generals.

When the four generals saw Lady Sun they dismounted, clasped their hands, and stood at attention.

"Chen Wu! Pan Zhang!" she cried, "your purpose in coming?" "We bear orders from our lord to request that you and Xuande return." Lady Sun regarded them sternly and spoke reproachfully: "It is all your fault, you and the likes of you; you have come between my brother and me. I am married to Xuande. This is not an elopement. My mother has sanctioned our trip back to Jingzhou. Even my brother has to conform to what ritual enjoins. Do these weapons mean you want to murder me?" The four commanders stared at one another helplessly, one thought running through their minds: "Lady Sun and Sun Quan will always be brother and sister. And she has the sanction of the state mother. A man of profound filial piety like Lord Sun could never violate his mother's wishes. Tomorrow he'll change his mind and we'll end up in the wrong! It would be better to show them a kindness." The four generals had one other thing to consider. Though Xuande was nowhere to be seen, Zhao Zilong was right before them, ready for bloody combat, eyes angry and wide-staring. At last the four generals, bowing repeatedly, withdrew; and Lady Sun ordered the servants to push on.²

Xu Sheng said, "I think the four of us should go together to the chief commander to make our report." They were debating this suggestion when Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai rode up like a whirlwind. "Have you seen Liu Bei?" they asked. "He passed this morning, a good while ago," the four replied. "Why didn't you hold him?" Jiang Qin demanded. The four related what Lady Sun had said. "That is what Lord Sun was afraid of," said Jiang Qin, "and so he pressed his seal to this sword in confirmation of his order to kill first his sister and then Liu Bei. Disobedience is to be punished by death." "They are already far off," said the four. "What can be done?" "Most of them are on foot," said Jiang Qin, "and can't travel too fast. Generals Xu Sheng and Ding Feng, you report back to the chief commander at once and have some fast boats sent after them. We four will pursue them along the shore. Whoever overtakes them first must kill them before they can speak." At that, Xu Sheng and Ding Feng raced back to Zhou Yu. Jiang Qin, Zhou Tai, Chen Wu, and Pan Zhang led their troops along the edge of the river.

In the meantime, Xuande's column of riders had put some distance between themselves and Chaisang.³ Only on reaching Liulangpu did Xuande begin to feel easier. He searched the shore for a crossing point, but the river loomed wide and no boat was to be found. Xuande lowered his head and mused. "My lord," Zilong said, "has escaped the tiger's mouth, and we are close now to our own territory. I am sure the director general will have arranged something. There is nothing to worry about now." But Xuande's thoughts turned to his life of luxury in the south, and tears of sadness came into his eyes. A poet of later times has left these lines on the marriage:

Upon these shores the South and West were wed:
Pearl-screened paths and golden rooms were shared.
None thought the girl would spurn her status royal,
Of those who meant Liu's kingly mind to guile.

Xuande was told of the pursuit after he had sent Zilong scouting ahead for a boat. Xuande climbed to a rise and viewed the plain: it was swarming with riders. Sighing, he said to himself, "Fleeing for days on end, my men and horses are exhausted. Again we are chased. If they catch us, who will give my corpse a resting place?" The noise from the plain grew louder. At this desperate moment Xuande spied a string of some twenty boats, sails down, hugging the shore. "A godsend," said Zilong. "Let's take them across quickly and then plan our next step." Xuande and Lady Sun climbed aboard. Zilong

followed with his five hundred. At that moment they spotted someone in the cabin dressed in plain Taoist garb, a band wound round his head. It was Zhuge Liang, laughing loudly as he emerged and said, "What a pleasure, my lord. I have been waiting here for some time." On board were Jingzhou sailors disguised as passengers. Reunited with his men at last, Xuande was overjoyed.

Presently, the four Southland generals reached the river. Pointing at them, Kongming grinned and shouted, "I arranged this long ago. All of you, return and take Zhou Yu this message: no more seduction schemes!" Arrows from the shore began flying at them, but the boats were already out of range. The surprise rescue left Jiang Qin and the others gasping.

As Xuande and Kongming proceeded homeward, a mighty roar echoing over the water announced the approach of a vast fleet behind them. Zhou Yu had brought the Southland's most seasoned navy under his command banner; Huang Gai and Han Dang flanked him left and right. The southern war-boats moved with the speed of a horse in full gallop, a star coursing through the sky. As they drew near, Kongming had his oarsmen row straight for the north shore, where everyone fled on horseback or in carriages. Zhou Yu made shore moments later and pressed the chase on land. All his sailors were on foot; only the captains had horses. Zhou Yu took the lead, followed closely by Huang Gai, Han Dang, Xu Sheng, and Ding Feng.

"Where are we?" Zhou Yu asked. "The Huangzhou border is up ahead," a soldier replied. Seeing that Xuande's party had not gone far, Zhou Yu resumed pursuit. But that moment he heard drums pounding as a troop of swordsmen came charging out of a mountain covert; their commander, Lord Guan. Confounded, Zhou Yu swung round and fled. Lord Guan pursued. Zhou Yu gave his mount its head as he raced for his life. Then two more generals struck—from the left Huang Zhong, from the right Wei Yan—and the southerners were routed. Zhou Yu retreated frantically to his boats as Kongming's soldiers jeered from shore: "Young Master Zhou's brilliant plan of conquest has cost you the lady, and officers and men to boot." Exasperated by the taunts, Zhou Yu shouted to his men, "Let's make one last try!" But Huang Gai and Han Dang firmly refused.

Zhou Yu reflected, "My plan has failed. How am I to face Lord Sun?" A howl broke from his lips, and his wound reopened as he collapsed on the deck. Men rushed to aid him, but he had lost consciousness. Indeed:

Trapped a second time in his own tricks,
Zhou Yu tasted humiliation added to rage.⁴

What was Zhou Yu's fate?

READ ON.



Cao Cao Feasts at Bronze Bird Tower; Kongming Riles Zhou Yu for the Third Time

UNDER KONGMING'S DIRECTION THE THREE COMPANIES—Lord Guan's, Huang Zhong's, and Wei Yan's—had ambushed and defeated Zhou Yu's southern troops. Huang Gai and Han Dang had brought Zhou Yu safely aboard their boat, but countless sailors were lost in the operation. Later, the defeated southern leaders watched Xuande, Lady Sun, and their party of attendants relaxing on a knoll safely beyond reach. Rage welled up in Zhou Yu; his wound burst, and he fainted. His commanders struggled to revive him as they steered downriver toward safety. Ordering no pursuit, Kongming returned to Jingzhou with Xuande to celebrate and to reward the imperial uncle's commanders.

Zhou Yu went back to Chaisang; the others marched on to Nanxu and reported to Sun Quan. Quan's first angry impulse was to send Cheng Pu as chief commander to capture Jingzhou. Zhou Yu, hoping to redeem his disgrace, also proposed new action. But Zhang Zhao argued: "Day and night Cao Cao ponders revenge for Red Cliffs. Fear alone restrains him—fear of the alliance that Liu Xuande and Lord Sun maintain against him. My lord, annexing Xuande's Jingzhou for a moment's satisfaction would expose the Southland to extreme danger of an attack by Cao Cao."

Gu Yong added his views: "Do you think Xuchang¹ has no spies here? At the first sign of conflict, Cao Cao will try to work something out with Liu Bei. And if Bei turns to Cao for protection, will the Southland know another single day of peace? Would not the wiser course be to send a petition to the throne recommending Liu Bei's appointment as protector of Jingzhou? That should deter Cao Cao from moving in this direction and alleviate any grievance on Liu Bei's part. It will also put us in a position to pit our enemies Cao and Liu against each other and to our advantage."

"There is wisdom in Gu Yong's words," said Sun Quan. "But whom shall we send to court?" "There is someone here," Gu Yong replied, "someone whom Cao Cao admires and respects." Sun Quan asked his name, and the adviser went on, "What would you say to Hua Xin for this mission?" Pleased by this suggestion, Sun Quan dispatched Hua Xin to the capital to present his memorial to the throne.² But the envoy reached Xuchang only to find that Cao Cao had gone to Ye to celebrate the completion of his Bronze Bird Tower. And so Hua Xin continued his journey to Ye in hopes of being received.

Cao Cao was indeed determined to avenge his great defeat at Red Cliffs, but the united strength of the Sun and the Liu houses deterred him. In the spring of the fifteenth year of Jian An (A.D. 210) the Bronze Bird Tower that Cao Cao had ordered built was completed. To honor the event Cao Cao held a grand banquet in Ye at which he entertained both court officials and army officers. The structure overlooked the River Zhang: the central tower was the Bronze Bird; to the left stood the Jade Dragon Tower, and to the right the Golden Phoenix. Each side tower rose some hundred spans high and was linked by an overhead walkway to the central tower. There were innumerable entrances

and doorways, and the interplay of gold and jasper was striking to the eye. On this day Cao Cao donned a golden cap inlaid with jade and wore a fine gown of green damask; he had a belt of jade tesserae and pearl-sewn shoes. Below the height where he sat his civil and military officials stood in rank.

Cao Cao wished to observe his military officers compete in marksmanship. He had an attendant drape a Riverlands red brocade battle gown on the branch of a poplar, beneath which a mound with a target had been raised. The marksmen—officers divided into two groups—were to shoot from one hundred paces. All members of the Cao clan wore red. Other officers wore green. Each carried a carved bow and long arrows as, mounted, they held their horses in until the signal to begin. The rules were: "Whoever strikes the red center on the target wins the damask battle gown. Whoever misses must drink a penalty cup." The first order was given, and a young commander from the Cao clan charged into the lists. All eyes turned to Cao Xiu as he made three flying passes up and down the field. Then, fitting arrow to string, he drew, shot, and hit the target! Gongs and drums sounded in unison, and shouts of acclaim filled the air.

A delighted Cao Cao watched from the terrace. "Our champion colt!" he said admiringly and was about to have the prize fetched for Cao Xiu when a horseman raced out from the green ranks, crying, "His Excellency's precious battle gown should go to an outsider. You should not allow your own clansman to preempt it." Cao Cao regarded the man closely. It was Wen Ping. The commanders said, "We might as well see what Wen Ping can do."

Wen Ping hefted his bow and in swift career hit the red bull's eye. The commanders hailed the shot, and the gongs and drums sounded wildly. Wen Ping shouted, "Bring the gown at once!" But from the red ranks of the Cao clan another commander dashed into the lists, demanding stridently, "Cao Xiu made the first shot. How dare you try to take it from him? Watch as my arrow takes its place between your two." The speaker bent his bow to the full, and his arrow too struck home. The spectators cheered again.

Who was the marksman? Cao Hong. Now Hong, the famed commander, went to take the battle gown. But another commander from the green ranks came forth, holding his bow high. "There's nothing exceptional in the marksmanship of you three," he cried. "Watch this!" The audience turned to Zhang He as he rode like the wind into the arena, twisted himself round, and shot with his back to the target. Another bull's eye! Four shafts in a row were now stuck in the center of the target. "A great shot!" the crowd declared. "The prize belongs to me!" Zhang He cried.

His claim was still ringing in the air when a commander from the red party raced out to make his challenge. "I see nothing to marvel at in your parting shot," he cried. "Watch me top you all." The spectators turned to view Xiahou Yuan. Yuan charged to the very end of the lists, turned around, and let fly. His arrow landed in the center of the other four. The gongs and drums burst out afresh. Xiahou Yuan reined in, braced his bow and said, "That shot must win the prize!" But in response yet another contender from the green side appeared.

"Leave the gown for Xu Huang," he cried. "What skill can you display," cried Xiahou Yuan, "to take this prize from me?" "Your last shot was nothing special," answered Xu Huang. "Watch me take down the damask gown." His long-range shot snapped the slender branch that held the gown; it dropped to earth. Xu Huang raced forward and seized the garment. He draped it over himself, then charged up to the dais and chanted ritually, "My thanks to Your Excellency for this battle gown."

Cao Cao and his retinue voiced their approval. But as Xu Huang started back to his place, a

green-coated commander sprang out from beside the dais, shouting, "Where are you going with that battle gown? Leave it here right now." The assembly turned to Xu Chu. "The gown is mine," Xu Huang said. "What right have you to demand it?" Making no reply, Xu Chu rode out to snatch the prize. As the two horses closed, Xu Huang lifted his bow to strike Chu, but Chu held it fast with one hand, nearly wrenching Huang out of the saddle. Huang quickly dropped his bow and slid to the ground. Chu also dismounted, and the two men wrestled wildly. Cao Cao had someone pull them apart. But the battle gown was torn to shreds.

Cao Cao ordered the two men to the dais. Xu Huang's eyes were wide with wrath. Xu Chu gnashed his teeth. They both lusted for combat. Laughing, Cao said, "Courage is all I admire. That gown means nothing." And he had each commander ascend the dais to receive a roll of Shu silk.³ After the commanders had given their thanks, Cao Cao had them seated in order of rank, and music rose harmoniously as delicacies from land and sea were served. Officials and officers exchanged toasts and congratulations.

Cao Cao turned to his civil officials and said, "The military leaders have enjoyed themselves with feats on horseback and marksmanship in a gratifying display of strength and daring. Now perhaps you learned scholars who share the dais would present us with some excellent stanzas to commemorate this splendid occasion?" The officials bowed low and said, "It is our desire to comply with your puissant command."

At this time the civil staff included Wang Lang, Zhong You, Wang Can, and Chen Lin. Each of them submitted verses lauding Cao Cao for his towering achievements and magnificent virtue and asserting his fitness to receive the Mandate of Heaven and rule as emperor himself. Cao Cao read each in turn and smiled. "Gentlemen," he said, "your praise goes beyond the measure. I am but a crude and simple man who began his official career by being cited for filial devotion and integrity. Later on, because of the disorder in the realm, I built a retreat fifty *li* east of the fief at Qiao, where I wished to devote myself to reading in spring and summer and hunting in autumn and winter until tranquility returned to the world and I could enter public life. Beyond all my expectations the court assigned me to serve as commandant for Military Standards, and so I forsook my life as a recluse and dedicated myself to achieving distinction by punishing the rebels in the Emperor's behalf. If after I die my tombstone reads 'Here Lies the Late Lord Cao, Han General Who Conquers the West,' my lifelong ambition will have been fulfilled.

"Let it be remembered that since bringing Dong Zhuo to justice and rooting out the Yellow Scarves, we have eliminated Yuan Shu, defeated Lü Bu, wiped out Yuan Shao, and won over Liu Biao. Thus peace has been restored in the realm. I have become the Emperor's highest servant, the chief steward of his realm. What greater ambition could I have? If not for me, who knows how many would have declared themselves emperor, or prince of a region?

"There are those who have drawn unwarranted conclusions concerning my power, suspecting me of imperial ambitions. This is preposterous. I remain constantly mindful of Confucius' admiration for King Wen's 'ultimate virtue.' His words burn bright in my heart.⁴ I long only to relinquish my armies and return to my fief as lord of Wuping. But practically speaking I cannot; for once I relinquish power, I might be murdered—and that would imperil the house of Han. I cannot expose myself to real dangers for the sake of reputation. So it seems, gentlemen, that not one of you understands my thinking."⁵ The officials rose as one and made obeisance. "Not even the great prime ministers of old, Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou," they said, "approach Your Excellency." A poet of later times

wrote:

Once Zhougong feared the slander of the world;
Once Wang Mang treated scholars with respect.
What if they had perished then, misjudged,
Their chronicles forever incorrect?

The wine had inspired Cao Cao. He called for writing brush and inkstone, intending to celebrate the Bronze Bird Tower in verse⁶ and was about to set pen to paper when someone announced: "Lord Sun Quan has sent Hua Xin with a petition recommending Liu Bei as protector of Jingzhou. Sun Quan's sister is now Liu Bei's wife, and most of the nine districts along the River Han already belong to Liu Bei." This report shattered Cao Cao's composure, and he threw the brush to the ground.

Cheng Yu said, "Your Excellency has led tens of thousands of men, faced slings and arrows in the heat of battle, and never once lost his nerve. Why does Liu Bei's capture of Jingzhou trouble you so?" "Liu Bei," Cao Cao replied, "is a veritable dragon among men, but he has never found his element. Now the dragon is confined no more; he has reached the open sea. Of course I am troubled." "Do you know what Hua Xin really wants?" Cheng Yu asked. "No," Cao replied. "Liu Bei worries Sun Quan," Cheng Yu explained. "Quan wants to attack him but fears that Your Excellency might attack the Southland while he is occupied with Liu Bei. That is why he has sent Hua Xin to recommend the appointment: to reassure Liu Bei and thus deter any move by Your Excellency against the south." "True enough," said Cao Cao, nodding.

Cheng Yu continued: "I have a plan, however, for turning Sun and Liu against each other. It would allow Your Excellency to maneuver both enemies into ruining each other—two vanquished at one stroke!" Cao was delighted and asked for details. "The pillar of the south," Cheng Yu went on, "is Zhou Yu, the chief commander. Your Excellency should petition the throne to appoint Zhou Yu governor of Nanjun and Cheng Pu governor of Jiangxia,⁷ and Hua Xin should be kept here at court and given an important position. Zhou Yu will then consider Liu Bei his mortal enemy, and we will profit from their conflict. Does this not seem apt?"⁸

"My thought exactly," Cao Cao responded. He called Hua Xin to the dais and bestowed rich gifts on him. After the banquet Cao Cao led his officials and officers back to Xuchang, where he submitted the appointments for Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu to the Emperor. Hua Xin was made junior minister of justice and kept in the capital. The documents confirming the appointments were then sent to the south, and Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu accepted their new offices.

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Now governor of Nanjun, Zhou Yu pondered his revenge against Xuande even more intently. His first step was to petition Lord Sun Quan to have Lu Su try again to reclaim Jingzhou. Accordingly, Sun Quan commanded Lu Su: "You served as guarantor when we loaned Jingzhou to Liu Bei. But he's dragging things out. How long must we wait to get it back?" "The document," Lu Su said, "provides for its return only after they acquire the Riverlands." This answer provoked Sun Quan to say, "That's all I hear, but so far they haven't sent one soldier west. I don't intend to wait for it until I've grown old." "Let me go and speak to them," responded Lu Su. And so he sailed to Jingzhou once more.

In Jingzhou, Xuande and Kongming had gathered ample supplies of grain and fodder, upgraded their armed forces, and attracted talented men from far and wide. When Xuande asked the meaning of Lu Su's visit, Kongming replied, "Recently Sun Quan proposed you, my lord, as protector of Jingzhou out of fear of Cao Cao. Cao Cao countered by appointing Zhou Yu governor of Nanjun, intending to set our two houses at odds and to pluck his advantage from between. Coming after Zhou Yu's appointment, Lu Su is here to demand Jingzhou." "How do we handle him?" Xuande asked. "If he refers to the question of Jingzhou," Kongming answered, "just bellow and wail, and at the height of the scene I will step forth and make certain representations." Thus the plan was made.

Lu Su entered Xuande's headquarters. After the formalities, he was offered a seat. "Now that the imperial uncle is a son-in-law of the Southland," he began, "he is my master too. How dare I sit in his presence?" "You are my old friend," Xuande said, smiling. "Such modesty is unnecessary." With that Lu Su seated himself. Tea was served. "I bear today the important mandate of Lord Sun Quan," Lu Su began. "My mission concerns Jingzhou. Imperial Uncle, you have occupied it too long and its return is overdue. Now that Sun and Liu are kinsmen, the territory should be returned as soon as possible in the interests of family harmony." At these words Xuande covered his face and burst into tears.

Startled, Lu Su asked, "What is this?" Xuande continued crying as Kongming stepped out from behind a screen and said, "I have been listening for some time. Do you know why my master cries?" "Indeed I do not," was the reply. "Is it not apparent?" Kongming said. "When my lord first borrowed the province, he promised to return it after taking the Riverlands. I have given this matter careful thought. Yizhou province is ruled by Liu Zhang, my master's younger cousin, who, like himself, belongs to the imperial family. Were Xuande to march on Liu Zhang's capital, the world would lose all respect for him. But if he returns Jingzhou to you, where will he live? And if he doesn't, he offends his brother-in-law. Torn by this dilemma, Lord Liu cries from heartfelt pain."

Kongming's words seemed to strike Xuande deeply, for he smote his breast and stamped his feet, wailing as bitterly as before. Lu Su tried to assuage him. "Imperial Uncle," he said, "do not fret and grieve like this. Perhaps Kongming has some plan." "I would trouble you," Kongming said, "to return to Sun Quan and, sparing no details, sincerely describe to him this most distressing scene that you are witnessing and beg him to allow us a little more time." "And if he will not?" Lu Su asked. "Lord Sun has given his own sister to the imperial uncle. How can he refuse? We are counting on you to place the matter before him in the right way." Lu Su, the soul of generosity and benevolence, was moved to act on Xuande's complaint. Xuande and Kongming offered their respectful thanks. The banquet ended, they escorted their guest to his boat.

Lu Su sailed straight to Chaisang and delivered the message. Zhou Yu stamped his foot and said, "He's trapped you once again. Back when Liu Biao ruled Jingzhou, Liu Bei was already dreaming of taking over. Why should he have any scruples about Liu Zhang's land? This last bit of foolery may land you in trouble, old friend. I have a plan, however, that should confound even Zhuge Liang—but it will mean another trip." "Let me hear your esteemed strategy," Lu Su replied. "You will not go to Lord Sun," said Zhou Yu. "Rather, you will go back to Jingzhou and tell Liu Bei this: 'The Suns and the Lius are now one family. If you cannot bear to take the Riverlands, the Southland will raise an army and do so. We will then turn it over to you as a dowry, and you can return Jingzhou to us.'"

To this proposition Lu Su responded: "The Riverlands is too far to be easily conquered. I wonder if your plan is feasible, Chief Commander." "You are too virtuous," said Zhou Yu. "Do you think I really mean to take the Riverlands and give it to them? It is only a pretext. I mean to catch them

unprepared and capture Jingzhou. As our army moves west via Jingzhou, we will ask them for coin and grain; and when Liu Bei comes out of the city to receive our men, we will kill him and take control. That will redeem my name and get you out of trouble."

This plan won Lu Su's immediate approval, and he returned to Jingzhou. Xuande took counsel with Kongming. "Lu Su can't have seen Sun Quan in so short a time," Kongming said. "He probably went to Chaisang, and he and Zhou Yu have cooked something up. Whatever he says, watch me. If I nod, give consent." Xuande agreed to act accordingly.

Lu Su entered; the formalities were concluded. "Lord Sun Quan," Su began, "sends his praise of the bounteous virtue of the imperial uncle. Having taken counsel with his command, he has decided to raise an army to capture the Riverlands for the imperial uncle—as a kind of dowry. Once this is done, you may give us Jingzhou. When our army passes through, however, we will expect a little cash and grain from you." At these words Kongming hastened to nod. "Such kindness from Lord Sun!" he said. Xuande, folding his hands in a gesture of respect and gratitude, added, "We owe this entirely to your persuasiveness." "When your heroic legions come," Kongming assured him, "we shall go out of our way to see that they are amply provided for." Inwardly pleased with his reception, Lu Su took his leave after the banquet had ended.

"What are they up to?" Xuande asked Kongming. "Zhou Yu does not have long to live," Kongming said with a loud laugh. "He's making plans that wouldn't fool a child, using the ancient ruse of 'passing through on the pretext of conquering Guo.'⁹ Their real objective is Jingzhou, not the Riverlands. They want you to come out of the city so they can nab you, 'attacking the unprepared, doing the unanticipated.'" "But what can we do?" asked Xuande. "It's nothing to despair over," Kongming said reassuringly. "Just keep in mind that 'it takes a hidden bow to catch a fierce tiger, and delicate bait to hook a giant tortoise.' When we get through with him, Zhou Yu will be more dead than alive." Next, Kongming communicated certain instructions to Zhao Zilong. Xuande was delighted with Kongming's scheme. According to the verse of later times,

Zhou Yu framed a plan to take Jingzhou
Whose opening move Liang knew from history.
Yu thinks his bait secure below the tide;
The hook that's meant for him he does not see!

Lu Su reported back to Zhou Yu his hosts' enthusiasm for the plan and their willingness to come out of the city and provide for the Southland army. Zhou Yu laughed aloud and said, "This time I will have them!" He told Lu Su to inform Sun Quan and to have him send Cheng Pu with reinforcements. Zhou Yu's arrow wound had gradually healed and his condition was good. He placed Gan Ning in the van, while he himself and Xu Sheng and Ding Feng formed the second contingent; Ling Tong and Lü Meng made up the rear. Counting land and naval forces, they had fifty thousand men marching toward Jingzhou.

On his boat Zhou Yu chuckled to himself, confident that Kongming was trapped. When his advance guard reached Xiakou, Zhou Yu asked, "Has Jingzhou sent anyone to greet us?" "Imperial Uncle Liu," he was told, "has sent Mi Zhu to receive the chief commander." Zhou Yu summoned the man and demanded to know how his forces would be provisioned. "Lord Liu," Mi Zhu replied, "has made all the preparations and arrangements." "And where is the imperial uncle?" Zhou Yu asked. "He

is outside the gates of Jingzhou awaiting the moment to offer you a toast," Mi Zhu responded.

Zhou Yu said, "For the sake of your house, we have undertaken a long expedition. The provisioning of our forces is not to be taken lightly." Mi Zhu took Zhou Yu's admonition back to the city. The Southland's war-boats advanced in order up the river. Soon they made Gong'an, but not a single soul nor war-boat was there to meet them. Zhou Yu urged his fleet on. Barely ten *li* from Jingzhou, he saw that the river was calm and quiet. Scouts reported back to him: "The city wall flies two white flags,¹⁰ but the city seems deserted."

Perplexed, Zhou Yu went ashore and rode on horseback to the city; Gan Ning, Xu Sheng, and Ding Feng, leading three thousand picked troops, followed him. They reached the foot of the wall but there was no sign of life. Zhou Yu reined in and had his men shout to open the gate. Someone above asked who had come. A Southland soldier answered, "The Southland's chief commander, Zhou Yu himself." At that moment they heard the rap of a stick as a row of soldiers armed with spears and swords appeared on the wall. From the guard tower Zhao Zilong emerged and said, "Chief Commander, what is your purpose in coming here?" "I have come to capture the Riverlands for your master," he answered. "Don't tell me you know nothing of it!" But Zilong answered back: "Director General Kongming knows full well that the chief commander means to 'borrow passage to destroy Guo.' That's why he left me here. As for my lord, he said that because Governor Liu Zhang of the Riverlands is, like himself, an imperial kinsman, it would be dishonorable to seize his province. If you Southlanders actually mean to seize the Riverlands, he said, he will have to unbind his hair and go off into the hills rather than lose the trust of men forever."

At these words Zhou Yu swung away; just then he saw a man holding the command banner and standing before his horse. "Four field corps," he reported, "are converging on us: Guan from Jiangling, Zhang Fei from Zigui, Huang Zhong from Gong'an, Wei Yan from Chanling. We don't know how many they have in all, but the hills are ringing for a hundred *li* with shouts that they want to capture Zhou Yu!" The chief commander gave a shout and fell from his horse. Again his wound opened. Indeed:

A subtle move is hard to counteract;
Every shift he tried came to naught.

Would the marriage-sealed alliance break apart?¹¹

READ ON.



*Sleeping Dragon Mourns Zhou Yu at Chaisang;
Young Phoenix Takes Office at Leiyang*

ZHOU YU, HIS CHEST POUNDING, toppled from the saddle; aides carried him aboard ship. When he recovered, they informed him that Xuande and Kongming had been sighted on a hilltop, drinking and enjoying themselves. Zhou Yu said grimly, "They think I can't take the Riverlands, but I swear I will." At that moment Sun Yu, Sun Quan's younger brother, arrived. Zhou received him and described the battle. "My brother sends me with orders to help you, Chief Commander," Sun Yu said; and so Zhou Yu directed him to advance on Jingzhou. Soon, however, Zhou Yu learned that Sun Yu's troops had been stopped at Baqiu by Xuande's commanders Liu Feng and Guan Ping, who already controlled the upper course of the Great River.¹ The news deepened Zhou Yu's distress. Soon after, a messenger brought him a letter from Kongming:

Director General for the Han, Imperial Corps Commander Zhuge Liang, addresses the eminent Chief Commander of the Southland, Master Zhou Yu: Since we parted at Chaisang, you have been much in my thoughts. When I heard that you were planning to take the Riverlands, I felt it could not be done. The people are sturdy, the terrain is rough, and Protector Liu Zhang, admittedly a bit foolish and feeble, can still manage to defend it.

Now your army has commenced a long campaign and will face many trials and uncertainties before victory is secure. Even the great strategists of old, Wu Qi and Sun Wu, could not guarantee their calculations nor ensure an outcome. I must remind you that revenge for the defeat at Red Cliffs is not absent from Cao's thoughts for a single moment! If he strikes while your army is far off, the Southland will fall. To prevent such an unbearable loss I have written this note which I hope you will favor with your attention.

Zhou Yu sighed, called for brush and paper, and wrote a statement for Sun Quan. Next, he summoned his commanders and said, "Far be it from me to withhold the service I owe to our land, but my time on earth ends here. No one can help that. I want you all to serve Lord Sun to the best of your ability and bring his great cause to fruition." With those words Zhou Yu lost consciousness, then seemed to revive momentarily. Looking Heavenward, he cried, "After making me, Zhou Yu, did you have to make Zhuge Liang?" He groaned several times and passed away; his age was thirty-six. A later poet wrote of Zhou Yu:

Glory had crowned this hero since Red Cliffs,
From earliest years hailed a champion.
In lute-set song he showed his sense of grace;

With cup in hand he bade his friend farewell.²
Three thousand bushels from Lu Su he once begged;
Ten legions took the field at his command.
Baqiu, now Zhou Yu's final resting place,
Still draws men who mourn in heartfelt grief.

While Zhou Yu lay in state in Baqiu, his testament was taken to Sun Quan, who grieved uncontrollably for his chief commander. Quan then read the document, which recommended Lu Su as his replacement:³

Despite my commonplace abilities, I was favored with exceptional recognition as confidential adviser and supreme military commander. Could I do otherwise than strain every fiber of my being attempting to render due service? Alas, the day of death is never known beforehand; life's duration is destined. That my flesh should succumb before my humble purpose has more to show overwhelms me with remorse.

At present, with Cao Cao to the north, our borders are uneasy. With Liu Bei living in our land, we are rearing a tiger. The leadership of the realm remains in doubt, and it is imperative that all vassals of our court remain ever vigilant and that the sovereign exercise careful judgment.

Lu Su, distinguished for his loyalty and dedication, serious and scrupulous in all affairs, may replace me as chief commander. A man's dying words are his best, they say. If this letter receives your consideration, I have not died in vain.

Sun Quan finished reading and said tearfully, "Zhou Yu, with the talent of a king's right-hand man, is dead, suddenly and prematurely. Whom else have I to depend on? How can I ignore his recommendation?" That day he appointed Lu Su chief commander and ordered Zhou Yu's coffin sent home for burial.

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In Jingzhou, Kongming pondered the constellations. Observing a falling "general" star, he smiled and said, "Zhou Yu has died." The next morning he told Xuande, whose spies soon confirmed it. "What shall we do now?" Xuande asked Kongming. "Lu Su is bound to be the new chief commander," was the reply. "I have been watching the 'general' stars clustered in the east. I think I should take a trip to the Southland, ostensibly to offer condolences, and see if any of their worthy men would be willing to serve you, my lord." "What if they harm you, master?" Xuande asked. "I was not afraid while Zhou Yu lived; what have I to fear now?" was his reply.

And so with Zhao Zilong and five hundred warriors and an assortment of funerary gifts, Kongming sailed to Baqiu. En route he learned that Sun Quan had already made Lu Su chief commander and that Zhou Yu's coffin had been returned to Chaisang, so Kongming headed for Chaisang, where Lu Su received him according to protocol. Zhou Yu's commanders wanted to kill Kongming, but Zilong's armed presence deterred them. Kongming had his funerary gifts placed before the coffin. Then he personally offered a libation, knelt on the ground, and read his eulogy:

Alas, Gongjin! Woefully fallen in your prime! Heaven numbers our days and leaves man to grieve. Heartbroken, I spill this flask of wine. May your spirit savor my libation.

I pay homage to your youth, remembering your deep friendship with Sun Ce. You stood for honor and disdained wealth, and you offered him your home. I pay homage to your early manhood when you flexed your wings like the stormembracing roc⁴ and constituted a new state in the south. I pay homage to your mature years when in the fullness of your powers you made Baqiu an outpost of the Southland: pressure for Liu Biao, relief for Sun Quan. I pay homage to your style and the dignity you wore when you took the junior Lady Qiao to wife. Son-in-law to a Han minister, you were a man who graced the court. I pay homage to your bold spirit, when you argued against sending Cao Cao tribute. You held your ground and ended up the stronger. I pay homage to your conduct at Poyang, when you resisted Jiang Gan's blandishments, showing self-possession, superb character, lofty ideals. I pay homage to your scope of talents, your capable administration, and worthy strategies,⁵ which broke the foe with fire, subduing a stronger enemy.

I think back to that time, your dashing mien and brilliance. I weep for your untimely demise, head bowed, heartsore. Loyal and honorable of mind, noble in spirit! Three twelve-year spans of life, a name for a hundred ages. I mourn, distraught, my insides knotted with grief. While a heart beats here, this sorrow cannot end. Heaven darkens over. The whole army blanches with despair. Your lord mourns; your friends pour out their hearts.

I have no talent, yet you sought my counsel. We aided the Southland against Cao Cao, supported the Han, and comforted the Liu. Our mutual defense was perfectly coordinated, and we did not fear for our survival. Alas, Gongjin, the living and the dead can never meet. You preserved your integrity with simple devotion, and it will survive the mists of death and time. Perhaps the dead can discern our thoughts, but what man alive truly knows me now? Alas, alas. Partake of this offering.

Kongming finished his eulogy and prostrated himself on the ground. Tears of grief gushed forth. The southern commanders remarked, "Everyone said they were enemies; but after watching him at the ceremony, we don't believe it." Lu Su, also deeply moved, thought, "Kongming is a man of such depth! Zhou Yu was narrow. He brought on his own death." A poet of later times wrote:

Before Nanyang's Sleeping Dragon woke,
Another star was born in Shucheng town.
When fair blue sky brought Gongjin into being,
Did sullied earth have to make Kongming?

Lu Su feasted Kongming. Then Kongming took his leave. He was about to descend into his boat, when a man in a Taoist robe and bamboo-leaf hat, a black sash of plaited silk and plain sandals accosted him. "You drove Master Zhou to his death," he said, laughing, "and yet have the nerve to come and pay your victim homage—as if to mock the Southland for having no one of stature!" Kongming turned and faced the man. It was Master Young Phoenix, Pang Tong.⁶ Kongming laughed in turn, and the two men entered the boat hand in hand, recounting all that had passed during their long

separation. Then Kongming handed his old friend a letter and said, "My guess is that Sun Quan won't have much use for you. If so, come to us in Jingzhou and work for Xuande. Here is a note to him. I think you'll find my lord tolerant and humane, a man of ample virtue who will put your vast learning to good use." Pang Tong nodded and left. Kongming returned to Jingzhou.

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Lu Su escorted Zhou Yu's coffin to Wuhu, where Sun Quan received it. Weeping freely, he made ritual offerings and ordered a lavish burial for the late chief commander in his native village. Sun Quan provided handsomely for Zhou Yu's sons, Xun, the elder, and Yin, as well as for Zhou Yu's daughter.

These matters settled, Lu Su said to Sun Quan, "A man of middling abilities like myself should never have received Zhou Yu's strong recommendation for an office I am unworthy to fill. Would Your Lordship permit me to suggest someone to assist you? The man is thoroughly versed in astronomy and geography; his plans rival those of Guan Zhong and Yue Yi. And his stratagems rank with those of Sun Wu and Wu Qi. Zhou Yu often used his ideas, and Kongming himself respects his knowledge. He is presently in the Southland. I think you should offer him a high position."

Delighted, Sun Quan asked the man's name, and Lu Su replied, "He comes from Xiangyang; his surname is Pang, his given name Tong; his style is Shiyuan. He also has a Taoist name, Master Young Phoenix."⁷ "A name long known to me, too," Sun Quan said. "Since he is here, have him present himself." Accordingly, Lu Su invited Pang Tong to come before Sun Quan. But after the introduction Lord Sun Quan found himself disturbed by Tong's strange appearance, his bushy brows and tilted nose, his dark complexion and short beard. At last Quan asked, "What have you spent your time studying principally?" "I stick to no particular subject," Pang Tong answered, "coping as occasions arise." "How do your ability and knowledge compare to the late Zhou Yu's?" Sun Quan inquired. "My studies differ greatly from Gongjin's," Pang Tong replied, smiling. Sun Quan, offended even more by Tong's tone of disdain for the man he had so admired, simply said, "You may withdraw for now. We will call on you when we need you." Pang Tong gave a long sigh and left Sun Quan's presence.

To Lu Su's question, "My lord, why have you made Pang Tong no offer?" Sun Quan answered, "He's unorthodox, not a well-balanced scholar. What would I gain?" "Before the battle at Red Cliffs," Lu Su protested, "he was the one who persuaded Cao Cao to tie his ships together. He achieved the highest merit. My lord must have recognized that." "That time," Sun Quan responded, "Cao Cao wanted the boats linked. It may well have had nothing to do with the chap. He shall not serve me."

Lu Su left Sun Quan's presence and said to Pang Tong, "My strong recommendation notwithstanding, Lord Sun is not inclined to use you. Please have patience." Pang Tong lowered his head, sighed again, and said nothing. "You must have lost interest in remaining here?" Lu Su asked. Pang Tong did not answer. Lu Su pressed him: "You have the talent to see a king through times of trouble, and wherever you go you will succeed. You must answer me truthfully: where do you mean to go?" "To Cao Cao," Pang Tong finally said. "What value has a shining pearl in darkness!" Lu Su cried. "Go to Imperial Uncle Liu in Jingzhou. He will undoubtedly employ you according to your ability." "I would really prefer that. My first answer was not serious," Pang Tong admitted. "Let me give you a letter of introduction," said Lu Su. "In guiding Xuande, remember that above all the

houses of Sun and Liu must remain friendly and united against Cao Cao." "That has been my lifelong commitment," Tong replied. He asked for the letter and headed for Jingzhou.

Kongming was still away inspecting the four southern districts of Jingzhou that Liu Bei had asked him to administer, when the gate guards reported to Xuande: "The noted Southland scholar Pang Tong has come to offer his services." Xuande was familiar with the visitor's reputation and issued him an invitation to audience. Tong appeared but, instead of prostrating himself, merely gave a low bow. Xuande was dismayed by the man's ugly face, just as Sun Quan had been. He remarked, "Such a long trip must have been difficult for you." Without showing Xuande his letters from Kongming and Lu Su, Pang Tong answered simply, "The imperial uncle's reputation for receiving scholars induced me to offer my services." "The region has hardly settled down," Xuande responded, "and unfortunately we have no unoccupied offices. However, one hundred and thirty *li* to the northeast, in Leiyang county, they have no prefect—if such an assignment would be no imposition? When a more important post opens, I shall transfer you."

Pang Tong thought, "He's not taking me seriously," and started to urge his case more earnestly, but noting Kongming's absence, he grudgingly took his leave and went to Leiyang. After assuming his post, Pang Tong ignored county affairs and spent his time drinking and amusing himself, leaving all fiscal and legal matters unattended. His negligent performance was made known to Xuande, who said angrily, "How dare this pedant make a mess of my administration?" and ordered Zhang Fei to investigate the affairs of the southern Jingzhou counties. "If you see anything unfair or unlawful," Xuande instructed him, "gather all the facts and pass judgment on the spot. Take Sun Qian with you just in case."

As assigned, Zhang Fei went with Sun Qian to Leiyang county. They were met before the walls by the local civil and military officials. Pang Tong, however, was not to be seen. "Where is the prefect?" Zhang Fei asked. His staff officers replied, "Prefect Pang, from the moment he took office nearly one hundred days ago, has totally neglected county affairs. Every day he drinks wine, dallying in the land of the intoxicated from morning to night. Right now he is still sleeping off last night's binge." Zhang Fei was outraged and wanted to arrest him. But Sun Qian said, "Pang Tong is a high-minded man. Before we condemn him, let's go to his office and ask some questions. There will be time enough to take measures if he can't justify himself."

Zhang Fei entered the county offices, seated himself in the main hall, and summoned the prefect, who came tottering in, dress and cap in disarray. "My elder brother," Zhang Fei said angrily, "trusted you when he put this county in your hands. How dare you fail in your duties?" Pang Tong smiled and replied, "What duties do you find have been neglected, General?" "You've spent the last one hundred days here in a drunken stupor," Zhang Fei shot back. "How could you manage the county in such a state?" "I reckoned," responded Pang Tong, "that in a county this small, the few petty public matters we had shouldn't take much deciding. Wait here a bit while I dispose of them." Pang Tong called for the cases that had accumulated during the hundred days. His officers flocked into the hall carrying the papers. Petitioners and defendants formed a circle below Pang Tong's seat. The prefect wrote out judgments and delivered oral decisions as he heard the litigation, establishing right and wrong in each case with uncanny precision. The people knocked their heads to the ground and prostrated themselves to show reverence for his wisdom. Within half a day judgment had been passed in all the hundred days' cases. Pang Tong tossed his writing brush to the ground and said to Zhang Fei, "Well, show me the 'neglected business' now. Cao Cao? Sun Quan? They're an open book to me—so this scrap of a

county is no bother at all!" Amazed, Zhang Fei rose from his sitting mat and apologized: "My unworthy self has failed to recognize great talent, master. I will recommend you strongly to my brother when I return."

Only then did Pang Tong produce the letter of recommendation given him by Lu Su. "Master," Zhang Fei exclaimed, "why didn't you show this to begin with?" "Because," Tong replied, "I didn't want to rely solely on the letter." Zhang Fei turned to Sun Qian and said, "We would have lost a most worthy man had you not stopped me!" Zhang Fei bade Pang Tong good-bye and returned to Jingzhou, where he gave Xuande a full account of Pang Tong's abilities. The astounded Xuande commented: "This mistreatment of a highly capable man is entirely my fault." Zhang Fei handed his lord the letter from Lu Su, which read:

Pang Tong has too great a talent for a petty administration. He should be assigned to government documents or made assistant to a governor; then he will display his powers. If you judge him by his appearance, you run the risk of ignoring his learning; and he will end up in another's service—which would be a great pity.

Xuande read the letter and sighed deeply. At that moment Kongming returned and, after the formalities, began by asking, "Has Director General Pang Tong⁸ been in good health and spirits of late?" "I put him in charge of Leiyang," responded Xuande, "but his love of drink led him to neglect his office." Kongming smiled and said, "He is no minor talent. He has ten times more in his head than I do. Did he show you the letter of introduction I left with him?" "Today," Xuande replied, "I saw one from Lu Su, but none from you." "A great talent," Kongming said, "given minor office often loses himself in wine and neglects his tasks." "If not for Zhang Fei, I'd have lost him," Xuande admitted, and he sent Zhang Fei back to Leiyang with a new offer.

When Pang Tong arrived back in Jingzhou, Xuande descended the hall steps and acknowledged his error. Pang Tong handed him Kongming's letter of introduction recommending him for a major post without delay. Xuande was immensely pleased and said, "Sima Decao told me I could pacify the world with the help of either Sleeping Dragon or Young Phoenix.⁹ Now that I have both, the house of Han will rise again." Xuande made Pang Tong deputy-director general and Imperial Corps commander, in which capacities he joined Kongming in all strategy sessions and took over responsibility for training the army for the northern expedition.¹⁰

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Reports soon reached Cao Cao in Xuchang that Liu Bei, guided by Zhuge Liang and Pang Tong, was recruiting troops, gathering grain and fodder, and maintaining the Southland alliance in preparation for a northern campaign. In response, Cao Cao proposed another southern campaign to his advisers. At the meeting Xun Wenruo said, "Now that Zhou Yu is dead, you should first take Sun Quan and next attack Liu Bei." "If we undertake a distant campaign," Cao said, "Ma Teng could surprise the capital. During the Red Cliffs battle our camps hummed with rumors that Teng's Xiliang army would sack the capital. We must take every precaution." "Why not make Ma Teng General Who Conquers the South on the pretext of sending him to punish Sun Quan?" Xun Wenruo proposed. "Once we lure him into the capital and do away with him, we can advance south unhindered."¹¹ Cao

Cao welcomed this advice and sent a decree summoning Ma Teng from Xiliang.¹²

Ma Teng (Shoucheng) was a descendant of the famous general Ma Yuan, Tamer of the Deep.¹³ Teng's father, Su (Zishuo), had been a justice of the peace in Tianshui's Lan-gan county during the reign of Emperor Huan. Removed from office, Ma Su was stranded in Longxi and had settled among the Qiang people. He married a Qiang,¹⁴ and she gave birth to Teng. Ma Teng, though some eight spans tall, with a heroic physique and striking features, was of a gentle nature and widely respected. He recruited militia and aided the Han pacifications of the Qiang rebellions that plagued the end of Emperor Ling's reign. During the reign era Chu Ping, "Beginning Stability" (A.D. 190-94), Ma Teng was elevated to General Who Conquers the West in recognition of his successful campaigns. He had sworn brotherhood with Han Sui, General Who Garrisons the West.¹⁵

On receiving the imperial summons, Teng said to his eldest son, Ma Chao: "Since Dong Cheng gave me Emperor Xian's secret mandate,¹⁶ Liu Xuande has been my sworn ally in the loyalist campaigns. Alas, Dong Cheng is dead, and Liu Xuande has suffered numerous defeats while I, off in this remote western corner, have been able to do little for him. The news of Xuande's conquest of Jingzhou has rekindled my longstanding ambition to help the Han—but now a summons comes from Cao Cao. What am I to do?" Ma Chao replied, "Cao Cao acts with the Emperor's sanction. If you refuse to go, he will charge us with sedition. Take advantage of his summons and go to the capital. Make use of the occasion to fulfill your 'longstanding ambition.'"

But Ma Teng's nephew, Ma Dai, said, "Who can fathom Cao Cao's purposes? You could be going to your doom, uncle." Ma Chao then volunteered, "What's to stop me from following you to the capital with the whole Xiliang army and ridding the empire of this evil?" To this suggestion Ma Teng replied, "You remain here guarding Xiliang with your Qiang troops. My other sons, Xiu and Tie, and my nephew Ma Dai can follow me. When Cao Cao sees that you have stayed in Xiliang, assisted by Han Sui, he won't dare harm me." "Father," Ma Chao answered, "if you must go, do not enter the capital without precautions. Size up the situation and act according to the circumstances." "Don't worry," Ma Teng said, "I know what I'm doing." And so Ma Teng took five thousand Xiliang fighters with him, putting Ma Xiu and Ma Tie in the vanguard and Ma Dai in the rear. Following a tortuous route, they advanced to within twenty *li* of Xuchang before pitching camp.

Informed of these developments, Cao Cao summoned the imperial officer Huang Kui¹⁷ and instructed him: "Ma Teng is on a southern expedition. I am ordering you there to represent me as adjutant general. Go to Ma Teng's camp and greet his army; tell him I say that Xiliang is too far away for easy movement of supplies and that he is to take only a small force because I will be providing an army to support him. Have him enter the capital tomorrow and present himself before the Emperor; I will see to his grain and fodder at that time."

As ordered, Huang Kui went to see Ma Teng, who received him cordially and served him wine. After several rounds Kui said, "My father Huang Wan died in the coup of Li Jue and Guo Si,¹⁸ something I have always bitterly resented. I never thought I would meet up with another traitor!" "Who is a 'traitor'?" Ma Teng demanded. "Cao, the traitor who victimizes the Emperor. Do you have to ask?" Fearing Kui had been sent by Cao Cao to test him, Ma Teng stopped him at once, saying, "Eyes and ears are everywhere. Do not speak nonsense!" But Kui replied indignantly, "Have you really forgotten the imperial decree sewn into the clothing?" Ma Teng now knew that the envoy spoke sincerely, and quietly disclosed the real nature of his mission.

"Cao Cao wants to present you to the Emperor," Huang Kui said. "His intentions are anything but good; precautions must be taken. Station your men at the wall. When Cao Cao comes out to review them, kill him on the spot, and our work will be done." Their conference concluded, Huang Kui returned home, angrier than ever. His wife tried to find out what was bothering him, but he would say nothing. Unbeknownst to Kui, however, his concubine, Li Chunxiang, was having an affair with his brother-in-law, Miao Ze. Miao Ze had always wanted Chunxiang for himself but had no way to get her. Chunxiang, noting her master's indignation, said to Miao Ze, "Imperial Officer Huang seemed so perturbed after his military conference. I wonder why?" "Why don't you see if you can get something out of him?" Miao Ze suggested. "Ask him why everyone calls Liu Xuande humane and virtuous and Cao Cao a treacherous villain, then see how he responds."

That night Huang Kui went to Li Chunxiang's room, and the concubine coaxed the drunken man into saying, "Even a woman like you can tell the true from the twisted. Do you think I cannot? My deepest longing is to kill Cao Cao." "How could you do that?" she wanted to know. "I've arranged it with General Ma Teng," Huang Kui answered. "Tomorrow he'll be killed while reviewing the troops." Chunxiang reported her master's words to Miao Ze, who informed Cao Cao. Cao Cao alerted Cao Hong and Xu Chu, as well as Xiahou Yuan and Xu Huang, and gave each his instructions. Meanwhile, he had Huang Kui's entire family taken into custody.

The next day Ma Teng led his Xiliang army close to the wall of the capital. In front of him he saw a cluster of red flags flying the prime minister's insignia. Ma Teng, assuming that Cao Cao had come to inspect his force, raced forward. Suddenly a bombard sounded and the flags parted. Archers and crossbowmen fired simultaneously. Cao Hong had the lead command. As Ma Teng urgently turned, another round of bombards sounded. On the left Xu Chu came forth for the kill; on the right came Xiahou Yuan. To the rear Xu Huang cut off the Xiliang army, leaving Ma Teng and his two sons surrounded. Realizing he was trapped, Teng fought furiously. His son Tie was quickly brought down in a barrage of arrows; his other son, Xiu, stayed close to Teng, thrusting left and lunging right, but could not break free. Father and son were badly wounded. Their horses had already fallen and both were captured. Cao Cao ordered Ma Teng, Ma Xiu, and Huang Kui bound and brought before him.

"I am innocent," Huang Kui cried, but Miao Ze contradicted him. Ma Teng denounced Huang Kui: "Low-down bookworm! You have ruined our cause. But my failure today is Heaven's work." Cao Cao ordered him dragged out as the curses poured from his lips. Thus, Ma Teng and his son Xiu met their doom. A later poet left these lines of admiration:

Equal glory for the father and the sons!
Loyal and pure, they dignified their house.
They gave their lives to keep the royal house safe;
Their plighted faith requites their liege lord's love.
The sacred oath, blood-written, still remains;
The pact to punish treachery still stands.
This scion of Xiliang
Was worthy of the Sea Tamer Ma Yuan.

Miao Ze said to Cao Cao, "I desire no reward, only Chunxiang for my wife." But Cao Cao said with a laugh, "For the sake of a woman you ruined your brother-in-law's entire family. A man so

faithless does not deserve to live." With that, Cao Cao had Miao Ze, Chunxiang, and Huang Kui and his entire family executed in the public square. The spectators heaved sighs of despair. A poet of later times left these lines:

For lust Miao Ze condemned the loyalist:
He gained no bride, and Cao Cao sealed his doom.
Not even a vicious tyrant could condone
The base and futile plan Miao Ze had spun.

After the executions Cao Cao offered amnesty to the Xiliang troops, exonerating them of Ma Teng's plot. At the same time he ordered the passes sealed until Ma Dai was apprehended. Ma Dai, who had one thousand men in the rear, learned of the disaster from Ma Teng's escaping soldiers. Dai abandoned his men and fled, disguised as a traveling merchant.

After the execution of Ma Teng and the others, Cao Cao resolved to begin the southern campaign. Suddenly he received a report that Liu Bei was training troops and gathering weapons for an attempt on the Riverlands. Cao Cao was shocked. "If Liu Bei takes the western river region, he will have flown full-fledged beyond our reach." At these words someone stepped forward saying, "I know how to foil the Liu Bei-Sun Quan alliance so that both the Southland and the Riverlands will end up in Your Excellency's hands." Indeed:

Even as calamity befell the bold spirits of the west,
It threatened the southern heroes, too.

Who had a stratagem to offer?

READ ON.



***Ma Chao Avenges His Father in the Field;
Cao Ah Man Throws Down His Coat and Cuts Off His Beard***

THE MAN WHO STEPPED FORWARD to advise Cao Cao was Chen Qun (Zhangwen), an imperial censor in charge of petitions. "Do you have a sound plan, Zhangwen?" Cao Cao asked. He replied, "Liu Bei and Sun Quan depend on each other like lips and teeth. But Liu Bei's desire to seize the Riverlands offers Your Excellency a splendid opportunity: order your chief generals to join the armies now at Hefei for a direct strike on the south. Sun Quan will seek Liu Bei's help; but a Liu Bei bent on taking the west will care little about helping his eastern ally. And Sun Quan, without Bei's help, should offer little resistance, Your Excellency. Once you have the Southland, Jingzhou will fall with a roll of the drums. From there we can conquer the west at our leisure—and make the realm our own at last!" "Chen Qun speaks my thoughts!" Cao Cao exclaimed. He called up three hundred thousand troops for the campaign and ordered Zhang Liao at Hefei to prepare the necessary supplies.

Swift spies informed Sun Quan, who called his commanders together. His senior adviser Zhang Zhao said, "Have Lu Su write at once to Xuande, asking his help against Cao Cao. Xuande should agree, as he owes Lu Su a great deal. Moreover, Xuande is our son-in-law, honor-bound not to refuse. His help will keep our land safe." Sun Quan accepted the proposal, and Lu Su accordingly sent a letter.

After quartering the messenger at a guesthouse, Xuande sent to Nanjun for Kongming. Kongming returned to Jingzhou to advise Xuande on the Southland's request; he said, "There's no need for them or for us to mobilize. I'll see to it that Cao Cao never turns his eyes southward again." He then wrote Lu Su: "You may sleep in peace. If the northerners make the slightest move, the imperial uncle has the perfect plan for driving them back." With this reply Kongming sent the envoy home.

Xuande asked Kongming, "Master, what plan do you have for keeping three hundred thousand troops, plus the army at Hefei, from advancing en masse?" "Cao constantly worries about the Xiliang troops," Kongming replied. "He has killed Ma Teng; Teng's son, Chao, now commands that army and burns for revenge on the traitor. My lord, write a letter opening relations with Ma Chao. If he will march on the north, what freedom will Cao have left for a southern campaign?" Highly satisfied with this advice, Xuande sent a trusted courier off to Xiliang.¹

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In Xiliang, Ma Chao dreamed that tigers had attacked him when he fell in the snow. Waking in panic, he gathered his commanders and advisers to consider the meaning of the omen. "An evil sign!" a follower said. Everyone turned to Pang De (Lingming), one of the Ma's trusted commandants. "Speak your thoughts," Ma Chao said. "To meet tigers in the snow," Pang De responded, "is a dire

dream portent. Can it be that the old general, Ma Teng, has met with some mishap in the capital?" Even as he spoke, a warrior scrambled in and flung himself to the ground, weeping. "Uncle and both cousins are dead," he cried. It was Ma Dai. "Uncle Teng," Ma Dai continued, "planned with Imperial Officer Huang Kui to kill Cao; but, alas, the scheme got out and all were executed publicly. Your brothers Tie and Xiu also met their doom. Only I, disguised as a merchant, managed to escape." At this news Ma Chao collapsed in tears and had to be helped to his feet. Ma Chao ground his teeth in hatred for Cao. At that moment Liu Xuande's envoy arrived with the letter from Jingzhou. Ma Chao read it:

My thoughts dwell on the misfortune that has befallen the house of Han. Because the traitor Cao has usurped power and wronged the sovereign, the common people are in misery. In the past your honored father and I received a secret decree on which we swore to punish the traitor. Now your honored father has been murdered by Cao; it is a crime that must be avenged. If you will lead your forces against Cao from the west, I shall check him to the south with my Jingzhou army. Then the renegade can be apprehended, the rebel party eliminated, your father avenged, and the house of Han restored. This letter tells but a fraction of my thoughts. I await your response anxiously.²

Brushing aside his tears, Ma Chao wrote a response to Xuande's letter and sent it back to Jingzhou with the envoy; he then mustered his army. Chao was about to march east when Han Sui, governor of Xiliang, called for him. Ma Chao went to Han Sui's residence and was shown a letter from Cao Cao that said, "If you will deliver Ma Chao to the capital, I will have you enfeoffed at once as lord of Xiliang." Ma Chao flung himself to the ground and said, "Uncle, I beg you, deliver me and my cousin, Dai, to Xuchang and spare yourself the ordeals of war." Han Sui raised Ma Chao to his feet. "Your father and I were sworn brothers," he said. "Could I harm his son? Take the field and I shall give you every support." Ma Chao thanked Han Sui profoundly. Han Sui had Cao Cao's messenger put to death. He then detailed eight companies to march east under his personal command. The eight commanders—Hou Xuan, Cheng Yin, Li Kan, Zhang Heng, Liang Xing, Cheng Yi, Ma Wan, and Yang Qiu—joined Pang De and Ma Dai, who were under Ma Chao's command. All told, two hundred thousand western troops marched on Chang'an.³

The governor of Chang'an, Zhong Yao, sped the news to Cao Cao, then drew his forces up to repel the enemy, deploying them on open ground.⁴ The vanguard of the Xiliang troops under Ma Dai, numbering fifteen thousand, moved across the land like a flood tide, covering the hills and filling the valleys. When Governor Zhong Yao rode forth to answer the invaders, Ma Dai brought his fine sword into play. But moments later the governor fled in defeat as Dai raised his sword and pursued him. Ma Chao and Han Sui arrived with the main armies and surrounded Chang'an. Zhong Yao ascended the wall, from there to direct the city's defense.

Once the site of the capital of the Western Han, Chang'an had formidable walls and moats, which saved it from succumbing at once to Ma Chao's assault. After the city had withstood a continuous siege for ten days, Pang De advised: "Inside, the soil is hard and the water too saline for drinking. They have no firewood, either. The siege has reduced army and inhabitants to hunger. Let us pull back for a time to see what happens. I think Chang'an will fall into our hands." "An ingenious plan!" exclaimed Ma Chao and sent his command banner around to each field army ordering a retreat, while

he personally guarded the rear. The various commands gradually withdrew.

The next day Governor Zhong Yao mounted the wall and viewed the evacuated field skeptically. Only when his scouts reported that the invaders were indeed far off did he relax enough to allow the inhabitants and soldiers out of the city to find fuel and water, and to open the main gates to traffic. On the fifth day the return of Ma Chao's forces was reported, and everyone flocked back into the walls, which Zhong Yao sealed and guarded once again.

Now, Zhong Yao's younger brother Jin was defending the west gate, and it was somewhere near there during the third watch that fire broke out.⁵ When Zhong Jin rushed to the scene, a man rode hard toward him from the wall, sword bared, shouting, "Pang De is here!" Before Zhong Jin could defend himself, Pang De had cut him down, dispersed his guard, and broken open the entrance. Ma Chao and Han Sui entered with their forces, and the governor abandoned the city by the east gate. Ma Chao and Han Sui took possession of Chang'an and rewarded their armies. Governor Zhong Yao retreated to Tong Pass and informed Cao Cao of what had occurred.⁶

The loss of Chang'an put an end to all discussion of a southern campaign. Cao Cao summoned generals Cao Hong and Xu Huang and instructed them: "Take a force of ten thousand and help Zhong Yao hold Tong Pass. If in the next ten days the pass is lost, both of you will be executed. After ten days your responsibility ends. I will bring up the main army." The two generals sped to the pass with their orders. Cao Ren, however, raised an objection: "Cao Hong is unstable. He could ruin everything." Cao Cao said, "You deliver the supplies, then, and reinforce the front."

Cao Hong and Xu Huang reached the pass and helped Zhong Yao guard the cross-points but did not show themselves to the enemy. Ma Chao led his troops below the pass and loudly defamed Cao Cao, his father, and his grandfather. Outraged, Cao Hong wanted to descend and fight, but Xu Huang said, "He only wants to provoke you. Do not engage him. When His Excellency arrives with the main army, he will have a master plan." Ma Chao's troops hurled up their taunts day and night, but Xu Huang managed to restrain Cao Hong. On the ninth day they saw from the height that the western soldiers had freed their horses and were lounging on the grass. Most were sleeping on the ground, exhausted. Cao Hong called for horses and detailed three thousand to go down from the pass and slaughter the enemy. The western soldiers fled, abandoning weapons and horses, and Cao Hong tracked them.

Xu Huang, who had been tending the grain supplies at the pass, was shocked to hear that Cao Hong had gone down to fight. He lit out after him to call him back. But shouts to the rear brought him up short. Ma Dai accosted him for battle. Cao Hong and Xu Huang tried desperately to escape. But at the signal of pounding sticks two more armies cut them off: to the left, Ma Chao; to the right, Pang De. A frenzied clash ensued. Cao Hong could not hold his ground. Half his men were lost before he broke through the enemy lines and bolted for the pass. The Xiliang troops gave chase, and Hong fled, abandoning the pass. Pang De plunged on through and saw that Cao Ren had rescued Cao Hong. At that moment Ma Chao arrived and took the pass with Pang De.

Cao Hong rushed back to Cao Cao. "You had a limit of ten days," Cao said, "and yet you lost the pass on the ninth." "The western soldiers abused us so foully that when their discipline looked lax, I seized the chance, little expecting a trap," Hong explained. "You are young and unstable," Cao Cao responded. "But, Xu Huang, you should have known better." "I did all I could to stop him," Xu Huang said. "That day I was above the pass inspecting the grain wagons. Before I knew what was happening, our young commander here had gone down to fight. I was afraid something would go wrong and

raced after him—but too late." Cao Cao, in great anger, called for Cao Hong's execution. On his commanders' appeal, however, the order was suspended. Cao Hong acknowledged his offense and withdrew.

Cao Cao marched straight to Tong Pass. Cao Ren said, "Camp before you attack." Cao Cao ordered barricades built with felled trees and sited three camps: on the left, Cao Ren's; on the right, Xiahou Yuan's; in the center, his own. The next day Cao Cao led the men and officers of the three camps en masse in a charge on the crosspoints. When they confronted the Xiliang army, each side assumed formation. Cao Cao rode out below his banners to observe the enemy: all of them brave and hardy warriors, veritable heroes. He also noted Ma Chao: a visage as light as if coated with powder; lips as red as if daubed with Vermillion; narrow-waisted, broad-shouldered, with a powerful voice and vigorous physique; clad in white battle gown and helmet.⁷

Gripping a long spear, Ma Chao, flanked by Pang De and Ma Dai, sat poised on his horse in front of his line. Cao Cao pondered the scene with admiration, then he rode toward Ma Chao and said, "You are descended from a renowned general of the Han. Why do you rebel?" Grimacing, Ma Chao replied, "Thief! Traitor who wrongs our Emperor! Execution would be too light. Murderer of my father and my brothers! We two are 'enemies who cannot share one sky.' If I catch you alive, I'll chew your flesh!" So saying, he held his spear high and charged.

From behind Cao Cao, Yu Jin emerged and engaged Ma Chao but retired defeated after eight or nine clashes. Zhang He suffered the same fate after some twenty clashes. Li Tong came out. Ma Chao, flaunting his powers, took him on and, in only a few bouts, dropped him with a thrust of his spear. Then the Xiliang troops, beckoned by a wave of Ma Chao's spear, came up in full career and did bloody work with Cao Cao's troops, whose commanders broke before the fierce onslaught of the western army. Ma Chao, Pang De, and Ma Dai plunged into the center camp to capture Cao Cao. In the confusion Cao Cao heard the westerners cry, "Cao's in the red battle gown!" No sooner had Cao Cao stripped off the garment⁸ than he heard another cry, "Cao Cao—with a long beard!" In panic Cao Cao cut his beard with his knife. Someone informed Ma Chao, who spread the word that Cao Cao now had short whiskers. Hearing this, Cao Cao tore off a corner of his banner and wound it round his neck. A poet of later times wrote of the rout at Tong Pass:⁹

For Cao Cao, dire defeat and frantic flight:
He shed his gorgeous surcoat for disguise
And hacked his beard, driven by his fright,
While Ma Chao's fame was mounting to the skies.

Fleeing, Cao Cao turned to confront the rider closing in—Ma Chao! Cao panicked. His commanders bolted, leaving Cao Cao to fend for himself. Ma Chao cried harshly, "Stand your ground!" The whip fell from Cao's trembling hand. Moments later Ma Chao, overtaking him, thrust with his spear. Cao Cao ducked behind a tree. The point stuck fast in the trunk. As Ma Chao struggled with it, Cao moved off. Ma Chao raced for him but, rounding a hill, found a warrior who shouted to him, "Stand back from my lord! Cao Hong here!" His sword whirling, Hong confronted Ma Chao, enabling Cao Cao to get away. Hong and Chao fought forty or fifty bouts until gradually Hong's swordplay became confused and his energy flagged. When Xiahou Yuan arrived with several dozen horsemen, Ma Chao turned and rode back, fearing foul play. Xiahou Yuan did not give chase.

On returning to camp Cao Cao found few losses, thanks to Cao Ren's determined defense. Cao Cao entered his command tent and said, "Had I not spared Cao Hong, I would have died at Ma Chao's hands." He summoned Cao Hong and rewarded him handsomely. He then collected the defeated troops, mounted vigilant defense over the camps, and adopted a strictly defensive posture.¹⁰

Every day Ma Chao came before the camps to revile Cao Cao and hurl battle taunts. Cao banned all response and ordered any unauthorized move punished by death. The commanders said, "All the westerners wield long spears. We should hit back with our archers and crossbowmen!" "To fight or not to fight," Cao Cao replied, "rests with me, not with the rebels. Can those long spears reach us here? Keep to the walls, gentlemen, and watch; they will retire of their own accord." But the commanders grumbled among themselves, "His Excellency has always taken the van. Maybe Ma Chao's victory has shaken his confidence."

Several days later a spy reported, "Ma Chao has added twenty thousand fresh troops, men from the Qiang tribes." The news delighted Cao Cao. His commanders said, "What does this mean? Ma Chao is reinforced, and Your Excellency is delighted?" "I'll explain it to you when I have defeated them," Cao Cao retorted. Three days later Cao Cao learned that the pass had been reinforced a second time. Cao again expressed satisfaction and held a congratulatory banquet in his tent. His commanders snickered. Cao Cao challenged them: "Do you think I have no plan for destroying Ma Chao? What do you propose?" Xu Huang came forward and said, "Your Excellency has ample troops here. The rebels, too, are concentrated at the pass, leaving the western side of the river vulnerable. We could make things pretty difficult for them if we sent one company secretly across Cattail Shoal and cut off their retreat while Your Excellency struck the rebel troops from the north before they could be aided." "Exactly my thought," Cao Cao said.

Cao Cao sent Xu Huang and Zhu Ling with four thousand picked troops to cross to the western side of the Yellow River¹¹ and set ambushes in the terrain. Cao told them to wait until he too had crossed the Yellow River for a joint attack. As assigned, Xu Huang and Zhu Ling crossed with four thousand, while Cao Hong readied rafts at Cattail Shoal. Cao Ren guarded the camps. Cao Cao prepared to lead his men north across the Wei River.

Spies informed Ma Chao, who said, "Instead of attacking Tong Pass, Cao Cao is making rafts to cross the river. He means to interdict us. I shall take a company upstream along the west bank and block his crossing. Within twenty days his supplies on the east side will give out. When his men begin protesting, I'll drop back south along the river and take him." Han Sui said, "Is that really necessary? Don't you know the rule of military science, 'Strike while they're halfway across'? Wait for Cao Cao's men to get halfway over, then strike from the southern shore. They'll all perish in the river." "Good advice indeed, uncle," said Ma Chao and sent spies to discover the time of Cao Cao's crossing.

Cao Cao completed his deployment into three armies and advanced to the river. His men reached the juncture of the rivers at sunrise.¹² First, Cao sent a select team over to the northern shore to break ground for camps. Then, with one hundred personal guards, Cao sat on the south shore, hand on sword, watching the troops embark. Suddenly a report came: "A general in white behind us!" It had to be Ma Chao. The men made for the boats, shouting furiously as they clambered aboard. But Cao Cao, hand firmly on his sword, did not budge, intent on calming the uproar.

The battle cries of the enemy and the wild whinnying of their horses preceded the onslaught. A commander leaped ashore and shouted, "It's the rebels! Get in this boat, Your Excellency." Cao Cao

turned to Xu Chu; the words "Who cares?" were still in his mouth when he spotted Ma Chao barely one hundred paces away. Xu Chu dragged Cao Cao toward the boat, but it had moved some ten spans from shore. Xu Chu put Cao on his back and vaulted in. Cao's guards jumped into the water and clutched the gunwales, causing the little craft to tip. Xu Chu hacked wildly at their hands, slicing many off into the water. The boat then shot downriver, Xu Chu in the stern working a pole to punt it. Cao Cao crouched at his feet.

Ma Chao came to the river's edge and watched Cao's boat pulling away. He hefted his bow and fitted an arrow to the string, shouting to his mounted commanders who out-raced the boat and raked it with bolts. Xu Chu held up his saddle to shield Cao Cao, but Ma Chao's shots took their toll: one after another the oarsmen toppled into the water. On board dozens lay wounded. The boat began to swerve and spin in the swift stream. In a burst of energy Xu Chu wrapped his legs around the tiller and guided the boat, poling with one arm and using the other to protect Cao Cao with his saddle. Meanwhile, from a hill to the south, Ding Fei, prefect of Weinan county, had been watching Ma Chao gaining on Cao Cao. Ding Fei urgently ordered all oxen and horses in his care driven into the open country, causing the Xiliang troops to lose all heart for pursuing Cao as they chased the herds, hoping to catch a prize for themselves. Thus Cao Cao finally escaped.

When Cao reached the north shore, he sank his rafts. His commanders who had heard of his escape were already on shore to assist as he landed. The leather cuirass of Xu Chu's heavy armor was studded with arrows. The commanders escorted Cao Cao to a bivouac, where they prostrated themselves and expressed concern for Cao. But he only laughed and said, "That little rebel nearly got me today!" "Somebody lured the rebels away with animals," Xu Chu added, "or they would have done their utmost to get across." Cao Cao asked who the man was, and someone replied, "Ding Fei, prefect of Weinan."

Shortly afterward, Ding Fei appeared before the prime minister. Cao Cao thanked him and said, "They would have caught me except for your excellent trick." Cao then appointed him a commandant for military standards.¹³ Ding Fei said, "They may be gone for now, but they'll return tomorrow. We'll need a good defense." "I am ready for them," Cao Cao said. He called on his commanders to split up and picket the corridor along the river to make a temporary barrier. Behind the pickets, battle banners served as decoys while troops were deployed outside in case of attack. Cao's men also dug trenches along the bank and covered them with reeds and brush, hoping to entice the rebels to land there.

Meanwhile, Ma Chao had met with Han Sui, to whom he said, "We almost caught Cao Cao! But some commander in a display of courage bore him back to the boat. I wonder who it was." "They say," Han Sui responded, "that Cao Cao has placed around him a select guard of superb warriors known as the Tiger Guard, led by the Valiant Cavalier generals Dian Wei and Xu Chu. Since Dian Wei is dead, it must have been Xu Chu who rescued him. He has extraordinary strength and courage and has been dubbed the Mad Tiger. Not a man to risk opposing." "A name long known to me, too," replied Ma Chao. "Cao Cao has crossed the river," Han Sui went on, "and means to surprise us from behind. We must attack before he can fortify, or we'll never clear him out." "My own preference, uncle," Ma Chao said, "would be to deploy on the north shore of the Wei and keep them from crossing it." "Worthy nephew," Han Sui answered, "you guard the camp while I advance along the riverbank to fight Cao Cao. What do you say?" "Let Pang De take the van for you," was the reply. And so Han Sui and Pang De took fifty thousand to Weinan. Cao Cao told his commanders to lure them on from both

sides of the picketed shore road. Pang De struck first with one thousand armored cavalry. They crashed down into the covered pits before their hoots and cries had faded from the air.

Pang De, however, with a mighty lunge succeeded in getting back to flat ground where he smote Cao's men as he marched forward to break the encirclement. He turned back to save Han Sui but was blocked by Cao Ren's field captain, Cao Yong. Pang De felled him with a sword stroke and seized his horse. Mounted, Pang De pulled Han Sui from danger, cutting a bloody swath, and fled to the southeast. Behind him, Cao Cao's troops were catching up, but Ma Chao came to his aid and sent them reeling back, so that the better part of the western army was saved. The battle lasted until dark. Surveying the toll, Ma Chao found that he had lost commanders Cheng Yin and Zhang Heng, as well as more than two hundred men in the pits.

Ma Chao and Han Sui took counsel. "Delay," Ma Chao said, "will enable Cao Cao to establish permanent fortifications north of the river. We have to raid their camps with a small cavalry force tonight." "We'd better divide our forces so we can assist each other," Han Sui replied. Ma Chao accordingly took the forward army and put Pang De and Ma Dai in command of the rear, preparing to march that night.

Cao Cao gathered his troops and positioned himself north of the River Wei. He told his commanders, "The rebels will attack our bivouacs as we have not yet built forts. Hide troops all around but leave the core area vacant. A bombard will signal the moment to come out; we will capture them on the first onslaught." The command was carried out.

That night Ma Chao did not come himself, however. He sent Commander Cheng Yi ahead with thirty mounted scouts. Seeing no one, Cheng Yi went straight to the center of the camps. Cao Cao's men saw the western riders and sprang their ambush, only to find a mere thirty horsemen in their trap. Cheng Yi fell to Xiahou Yuan. But Ma Chao then came on from behind, together with the armies of Pang De and Ma Dai, and stormed the scene in a murderous assault. Indeed:

Though Cao had laid an ambush for the foe,
Their able leaders were striving to excel.

How would this crucial engagement turn out?¹⁴

READ ON.



Xu Chu Strips Down and Duels with Ma Chao; Cao Cao's Doctored Letter Turns Ma Chao Against Han Sui

BOTH ARMIES FOUGHT FIERCELY, their formations deteriorating, until recalled at dawn. By then Ma Chao had the mouth of the Wei and was dispatching troops steadily to harass Cao Cao front and rear.

Cao Cao linked his boats and rafts, making three bridges to the southern shore; Cao Ren built camps on both sides of the river and made a barrier out of his freight wagons Ma Chao, intent on stopping Cao Cao from establishing a fortified position, provided his men with sheaves of hay and other kindling. Then Chao and Han Sui carried the fight to the enemy camps where they set bonfires with the piles of straw, forcing the northerners to flee as the wagon train and floating bridges went up in flames. The triumphant westerners now held the River Wei. Cao Cao, unable to fortify his positions, was apprehensive. Xun You advised using soil, so Cao Cao assigned thirty thousand men to carry mud from the river to make a defensive wall. But Ma Chao had Pang De and Ma Dai harass the workers with small cohorts of five hundred. On top of that, the mud did not solidify and the walls kept collapsing. Cao Cao was at his wits' end.

It was the end of the ninth month (A.D. 211) and bitterly cold. Dense clouds covered the sky day after day. Cao Cao brooded in his tent, wondering what to do. An attendant reported: "An old man is here to see Your Excellency to speak of tactics." The visitor admitted to Cao Cao's presence was a man of great age, thin and angular like a crane, craggy and austere like a pine tree. He turned out to be Lou Zibo from Jingzhao, a recluse, who dwelt in the Zhongnan Mountains and had the Taoist name Hermit Who Dreams of Plum Blossoms. Cao Cao treated him as an honored guest.

"Your Excellency," Zibo said, "has long been trying to fortify both sides of the River Wei. Is this not the ideal moment?" "The earth is too sandy," Cao Cao replied. "What I build doesn't hold up. Perhaps a retired man of learning like yourself would have some useful advice?" "What surprises me," responded the visitor, "is that a master of military operations like yourself is not taking the climate into account. It's been overcast for days on end. With the first gales from the north, everything will freeze. After that happens have your men move the earth and wet it down. By dawn the walls can be completed. Cao Cao saw his point. Lou Zibo then left, declining Cao's offer of a rich reward.

That night the north wind blew. Cao Cao ordered every soldier to bring up mud and wet it. Having no pots or jars, they carried water in watertight silk pouches, pouring it on the wall as they built. By dawn the water and sand had frozen and the walls had firmed.

Spies informed Ma Chao, who came and gazed at the finished structure, which he thought could be nothing less than the result of divine action. The next day he gathered his army and advanced to the rolling of his drums. Cao Cao rode out of the camp, attended only by Xu Chu. Flourishing his whip, he shouted, "Cao Cao comes, alone. Let Ma Chao come forth and answer for himself." Spear held high, Ma Chao rode out. Cao Cao said, "You were too confident that we couldn't build this wall. I

have built it in a single night. Why have you not surrendered yet?" Angered, Ma Chao started for Cao, but suspecting the guard behind him was Xu Chu—monstrous, wide-staring eyes, blade in hand, set to charge—he flourished his whip again and cried, "Where is that Tiger Lord of yours?" Xu Chu raised his sword and shouted, "Xu Chu of Qiao." His eyes emitted a supernatural light. His fighting spirit was palpable. Ma Chao froze, then turned his horse and retired. Cao Cao, too, led Xu Chu back to camp. Both armies watched, dumbfounded.

Cao Cao said to his commanders, "Even the rebel can see that Xu Chu is a Tiger Lord." From then on the name stuck to Xu Chu. "Tomorrow," Xu Chu vowed, "I will capture him." "He's a splendid warrior," Cao Cao warned. "Don't take chances." "I shall fight to the death," Xu Chu declared and had a letter sent in the name of the Tiger Lord challenging Ma Chao to single combat. The letter angered Ma Chao, who said, "He dares express such contempt for me?" He swore to kill the "Mad Tiger" the next day.

On the morrow the opposing armies deployed. Ma Chao placed Pang De on his left, Ma Dai on his right; Han Sui held down the center. Ma Chao, spear high, rode swiftly to the front of his line and cried, "Let's have the Mad Tiger!" Cao Cao, beneath his banners, turned to his commanders and was saying, "Ma Chao is another Lü Bu!" when Xu Chu rode out to battle, his blade dancing. The warriors closed and fought a hundred bouts, but neither could prevail. Each got a fresh horse and returned to the combat. Another hundred clashes produced no victor. Xu Chu's blood was up. He dashed back to his lines and stripped off helmet and armor, revealing muscles that stood out all over his body. Sword in hand, he remounted and came for Ma Chao once again. The armies watched, breathless.

After another thirty passages, Xu Chu swung a mighty blow in a burst of energy; but Ma Chao ducked, then charged, leveling his spear at Xu Chu's heart. Xu Chu threw down his sword to clasp the oncoming spear under his arm. The two riders struggled for the spear. Xu Chu, the more powerful, roared and snapped the shaft in two, leaving them each with a fragment with which they belabored one another. Cao Cao, fearing for Xu Chu, ordered Xiahou Yuan and Cao Hong into the battle. Pang De and Ma Dai on Ma Chao's side signaled mailclad horsemen from either wing to join the fray. In the murderous melee that followed, Cao Cao's troops became disorganized. Xu Chu took two arrows in his arm, and Cao's panicked commanders withdrew into camp. Ma Chao fought his way to the riverside. Half his troops fallen, Cao Cao ordered the camp sealed. No one could go out.

Ma Chao returned to the mouth of the Wei and said to Han Sui, "I've never seen such a vicious fighter. Mad Tiger, indeed!" Cao Cao, however, judged Ma Chao vulnerable to trickery and secretly ordered Xu Huang and Zhu Ling to cross the Yellow River slightly above its angle and fortify the west bank for a two-fronted attack. Several days later Cao Cao observed Ma Chao from the wall approach his front outworks with a few hundred riders and there race back and forth. After watching him for a long time, Cao Cao threw his headgear to the ground and cried, "This Ma must die! Or I shall have no burying place!" Xihou Yuan answered hotly, "I will crush the Ma rebels or die here in the attempt." So saying, he led his thousand men into the field, and Cao Cao, unable to stop him yet fearing for his life, hastily mounted to support him.

Ma Chao, seeing the enemy in the field again, switched his van and rear squadrons and deployed in a single file. As Xiahou Yuan arrived, Ma Chao engaged his force directly. Ma Chao, surrounded by the turmoil of battle, spotted Cao Cao in the distance and went at him, shaking off Xiahou Yuan. Frightened, Cao Cao wheeled and fled. His order of battle began falling apart. Ma Chao gave hot pursuit but pulled back to camp on the stunning news that Cao Cao's men had fortified the west bank.

Ma Chao consulted with Han Sui. "They saw their opening and crossed to the west bank," Chao said. "They have us, van and rear. What to do?" Lieutenant Commander Li Kan said, "Offer them a piece of our land, and let each side withdraw. Let us get through the winter, and we'll think of something else when spring comes." "Good advice," Han Sui said. "Take it."

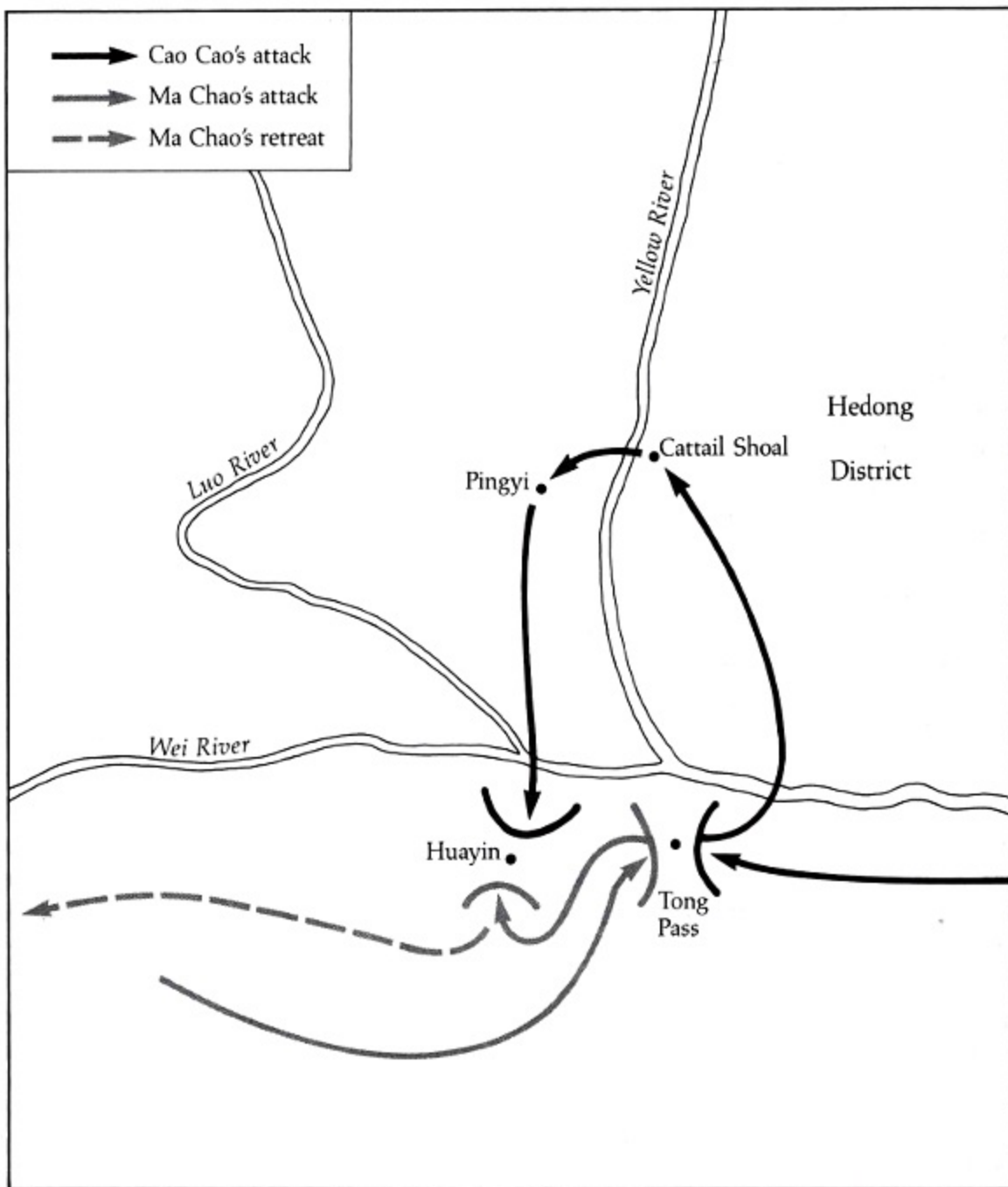
Ma Chao hesitated. But the other commanders, Yang Qiu and Hou Xuan, urged him to seek peace. And so Han Sui sent Yang Qiu to Cao Cao with an offer of territory. Cao Cao said to the envoy, "You may return to your camp. I will send my answer tomorrow." Yang Qiu departed. Jia Xu entered Cao Cao's tent and said, "What is Your Excellency's decision?" "What's your view?" Cao Cao replied. "In warfare," Jia Xu said, "there can never be too much trickery. Agree to it now and later we can find a way to turn them against each other. If Han Sui and Ma Chao become suspicious of each other, we won't have much trouble destroying them." Cao Cao clapped his hands with satisfaction and said, "Great thinkers think alike! Your plans accord perfectly with my own thinking."

Cao Cao returned the following answer: "Give us time to pull back and we will return the west bank." Accordingly, Cao Cao had his pontoon bridges set up as an indication of his intention to recross the river and withdraw. On receiving this note, Ma Chao said to Han Sui, "Although Cao Cao has agreed to a peace, he is too treacherous to read clearly. Unless we are prepared, we could fall into his hands. Let's rotate our forces. Today you take Cao Cao, uncle, and I'll take Xu Huang; tomorrow we'll switch. Our separate defense should foil any tricks they try." Ma Chao and Han Sui proceeded accordingly.

A courier soon apprised Cao Cao of these tactics. "Now we will succeed," Cao said privately to Jia Xu. Then he asked the runner, "Whom will I be facing tomorrow?" "Han Sui," was the reply. The next day Cao Cao rode out of camp, a lone rider conspicuous in the midst of his accompanying lieutenants. Han Sui's soldiers, few of whom had ever seen Cao Cao, stared at him. Cao Cao cried: "You'd like a look at Lord Cao? I'm only human; I haven't got four eyes or two mouths—I'm just full of ideas, a bit smarter, that's all!" Han Sui's men blanched. Cao sent a message: "His Excellency earnestly requests a meeting with General Han. "

Han Sui appeared and, seeing Cao Cao completely unarmed, put off his own gear and rode forth alone. As the horses touched heads, their masters reined in and began talking "General," Cao Cao said, "your father and I were cited as filial and honest in the same year, and he was ever like an uncle to me. You and I, moreover, have both served the Emperor. The years have slipped by. How old are you now, General?" "Forty," was his reply "Those days in the capital," Cao Cao went on, "that was our springtide, our youth. Who would have expected the middle years to come so soon! If only the world were at peace if we could have the pleasure of one another's company . . ." And Cao Cao continued making small talk about the past, never alluding to the military situation. After two hours they parted, Cao laughing heartily, and returned to their respective camps.

As soon as the incident was reported to Ma Chao, he hurried to Han Sui and demanded, "What was Cao Cao talking about today?" "Nothing—the old days in the capital," was Han Sui's reply. "Why did you say nothing about the fighting?" Ma Chao demanded. "He didn't mention it," answered Han Sui, "how could I?" But suspicion had been planted. Ma Chao withdrew without another word.



MAP 5. The battle at the Wei River. Source: Liu Chunfan, *Sanguo shihua* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), p. 114.

In camp Cao Cao asked his adviser Jia Xu, "Did you know the purpose of my conversation with Han Sui?" "It was an ingenious one," Jia Xu responded, "but not enough to divide your enemies. I know a way, however, to engender hatred between them." "Yes?" Cao Cao inquired. "A brawny brute like Ma Chao," Jia Xu went on, "knows nothing of intrigue. Your Excellency, write Han Sui in your own hand, something vague in content, smearing or scratching out words and writing over others in the important parts. Send it to Han Sui, sealed, but make sure Ma Chao knows so that he'll be certain to ask to see the letter. The alterations will make him suspect that Han Sui has doctored it to keep him from discovering some secret activity. This will confirm his suspicions about the conversation on horseback—suspicions that will breed confusion between them. Furthermore, if we can quietly create friction between him and Han Sui's commanders, Ma Chao will be as good as dead." "An excellent plan!" Cao Cao said and wrote Han Sui as Jia Xu had advised, conspicuously sending a number of his followers to bear the envelope.¹

As expected, Ma Chao soon learned of the letter and went directly to Han Sui, demanding to see it. When Han Sui handed him the letter, Ma Chao, noting the deletions and changes, asked, "Why are these passages all blotted out?" "That's how it came," Han Sui replied. "I don't know why." "Why would he send a rough draft?" Ma Chao continued. "Uncle, you must have changed something so that I wouldn't find out certain details." "He must have sealed the draft by mistake," Han Sui countered. "I'm not convinced," Ma Chao said. "Cao Cao is far too meticulous for that. You and I, uncle, have joined to fight that traitor. Why are you double-crossing me?" "If you do not trust me," replied Han Sui, "then let me lure Cao Cao into conversation again tomorrow; you can race out and kill him with a spear stroke." "That would show your sincerity, uncle," was Ma Chao's reply. So it was agreed.

Next day Han Sui led five commanders—Hou Xuan, Li Kan, Liang Xing, Ma Wan, and Yang Qiu—onto the field. Ma Chao was concealed in the shadows of the opening of the formation. Han Sui sent a man to Cao Cao's camp. "General Han Sui," he called out, "requests that the prime minister come forth and continue the talk." Cao Cao had Cao Hong lead a few score horsemen out to answer Han Sui. Cao Hong rode to within a few feet of Han Sui, bent forward over his horse, and said, "His Excellency was most gratified by your words last night. Let there be no slipup." He then rode back to his line. Ma Chao overheard and flew into a rage. Raising his spear, he forged ahead and struck at Han Sui. The five commanders intervened and tried to get Ma Chao back to camp. "Worthy nephew," Han Sui cried, "you must not doubt me. I bear you no malice." But Ma Chao, having lost all confidence in Han Sui, left in a vengeful mood.

Taking counsel with his five commanders, Han Sui asked, "How can this be made right?" Yang Qiu said, "With his martial skill, Ma Chao thinks too highly of himself; he has always tended to bully you. Even if Cao Cao is defeated, Chao will continue in his arrogance. In my humble opinion we should secretly enter Lord Cao's service; later you will have a lordship for sure." "Ma Teng and I were sworn brothers," Han Sui said. "I cannot bear to betray that trust." "There is no choice, at this point,"² responded Yang Qiu. "Then who will take the message?" Han Sui asked. "I'll do it," Yang Qiu answered. And so Han Sui sent Yang Qiu to Cao Cao's camp with a secret offer of surrender.

Cao Cao received this letter with great delight. He had Han Sui enfeoffed as lord of Xiliang and Yang Qiu as governor. The other commanders received official appointments all. They agreed on signal fires to coordinate their moves against Ma Chao. After taking leave, Yang Qiu reported to Han Sui in full, adding, "Tonight at the signal, those inside and those outside will work together." Well pleased, Han Sui ordered his men to accumulate kindling behind the tents of the central army. The five

commanders waited with their weapons near to hand. Han Sui had also proposed holding a banquet in order to murder Ma Chao, but this plan had not yet been put into action.

Little did Han Sui know that Ma Chao had already discovered the details of the plot against him. Taking a few trusted followers, Ma Chao went directly to Han Sui, sword in hand. Pang De and Ma Dai followed close behind. Ma Chao silently entered Han Sui's tent. There were the five commanders whispering with Han Sui; and there was Yang Qiu actually saying, "This cannot be delayed. It must be done now." Roused to fury, Ma Chao confronted them, swinging his sword as he bellowed, "You pack of thieves would murder me?" Everyone was astounded. Ma Chao sliced at Han Sui's face. Sui tried to ward off the blow; the blade swiftly severed his left hand. All five commanders then rushed Chao waving their swords. Ma Chao strode outside but was quickly surrounded by the five, who flailed wildly at him. Wielding his fine sword, Ma Chao took them on. Wherever his blade flashed, fresh blood shot forth: he cut down Ma Wan and hacked Liang Xing to death; the other three fled. Ma Chao went back into the tent to finish off Han Sui, but Sui's attendants had already pulled him to safety.³

Behind the tent a torch flared, and the troops in every camp began stirring. Ma Chao mounted swiftly. Pang De and Ma Dai too joined in the furious combat. By the time Ma Chao had forced his way free, Cao Cao's units were on all sides: Xu Chu in front, Xu Huang behind; Xiahou Yuan to the left, Cao Hong to the right. The Xiliang troops began fighting among themselves. Ma Chao, having lost sight of Pang De and Ma Dai, took up a position on Wei Bridge with a hundred riders. Day was starting to break. Li Kan, one of Han Sui's five commanders, appeared with a small force. Ma Chao put him to flight but broke off the chase when Yu Jin, Cao's commander, arrived. Yu Jin, coming from behind, shot at Ma Chao. Detecting the hum of the string, Ma Chao leaned away, and the arrow struck down Li Kan instead. Then Chao turned on Yu Jin; but Jin galloped away, and Chao subsequently resumed his place on the bridge.

Cao Cao's main force reached the scene, his famed Tiger Guard in the fore. Arrows rained on Ma Chao from two sides, but he managed to deflect many with his spear as his guard made short, murderous charges. Alas, Cao Cao's mass of troops was too solid to break through. From the bridge Ma Chao gave a deafening yell, then dashed away to the north of the stream. His guard was completely cut off. All alone now, Chao tried to force his way out, but the bolt from a sniper's crossbow knocked his mount from under him. Cao Cao's men closed in.

At this moment of dire peril, a body of men flashed into view on the northwest, led by Pang De and Ma Dai. They brought Ma Chao to safety and gave him a horse. Then they pushed forward, leaving a bloody trail, and escaped to the northwest. Hearing of Ma Chao's getaway, Cao Cao ordered his commanders: "Ride day and night till you ride him down. A thousand pieces of gold and a fief of ten thousand households to the man who takes his head. And the man who takes him alive will be supreme general." His commanders set out one after the other in quest of the prize fugitive. Ma Chao, meanwhile, heedless of his own fatigue or his mount's, dashed on, gradually leaving his followers behind. Those on foot were mostly taken captive. Attended by only thirty riders, Ma Chao, Pang De, and Ma Dai headed for Lintao in Longxi.

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Cao Cao personally pursued Ma Chao as far as Anding before returning to Chang'an, where he

received all his returning commanders. Han Sui, crippled by loss of his left hand, was permitted to remain in Chang'an and was made lord of Xiliang. Yang Qiu and Hou Xuan were enfeoffed as lords of the first rank and ordered to defend Weikou. Cao Cao gave the order for all to withdraw east to Xuchang. At that moment a Liangzhou military adviser, Yang Fu (Yishan), presented himself before Cao Cao and said: "Ma Chao has the prowess of a Lü Bu, and the Qiang hold him dear. If Your Excellency does not remove him before he regains his strength, the dynasty will never again control the western districts. I pray Your Excellency not to go back to the capital."

"Initially," Cao Cao replied, "I had intended to leave a force to conquer him. But, alas, the northern heartland has troubles enough of its own, and the south, too, has yet to be controlled. I cannot remain here. You shall have to undertake it for me." Yang Fu assented and requested the appointment of Wei Kang as imperial inspector of Liangzhou to help him defend Jicheng against Ma Chao. Fu also asked Cao Cao to leave well-armed troops in Chang'an for support. "I have arranged it," Cao Cao replied. "Don't worry." Yang Fu took his leave.

Cao Cao's commanders put a question to him: "When the rebels first took Tong Pass, the way north was wide open. Why did Your Excellency contest the pass so long before crossing to the north and attacking Pingyi from the east bank of the Yellow River?" Cao Cao replied, "When they had the pass, if we had gone for the east bank right away, the rebels would have fortified the crossing points and kept us from getting over to the west bank. Instead, by concentrating my troops at the pass I forced the rebels to throw everything into defending themselves on the south side of the river, leaving the west bank to their north undefended. That way, Xu Huang and Zhu Ling were able to cross first; then I followed, linking up the carriages and posts to make a sheltered road, and building walls of iced mud—all in order to make the rebels so confident of our weakness that they would fail to prepare their own defenses. Next, I used trickery to divide our enemies while conserving our soldiers' strength so that we could break them with a surprise attack—an example of what is meant by 'There's no time to cover the ears after thunder peals.' The possibilities in warfare are manifold."

The commanders asked: "Your Excellency, every time an increase in the rebels' troop strength was announced, you seemed pleased. Why?" "Guanzhong is a remote region," Cao Cao responded. "If the rebels had kept to their strongpoints, it would have taken us a year or two to restore order. But when they gathered in one place, despite their numbers, their lack of unity made it easy to cause dissension and annihilate them in a single action. That's what pleased me." The commanders expressed their profound respect, saying, "Your Excellency's marvelous tactics far surpass anything we would have devised." "I could not do without the efforts of my officers and officials," Cao Cao replied and distributed rewards to the various corps. He left Xiahou Yuan in Chang'an to redeploy the surrendered soldiers into several commands. Xiahou Yuan recommended to Cao Cao that Zhang Ji (Derong) from Gaoling in Pingyi serve as governor of Jingzhao district, defending Chang'an jointly with himself.

After these arrangements Cao Cao brought the army home to Xuchang. Emperor Xian personally welcomed him before the walls. By imperial proclamation, Cao Cao was excused from using his given name before the Emperor; he was also permitted to enter the court without hurrying forward with his body bowed, and to enter the principal hall shod and armed with a sword—all after precedents set for the first prime minister of the Han, Xiao He. From this time forward Cao Cao's reputation flourished and spread at home and abroad.

Details of these events made their way to Hanzhong, alarming Zhang Lu, the governor of Hanning. Zhang Lu was originally from Feng in the fief at Pei. His grandfather, Zhang Ling, the Taoist of the Swan Call Hills in the Riverlands, led people astray with faked miracles that won him a great name. After Zhang Ling's death, his son Heng followed in his footsteps. Those among the people intending to study the Tao had to contribute five pecks of rice; thus, Zhang Heng earned the popular sobriquet Rice Rebel. Zhang Heng died, and Zhang Lu carried on his work in Hanzhong. He styled himself lord-preceptor, and his disciples were known as the Ghost Squad. Captains were known as libationers; and those commanding large numbers were called head libationers.

The principal concern of this sect was sincerity; neither lying nor deception was condoned. Anyone who became ill was placed in a quiet room in a sanctuary so that he could reflect on his past mistakes and make a clean breast of them. Then all prayed for the patient. A control-libationer directed the prayer session. The method was as follows. The sick man's full name was written out, his penance explained, and three copies of his "petition to the three realms" were made: one to place on a hilltop in appeal to Heaven, one to bury in the ground in appeal to earth, and one to drop in the water in appeal to the masters of the netherworld. After this was done, and once the illness had passed, the patient donated five pecks of rice as an expression of gratitude.

This Taoist sect also had public bins filled with rice, fuel, and meat. Anyone who came was allowed whatever he could consume, though he would be punished by Heaven for taking more than an honest share. Within the dominion of the sect, offenders were forgiven three times. Only those who refused to mend their ways suffered punishment. There were no court officials; all were attached to the libationer. Thus had Hanzhong been ruled for thirty years. The court regarded it too far away to be worth an expedition, and so simply commissioned Zhang Lu as Imperial Corps Commander Who Garrisons the South and governor of Hanning; his only responsibility was to forward local tribute.

When Zhang Lu heard that Cao Cao had defeated the western army and was making his might felt in the region, he called his advisers to counsel. "Ma Teng of Xiliang," he said, "has met his doom, and Ma Chao has taken a beating. That means Cao Cao will attack us. I am going to declare myself prince of Hanning and take charge of the resistance. What are your views?" Yan Pu said, "The people of the Han River region, numbering over one hundred thousand households, have great wealth and ample grain as well as natural fortification on all four sides. Ma Chao's defeat has sent tens of thousands of Xiliang soldiers through the Zi-Wu valley and into Hanzhong. In my humble view, Liu Zhang, the protector of Yizhou, the Riverlands, is too muddled to govern with any effect. Let us first seize the forty-one departments of the Riverlands as our base before we take the step of declaring an independent kingdom." Zhang Lu accepted this advice with pleasure and consulted with his brother Zhang Wei on the mustering of the troops.⁴

News of these developments soon reached the Riverlands. The province's protector, Liu Zhang (Jiyu), was the son of Liu Yan and a descendant of Prince Gong of Lu.⁵ During Emperor Zhang's reign of Primal Harmony (Yuan He, A.D. 84-86), Prince Gong's kingdom was shifted to Jingling, and so the clan's sons settled there. Later Liu Yan's position was shifted to that of protector of Yizhou; he died of an ulcer during the first year of Prosperous Tranquility (Xing Ping, A.D. 194). The main officials of the province, Zhao Wei and others, supported Liu Zhang as his replacement.

Liu Zhang and Zhang Lu were enemies, for the protector had killed Lu's mother and younger

brother. Accordingly, Liu Zhang had set up Pang Xi as governor of Baxi to serve as a buffer against Zhang Lu. Informed by the governor that Zhang Lu meant to march on the Riverlands, the protector, a timid sort, became unnerved and confused. But at an emergency meeting of Liu Zhang's advisers, someone stepped boldly forth and said, "Set your mind at ease, my lord. I don't have much ability, but this tough little tongue of mine can forestall Zhang Lu's plan to take our territory." Indeed:

Because a man of Shu stepped forward with a plan,
The Jingzhou champions were drawn into the game.

Who was that man of Shu?

READ ON.



Zhang Song Confounds Yang Xiu; Pang Tong Proposes the Conquest of Shu

THE PLAN WAS PROPOSED BY ZHANG SONG (Yongnian), the lieutenant inspector of Yizhou. Zhang Song was a most unusual looking man. He had an angular brow and a tapered skull; his nose was flat, his teeth protruding; he was under five feet tall; and his voice was plangent as a bronze bell. To Inspector Liu Zhang's question, "Lieutenant, what can be done about the threat Zhang Lu poses from Hanzhong?" Zhang Song responded, "Cao Cao, based in Xuchang, has swept the northeast of seditious elements, wiping out Lü Bu, Yuan Shao, and Yuan Shu.¹ Today, after defeating Ma Chao, he has emerged unrivaled. My lord, prepare gifts for me to take to the capital. If I can persuade Cao Cao to march on Hanzhong, Zhang Lu will have little time to concern himself with our territory of Shu." Delighted with this counsel, Liu Zhang collected gold and pearls and rich textiles for his lieutenant to take to the capital. Meanwhile, after quietly providing himself with maps of the Riverlands, Zhang Song set out attended by a few horsemen. His movements were soon reported in Jingzhou, and Kongming sent men to the capital to bring back information on Zhang Song's mission.²

Having arrived in Xuchang, Zhang Song sought audience daily at Cao Cao's ministerial quarters. Now Cao Cao, swelled with pride after his victory over Ma Chao, held banquets regularly and kept to his residence, from which he conducted government business. It took Zhang Song three days to get his name announced. Finally, after bribing Cao's attendants, he gained admittance. Zhang Song presented himself to Cao Cao, who was seated in the main hall, and prostrated himself. Cao Cao asked, "Your master, Liu Zhang, has submitted no tribute for years. Why?" "The routes are virtually impassable," Zhang Song replied. "With so many highwaymen, we have been unable to send tribute." Cao Cao said derisively, "I have cleaned up the north; where are there any thieves?" "To the south there is Sun Quan," Zhang Song answered, "to the north, Zhang Lu; and to the west, Liu Bei—the least of whom has a hundred thousand under arms. How can you call this an era of general peace?"

Cao Cao, already unfavorably impressed by Zhang Song's wretched appearance, reacted to these provocative remarks. He stood up, flicked his sleeves, and retired to his private chambers, leaving his aides to rebuke the visitor. "An emissary," they admonished, "should display some understanding of proper ceremony instead of blindly crossing his host. Luckily the prime minister, in view of your long journey, did not take offense. Now go back as quickly as you can." "You won't find any craven toadies among us Riverlanders," Zhang Song replied smugly.

This fresh jibe was suddenly answered by someone at the base of the stair leading to the main hall. "You Riverlanders have no skill in flattery, do you?" he shouted. "Do you think we northerners do?" Zhang Song regarded the man. He had thin eyebrows and narrow eyes, a light face and fine features. He was the son of the former grand commandant Yang Biao, Yang Xiu (Dezu), presently first secretary to the prime minister, in charge of the treasury. Yang Xiu had broad learning and a

competence in argument that few could surpass; and his skill in debate was well known. Zhang Song had a mind to put him in his place. Yang Xiu had supreme confidence in his talent and disdained other scholars of the realm. After Zhang Song's sarcastic response, Yang Xiu invited him to join him in the library.

The two scholars seated themselves as host and guest. Yang Xiu said, "The road from Shu is rough indeed. Such a long journey must have tired you." "At my lord's command," Zhang Song replied, "I would walk through fire or boiling water." "Tell me something of the way of life in Shu," Yang Xiu requested. "Shu comprises the districts of the west," Zhang Song began, "under the ancient name Yizhou. Access by water is by the difficult Jin River; by land, through the formidable Saber Gateway Road. It would take two hundred and eighty stages to make the round trip from Shu, and its area exceeds thirty thousand *li*. Cocks crow and dogs bark everywhere, for the common folk are ceaselessly active. The fields are fertile and the soil productive, and neither flood nor drought plagues us. Thus, the state is wealthy and its people prosper, enjoying in due season the delights of music and song. No place under Heaven can produce such mountains of goods."

"And what men of note have you produced?" Yang Xiu asked. "In the civil arts we have had men as gifted as the great rhapsodist Sima Xiangru; in the military, leaders as capable as Ma Yuan; in medicine, physicians as able as Zhang Ji,³ in divination, seers as profound as Yan Zun. Furthermore, in the various schools of philosophy and religion we have produced more exemplary men of talent and learning than I could begin to name." So Zhang Song replied.

"And," Yang Xiu went on, "could you also tell me something about the men now in Liu Zhang's service? Are there more like yourself?" "In both civil and military departments," Zhang Song said, "we have a full complement of talented men—wise, brave, loyal, honorable, and noble-minded—numbering in the hundreds. As for those like me, men of the most limited capacity, we come by the cartload, the bushelful, too many to be counted." To this Yang Xiu responded, "And what position do you presently occupy?" "I am filling in as a lieutenant inspector, but I am unqualified for the position. And what office do you hold at court, sir? May I inquire?" "Presently," Yang Xiu replied, "I am first secretary to the prime minister." "It is said you come from successive generations of officeholders," Song said. "Why are you not an assistant to the Emperor instead of an insignificant staff officer in the prime minister's service?"

At these words Yang Xiu flushed crimson. Controlling his expression he answered with effort, "Although I am a minor aide, His Excellency has entrusted me with the administration of money and provisions for the army, a weighty responsibility that has taught me much, under His Excellency's constant guidance. That is why I took the position." Zhang Song smiled. "I have heard," he said, "that His Excellency knows nothing of the way of the ancient sages Confucius and Mencius and that he falls short of Sunzi and Wu Qi in military strategy. He is said to be a man whose high office serves wholly to enhance his power. What could you possibly learn under such 'guidance'?"

"Living in a backwater as you do," Yang Xiu responded, "you may be excused for not appreciating His Excellency's talent. Perhaps you should be given an opportunity to see something of it." With that Yang Xiu summoned his aides, who brought a cased scroll to Zhang Song. Glancing at the title, *New Writings of Mengde*, Zhang Song read it from beginning to end, all thirteen chapters containing Cao Cao's major teachings on military science, and remarked, "What book is this?" "It was written by the prime minister; it is drawn from history and the current situation and is modeled on the thirteen chapters left by Master Sun. You ridicule His Excellency for having no talent. Here's

something worthy of being handed on to future generations, I should say." Zhang Song laughed as he replied, "What? The children in our land of Shu know this sort of stuff by heart! Why call it new? It was written in the Warring States era by an unknown hand and has now been plagiarized by Prime Minister Cao. He seems to have put one over on you, at any rate."

"Although it has grown into a volume, the prime minister's work is kept in private, never made public," Yang Xiu explained. "As for the children of Shu being able to recite it, that's all bluff." "If you don't believe it," countered Zhang Song, "let me recite for you." With that, he recited the contents of the volume in a clear, loud voice, every word in place. Yang Xiu was astonished. "You memorized it at a glance," said Yang Xiu. "Truly a man of rare talent." A poet of later times left this description of Zhang Song:

A cranky man, peculiar to describe:
Pure and upright, but coarse in countenance,
Whose words poured forth like rapids through the gorge,
Who mastered pages in a single glance.
His courage topped them all in western Shu.
To every learned sphere he stretched his pen.
In philosophy and literature he was read,
So widely that no point escaped his ken.

Zhang Song began to take his leave, but Yang Xiu said, "Don't go quite yet. Let me plead your case one more time. Perhaps His Excellency will see you." Zhang Song expressed his thanks and withdrew.

Yang Xiu approached Cao Cao. "Why did you rebuff Zhang Song just now, Your Excellency?" he asked. "He was rude," Cao Cao replied. "You showed tolerance for Mi Heng once," Yang Xiu argued. "Couldn't you receive Zhang Song now?" "Mi Heng was a noted writer," Cao Cao said, "so I spared him. What talent does Zhang Song have?" "Superb rhetorical powers," was the reply. "He is an unbeatable debater and has a broad knowledge and accurate memory all too rarely found. I have just shown him Your Excellency's *New Writings*, and he recited them verbatim after merely glancing over them. He said the book was an anonymous work of the Warring States era and that even the children of Shu are familiar with its contents." "Could it by chance be in accord with writings of the ancients?" Cao Cao said; he ordered his book burned.

"I think you should see this man and show him the magnificence of the imperial court," Yang Xiu continued. "Tomorrow I'll be reviewing troops in the west field," Cao Cao replied. "Bring him over before it starts. I want him to witness the abundance of our power and let the westerners know that the day after we conquer the south, we will be coming for the Riverlands." The following day Yang Xiu brought Zhang Song to the parade ground. Fifty thousand marched before Cao Cao. His Tiger Guard and elite fighting units were spread in formation. Helmets and armor gleamed over brilliant surcoats; gong and drum resounded to the heavens; halberd and spear glinted in the sun; echelons of warriors stretched in the eight directions; bunting and banner spangled and streamed; men on horses pranced and vaulted against the horizon. Zhang Song glanced sidelong at the pageant. After a while Cao Cao summoned Song and, gesturing outward, said, "Does your Riverlands have such splendid, gallant heroes?" "In the land of Shu," Song answered, "I have never seen such a display of military force. We

govern ourselves only by humanity and justice."

Cao Cao's countenance altered as he regarded Song, but Song looked unconcerned as Yang Xiu tried in vain to catch his eye. Cao responded, "Those 'river-rats'⁴ of Shu are nothing but dirt. Where our army goes, it conquers. What it attacks, it takes. Those who obey us live. Those who resist die. Do you know that?" "That Your Excellency conquers and captures wherever he directs his forces," Zhang Song replied, "I am only too well aware—when you met Lü Bu at Puyang and Zhang Xiu at Wancheng, for example, or Zhou Yu at Red Cliffs and Lord Guan at Huarong Pass; when you cut off your beard and dropped your battle gown at Tong Pass; when you fled under a hail of arrows on the River Wei. Certainly, it all goes to show that you have no equal in the empire."

Cao Cao was inflamed. "What petty pedant dares hold up my failures before my face?" he cried and ordered Zhang Song executed. Yang Xiu protested: "Though he deserves to die, he does bear tribute from the remote Riverlands, and if we kill him we risk losing the confidence of men from afar."⁵ Finally, Xun Wenruo convinced the outraged prime minister to spare the envoy, and Zhang Song was driven from the ministerial quarters with a sound thrashing.

At his lodgings Zhang Song was preparing to return directly to the Riverlands when something occurred to him: "I was only trying to offer the territory to Cao Cao. I never expected to find him so insolent. I gave Inspector Liu Zhang some pretty big assurances; and to go home now disappointed and with nothing to show, as it were, must earn me the mockery of my countrymen. They say Liu Xuande of Jingzhou has a great reputation for humanity and justice. I could make a side trip there before returning, just to see what he is like. I shall keep my own counsel about this."

Thus Zhang Song led his small suite toward the province border. Soon he saw a squadron of some five hundred cavalry. Their leader, a ranking commander, lightly equipped and without armor, guided his horse forward and asked, "Could our visitor be Lieutenant Inspector Zhang Song?" "The same," Song replied. The commander dismounted hastily and announced himself after due salutation: "Zhao Yun, here. I have been expecting you." Zhang Song dismounted and returned the greeting: "Not Zhao Zilong of Changshan?" "The same," Zilong replied. "My lord, Liu Xuande, has assigned me to host Your Honor and relieve the fatigue so long a journey must entail."⁶ With that, Zilong's attendants, kneeling humbly, carried over refreshments, which Zilong respectfully proffered.

Zhang Song began to think Liu Xuande's reputation for magnanimity and hospitality well deserved. He joined Zhao Zilong in a few cups; then they remounted and proceeded together, reaching Jingzhou by nightfall. At the inn there, Zhang Song was greeted by one hundred men standing in lines leading to the door; beating drums welcomed him. A commander came before Zhang Song's horse to extend his courtesies. "My elder brother put me under orders to clean up this station for you to rest yourself in after the rigors of the road," said Lord Guan introducing himself. Zhang Song dismounted and was brought into the guesthouse. After the amenities, a banquet was spread and the two hosts urged their guest to enjoy himself. They drank until late into the night and then retired.

The next day after breakfast Zhao and Zhang rode a little way and then encountered Xuande himself, accompanied by Sleeping Dragon and Young Phoenix.⁷ As Zhang Song approached, the three dismounted and waited. Song also dismounted hurriedly. "Your resounding reputation has long been known to me," Xuande began. "How we rue the distance that clouds and mountains impose, preventing us from profiting by your advice. Hearing you are homebound, we have come here especially to greet you. If you will only accept the hospitality of our poor province to break your journey and gratify our hopes, truly, it would be a blessing ten thousand times over." Delighted, Zhang

Song rode into the city with his hosts.

In the main hall of the government buildings ritual greetings were exchanged and a banquet was laid. Throughout the repast Xuande confined himself to commonplace conversation, studiously avoiding any reference to the western Riverlands.⁸ Zhang Song probed: "I wonder how many districts the imperial uncle holds in Jingzhou?" "Jingzhou is only on loan to us from the Southland," Kongming replied with a smile, "and they are always sending somebody to reclaim it. However, Lord Liu, as a brother-in-law of Sun Quan, has been granted temporary tenure." "Does that mean," Zhang Song continued, "that the Southlanders are not satisfied, despite their six districts and eighty-one regions, the strength of their people and the wealth of their state?" "Lord Liu," Pang Tong said, "though an imperial uncle of the dynasty, has never taken a piece of the realm, unlike those grubbing traitors to the Han who depend on forced seizures. But men of true understanding decry this injustice."

"Refrain from such statements, gentlemen," Xuande said. "What virtue have I to justify ambition?" "Not so," Zhang Song said.⁹ "My enlightened lord, you are a royal kinsman whose humanity and sense of honor reach far and wide. Far more than 'a piece of the realm'—it is not beyond expectation that you might one day occupy the imperial throne as a successor in the legitimate line." Xuande joined his hands and made a gesture of disavowal. "Good sir," he said, "you far overestimate whatever I may deserve."

And there the matter lay during three days of feasting. Then, at a parting banquet at the first way station, Xuande toasted Zhang Song: "We are deeply grateful to you for sharing these three days with us. But now the time to take leave of one another has come, and I wonder when I may again have the benefit of your advice." Having spoken, Xuande shed tears freely, while Zhang Song wondered inwardly, "He is magnanimous and humane, a lover of learned men. Can I pass over him? Better to persuade him to take the Riverlands." Song said aloud, "I have long wished to be of service to you but despaired of finding the occasion. From Jingzhou, I see Sun Quan on the east, like a tiger ready to strike, and to the north Cao Cao with a whale's appetite. This place can hardly have enduring appeal for you."

Xuande replied, "I know it all too well. But there is not a place I can put my foot down safely." "The province of Yi, the Riverlands," Zhang Song said, "is protected by formidable barriers. Its fertile territory extends thousands of Zi. The people are thriving and the state prospers. Our wise and capable officials have long held the imperial uncle's virtue in high regard. If you will mobilize your forces to make the long trek west, your hegemony can be established and the house of Han restored." "How could I undertake such a thing?" Xuande said. "The provincial protector, Liu Zhang, is a royal kinsman like myself, and he has long dispensed favor throughout the land of Shu. What third party could upset things?"

"I am not one to sell my sovereign for high position," Zhang Song answered. "But having met with Your Lordship, I must bare my innermost thoughts. Liu Zhang, though in possession of Yizhou, is endowed with so ignorant and irresolute a nature that he has kept worthy and competent men from office. Now with the threat from Zhang Lu in the north, confidence is shaken, and people's thoughts turn to acquiring an enlightened lord. This excursion of mine was for the sole purpose of making an offer to Cao Cao; but in him, to my surprise, I found a perverse traitor who uses deceit for statecraft, who disdains the worthy, who insults those willing to serve. For these reasons I have made a point of coming to see you. My lord, take the Riverlands and make it your base, plan an attack on the Hanzhong buffer, then go on to incorporate the northern heartland and set the dynasty to rights. Your

fame will pass into history and you will outshine all rivals. Should you be inclined to adopt this suggestion, I would be willing to do whatever is necessary to coordinate matters from within. Let me know your esteemed decision."

"Your concern touches me deeply," Xuande responded. "Alas, Liu Zhang and I share the same ancestor. If I attacked him, I would be reviled and repudiated by all." "A man of noble ambition," Zhang Song said, "spares no effort to establish his worth and his estate. Apply the whip and assume the lead! For if you do not take Yizhou, others will—and then it will be too late for regrets." "They say the roads are so hilly and rough," Xuande remarked, "that neither carriage nor horse can ride abreast. Even if I wanted to take it, what strategy would work?"

Producing a map from his sleeve, Zhang Song said, "I am moved by my lord's ample virtue to present this. A single glance will apprise you of the road system of the Riverlands." Casually, Xuande unrolled the map and examined it. The geographic details of the region were fully spelled out: topography and marching stages, dimension and distance of roads, strategic intersections, repositories of coin and grain. "Strike now, my lord," Zhang Song urged. "My two close and trusted friends there, Fa Zheng and Meng Da, can be counted on. Should they come to Jingzhou, you may consult them in complete confidence." Xuande raised his clasped hands in an expression of gratitude. "You will be well rewarded when the plan is realized," he said, "as sure as the hills stay green and the rivers ever run." "I look for no reward," Zhang Song asserted. "Having met a lord who is wise and enlightened, I could do nothing but make known to him all the facts of the case." With that, they parted. Kongming ordered Lord Guan and the others to escort the guest several dozen *li*.



Back in Yizhou, Zhang Song went first to see his close friend Fa Zheng (Xiaozhi), a man from Mei in West Fufeng, son of the worthy officer Fa Zhen. Zhang Song gave Fa Zheng a complete account of his interview.¹⁰ "Cao Cao," he began, "has utter contempt for learned, honorable men. He turns to them in trouble, and from them in success. I have promised our province to Imperial Uncle Liu, and I want to discuss it with you, brother." "In my judgment," replied Fa Zheng, "Liu Zhang is an incapable leader. I have had my eye on Liu Xuande for some time. Since I share your view, you need have no doubts."

A while later Meng Da (Ziqing) arrived. He was a fellow townsman of Fa Zheng's. Seeing the two talking together, Meng Da said, "It looks like you are ready to surrender the province." "Such is our wish," answered Zhang Song. "What is yours, elder brother? Who is the best choice?" "Xuande! Who else?" responded Meng Da. Each of the three clasped his hands and laughed. Then Fa Zheng said to Zhang Song: "And what will you say to Liu Zhang tomorrow, brother?" "I am going to recommend that he send both of you to Jingzhou as his envoys," Zhang Song replied. The others agreed.

The next day Liu Zhang received Zhang Song and asked, "How did you fare?" "Cao is a traitor to the Han!" Zhang Song exclaimed. "His lust for power is unspeakable. He is after our land." "Then what are we to do?" asked Liu Zhang. "I have a plan for keeping both Cao Cao and Zhang Lu from invading us," Zhang Song answered. "Yes?" said Liu Zhang. "Imperial Uncle Liu Xuande of Jingzhou," Zhang Song began, "is a member of the royal house, my lord, as you yourself are. Benevolent, kind, magnanimous, liberal, he has the aura of a man who is honest and self-respecting.

Since the battle at Red Cliffs, the mere mention of his name throws Cao Cao into panic, not to speak of Zhang Lu! I think, my lord, that you would do well with such friendship and support from the outside in your struggle against Cao Cao and Zhang Lu."

"I have been thinking along these lines for some time," the imperial inspector said. "Whom could we send as envoys to Jingzhou?" "Fa Zheng and Meng Da," Zhang Song replied, "no one else will do." Liu Zhang summoned the two men. He gave Fa Zheng a letter to establish good relations with Xuande, and Meng Da five thousand men to escort Xuande and his supporting force into the province. But while this discussion was under way, a man burst into the room, his face covered with perspiration. "My lord, listen to Zhang Song," he cried, "and your forty-one departments will pass into the hands of another."

Zhang Song stared at him in astonishment. It was Huang Quan (Gongheng) from Xi-langzhong in Ba, presently serving Imperial Inspector Liu Zhang as first secretary. "Xuande and I are royal kinsmen," Liu Zhang said. "That is why I enlist his support. How can you make such a statement?" "I am quite familiar with Xuande's magnanimity," was the reply, "how his gentle approach has overcome the hardest resistance the empire's heroes have put up so far. He has won the allegiance of men from afar, and gratified the hopes of those he has ruled. On top of that, he has two wise counselors in Zhuge Liang and Pang Tong; and he has the support of such valiant warriors as Guan, Zhang, Zhao Zilong, Huang Zhong, and Wei Yan. If you call him into Shu and treat him as a subordinate, how long do you think he will be willing to remain compliant? On the other hand, if you accord him the reception of an honored guest—well, one kingdom can't hold two kings. Heed my words and our rule can be secure as Mount Tai. Heed them not and your own position will become as precarious as a pile of eggs. Zhang Song must have arranged something with Xuande when he passed through Jingzhou. Execute Zhang Song, break off with Liu Bei, and the Riverlands will enjoy unlimited good fortune."

"And how am I going to stop Cao Cao and Zhang Lu?" Inspector Liu Zhang asked. "Seal the borders and close the passes," Huang Quan replied. "Improve defenses and wait for the threat to blow over." "With the enemy at our borders, we cannot waste time," Liu Zhang said; he rejected Huang Quan's strategy in favor of Fa Zheng's mission. But another man cried out in opposition. It was Wang Lei, an aide in Liu Zhang's personal service. Touching his head to the ground, Wang Lei said, "My lord, Zhang Song's advice spells disaster." "No!" Liu Zhang shot back. "Alliance with Xuande will block Zhang Lu." "Zhang Lu," Wang Lei continued, "is a superficial problem. Liu Bei represents a threat to our vitals, for he is the most treacherous of villains. Once he served Cao Cao; then he plotted his destruction. Next, he joined Sun Quan and ended up stealing Jingzhou. Can you coexist with such duplicity? If you summon him, it means the end of the Riverlands!"

Liu Zhang dismissed the speaker sharply: "Stop this nonsense! Would a kinsman steal my estate?" The inspector had attendants escort the protesters from the hall and sent Fa Zheng to Jingzhou.

Fa Zheng went straight to Jingzhou and was granted audience. After presenting himself, Fa Zheng handed Liu Xuande a written proposal.¹¹ It read:

Your cousin, Liu Zhang, respectfully commends the following to the attention of General Xuande as an elder of the clan. Long have I esteemed your lofty name, but the difficult roads of Shu have prevented me from sending tribute. For this I feel deepest shame. They say, "Share trouble, bear trouble." This goes for friends, not to speak of kinsmen. Now Zhang Lu's

army on our northern borders gives me no peace, and so I send this earnest petition for your weighty consideration. If you decide to take cognizance of our common ancestry and preserve honor among brothers, you will raise an army at once to rid us of these violent marauders. In that way we will remain mutual adherents, "lips and teeth," and you will be richly rewarded. No letter can say all that I wish. I expectantly await your arrival.¹²

Xuande exulted on reading the letter. He ordered a banquet for Fa Zheng. As the wine was circulating, he dismissed his attendants and said confidentially, "I have long admired your splendid name, and Zhang Song has spoken much of your ample virtue. This opportunity to benefit by your counsel answers hopes long held."

Disclaiming the compliment, Fa Zheng replied, "A minor official from the Riverlands is hardly worth notice. But they say horses whinnied when they met the master trainer Bo Luo: a man will sacrifice all for one who appreciates him. General, have you thought further on Lieutenant Inspector Zhang Song's proposal?" "My life as an exile," Xuande replied, "has never been free of woe and discontent. I often think of the little wren that keeps a cozy spot for itself and the cunning hare that maintains three holes in case of escape. Men should do the same. Don't think I would not have your overabundant land—but I cannot bring myself to conspire against my clansman." "The Riverlands is a natural storehouse," Fa Zheng responded. "A sovereign who cannot keep control cannot last. Liu Zhang has proved unable to assign good men to office, and his patrimony is doomed to pass to someone else. It would be unwise, General, not to take what he offers you so freely. As the saying goes, 'He who gets to the rabbit first, wins the chase.' I stand prepared to give you my full support." Xuande folded his hands in a gesture of appreciation and said, "Much yet remains to be discussed."

After the banquet Kongming personally escorted Fa Zheng to the guesthouse. Xuande was alone, pondering, when Pang Tong approached him and said, "It is a foolish man who fails to resolve a matter that demands resolving. You are high-minded and understanding, my lord. Why hesitate?" "What do you think we should do?" Xuande asked. Pang Tong replied, "Jingzhou's present situation—Cao Cao to the north and Sun Quan to the east—confounds our ambitions. But the Riverlands, in population, territory, and wealth, offers the wherewithal for our great endeavor. If Zhang Song and Fa Zheng are going to help us from within, that is a godsend. Do not hesitate!"

"The man who is my antithesis," Xuande responded, "who struggles against me as fire against water, is Cao Cao. Where his means are hasty, mine are temperate; where his are violent, mine are humane; where his are cunning, mine are truehearted. By maintaining my opposition to Cao Cao, my cause may succeed. I can't throw away the world's trust and allegiance for personal gain." Smiling, Pang Tong said, "My lord, that accords well enough with sacred universal principles. But in a time of division and subversion, when men strive for power by waging war, there is no high road to follow. If you cling to accustomed principle, you will not be able to proceed at all. Rather, you should be flexible. You know, 'to incorporate the feeble and attack the incompetent,' to 'take power untowardly but hold it virtuously,' was the way of the great conquerors, kings Tang and Wu.¹³ When things are settled, and if you reward Liu Zhang honorably with a big fief, what trust will you have betrayed? Remember that if you do not take power, another will.¹⁴ Give it careful consideration, my lord."

Inspired by these words, Xuande answered, "Your memorable advice shall be inscribed on my heart." Soon after he consulted with Kongming about raising a force to move west. "Jingzhou is too

important to leave undefended," Kongming said. "Then," Xuande replied, "I shall go ahead with Pang Tong, Huang Zhong, and Wei Yan. You remain behind with Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Zilong." Kongming agreed and assumed overall responsibility for Jingzhou province, assigning Lord Guan to defend the route into Xiangyang from the pass at Qingni; Zhang Fei to take charge of the four districts along the river; and Zhao Zilong to hold Jiangling and protect Gong'an, the seat of Xuande's administration.

Xuande, with Huang Zhong as forward commander and Wei Yan as rear guard, took command of the center, with Liu Feng and Guan Ping assisting. Pang Tong was made director general. All told, their forces numbered fifty thousand. At this time Liao Hua offered his services, and Xuande assigned him to assist Lord Guan in guarding against Cao Cao.

In the winter Xuande marched west. Meng Da greeted him, explaining that inspector Liu Zhang had provided five thousand troops for the reception. Earlier, Xuande had notified Liu Zhang of his route, and the imperial inspector had instructed the localities along the way to supply the arriving soldiers with grain and cash. Liu Zhang himself meant to greet Xuande at Fucheng and had therefore ordered splendid carriages, tents, flags, and armor for the occasion. But First Secretary Huang Quan again protested: "My lord, if you go, Xuande will kill you. I have served you for many years, and it pains me to see you walking into a trap. Please reconsider." Zhang Song countered: "Huang Quan is trying to divide kinsmen while aiding our enemies. His advice is worthless." Liu Zhang cried: "I have made up my mind. Cross me no more!" Thus rebuked, Huang Quan struck his head to the ground until blood ran; he bit down on the hem of Liu Zhang's clothing to stop him. Enraged, Liu Zhang arose, yanking his garment free of Huang Quan's clenched mouth, breaking his front teeth. Zhang shouted to have Huang Quan removed. Lamenting bitterly, Quan returned home.

As Liu Zhang prepared for the journey to meet Xuande, someone bowed at the stair and warned, "My lord, rejecting Huang Quan's loyal advice will only speed your doom." Liu Zhang looked on Li Hui from Yuyuan in Jianning. Striking his head to the floor, he cried, "'A lord will profit from his minister's warning, and a father from his son's.' Huang Quan's loyal and honorable words cannot be ignored. In Liu Bei you're welcoming a tiger at the front gate." "Xuande is a senior member of our clan," Liu Zhang retorted. "He would never murder me. The next protester dies." And he had Li Hui thrust from his presence.

"The officials of the Riverlands," Zhang Song said, "care only for their wives and children and will never give their all for Your Lordship; the military leaders are arrogant, content with their accomplishments, eager for external contacts. Without Imperial Uncle Liu, you will be attacked and destroyed by enemies both inside and out." "Your planning," Liu Zhang said, "serves my interest profoundly."

The next day Liu Zhang rode to Elm Bridge Gate. There he was told that his aide Wang Lei had strung himself upside down above the city portals, a written protest in one hand, a sword in the other, and was threatening to cut the rope and dash himself to death if his warnings were not heeded. Liu Zhang called for the protest note, which said in essence:

Your aide Wang Lei weeps blood, appealing in all sincerity. "Effective medicine is bitter to the mouth but remedies disease. Loyal words offend the ear but benefit one's conduct." In ancient times King Huai of Chu ignored the advice of Qu Yuan and covenanted at Wuguan, falling prey to Qin. Now Your Lordship lightly leaves his home district to welcome Liu Bei at

Fucheng. Will you return the way you came? If only you would put Zhang Song publicly to death and break off with Liu Bei, the entire population of Shu as well as your own house would benefit.

Angered by what he had read, Liu Zhang said, "I go to meet a humane and benevolent man, a kindred spirit of noble intent. How often do you mean to affront us this way?" Wang Lei uttered a single cry, severed the rope, and crashed to his death. A poet of later times left this tribute:

Suspended from the city gate, the protest note in hand,
So he chose to die in the service of Liu Zhang.
Huang Quan, with his broken teeth, gave in at the end;
Wang Lei alone exemplifies fidelity unstained.

Liu Zhang set off for Fucheng with thirty thousand soldiers. Behind him rolled a thousand carts loaded with grain, money, and silk.

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Xuande had advanced as far as the River Dian. Because the westerners had provisioned his army and because his soldiers had been warned on pain of death not to touch anything belonging to the people, Xuande's forces maintained discipline wherever they passed. Young and old thronged the thoroughfares to catch a glimpse of the arriving army, burning incense to pay their respects. Xuande spoke kindly and reassuringly to the people.

Meanwhile, Fa Zheng confided to Pang Tong: "I have a secret letter from Zhang Song. He wants us to move against Liu Zhang at the meeting in Fucheng, not to delay." "Say nothing for now," replied Pang Tong. "Wait until they are face-to-face. If this gets out, things could go awry." Fa Zheng kept his counsel. Fucheng was three hundred and sixty *li* from Chengdu, the capital of Yizhou. On arriving, Liu Zhang sent a man to welcome Xuande. The two armies settled in above the River Fu. Then Xuande entered the city to meet Liu Zhang, and the two men expressed their fraternal feelings. The overtures concluded, they wept freely, speaking their affection. After feasting, each returned to his camp to rest.

Liu Zhang told his assembled officials: "Those absurd suspicions of Huang Quan and Wang Lei! Little did they understand my clan-brother's good heart. Now I see how humane and honorable a man he really is. With his support, we have nothing to fear from Cao Cao or from Zhang Lu. And we have Zhang Song to thank for it!" So saying, he removed the green robe he was wearing and sent it with five hundred taels of gold to Zhang Song in the capital. His subordinates, however, Liu Gui, Ling Bao, Zhang Ren, Deng Xian, and other officers and officials said, "Restrain your enthusiasm a little, my lord. Liu Bei has an iron hand under that soft touch, and his motives are not easy to fathom. We had best take precautions." "You are overanxious," Liu Zhang replied. "There is no duplicity in my kinsman." His officials sighed in frustration and withdrew.

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Meanwhile, Xuande had returned to his base, where Pang Tong came to him. "Your Lordship," he said, "what was your sense of Liu Zhang at the banquet?" "A sincere and honest man," Xuande

replied. "He is a good man," Pang Tong agreed, "but his men, Liu Gui and Zhang Ren, seemed most aggrieved. With them our fortune is uncertain. My advice is to invite Liu Zhang to a banquet tomorrow. Have a hundred men placed behind the wall hangings beforehand. During the banquet you can signal them by throwing a cup down and have him put to death. We can then enter Chengdu en masse and conquer it without lifting our swords from their scabbards or fitting an arrow to a string." "Liu Zhang is my kinsman," Xuande responded. "He has treated me with all sincerity. Moreover, we are newcomers in the west. Our favor and trust have yet to be established. Heaven would not condone, nor the people forgive, a thing like that. Not even the power-hungry hegemony of old would have done what you propose."

"It is not what I propose," Pang Tong explained, "but a suggestion from Zhang Song conveyed in a confidential letter to Fa Zheng calling for swift action. The time must come sooner or later." As Pang Tong was speaking, Fa Zheng himself entered. "We are not acting for ourselves," he said, "but in conformity with the Mandate of Heaven." "Liu Zhang is my kinsman. I cannot do it," was Xuande's answer. "You are mistaken, my enlightened lord," Fa Zheng continued. "If you do not do it, Zhang Lu, who holds our state responsible for his mother's death, will attack and seize it. Your Lordship has come all this way across hills and streams; your men and horses have suffered hardship. To go forward is to your advantage; to withdraw is profitless. If you persist in these doubts and scruples and let the time pass, our cause will fail. And if our plans are discovered, they will do us in. Seize this moment when Heaven and man concur, when Liu Zhang suspects nothing: establish your estate. That is our best move." Pang Tong added his own exhortations. Indeed:

The ruler holds an honorable course

While clever ministers urge on him their schemes,

for Liu Xuande must have a place to rule! What kind of decision would Liu Xuande reach?

READ ON.



Zhao Zilong Recovers Ah Dou at the River; Sun Quan's Letter Causes Cao Cao to Retreat

PANG TONG AND FA ZHENG tried to convince Xuande that the Riverlands could be handily won by murdering Liu Zhang at the banquet. But Xuande stood firm against their counsel, saying, "Having just entered the realm, we have neither good will nor credibility. It would never work."

The next day Xuande feasted with Liu Zhang in the city.¹ The two men expressed their deep feeling for one another in tones of earnest friendship. When the company was well into its wine, Pang Tong suggested to Fa Zheng, "At this point there's nothing my master can do to stop us," and told Wei Yan to ascend into the banquet hall and assassinate Liu Zhang while giving a sword dance. Wei Yan bared his weapon and presented himself, saying, "Our gathering lacks entertainment. Let me perform the sword dance for your amusement." As Wei Yan spoke, Pang Tong had armed guards line up below the hall in anticipation of the deed.

Some of Liu Zhang's commanders were alarmed at the unfolding scene. An aide to Imperial Inspector Liu, Zhang Ren, gripped his sword and stepped forth. "This is a dance to perform in pairs," he said. "I shall accompany General Wei Yan." The two men moved gracefully before the company. At a glance from Wei Yan, Liu Feng also drew his blade and joined the dance, followed quickly by Liu Gui, Ling Bao, and Deng Xian, who said, "To add to the merriment." At this point Xuande, thoroughly alarmed, took hold of a follower's sword and stood up; he addressed the gathering: "I meet Liu Zhang at this feast today as a brother. Mistrust has no place here. This is no Hongmen!² The sword dance is uncalled for. Let each throw down his blade or die." Liu Zhang added his own rebuke, "This reunion requires no weapons," and ordered his followers to disarm. Everyone rushed from the banquet hall.

Xuande summoned Liu Zhang's captains to the feast and rewarded them with wine as he said, "We two are kinsmen, blood and bone, conferring on matters of import. Duplicity has no place. You should all be clear about that." At these words Liu Zhang's captains prostrated themselves in gratitude. Deeply moved, Liu Zhang took Xuande's hand and said, "Your good will, brother, will never be forgotten." The two men continued carousing until late hours. Back at his camp, Xuande reproved Pang Tong: "Were you and the others trying to dishonor me? Don't let such a thing ever happen again." Sighing profoundly, Pang Tong withdrew.

When Liu Zhang returned to his camp, Liu Gui said, "My lord, you saw that scene at the banquet today? Let us go home while we are still alive." "My brother Liu Xuande is unlike other men," replied Liu Zhang. But his officers retorted, "Xuande himself may harbor no ill will, but those around him aim to take over the Riverlands in pursuit of their own interests." "Do not come between two brothers," Liu Zhang answered, and he remained deaf to all persuasion during his days spent with Xuande.

Suddenly it was reported that Zhang Lu had brought a well-organized force before Jiameng Pass. Liu Zhang requested Xuande to defend the pass, and Xuande, generously agreeing, went there at once with his troops. Liu Zhang's commanders urged Zhang to have his main force seal off all points of access in case of a mutiny by Xuande's army. After much urging, Liu Zhang finally agreed to have two leading military officers of Baishui, Yang Huai and Gao Pei, guard the pass at the River Fu. Liu Zhang then returned to Chengdu. Xuande kept his soldiers on tight discipline in the Jiameng Pass area, winning the favor of the inhabitants by his many acts of largess.³

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Spies had already reported these events to the Southland command. Lord Sun Quan was consulting with his civil and military officials when Gu Yong proposed: "Now that Liu Bei has taken a part of his forces so far to the west, I think we should send a company to cut off the mouth of the river and prevent his return. Then a general military action will bring us an easy victory in Jingzhou. This is not an opportunity to let slip." "An excellent plan!" responded Sun Quan. But during the session someone stepped forward from behind a screen, shouting, "The author of this plan should be killed for trying to murder my daughter." The assembly was startled at the sight of State Mother Wu. Angrily, she said, "I have only one daughter, and she is married to Liu Bei. If you attack him, what of my daughter?" Then she turned on Sun Quan: "You hold your father's and your brother's estate in your hands. Is comfortable possession of the eighty-one regions of the south not enough for you? Must you risk your own flesh and blood for some trifling gain?" Sun Quan voiced his respectful submission over and over again. "Whatever my revered mother requires will be performed," he answered and dismissed the assembly. The state mother left indignantly.

Standing by the porch railing, Sun Quan mused, "If I miss this chance, Jingzhou could be lost forever." Zhang Zhao entered and asked, "My lord, what troubles you?" "I'm still thinking of what Gu Yong said," responded Sun Quan. "Nothing could be simpler," Zhang Zhao went on. "Slip a trusted commander and five hundred men into Jingzhou with a letter for Lady Sun saying that the state mother is critically ill and wants to see her daughter. That should bring her back as soon as possible. See that she brings Xuande's only son with her—Xuande will be only too glad to exchange Jingzhou for his son. And if he refuses, you are free to use force." "An excellent plan!" cried Sun Quan. "I have a man, Zhou Shan, so trusted by my brother that since his youth he used to enter his private chambers. He's the man to send." "This must be kept absolutely secret," said Zhang Zhao. "Give him his orders to start out here and now."

Zhou Shan took five hundred men disguised as merchants and five boats. He was provided with false papers in case anyone questioned him on the way. Weapons were concealed on board. As commanded, Zhou Shan sailed for Jingzhou. Reaching the capital area, he docked and had the gate guards report his arrival to Lady Sun.

Lady Sun summoned Zhou Shan to audience, and he presented her the secret letter. Reading of her mother's condition, Lady Sun tearfully expressed her deep concern. Prostrating himself, Zhou Shan said plaintively, "Throughout her terrible illness the state mother has had you alone in her thoughts. If you delay, you might never see her again. She bids you take Ah Dou with you to see her." "The imperial uncle," replied Lady Sun, "is on a remote campaign. I will have to inform Director General Kongming before returning south." "And what," Zhou Shan answered, "if he has to have the imperial

uncle's approval?" "If I depart without taking leave," said Lady Sun, "we will be blocked." "Boats are now waiting in the river," said Zhou Shan. "I beg Your Ladyship, mount your carriage at once and leave the city."

The news of her mother's condition made Lady Sun's head spin. She hurried the seven-year-old Ah Dou into her carriage and, followed by some thirty armed guards, left the city of Gong'an for the river's edge. She had already embarked at Sandy Head before her attendants could report it.

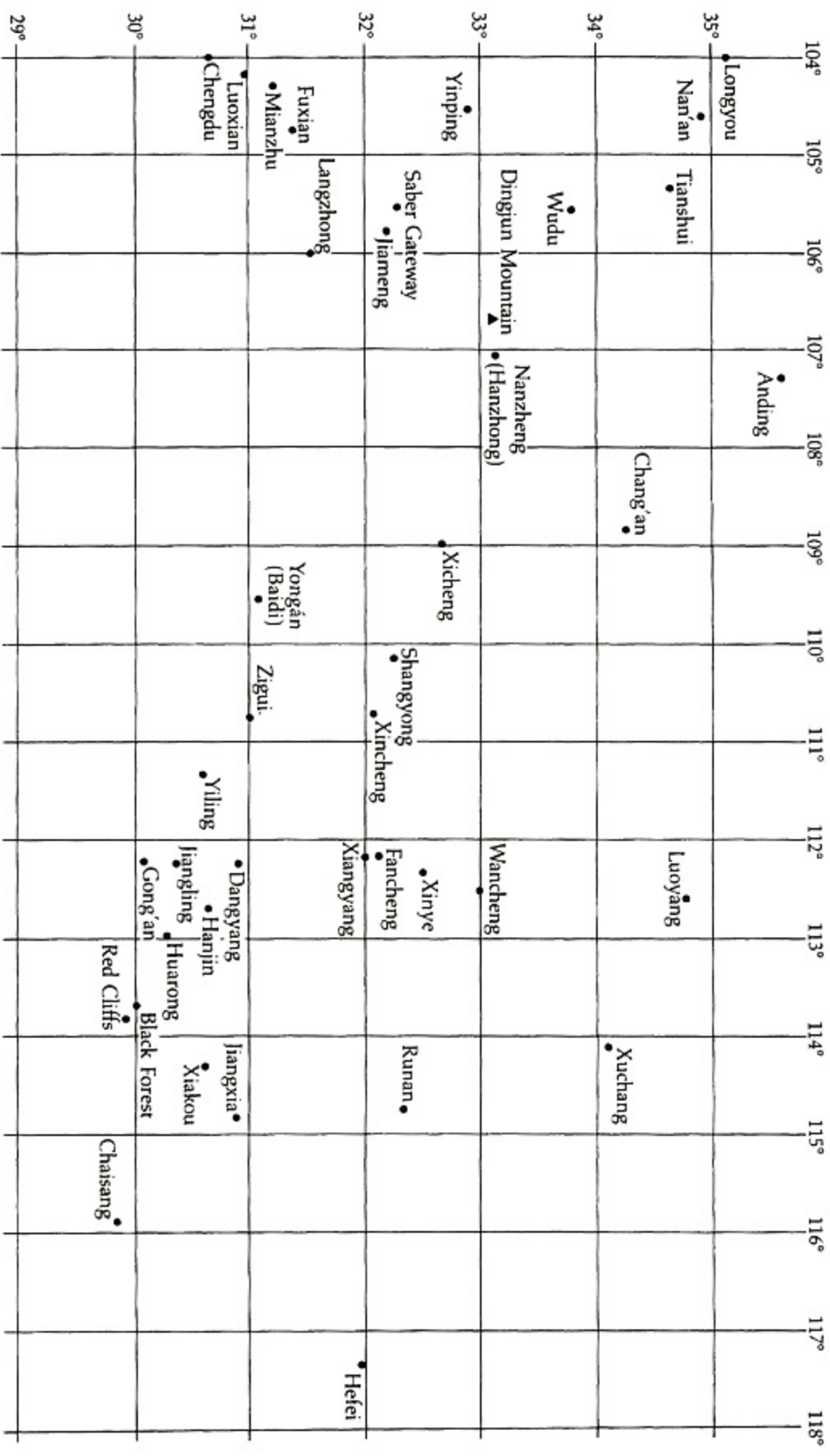
Zhou Shan was about to set sail when he heard a shout from the shore: "Hold on! Let me see my lady off!" It was Zhao Zilong. Returning from patrol, Zhao Zilong was shocked to discover Lady Sun had departed. Riding like the wind, he had reached the shore with but five horsemen. Gripping a long spear, Zhou Shan cried out, "Who dares thwart the lady?" and ordered the boat launched as armed soldiers lined the decks. The wind favored them and the current sped the five boats on.

Zhao Zilong rode along the shoreline, shouting, "Lady Sun is free to leave. But I must make one appeal to her." Zhou Shan took no notice and urged the little fleet forward. Zilong followed another ten *li*. Suddenly he sighted a fishing vessel moored at the bank. Dismounting, he seized his spear and jumped aboard. Zilong and one follower steered urgently after the boat carrying Lady Sun. Zhou Shan ordered his men to shoot. But Zilong knocked the arrows harmlessly aside with his spear. As he drew to within ten feet of the main craft, the soldiers stabbed wildly at him. Zilong set aside his spear and took hold of the black-hilted sword at his waist. Finding a break in the menacing spears, he scrambled aboard the southern boat.

The sailors fell back, astonished. Zilong entered the cabin and saw Lady Sun cradling Ah Dou at her bosom. "How dare you!" she cried. Zilong put away his sword and paid his respects, saying, "Where is my lady bound? Why have you not informed the director general?" "My mother is at death's door," she replied. "There was no time to inform anyone." "Does a visit to the state mother require taking the young master?" asked Zilong. "Ah Dou is my child now," was the reply. "There was no one to leave him with in Jingzhou." "Not so, my lady," responded Zilong. "This bit of blood and bone, my master's only progeny, was saved by your humble commander from a battlefield of a million by Steepslope Bridge in Danyang. Why does my lady wish to carry him off?"

Angrily Lady Sun said, "What has the likes of you, a ruffian in service, to do with my family affairs?" "You are free to leave," Zilong replied. "But our young lord must stay." Lady Sun shouted, "You jump onto my boat midway—it means revolt!" "If you don't leave the child, I will face ten thousand mortal perils before I'll let Your Ladyship go," said Zilong. Lady Sun called her female attendants to seize the intruder, but Zilong thrust them aside, snatched Ah Dou, and carried him safely onto the deck. He wanted to get close to shore, but there was no one to help; neither had he cause for violent action. There was no way out.

Lady Sun called her women to recover Ah Dou. Zilong held the boy in one arm and fended off the attendants with the other; no one dared approach him. To the rear Zhou Shan held the rudder steady, bent on his downstream course. Sped by wind and current, the boat moved toward midstream. Zilong was helpless. With Ah Dou in his arms, how could he shift the boat toward shore?



MAP 6. Approximate latitude and longitude of key centers and strongpoints east and west of the 112th meridian. Source: Tan Qixiang, chief ed., *Zhongguo lishi dituji* (Shanghai: Cartographic Publishing House, 1982), II:42-58.

At this critical moment, from an inlet downstream, a row of ten boats emerged, flags waving, drums rolling. Zilong thought, "This time the Southland has me!" Then he saw a commander on the boat ahead. A long spear was in his hand. "Sister-in-law!" he bellowed. "Leave my nephew!" It was Zhang Fei; he had learned of Lady Sun's departure while on his rounds and had rushed to the mouth of the River You. Encountering the southern ships, he hastened to bar their advance. In moments Zhang Fei had boarded the main craft, sword at the ready. Zhou Shan sprang to meet him, but Zhang Fei cut him swiftly down and flung his severed head at Lady Sun's feet. "How could you commit such an outrage, brother-in-law?" Lady Sun cried in alarm. "The outrage, sister," Zhang Fei went on, "is that you are quietly taking yourself home without giving a thought to my elder brother." "My mother is dying," she replied. "If I waited for your elder brother's approval, it would be too late. Let me go home or I will throw myself into the water."

Zhang Fei observed to Zilong, "To drive her to her death is no way for loyal men to act. Let's take Ah Dou and leave it at that." So Zhang Fei said to Lady Sun, "My brother, imperial uncle of the great Han, has always treated Your Ladyship as befits your dignity. Now you are leaving us. But if my brother's kind affection for you be in your thoughts, you will come back soon." So saying, Zhang Fei took Ah Dou in his arms and returned with Zilong to his boat. Lady Sun was permitted to pass. A later verse pays tribute to Zilong:

In Danyang once he saved the little heir;
Now he hurls himself upon the Jiang.
The southern sailors feel their spirits die
Before the prowess of this paragon.

Another verse praises Zhang Fei:

Once by Steepslope Bridge at fury's pitch
The tiger growled and Cao's men gave ground.
Today he stands beside his menaced prince
And makes a name for evermore renowned.

The two men sailed homeward well pleased with themselves. Before they had covered many *li*, Kongming met them with a large naval force. He was delighted to have Ah Dou safely back. The three men continued their journey on horseback. Kongming sent a letter to the Jiameng Pass to inform Xuande of what had happened.

• • • •

Lady Sun told her brother, Sun Quan, that Zhang Fei and Zhao Zilong had intercepted her boat, killed Zhou Shan, and wrested Ah Dou from her. Angrily Sun Quan said, "My sister has returned to us. Xuande is my relative no more. The death of Zhou Shan must be avenged." He met with his advisers to consider the conquest of Jingzhou. But during their discussion of the assignment of units, Sun Quan learned that Cao Cao was coming with an army of four hundred thousand to avenge his defeat at Red Cliffs. Astounded, Sun Quan set aside the question of Jingzhou and turned to the threat

from Cao Cao.

At this moment a messenger announced the death of the senior adviser Zhang Hong, who had earlier pleaded illness and returned home. His last words had been put down in a letter urging Sun Quan to shift his capital to Moling, a site, he claimed, that had an imperial aura in its hills and streams and would sustain an enduring estate. After perusing the letter, Sun Quan wept and addressed his followers: "Zhang Hong urges me to remove to Moling. How can I ignore his counsel?" He ordered the seat of government shifted to Jianye,⁴ where he built the City of Stones.

Lü Meng offered his counsel: "Since Cao's troops are coming, we should build a rampart near the mouth of the Ruxu River to hold them back." The commanders all said, "There's no need for a wall. We can attack from shore, or wade barefoot into our boats." To this Lü Meng responded, "The fortunes of war are never constant; victory is never sure. In an abrupt confrontation, with infantry and cavalry jostling together, our men may not have time to reach the water much less board the boats." Sun Quan commented, "Improvvidence invites danger. Lü Meng wisely looks ahead." So saying, he sent tens of thousands of soldiers to build a rampart at the Ruxu, and by dint of unremitting toil the project was completed according to plan.

• • • •

Cao Cao was in Xuchang, the capital. Day by day his power and fortune grew. Senior Adviser Dong Zhao proposed: "Since antiquity no servant of the throne has achieved what His Excellency has achieved. Neither the Duke of Zhou nor Lü Wang approaches him. These thirty years he has faced the utmost rigors in his campaigns to clear our realm of rebels, relieve the people's plagues, and revive the house of Han. How could he be ranked with other servants of the imperial house? He merits the position of lord patriarch of Wei and the award of the Nine Dignities to glorify his virtue and his achievements." What are the Nine Dignities?

1. Chariot and Horse: one great wain of state or golden chariot, one military chariot, two quadriga of dark stallions, eight cream-colored mounts;
2. Royal Raiment: Dragon-figured robe and squared headdress matched with vermilion shoes;
3. Suspended Chimes: music suited to audience with a king;
4. Vermillion Doors: a gateway of fortune for his residence;
5. Inner Staircase: protected, for him to ascend;
6. Imperial Tiger Escort: three hundred guards to secure his palace gates;
7. Imperial Axes: ceremonial axes and battle-axes;
8. Bows and Arrows: one red-striped bow and one hundred red-striped arrows, ten black bows and a thousand black arrows;
9. Implements for the Ritual Offering of Black Millet Wine, Herb-Scented: jade tablet and libation cup, one bowl of millet and wine each (the tablet and cup matching, the millet black); seasoned wine to sprinkle on the ground to attract the gods below; tablet and libation cup, ritual instruments of the ancestral temple for sacrificing to the former kings.⁵

Privy Counselor Xun Wenruo said, "This may not be! His Excellency has raised a loyalist army in

support of the house of Han and must follow humble and retiring ways to maintain his loyalty and integrity. The noble man shows his love of fellow man through his virtue—not like this." Cao Cao was indignant at Xun Wenruo's stand. Dong Zhao said, "Can one man thwart the general wish?" and submitted a memorial to the throne calling for Cao Cao to be honored as lord patriarch of Wei and awarded the Nine Dignities. Xun Wenruo sighed and said, "Little did I expect to witness such a thing!" Cao Cao, deeply angered by Wenruo's objections, no longer regarded him as a dependable friend.

In the winter of Jian An 17 (A.D. 212), the tenth month, Cao Cao mobilized his army to crush the Southland. He ordered Xun Wenruo to accompany him; but Wenruo had anticipated Cao's intent and, pleading illness, remained in Shouchun. Cao sent the adviser a container for food sealed with his handwritten inscription, but Wenruo found the box empty when he looked inside. There was no mistaking Cao Cao's point. The counselor took poison and died. He was fifty years old. A poet of later times left this appreciation of Xun Wenruo:

A splendid talent, admired of all men!
His folly lay in serving Cao Cao's power.
Likened him not to Zhang Liang, Lord of Liu:⁶
Wenruo was 'shamed to face Han's Emperor!

Xun Wenruo's son, Xun Yun, informed Cao Cao of his father's passing. The prime minister deeply regretted his action and had Wenruo buried richly and honorably with the posthumous title lord of Jing.

Cao Cao's main force reached the Ruxu. He sent Cao Hong ahead with thirty thousand armored cavalry to scout the shoreline. The report came back: "Banners along the river far as the eye can see. But troop concentrations not visible." His confidence shaken, Cao Cao went to the Ruxu himself and deployed his force. He took one hundred men to a height and observed squadrons of southern warships in orderly array, flying flags of all colors, weapons gleaming smartly. On a large craft positioned in the center, beneath an umbrella of blue-green silk sat Sun Quan, flanked by attendants, counselors, and advisers.

Pointing with his whip, Cao Cao said, "Oh, for sons like Sun Quan! Liu Biao's were pigs and pups." As he spoke, a noise rang out. Swift boats were attacking from the south. From behind the Ruxu barrier an armed force emerged and attacked. Cao Cao's troops turned and fled, heedless of commands to stop. Suddenly hundreds of pursuers raced to the hillside; at the lead, a man with jade-green eyes and a purplish beard. Everyone recognized Sun Quan himself, leading a squad of cavalry. Cao Cao panicked and turned as Sun Quan's generals—Han Dang and Zhou Tai—joined the fray. Xu Chu dashed up to cover Cao Cao and, working his sword, checked the two southern generals' advance. Thus, Cao Cao got away and back to camp. Xu Chu fought thirty bouts with the two before retiring.

Back at camp Cao Cao rewarded Xu Chu well. He then scolded the rest of his commanders: "To retire in the face of the enemy blunts morale. Those who break ranks again will face execution." That night during the second watch an earthshaking clamor arose outside Cao's camp. Cao took to his horse in time to see fires spring up on all sides as the southern troops forced their way into the site. The killing went on until dawn. Cao's men retreated fifty *li* and camped. Sick at heart, Cao Cao browsed

among his military manuals. Cheng Yu said to him, "Your Excellency knows the art of warfare well. Can you have forgotten the dictum that nothing is more precious than 'superhuman speed'? Your operations took too long and Sun Quan had ample time to prepare. He walled the Ruxu River on both sides, making it difficult to attack. I think we should retreat to the capital and reformulate our plans." Cao refused this advice.

Cheng Yu left, and Cao Cao rested his head on a low table. A noise like the surge of the tide or the stampede of ten thousand horses filled his ears. Cao went to look outside and saw in the midst of the river a great rolling sun whose blaze dazzled his eyes, and up in the sky a pair of suns. Suddenly the sun in the river rose from the water and dropped to earth in the hills before his camp, making a terrific peal. With a start Cao Cao awoke from his dream. They were announcing the noon hour.

Cao Cao had his horse readied and rode with fifty men to where he had seen the sun fall. There by the hillside he saw a body of soldiers. The leader wore gilded armor and helmet. It was Sun Quan. Cao's arrival seemed to make no impression on Sun Quan. Betraying no uneasiness, he reined in his horse and, pointing at Cao with his whip, said, "The prime minister has full control of the northern heartland and has attained the height of his fortunes. What greed prompts him to invade the south?"

To this Cao Cao responded, "You are a vassal who shows no respect to the royal house. The Son of Heaven has mandated me to bring you to justice." With a laugh Sun Quan replied, "What an outrage! Who in the world does not know that you coerce the Son of Heaven to compel the obedience of the feudal lords? Far from not respecting the Han court, I am going to bring you to justice so that the dynasty may be set to rights." Enraged, Cao Cao shouted to his commanders to take the hill and capture Sun Quan. Suddenly there was a tremendous drumming as two companies came from behind the hill: on the right, Han Dang and Zhou Tai; on the left, Chen Wu and Pan Zhang. The four commanders had three thousand archers unleash a storm of arrows on Cao's position. Cao beat a swift retreat, but the four southern commanders gave chase. Midway, Xu Chu managed to block the pursuers with Cao's personal guard and pull Cao to safety. The southern troops burst into a victory song and returned to the Ruxu naval base.

Returning to his own camp, Cao Cao thought, "Sun Quan is no ordinary man. The sign of the red sun means he will eventually reign." Yet though he saw the wisdom of pulling back, he feared the ridicule of the southerners. And so the two sides remained at a standoff for over a month, each scoring small victories. By the first lunar month of the following year, continuous rains had flooded the roadways, and Cao Cao was anxious over the suffering of his troops in the mud. Some counseled retreat; others argued that the spring thaw would assist the campaign. Cao Cao remained undecided. At this point a messenger from the south brought a letter to Cao Cao. The text read:

Your Excellency and myself act equally in the service of the court. Yet Your Excellency, giving no thought to his debt to the dynasty or the welfare of the people, resorts unreasonably to arms, causing dreadful suffering to the common people. Is this the conduct of a humane man? Now that the spring floods have erupted, you should depart quickly, lest you suffer another Red Cliffs. Kindly give this your consideration.

On the back of the document was another sentence: "I shall have no peace while you live."

Cao Cao laughed at what he read. "Sun Quan speaks no lie," he said. After rewarding Sun's envoy, Cao ordered a general retreat to the capital. He instructed the governor of Lujiang, Zhu Guang,

to garrison Huancheng and took the army back to Xuchang himself. Sun Quan, too, retired to Moling. There he set a proposal before his advisers: "Cao Cao has gone back, and Liu Bei remains away at Jiameng Pass. Why not use the soldiers who were fighting Cao Cao to capture Jingzhou?" Zhang Zhao, however, opposed this plan, saying, "It's still not time to use the army. I have a plan that will prevent Liu Bei's return to Jingzhou." Indeed:

The moment Cao Mengde's power moved back north,
Sun Quan's ambitions for the south revived.

Would Zhang Zhao's proposal return Jingzhou to Sun Quan's hands at last?

READ ON.



*Yang and Gao Lose Their Heads in the Conquest of Fu;
Huang and Wei Vie for Credit in the Attack on Luo*

"REFRAIN FROM MILITARY ACTION," Zhang Zhao advised. "The moment you mobilize, Cao Cao will return. Instead, write two letters: the first, telling Liu Zhang that Liu Bei is allied with us in an effort to capture the Riverlands—that will turn Liu Zhang against Liu Bei; the second, urging Zhang Lu to attack Jingzhou and cut off Liu Bei's link to his base area. That should assure the success of our campaign for Jingzhou." Following this suggestion, Sun Quan dispatched two envoys.

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Xuande, after many months at Jiameng Pass, had won popular support in the locality. Receiving Kongming's letter informing him that Lady Sun had returned south and hearing of Cao Cao's attack on the Ruxu, Xuande turned to Pang Tong: "Cao has attacked Sun Quan. Whoever wins will take Jingzhou. What are we to do?" "There is nothing to fear," Pang Tong replied. "With Kongming there, I doubt the south will invade Jingzhou. Speed a letter to Liu Zhang, though, as follows: 'Sun Quan seeks aid from Jingzhou against Cao Cao. Quan and I stand or fall as one; I must help him. Zhang Lu is digging in now and won't dare attack the Riverlands. I would like to join forces with Sun Quan, but, alas, I don't have enough grain or men. I wonder if I could presume on our relationship as kinsmen to request thirty or forty thousand crack troops and a hundred thousand bushels of grain for the march? Please fail me not.' If Liu Zhang grants our request, we can plan the next step."

On Pang Tong's advice Xuande sent a man to Chengdu. He was received at the pass at the River Fu by Yang Huai and Gao Pei. Leaving Gao Pei to guard the pass, Yang Huai accompanied Xuande's envoy into Chengdu, where Liu Zhang accepted the petition. After reading it, Zhang asked Yang Huai why he had escorted the envoy. "Solely on account of this appeal," Yang Huai replied. "Since entering our region, Liu Bei has exhibited benevolence and virtue and has won the people's love thereby. He therefore means us harm. His present request for men, money, and grain must not be honored. To do so would be to add kindling to the fire."

"Xuande and I are like brothers," Liu Zhang replied. "How can I fail him?" Someone stepped forward and said, "Liu Bei's a crafty owl. To keep him in Shu is like letting a tiger into your house. And now to grant him what he requests is to add wings to that tiger." The speaker was Liu Ba (Zichu) from Zhengyang in Lingling. His argument gave Liu Zhang pause. Then Huang Quan, too, urged his opposition. Liu Zhang consequently decided to lend Liu Bei four thousand inferior troops and only ten thousand bushels of grain. He sent his answer to Xuande and told Yang Huai and Gao Pei to guard the gateway to Chengdu.

Liu Zhang's envoy presented the letter to Xuande at Jiameng Pass. "I hold off your enemies," the

outraged Xuande cried, "wearing myself out in mind and body, while you amass wealth and stint rewards. Is that the way to get the troops to give their utmost?" So saying, he destroyed the letter and stood up, denouncing Liu Zhang. The envoy ran back to Chengdu. Pang Tong said, "My lord, you give too much importance to humanity and honor. Today your display of anger has ended your friendship with Liu Zhang." "If so, what can be done?" asked Xuande. "I have three strategies," Pang Tong replied. "I pray Your Lordship, choose one and make use of it."

"Well?" said Xuande. "All you have to do," Pang Tong replied, "is to select your best men and make a lightning raid on Chengdu. That's the best plan. Yang Huai and Gao Pei are two famous generals of Shu. They have tough troops guarding the entrance to Chengdu. If you pretend to be seeking passage back to Jingzhou, they will come to see you off. Put them to death then and there, take the pass, and capture Fu; then take Chengdu. That's the second-best plan. Retire to Baidi and then go back to Jingzhou by rapid marches and make further plans there. That's the least preferable. If you stay here brooding, you are in for more trouble than you can get out of." Xuande replied, "Director General, plan one is too impetuous, plan three too slow. The second seems best. Let's try it."

Xuande wrote to Liu Zhang to say that Cao Cao had ordered Commander Yue Jin to Qingni township with more men than could be held off, that he had to help defend Qingni¹ himself, and that he was writing to bid farewell because there was no time to take leave in person. When the letter reached Chengdu, Zhang Song assumed that Xuande really was returning to Jingzhou, so he drafted a letter to Xuande himself. While he was looking for a courier, his brother Zhang Su, governor of Guanghan, arrived. Zhang Song hid the letter in his sleeve and began chatting idly. Zhang Su became suspicious at his brother's aimlessness. Song poured wine for Su and in offering the cup dropped the letter on the ground. One of Su's men recovered it. After the party ended, he showed it to Su. It read:

Recently I made my views known to the imperial uncle. Everything I wrote was sound and sensible. Why have you yet to act? "Rough in conquest, smooth in rule" is what the ancients prized. Everything lies in your hands. I cannot grasp why you are leaving for Jingzhou now. When you get this, march on Chengdu at once. I will coordinate from within. You must not let yourself down.

Astounded by what he had read, Zhang Su thought, "My brother conspires to treason. I shall have to turn him in." He took the letter directly to Liu Zhang and denounced Zhang Song for plotting to deliver the Riverlands to Liu Bei. Liu Zhang cried in outrage, "All along I have treated him generously. How could he plot against me?" He ordered Zhang Song's family executed in the center of the city. A later poet expressed his regret:

Though gifted with a memory most rare,
Zhang Song let the crucial secret fall.
Before Xuande's kingly cause was crowned,
He fell to bloody swords before his town.

Liu Zhang proceeded to gather his advisers. "Liu Bei means to steal my estate," he told them. "What is to be done?" In reply Huang Quan said, "The situation brooks no delay. Tighten control at the passes and let no man from Jingzhou through." Liu Zhang approved and had all points notified.²

Xuande brought his forces back to Fu. He notified the pass guards and asked Yang Huai and Gao Pei to come out for the formal parting. Yang Huai asked, "What is Xuande up to this time?" Gao Pei replied, "Xuande comes to get killed. Let's carry daggers and do it at the parting. That will put an end to our lord's problems." "An excellent plan!" Yang Huai agreed. The two commanders took but two hundred men down to see Xuande through the pass and on his way. The rest of the guard stayed above.

Xuande's entire force had advanced to the edge of the River Fu. Pang Tong said to Xuande, "If Yang Huai and Gao Pei come eagerly, be on your guard. If they don't come, capture the pass directly." As they were speaking, a sharp gust of wind blew down the command flag before Xuande's horse. "What does this signify?" Xuande asked Pang Tong. "It's a warning," was the reply. "Those two mean to kill you. Be prepared." Xuande accordingly donned thick armor and belted on his fine sword. The approach of the two commanders was announced. Xuande ordered his men to halt. Pang Tong instructed Wei Yan and Huang Zhong: "As many as they are, not one is to go back, cavalry or foot." Wei Yan and Huang Zhong went to carry out their orders.

Meanwhile, Yang Huai and Gao Pei, carrying concealed weapons and attended by two hundred men, had brought sheep and wine to Xuande's soldiers. Seeing no particular precautions, they secretly rejoiced at the prospects for their scheme. They entered the command tent, saw Xuande and Pang Tong seated inside, saluted, and said, "We heard the imperial uncle was taking the long trip homeward and have come to send him off with a few trifles." So saying, they offered Xuande wine. "Your responsibilities at the pass are not light," responded Xuande. "You should drink first." The visitors drank as Xuande went on: "I have something to discuss with you two in secret. Everyone else should retire." He dismissed the two hundred followers, then ordered his men to arrest the two commanders. From behind the curtains Liu Feng and Guan Ping responded instantly. Yang and Gao began to struggle, but Liu and Guan took them prisoner. Xuande shouted at them: "Your lord and I are brothers of the same clan. How dare you conspire to divide us?" Pang Tong ordered them searched, and the knives were brought forth. Tong ordered them beheaded, but Xuande hesitated. "They meant to kill Your Lordship," Tong said. "For their crime death is too generous." And so Xuande ordered Yang Huai and Gao Pei put to death in front of the tent.

Huang Zhong and Wei Yan had already taken prisoner all two hundred followers of Yang Huai and Gao Pei. Xuande summoned them before him and offered them wine to calm their fears. "Yang Huai and Gao Pei," Xuande said, "meant to turn Liu Zhang and myself against each other. They were carrying weapons to commit an assassination, and for that reason we have had them executed. None of you is involved, and none needs fear for his safety." The soldiers prostrated themselves gratefully.

Pang Tong said, "Help us get to the pass so that we can capture it, and you will be well rewarded." The soldiers assented. That night the two hundred, with Xuande's main army close behind, reached the pass. "Our commanders return on urgent business," they shouted up. "Let us in. Hurry!" Those above, hearing familiar voices, opened the barrier at the pass. Xuande's men poured in and took Fu Pass without staining their swords. The Shu troops surrendered to a man. Xuande rewarded them well and set up his own defenses.

The next day he feasted the troops in the great hall. Warmed with wine, Xuande turned to Pang

Tong and said, "Today's gathering is cause for celebration!" Pang Tong said, "To take up arms against another's state and then celebrate it is not the way a humane man wages war." "I have heard," Xuande replied, "that in ancient days King Wu celebrated his victory over Zhou. Was King Wu not a humane warrior? Why are you so unreasonable? I advise you to withdraw." Pang Tong rose and laughed aloud. The attendants conducted Xuande into his private quarters. After several hours' sleep, he awoke from his stupor and, on being told that he had dismissed Pang Tong, was overcome with remorse. Early next morning he appeared in the main hall and apologized. "I was intoxicated yesterday and gave offense. Please do not remember it and hold it against me." Pang Tong spoke and laughed as if nothing had happened. "Truly I was in the wrong," Xuande insisted. "Lord and vassal both," replied Pang Tong. "Not Your Lordship alone." Xuande too laughed, and good will was restored.

. . . .

Liu Zhang was dismayed to learn that Xuande had killed Yang Huai and Gao Pei and taken the pass at the River Fu. "Who would have thought this day would come?" he cried and assembled his advisers to discuss strategy for forcing Xuande's army back. Huang Quan said, "Reinforce Luoxian at once. That will give you control of the key road. The finest troops, the fiercest commanders will not get through." Accordingly, Liu Zhang commanded Liu Gui, Ling Bao, Zhang Ren, and Deng Xian to guard Luoxian with fifty thousand men.

On the first stage of the march Liu Gui said, "In the Damask Screen Hills dwells a remarkable man whose Taoist name is High Priest of the Azure Realm. He can foretell life and death, and things to come as well. When we march by those hills today, let's ask him how we'll fare." But Zhang Ren objected: "Warriors of mettle on their way to meet a foe don't seek answers from hermits." "I disagree," Liu Gui retorted. "The sage has said, 'Those who sincerely follow the way have foreknowledge.' A wise and lofty man may show us whether good or ill lies ahead." And so the four took fifty or sixty riders to the foot of the hills where they asked a woodcutter how to reach the sage's dwelling. Following his directions, the four ascended to a little hermitage on top of the hill.

A Taoist acolyte met them, took their names, and led them inside where the High Priest was seated on a rush mat. The four visitors bowed and expressed their wish to know of things to come. The High Priest replied, "We poor followers of the way are castaways in the wilderness; what do we know of the blessings or woes fate has in store?" Only after Liu Gui had repeated his request several times did the master call for writing brush and paper. He wrote eight lines, which he gave to Liu Gui. They read: "A dragon left, a phoenix right, he flies into the Riverlands. Young Phoenix drops to earth; Sleeping Dragon soars on high. One gain, one loss, as Heaven's lots dictate. Act as opportunity beckons and avoid perishing below in the Nether Springs."

"And our own individual fates?" Liu Gui continued. "What is ordained," the master answered, "is inevitable. No more questions." Liu Gui persisted, but the High Priest lowered his brows, closed his eyes, and made no further reply. The four climbed down the hill. "One must have faith in what these immortals say," Liu Gui commented. But Zhang Ren said, "He's a mad old fool whose words are worthless." The four remounted and proceeded to Luoxian, where they dispatched their men to guard the several strongpoints.

"Luoxian is vital to the defense of Chengdu: lose Luoxian, lose Chengdu," Liu Gui said. "The right

thing would be for two of us to guard the city while the other two pitch their camps in front of the town at strategic points near the hills—to keep the enemy from approaching." Ling Bao and Deng Xian said, "We will prepare the camps." Gratified, Liu Gui assigned them twenty thousand men. They pitched camp sixty *li* from Luoxian, and Liu Gui and Zhang Ren guarded the city itself.

Having taken the pass at the River Fu, Xuande was deliberating with Pang Tong on how to capture Luoxian. When Liu Zhang's countermeasures—the advance of the four commanders and their men—were reported to them, Xuande convened his own commanders. "Who will win merit first," he demanded, "by seizing their forward encampments?" Veteran Huang Zhong responded promptly: "Here's a ready old soldier!" "Take your own men," said Xuande, "and proceed to Luoxian. You will be richly rewarded for taking the forts of Ling Bao and Deng Xian."

Huang Zhong, delighted, was about to set out when someone stepped forward and said, "The veteran general is too old to go. Though this junior commander has no talent, he begs to be sent." Xuande eyed the speaker—Wei Yan. "I have my orders," Huang Zhong protested. "How dare you interfere?" "The value of the elders does not lie in their sinews," was Wei Yan's reply. "Ling Bao and Deng Xian are famed generals of Shu, in the prime of their powers. I fear you are no match for them and could well ruin our lord's cause. That is why I beg to replace you. I mean no harm." Angrily Huang Zhong said, "If you think I'm too old, perhaps you will match martial skills with me." "Here before Our Lordship," answered Wei Yan. "The winner goes—agreed?"

Huang Zhong hastened from the hall and called for his sword. Xuande checked him swiftly. "No!" he shouted. "Today's campaign against the Riverlands depends entirely on the efforts of both of you. If two tigers fight, one will be wounded—and my cause will surely suffer. I appeal to you, do not continue this dispute." Then Pang Tong added, "What's the point of your arguing? Ling Bao and Deng Xian have two camps. Each of you attack one. The first to succeed gets top honors." Thus it was decided that Huang Zhong would attack Ling Bao's camp, and Wei Yan, Deng Xian's. After the two had set out, Pang Tong said, "They are likely to fight on the way. Your Lordship, follow with reinforcements." Xuande left Pang Tong guarding the town while he, Liu Feng, and Guan Ping went after Huang Zhong and Wei Yan with five thousand men.

Back at camp, Huang Zhong ordered mess ready at the fourth watch and finished by the fifth so that they could set out at dawn and approach through a ravine to the left. Meanwhile, through a spy he had planted among Huang Zhong's men, Wei Yan learned of the veteran's plans. Keeping his satisfaction to himself, Wei Yan instructed his army to prepare mess at the second watch and to march at the third so that he could reach Deng Xian's camp by dawn. The soldiers ate their fill; bells were stripped from the horses, the men gagged, flags furled, and armor bound—all to ensure silence before storming the camp.

During the third watch Wei Yan's force left camp. Halfway there, Wei Yan reflected, "Simply to attack Deng Xian's camp is no display of my prowess. I'll attack Ling Bao's camp and then Deng Xian's, so I'll have two victories to my credit." Abruptly, he ordered his troops to take the left road round the hill. By dawn they were nearing Ling Bao's position. Wei Yan's soldiers enjoyed a respite while the gongs, drums, and flags, as well as spears, swords, and other devices were arrayed for use.

Ling Bao, however, was well prepared, thanks to a sentinel's timely report. At the first shock of the bombards his men mounted and came out fighting. Wei Yan, sword upraised, raced to meet Ling Bao. The two generals tangled and fought some thirty bouts. The Riverlands troops formed themselves into two companies and surprised the Han army under Wei Yan's command. Finally, men

and horses too weary to fight on after the night's march, the Han army retreated and fled. Hearing the disorganized march of his men, Wei Yan broke off his combat with Ling Bao and raced for safety. The Riverlands troops came on in hot pursuit. The Han forces sustained a grave defeat.

Before they had fled five *li*, the rumble of drums behind a hill announced a body of troops—led by Deng Xian himself—coming out of the ravine to bar their way. "Wei Yan! Dismount and surrender!" the call rang out. Laying on the whip, Wei Yan rode for his life, but the horse stumbled, fell forward, and flung Wei Yan to the ground. Deng Xian raced up and had raised his lance to dispatch Wei Yan when a bowstring hummed, and Deng Xian collapsed on his horse. Ling Bao was about to come and rescue Deng Xian, but a commander sprang into view crying fiercely, "The veteran Huang Zhong stands here!" and took on Ling Bao point-blank. Unable to withstand the charge, Bao turned and fled. Huang Zhong, pressing his advantage, routed the Riverlanders.

Huang Zhong's men rescued Wei Yan, put Deng Xian to death, and charged on to the campsite. Ling Bao now turned to engage Huang Zhong. They had clashed less than ten times when a mass of cavalry surged up from behind. Ling Bao abandoned his eastern camp and brought his defeated troops to the western camp, only to find the flags there completely changed. Astonished, he held his horse steady; before him was an imposing general in gilded armor and brocade war gown—it was Liu Xuande, flanked by Liu Feng and Guan Ping. "The camp is ours!" he cried. "Where are you going?" Xuande, who had originally set out to support Huang Zhong and Wei Yan, had later seized the opportunity to capture Deng Xian's camp. Ling Bao had no exit before or behind, so he took to mountain trails, heading for Luoxian. But before he had traveled ten *li*, he sprung an ambush on the narrow road, and men armed with hooked poles took Ling Bao alive. Wei Yan had realized his earlier mistake and established an ambush here with the help of some Riverlands troops. Thus, they were ready for the enemy. Ling Bao was bound and delivered to Xuande.

Xuande raised the flag of amnesty, ensuring that those who laid down their arms would be spared and that anyone harming a prisoner would forfeit his life. He then informed the body of surrendered Riverlands troops: "You are natives of the Riverlands; you have parents and families here. Those willing to come over to us shall be integrated into the army. Those unwilling are free to return to their homes." The cheering of the soldiers rocked the earth.

Huang Zhong established the foundation for his camp and then went to see Xuande, before whom he reported Wei Yan's violation of military regulations and demanded capital punishment. Xuande summoned Wei Yan, who brought in his prize captive, Ling Bao. "Such an achievement redeems your fault," Xuande said. He commanded Wei Yan to acknowledge his debt to Huang Zhong for saving his life and forbade further contention between them. A contrite Wei Yan pressed his head to the ground. Xuande rewarded Huang Zhong handsomely. Next, he had the prisoner Ling Bao brought before him. Xuande removed the bonds and offered him wine to reassure him. "Do you consent to surrender?" Xuande asked. "For sparing my life, I stand in your debt. Of course I consent. Liu Gui and Zhang Ren are my dearest comrades. If you let me go back, I shall invite them to surrender and tender Luoxian to you." Xuande was delighted; he arrayed Ling Bao and provided him a mount and sent him back to Luoxian. "Don't let him go," Wei Yan urged. "Once he's free, he'll never return." But Xuande responded, "I treat men with humanity and honor, and they never betray me."

Back in Luoxian, Ling Bao presented himself to Liu Gui and Zhang Ren. Without alluding to his capture and release, he simply said, "I killed a dozen men, snatched a horse, and got away." Liu Gui sent for help to Chengdu, where Liu Zhang, alarmed at the loss of Deng Xian, called an emergency

conference. He eldest son, Liu Xun, requested a command to defend Luoxian. "Who will support him?" Liu Zhang asked. A man stepped forth to volunteer. It was his wife's brother, Wu Yi. "This offer gratifies us," said Liu Zhang. "Who will serve as deputy commander?" he asked. Wu Yi recommended Wu Lan and Lei Tong and detailed twenty thousand to proceed to Luoxian.

Liu Gui and Zhang Ren received them at the strongpoint and provided a complete account of the recent events. "The enemy is upon us," Wu Yi observed. "The defense will not be easy. What is your view?" Ling Bao said, "This region is flanked by the swiftflowing Fu River. Their fortifications stand before us at the foot of the hills, where the land is low. Give me five thousand men with spades and hoes to divert the river, and we can drown Xuande's army." Wu Yi followed the suggestion and ordered Ling Bao to cut a gap for the water. With Wu Lan and Lei Tong furnishing support troops, Ling Bao prepared the equipment.

Xuande left the two captured camps in charge of Huang Zhong and Wei Yan and returned to Fu, where he conferred with Pang Tong. Spies reported to them, "Sun Quan of the Southland is trying to conclude an agreement with Zhang Lu of Dongchuan³ concerning an attack on Jiameng Pass." Startled, Xuande said, "If we lose the pass, we'll be cut off from behind, unable to advance or retreat. What would we do?" Pang Tong turned to Meng Da and said, "This is your homeland, and you know the terrain well. Suppose you go and help guard the pass; are you willing?" "If I could recommend someone to go there with me, I will guarantee its security," was Meng Da's reply. "He was an Imperial Corps commander under Liu Biao when Biao governed Jingzhou. His name is Huo Jun (styled Zhongmiao). He hails from Zhijiang in Nanjun." Delighted, Xuande sent Meng Da and Huo Jun to defend Jiameng Pass.

When Pang Tong returned to his quarters, the gatekeeper told him a special visitor had come. Pang Tong went forth to receive a man of majestic appearance, well over six spans tall. His cut hair, disheveled, hung about his nape. His clothes were slovenly. "Who are you, sir?" asked Pang Tong. Without answering, the stranger stepped up into Pang Tong's quarters and lay down on the bed. Puzzled, Pang Tong repeated his question until the man replied, "A moment please, and then I will speak to you of the fate of the empire." Bewildered, Pang Tong ordered wine and food for the man. He rose from the bed and ate his fill unabashedly. Then he went to sleep.

Pang Tong did not know what to do. Fearful that the stranger was a spy, he summoned Fa Zheng to observe him. Fa Zheng listened to Pang Tong explain the circumstances of the stranger's visit. "Could it be Peng Yungyan?" Fa Zhang said, and ascended the stairs to look. The stranger leaped up and said, "Fa Zheng, I trust you have been well since we parted?" It came to pass, indeed:

That the Riverlander found an old friend,
And the River Fu was not turned from its course.

Who was the stranger?⁴

READ ON.



*Zhuge Liang Weeps for Pang Tong;
Zhang Fei Obliges Yan Yan*

FA ZHENG AND THE STRANGER looked at one another; then each clapped his hands and laughed. "This is Peng Yang (styled Yungyan) from Guanghan, a Riverlander of high repute," Fa Zheng explained to Pang Tong. "His frankness rubbed Liu Zhang the wrong way, so he was put to slave labor, his hair cut and his neck closed in a metal ring. That's why his hair is short." Pang Tong welcomed him as a guest and asked why he had come. "I have come to save the lives of tens of thousands of your men," was his answer, "as I will explain to General Liu when I see him." Fa Zheng swiftly informed Xuande, who came to interview the visitor personally.

"How many men in your forward camp, General?" the visitor asked. Xuande told him the number and identified the two commanders, Wei Yan and Huang Zhong, by name. "Shouldn't a general be better informed about topography?" asked Peng Yang. "Your fortifications are too close to the River Fu. If the enemy breaches its banks and bottles you up—van and rear, no one will escape." Xuande saw at once the danger of his position. "The handle of the Dipper is turned west," Peng Yang went on, "Venus lowers overhead: something ill-starred is on the horizon. Exercise utmost caution." Xuande appointed Peng Yang to his council of advisers and secretly alerted Wei Yan and Huang Zhong to patrol the river vigilantly. The two generals agreed to alternate the watch daily and inform each other of any enemy movements.

That night as a great storm blew up, Ling Bao took his five thousand men along the river in order to cut a channel. Suddenly he heard a jumble of voices behind him and, seeing that the enemy was on guard, beat a quick retreat. But Wei Yan overtook Ling Bao, and the Riverlands troops panicked. Ling Bao stumbled into Wei Yan, who captured him after a brief struggle. Then Ling Bao's support force, led by Wu Lan and Lei Tong, arrived, only to be cut to pieces by Huang Zhong. Wei Yan delivered his prisoner to Fu Pass, where Xuande denounced him: "I treated you humanely and honorably when I let you go. How could you betray me? How can I forgive you?" So saying, he had Ling Bao executed and Wei Yan rewarded richly.

Xuande was hosting a banquet for Peng Yang when Ma Liang, carrying a message from Director General Zhuge Liang, was announced. Xuande summoned Ma Liang, who, after performing the ritual courtesies, told him, "All is well; nothing in Jingzhou need concern Your Lordship." He delivered Kongming's letter:

I have been marking the Guardian star of the Polar Palace. This year Jupiter advances to the midpoint of the cycle. The handle of the Dipper points west. Observing other celestial phenomena, I see Venus lowering over Luoxian: that means our commanders are likely to incur misfortune. The utmost caution is essential.

Xuande read the letter and told Ma Liang to return. "I, too, shall return to Jingzhou to discuss this matter," he said. But Pang Tong thought: "Kongming, resentful of our conquest of the Riverlands and my own achievements, has written to deflect us." Pang Tong then said to Xuande, "I, too, have been marking the Guardian star and the westward turn of the handle of the Dipper. These signs correspond to Your Lordship's acquisition of the Riverlands and bode no ill. I, too, have read the stars and marked Venus looming above Luoxian—an evil omen signifying that we have already killed the Shu general Ling Bao, and nothing more. Your Lordship, do not waver. Now we must press our attack."

Urged on by Pang Tong, Xuande advanced. Huang Zhong and Wei Yan took him into camp, while Pang Tong asked Fa Zheng about the routes to Luoxian. Fa Zheng sketched them in the dirt, and Xuande checked them against the maps Zhang Song had left with him; they matched perfectly. Fa Zheng said, "North of the hills runs a major road by which Luoxian's east gate can be taken. South of the hills is a trail to the west gate. Both can be used by troops." Pang Tong said to Xuande, "I have ordered Wei Yan to the van: he will advance by the southern route. Your Lordship should order Huang Zhong to proceed by the northern. They can join forces in Luoxian."

"Horse and bow are second nature to me," Xuande said. "And I have much experience on narrow roads. Director General, you take the east gate from the main route, and I will take the west gate." "There will be enemy troops to intercept us on the main road; they will be better dealt with by you. I will take the narrow road," Pang Tong replied. "Better not," responded Xuande. "Last night I dreamed a divine being struck my right arm with an iron bar, and the arm hurt after I awoke. Our sortie may be ill-fated." "A brave soldier," Pang Tong said, "expects wounds, if not death. Can a dream make you waver?" "It is rather Kongming's letter," Xuande continued, "that gives me pause. Why don't you maintain guard at Fu Pass?" Laughing loudly, Pang Tong said, "Kongming is deceiving you, my lord. He has no wish for me to achieve great merit on my own, and he wrote that letter to make you doubt. Your doubts gave rise to dreams. What ill fortune is in this? I would gladly die the cruellest death fulfilling my heartfelt purpose. Please say no more, my lord, but make ready for an early start tomorrow."

Xuande had the morning meal scheduled at the fifth watch; they departed at dawn. Huang Zhong and Wei Yan took the lead. Xuande and Pang Tong, together again, were firmly in their saddles when Pang Tong's horse balked and stumbled, throwing its rider to the ground. Xuande leaped down and collared the horse. "Director General, why do you ride such a nag?" he asked. "I've had him a long time. He's never done this before," Pang Tong replied. "To balk on going into battle endangers the rider's life. My white is docile. Please take him. He will never fail you. Let me ride that wretch," Xuande said and exchanged horses with Pang Tong, who replied, "Not even my life could repay your kind generosity." Each remounted and rode on, but watching Pang Tong leave, Xuande could not suppress a sense of foreboding.

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At Luoxian, Wu Yi and Liu Gui were considering the loss of Ling Bao. Zhang Ren said, "Off to the southeast there's a small but crucial road. I'll take a company and guard it. You gentlemen defend Luoxian. Let there be no slips." Suddenly they learned that Han forces were closing in on the city by both roads. Zhang Ren hurried off with three thousand men. He placed them in ambush along the

narrow route, lying low as Wei Yan's troops passed. Pang Tong's forces were following from behind. Zhang Ren's soldiers pointed to the chief general in the distance, saying, "That must be Liu Bei—on the white horse." Excited, Zhang Ren issued his orders.

Pang Tong advanced along the twisting route. He noticed how the hills pressed close and the vegetation grew thick. It was summer's end, when the leaves grow thickest. "Where are we?" he asked, warily coming to a halt. He had freshly surrendered troops among his own, who said, "This is Fallen Phoenix Slope." Astonished, Pang Tong said, "My Taoist name is Young Phoenix. That name bodes no good." He ordered an immediate retreat, but the bombard had sounded, and bolts converged like locusts on the white horse. Helpless, Pang Tong perished in the barrage; his age was thirty-six. A later poet left these lines of lamentation:

Afar, old Xian Hill in a hazy pile;
In one snug nook, the home Pang Tong once knew.
There lads could tell the turtledove's homing call,
And news of his great deeds was known by all.¹

Pang Tong foretold a kingdom cut in thirds:
Far he sought but never found his place.
Alas, that savage Sky Dog charging down
Never let him have his proud return.²

Prior to Pang Tong's death a children's ditty circulated in the northeast:

Phoenix and Dragon joined as two,
Minister and general came to Shu.
Hardly halfway down the Luoxian trail,
On the eastern slope the Phoenix fell.

Winds bring rains;
Rains chase winds.
When Han rises next, the road to Shu'll be free.
But when it's free, a dragon's all there'll be.³

Zhang Ren had shot Pang Tong down, and the Han army—caught in a vise, unable to advance or retreat—lost half its men. The bad news was rushed to Wei Yan, who immediately tried to swing his troops around. But the narrow mountain trail cramped their movement and Zhang Ren's archers and crossbowmen, shooting from a knoll, cut off their retreat. Wei Yan was at a loss. On the advice of one of the Shu soldiers who had surrendered, Wei Yan fought his way through to the main road and went on toward Luoxian. Amid rising dust ahead, a company of the defenders appeared, commanded by Wu Lan and Lei Tong. To the rear, Zhang Ren was catching up. Ringed by Riverlands soldiers, Wei Yan could not break free. Suddenly, he saw the troops of Wu Lan and Lei Tong becoming disorganized at the rear; the two commanders raced off. Seeing his chance, Wei Yan charged ahead—toward a commander who was swinging his sword and slapping his horse. "Wei Yan, I've come to

save you," he cried. It was Huang Zhong!

Wei Yan and Huang Zhong turned the tables on Wu Lan and Lei Tong. Attacking van and rear, Xuande's generals crushed their enemies and forged ahead to Luoxian. Liu Gui came forth to do battle, but Xuande had now arrived with support troops, and Huang Zhong and Wei Yan hurried back to safety. By the time Xuande raced back to camp, however, Zhang Ren had cut the narrow road, and Liu Gui, Wu Lan, and Lei Tong were moving in. Xuande could not defend his two camps. He fought, fled, and fought again until he neared Fu Pass, hotly pressed by the victorious soldiers of Shu.

Xuande and his mount were spent. Bent only on flight, he had no taste for combat. As he neared Fu Pass, Zhang Ren's pursuers pressed closer. Xuande was saved only when Liu Feng and Guan Ping seized the road with thirty thousand fresh troops and forced Zhang Ren back in heavy fighting. Xuande's two commanders pursued Zhang Ren for twenty li, recovering many war-horses. After Xuande's force had reentered Fu Pass, Xuande asked for news of Pang Tong. Men who had escaped the massacre reported that he had fallen in the heat of battle under volleys of arrows. Xuande faced west and wept uncontrollably. A ceremony for recalling the soul was held, though they were away from the site of the incident. The commanders wept too.

"With Director General Pang Tong dead," Huang Zhong commented, "Zhang Ren will attack Fu Pass. What should we do? I think we should send to Jingzhou for Director General Zhuge to come and advise us how to take over the Riverlands." Even as he spoke, they learned that Zhang Ren was at the walls issuing battle taunts. Both Huang Zhong and Wei Yan wanted to take the field, but Xuande said, "Your mettle is blunted now. We'll dig in until the director general gets here." The two commanders did as ordered. Xuande wrote out a letter and instructed Guan Ping, "Go to Jingzhou for me; request the director general to come." Guan Ping hastened to Jingzhou, while Xuande himself defended the walls, refusing all challenges to battle.

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Meanwhile, in Jingzhou, on the festive evening of the seventh day of the seventh month, Kongming had assembled a grand congregation of officials to feast and discuss the conquest of the Riverlands. Due west in the night sky he witnessed a falling star, its head the size of a bowl, plunge to earth, spewing plumes in every direction. Kongming lost his composure and flung down his wine cup. "Alas! Grieve, then!" he cried, covering his face. The officials asked him why. "Earlier," Kongming answered, "I'd calculated that the handle of the Dipper's pointing west this year boded the director general no good. With Sky Dog⁴ in the same degree as our army, and Venus above Luoxian, I have already respectfully advised Lord Liu to take every possible precaution. But I never expected that falling star this evening. Pang Tong must have died." So saying, he wept again before continuing, "My lord has lost a limb." The officials were astounded, yet doubtful. "In a few days," he added, "we will hear." The company adjourned, leaving the feast unfinished.

Several days later Kongming and Lord Guan were conferring when Guan Ping was announced. Before the astonished officials Lord Guan's foster son delivered Xuande's letter to Kongming. It read: "On the seventh day of the seventh month Director General Pang was slain on Fallen Phoenix Slope by Zhang Ren's archers." Kongming wept freely, and the officials did so, too. He then said, "I shall have to go. Lord Liu is in trouble at Fu Pass." "If you leave, Director General, who will guard this base so vital to our fortunes?" Lord Guan asked. "Although this letter does not say so specifically,"

Kongming replied, "I think I know our lord's mind."

Showing Xuande's letter to the officials, Kongming said, "Our lord has placed the responsibility for Jingzhou upon me, with instructions to appoint whomsoever I deem fit. Nonetheless, today Guan Ping is here with a letter whose intent is that Lord Guan assume this heavy task. Yunchang, be ever mindful of the honor-binding oath in the peach garden and do your utmost to defend this province. So weighty a task will require the utmost diligence."

Lord Guan, without pausing to make the ritual refusal, readily accepted. At a magnificent feast Kongming proffered the seal and cord of authority, which Lord Guan extended both hands to receive. "Everything now depends on you," Kongming said, holding forth the seal. "An honorable man," Lord Guan responded, "perseveres until death." At the mention of death Kongming became uneasy, and he would have put off the transfer of authority had he not already committed himself.

"And if Cao Cao attacks?" Kongming asked him. "I will repel him vigorously," was the reply. "And if Cao Cao and Sun Quan attack?" Kongming pressed. "I will divide my army and repel both," was Lord Guan's response. "That would jeopardize Jingzhou," said Kongming. "Let me give you eight words of advice; if you commit them to memory, General Guan, they will keep Jingzhou safe." "What eight words?" Lord Guan asked. "North—repel Cao Cao. East—conciliate Sun Quan," was Kongming's answer. "The director general's words are engraved in my heart," Lord Guan said. Kongming tendered the seal and cord of office and commanded the civil officials—Ma Liang, Yi Ji, Xiang Lang, and Mi Zhu—as well as the military officers—Mi Fang, Liao Hua, Guan Ping, and Zhou Cang—to support Lord Guan in the defense of Jingzhou.⁵

Kongming took personal command of a force to enter the Riverlands. He placed ten thousand picked troops under Zhang Fei, ordering him to cut through west of Bazhou and Luoxian, and offering top prizes for those who arrived first. Then he dispatched another body of men, with Zhao Zilong in the van, to follow up the Great River and meet the first group at Luoxian. Kongming himself was to follow with Jian Yong and, in the capacity of secretary, Jiang Wan (Gongyan), a noted scholar of the Jingzhou capital, originally from Xiangxiang in Lingling.

Kongming himself had fifteen thousand men. He set out the same day as Zhang Fei. Before departure Kongming said to Fei, "The Riverlands has many mighty warriors to be reckoned with. Along the way your men must observe strict discipline; looting will alienate the common people. We must show compassion everywhere; and toward our own men we must not indulge in brutality—no whipping or flogging them. I trust you will reach Luoxian quickly, General. Do not fail us."

Zhang Fei eagerly accepted his command and set out. He met no opposition; no one surrendering to him was harmed. But when he reached Bazhou by the Hanzhong-Riverlands route, a spy reported that the governor of Bajun, Yan Yan, was refusing to surrender. Yan Yan, one of the Riverlands' most famous generals, had all his powers despite his advanced years. He could draw a heavy bow, wield a big sword; and he had the courage to confront ten thousand. Zhang Fei ordered camp pitched ten *li* from the city. He then sent a man into Bazhou to "tell the old fool to hurry up and surrender and spare his people, or I'll flatten the city and kill all within."

It happened that Yan Yan had been strongly opposed to inviting Xuande into the Riverlands. When told that Liu Zhang had authorized Fa Zheng to extend the invitation, he beat his breast and sighed, "A case of calling a tiger to guard someone alone in the hills." Later, told that Xuande had seized Fu Pass, he restrained his wish to attack the pass only for fear of a counterattack on his city. Now he was determined to stand against Zhang Fei with five or six thousand warriors.

Someone offered Yan a piece of advice: "At Steepslope Bridge in Dangyang, Zhang Fei drove back Cao Cao's mighty host of one million with a single shout. Cao Cao himself sensed Fei's strength and backed off. Do not rush to engage him. For now, it is best to dig in and defend tenaciously. They have no grain and will have to retreat within a month. Then, too, Zhang Fei has an explosive temper and makes a point of flogging his men. If we refuse battle, he will be piqued and will be sure to maltreat his soldiers in some fit of temper. When his soldiers revolt, we can strike and capture Zhang Fei." Yan Yan accepted this advice and ordered his entire force to defend the walls. At this point Zhang Fei's emissary arrived and was admitted. The soldier identified himself and delivered his message bluntly. Enraged, Yan Yan swore at him: "Lout! Barbarian! Will General Yan ever submit to traitors? Tell him that!" He had the man's ears and nose cut off and sent him back.

Zhang Fei listened to his envoy's bitter recitation of Yan Yan's insults. Gnashing his teeth and opening his eyes wide, Zhang Fei donned full armor and led several hundred riders to the walls of Bazhou to provoke the defenders to battle. But they threw every manner of epithet back down at him. Temper flaring, Zhang Fei fought to the drawbridge several times and would have crossed the moat, but volleys of arrows drove him back. By nightfall, however, not a man had emerged, and Zhang Fei returned to camp swallowing his rage.

At dawn Zhang Fei returned. From the observation tower Yan Yan shot a bolt through Fei's helmet. Fei pointed up and cried wrathfully, "If I catch you, old fool, I'll feed on your flesh!" Evening fell, and Zhang Fei went back to camp again without having fought. The third day, followed by his company, Zhang Fei circled the wall, reviling Yan Yan. It so happened that Bazhou, a hill town, was itself surrounded by groups of hills. Zhang Fei looked down from one of them into the city and saw the soldiers all readied in their armor and arrayed in ranks but keeping hidden behind the walls, determined to stay in their hold. He also watched the common folk moving back and forth transporting bricks and stones for the city's defense. Fei ordered his horse soldiers to dismount and his foot soldiers to sit down, hoping to draw the defenders out—but to no avail. After a futile day of full-throated curses, Zhang Fei went back to camp as he had before.

Zhang Fei mused: "I bellow at their wall all day long, but no one comes out. What can I do?" A solution struck him: keep the main body of troops standing by fully armed in camp and send only a few dozen warriors to the wall to draw out Yan Yan's men. But three days of such sallies by these common soldiers failed to draw forth a single fighter, and so Zhang Fei revised his strategy: he had his men fan out to chop firewood and explore the roads around the city without challenging the enemy to battle.

Wondering what Zhang Fei was up to, Yan Yan had a dozen men, disguised as Zhang Fei's woodcutters, slip out of the city to mingle with the enemy troops and find out what was going on in the hills. Back at his camp Zhang Fei sat amid his men stamping his feet. "That damned old fool will drive me mad!" he cried. A few men by the entrance to his tent were then heard saying to him, "General, why distress yourself? We have discovered a path that will take us past Bazhou unobserved." Zhang Fei deliberately shouted loudly enough to be heard, "Why did you wait till now to tell me this?" "We just found out," they replied together. "We must act at once," Zhang Fei declared. "Mess today at the second watch; break camp at the third when the moon is bright. Gag the men and strip the horses of bells for the march. I will go ahead and clear the way. You all follow in order." Zhang Fei's command was circulated throughout the camp.

Once these plans were known to Yan Yan's spies, they returned to Bazhou. The news pleased Yan

Yan, who said, "I figured you couldn't control yourself, you damned fool. Sneaking over that road with your grain and supplies in the rear! When I intercept you from behind, how will you feed your men? Brainless idiot! I'll have you now!" Yan Yan ordered the army to prepare for battle: "Mess for us, too, at the second watch. At the third we leave the walls and hide where the trees grow thickest. Wait for Zhang Fei to come through the neck of this little road. When their wagons pass, hit them hard at the roll of the drum."

Night fell soon after the order was issued. Yan Yan's army, fed and well appointed, left Bazhou silently and spread out into an ambush, awaiting the signal to strike. Yan Yan himself entered a nearby thicket with a dozen lieutenants. Some time after the third watch he spotted Zhang Fei marching on, spear leveled for action, his warriors behind him, silent; three or four *li* further behind came the wagon guard—in plain view of Yan Yan. From all sides the ambushers emerged and were about to fall upon the wagon guard, when a gong rang out and a body of warriors overwhelmed the ambushers. "Stay where you are, you old scab!" a voice boomed. "This is a timely meeting." Turning swiftly, Yan Yan saw a powerful general—a pantherine head and wide-staring eyes, swallow-like jaw and a tiger's whiskers—wielding a ten-span spear and riding a deep black horse. It was Zhang Fei!

Gongs shattered the air as Zhang Fei's men came in for the kill. Seeing Zhang Fei, Yan Yan felt his skill depart him. After a few bouts on horseback Zhang Fei feigned a fall and allowed his foe an opening. Yan Yan swung hard. Fei ducked, then charged, grabbed Yan Yan's armor straps, pulled him over, and flung him to the ground; Fei's men bound him tightly. Actually, the first man on the path had been made to look like Zhang Fei. The real Zhang Fei had gongs rung ahead of the anticipated drums. That signaled his own onslaught, which caused the bulk of the Riverlands troops to throw down their arms and surrender.

Zhang Fei reached the wall of Bazhou in heavy fighting after his support troops had already entered the city. He ordered an amnesty and guaranteed the population's safety. His warriors pushed Yan Yan forward into the main hall where Zhang Fei sat, but Yan Yan refused to kneel. Through clenched teeth Fei shouted, "Why did you refuse to surrender to this general? How dare you continue to resist?" Without a trace of fear on his face, Yan Yan shouted back, "No man of honor in this bunch! Invading our province—you can have a headless general, but never a surrendering one." Zhang Fei angrily called for his executioners. "Viliam and fool!" cried Yan Yan. "Take the head! Why waste anger?"

Yan Yan's strong, dignified voice and unflinching expression caused Zhang Fei to alter his mien. Coming down from his seat and waving off his attendants, he removed Yan Yan's bonds, gave him suitable clothes, and guided him to the central seat of honor. Then, inclining his head, he bowed, saying, "Just now I spoke harshly. Please take no offense.

I have always known you for a noble warrior. " Grateful for this demonstration of high-minded generosity, Yan Yan fell to his knees. A poet of later times wrote of the general:

This grand, grey man of Riverlands,
Whose spotless name the whole realm knows,
Proved constant as the bright and lofty moon;
Within the jiang his mighty spirit rolls.
He'd part with his head but would not give

His knee in base subjection curled.
Age-honored general of Bazhou,
Who can find his equal in this world?

Another poem, praising Zhang Fei, reads:

Bravest of all for taking Yan Yan alive,
Valiant Zhang Fei won the hearts of all.
Today in western shrines his image we revere,
Where services keep springtime round the year.⁶

Zhang Fei asked Yan Yan the best way to enter the Riverlands. "A defeated general," Yan Yan replied, "indebted for such generosity, will toil like a beast of burden to requite his benefactor. The capital at Chengdu can be reached without resort to bow and arrow." Indeed:

Because this general gave himself to Zhang Fei heart and soul,
A string of cities would pass into Xuande's hands.

What plan had Yan Yan to offer Zhang Fei?

READ ON.



Kongming Sets a Scheme to Capture Zhang Ren; Yang Fu Borrows Troops to Vanquish Ma Chao

IN ANSWER TO ZHANG FEI, Yan Yan said, "From here to Luoxian my men hold all the strongpoints, and they will do what I tell them. Allow me to lead the march to repay your kindness. The pass guards will surrender at my call." Zhang Fei thanked him from the bottom of his heart. Yan Yan went forth, followed by Zhang Fei, and the defenders indeed delivered each strongpoint to him. To win over those who hesitated, he said, "If I have surrendered, why not you?" In this way he advanced unopposed.

. . . .

Kongming had already informed Xuande of his intended departure date, designating Luoxian as the meeting place. In council with his advisers, Xuande said, "Kongming and Zhang Fei are taking separate routes into the Riverlands. We are to join them at Luoxian and proceed to Chengdu together. Their chariots and boats set out on the twentieth of the seventh month and should be arriving shortly. We can begin to march."

"We have steadily refused Zhang Ren's challenges," Huang Zhong said. "Their troops are getting lax, lowering their guard. If we send a company out to sack their camp tonight, it will be even better than a daylight rout." Xuande approved the plan and sent Huang Zhong to the left, Wei Yan to the right; he himself took the center. At the second watch the three forces set out together. In fact, Zhang Ren was utterly unprepared. The Han troops surged into the main fortification, setting fires that quickly mounted high. That night the Riverlands troops fled back to Luoxian where they found refuge. Xuande withdrew and camped on the road. The following day he advanced, encircled the city, and attacked it. Zhang Ren kept to his walls. On the fourth day Xuande personally led an attack on the west gate while Huang Zhong and Wei Yan went against the east; they left the north and south gates open to traffic. Xuande did not bother to guard the south gate, which led into mountainous roads, nor the north, which gave onto the River Fu.

In the distance Zhang Ren watched Xuande at the west gate to the city, riding back and forth, directing the assault through the morning hours. Observing that Xuande's forces were tiring, Zhang Ren ordered Wu Lan and Lei Tong to lead their men out of the north gate and swing over to the east, there to confront Huang Zhong and Wei Yan. Zhang Ren himself came out of the south gate and swung west to take on Xuande alone. Within the city soldiers and dwellers mounted the walls to beat drums and shout encouragement.

As the sun reddened in the western sky, Xuande ordered his rear contingent to pull back first. His troops were trying to turn when a great shout rose from the wall: Zhang Ren had charged out of the

south gate and was heading straight for Xuande. Xuande's forces were becoming disorganized, and Wu Lan and Lei Tong had checked Xuande's two generals, Huang Zhong and Wei Yan. Cut off from their help, Xuande fell back and fled along a narrow mountain trail; Zhang Ren was close behind. Alone, Xuande raced ahead, Zhang Ren and a few horsemen giving chase. Riding straight ahead, Xuande laid on the whip. Suddenly a body of soldiers burst into view. "An ambush!" Xuande cried bitterly. "I'm trapped. Heaven has doomed me." Then he realized that the leader of the force ahead was Zhang Fei.¹

Zhang Fei and Yan Yan had been coming along that very road when they spotted dust in the distance, a sure sign of a battle in progress. Zhang Fei hurried forward and clashed with Zhang Ren. After ten bouts Yan Yan arrived in force, and Zhang Ren fled. Zhang Fei chased him to the city wall, but Zhang Ren passed through the gate to the city and hauled up the drawbridge.

Zhang Fei rode back to Xuande. "The director general is still making his way upriver," he reported. "It looks like I won the race." "The roads are so treacherous," Xuande responded, "and you must have met opposition. How could you come so far so fast?" "There were forty-five strongpoints, but Yan Yan, the veteran commander, gets the credit for taking us through without difficulty," Zhang Fei said and explained how he had won Yan Yan's allegiance by freeing him. He then introduced Yan Yan. "But for you, General, my brother could not have made it," Xuande said gratefully as he removed his gilded armor and gave it to Yan Yan. Yan Yan prostrated himself before Xuande. As they were arranging a banquet, a scout rode back and reported: "Huang Zhong and Wei Yan are locked in combat with two Riverlands commanders, Wu Lan and Lei Tong. When Wu Yi and Liu Gui came out to aid the enemy, our forces could not fight off the combined attack. Huang Zhong and Wei Yan have fled east in defeat."

On hearing this, Zhang Fei requested that Xuande divide his field army into two forces to relieve Huang Zhong and Wei Yan. Fei led one force and Xuande the other as they charged to the rescue. Wu Yi and Liu Gui, hearing the tumult to their rear, retreated into the city in confusion; Xuande and Zhang Fei then intercepted Wu Lan and Lei Tong, who were closing in on Huang Zhong and Wei Yan. The latter two turned on their pursuers, catching them in the middle. Wu Lan and Lei Tong offered their surrender, which Xuande accepted. He then camped near the city.

Zhang Ren was sorely distressed by the loss of the two commanders. "The military situation is extreme," said Wu Yi and Liu Gui. "Without a fight to the death, we'll never repel them. We should report the emergency to Lord Liu Zhang in Chengdu while we think of a way to hold them in check." Zhang Ren advanced a proposal: "Tomorrow I shall challenge them to battle, feign defeat, and lead them around north of the city. At the right moment, rush out with a company and intersect their army. Victory can be won!" Wu Yi responded, "Let Liu Gui support our lord's young Master Liu Xun in the defense of the city. I shall conduct the attack at the north wall." And so it was decided.

The next day Zhang Ren led several thousand out of the city. Waving their pennants and shouting raucously, they taunted the army of Xuande. Zhang Fei rode out to confront them and without sparing a word engaged Zhang Ren. After ten clashes Ren feigned defeat and fled along the city wall. As Zhang Fei came after Ren at top speed, Wu Yi struck at the appointed moment and Zhang Ren turned his company rearward, thus trapping Zhang Fei between them. In despair, Zhang Fei spotted a company fighting its way up from the edge of the River Fu, a general at its head. Spear high, horse in full career, the general crossed points with Wu Yi. Within moments he had taken Wu Yi alive, thrown back the enemy troops, and plucked Zhang Fei from their midst. The warrior was Zhao Zilong.

"Where is the director general?" asked Fei. "He has already arrived," Zilong answered. "He must be with Lord Liu by now." The two brought Wu Yi back to camp, and Zhang Ren retreated into the east gate.

On their return Zhang Fei and Zhao Zilong found that Kongming, Jian Yong, and Jiang Wan were already gathered in Xuande's tent. Fei dismounted and came to see the director general. "How did you get here before me?" asked Kongming in astonishment. Xuande related how Yan Yan had been released under obligation and had aided the march. "General Zhang certainly knows his strategy," commented Kongming as he congratulated Fei. "This is a boundless blessing for Your Lordship." Next, Zilong delivered Wu Yi to Xuande. "Will you submit?" Xuande asked. "How can I refuse? I've been taken alive," Wu Yi replied. Delighted, Xuande personally undid the prisoner's bonds.

Kongming asked Wu Yi, "How many men are inside guarding the city?" "There is Liu Xun, son of Inspector Liu Zhang, and two supporting commanders, Liu Gui and Zhang Ren. The former is no problem, but Zhang Ren is from Shu district and has great courage. Do not risk confrontation with him lightly." "We'll have to capture Zhang Ren before we can take Luoxian," Kongming said. "What bridge stands east of the city?" "Gold Goose Bridge," Wu Yi answered. Kongming rode directly to the spot to survey the river. On returning, he summoned Huang Zhong and Wei Yan and commanded them, "Along the river, five or six *li* south of Gold Goose Bridge, both banks are thick with reeds and rushes—a perfect place for an ambush. I want Wei Yan to hide a thousand spearmen on the left—they will stab at the commanders on horseback—and Huang Zhong to hide a thousand swordsmen on the right—they will cut down their mounts. Once their force is dispersed, Zhang Ren will have to come out by the small road east of the hills. That's where I want Zhang Fei with a thousand men in hiding—they will take him alive." Last, he ordered Zhao Zilong to wait at the north end of the bridge: "Destroy it as soon as I get Ren to cross. Then deploy your men north of the bridge to prevent his flight to the north. When he moves south, I'll have him!" His directions given, the director general went himself to draw the enemy out.

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Meanwhile, Riverlands Inspector Liu Zhang had sent two commanders, Zhuo Ying and Zhang Yi, to reinforce Luoxian. Zhang Ren left Zhang Yi and Liu Gui to defend the city while he and Zhuo Ying went forth, Ren in the van and Ying at the rear, to drive the enemy off. Kongming led a rather disorderly troop over the bridge and arrayed them against Zhang Ren. Kongming himself appeared in a four-wheeled carriage, holding a feather fan, surrounded by his hundred cavalry. Pointing at Zhang Ren, he cried, "Cao Cao had a million men, but he fled at the mention of my name. Who are you to refuse surrender?" Zhang Ren, noting the careless look of Kongming's lines, smiled coldly from horseback. "It seems there is little reality in Zhuge Liang's reputation as a marvel among strategists," Zhang Ren said and with his spear motioned his force into action.

Kongming abandoned his carriage and retreated across the bridge on horseback, Zhang Ren in hot pursuit. When Ren crossed the bridge, he saw Xuande to the left and Yan Yan to the right, both charging toward him. He strove to pull out of the trap, but the bridge behind him was already down. He started north, but saw Zhao Zilong's men arrayed on the opposite shore and decided to flee south around the river. Riding some five or seven *li*, he reached the thicket of reeds and rushes. Wei Yan's men sprang out, stabbing furiously with their long spears while Huang Zhong's men slashed at the

horses' legs with their long swords. The entire cavalry force was downed, the horsemen captured and bound. How could the infantry follow?

Zhang Ren fled to the hills with a few dozen riders, but Zhang Fei blocked his way. Ren tried to retreat, but a shout from Fei brought his whole force to the fore, and Zhang Ren was taken alive.² His rear guard commander, Zhuo Ying, had seen the trap closing and had surrendered to Zhao Zilong, who brought him back to the main camp. Xuande rewarded Zhuo Ying.

Zhang Fei brought Zhang Ren in when Kongming was seated in the command tent. Xuande said to Zhang Ren, "The other generals of Shu have submitted. Why not you? The sooner you do, the better." Eyes glaring, Zhang Ren shouted back, "No loyal vassal serves a second lord!" "You fail to recognize how times have changed," Xuande went on. "Submit and save your life." "I might for today," Ren replied. "But not for long! Kill me quickly!" Xuande could not bear to give the order, but Zhang Ren continued to denounce him. Finally Kongming had him executed to preserve his reputation for loyalty. A poet of later times wrote of Zhang Ren:

No constant man consents to serve two lords;
Loyal and brave, he died a deathless death.
Now he shines like the heavens' circling moon,
Lighting up the city Luo beneath.

Xuande was inconsolable. He had the body interred beside the Gold Goose Bridge to honor Zhang Ren's devotion to his master.

The next day Yan Yan, Wu Yi, and a group of surrendered commanders in the van marched to Luoxian and shouted out, "Open the gates and submit. Spare the people of the city." From the wall Liu Gui shouted back defiance. As Yan Yan put an arrow to his bow, a commander on the wall suddenly drew his sword and cut down Liu Gui. The gate was opened and the city delivered to Xuande. Liu Xun exited from the west gate and headed for Chengdu.

Xuande comforted the population. The man who had killed Liu Gui was Zhang Yi of Wuyang. With Luoxian firmly in hand, Xuande rewarded his commanders richly. "Luoxian has fallen," Kongming said, "and Chengdu will soon be ours. But I am concerned about the outer districts. It would be advisable to have Zhang Yi and Wu Yi lead Zhao Zilong in a campaign to pacify Jiangyang and Jianwei and the regions they administer along the Great River, while Yan Yan and Zhuo Ying lead Zhang Fei in a campaign to pacify Deyang and its subdistricts in Baxi.³ After they have appointed officials there, they can return and move on Chengdu." Zhao Zilong and Zhang Fei set off at once to fulfill their missions.

Kongming next asked about the strongpoints on the road to Chengdu. The former Riverlands commanders replied, "Only Mianzhu is well defended. Once that falls, the capital is easily taken." Kongming called a conference on commencing the attack. Fa Zheng said, "With Luoxian in our hands, the district of Shu cannot stand. If, my lord, you mean to win over the people here by means of humanity and justice, defer taking action while I write to Liu Zhang setting forth the perils of his situation. That should induce him to surrender." "This advice is most pertinent," Kongming added. And so a letter was sent to Chengdu.

Liu Xun, meanwhile, after his escape from Luoxian, had returned to Chengdu to inform his father of its fall. Inspector Liu Zhang hurriedly gathered his advisers. An assistant, Zheng Du, proposed:

"Despite his victories, Liu Bei still lacks troops and the adherence of the officials and the population. He feeds his men with wild grains, and he has no supply train. I suggest that we drive the people of Zitong in Baxi west across the River Fu and burn all their stored foodstuffs and all grain in the field. Then we can dig in quietly and wait them out, refusing to engage when they come to fight. Without supplies, they will have to leave inside of one hundred days. That will give us the opportunity to strike and capture Liu Bei." "I doubt it," responded Liu Zhang. "They say one drives off an enemy to secure the people. But who has ever heard of dislodging the people to prepare for the enemy? This is no way to ensure our safety."

During this discussion Fa Zheng's letter arrived. It read:

Only recently I was charged with binding Liu Bei to us in friendship. Little did I expect the opposition of those around Your Lordship would bring us to this pass. Yet Bei remains mindful of our longstanding amity and shared ties of kinship. If Your Lordship would reverse course and tender your allegiance, I am sure you would be treated most generously. We pray you will reflect and make your wishes known.

Infuriated, Liu Zhang ripped the letter to shreds. "Fa Zheng is a traitor! A mercenary, glory-seeking, faithless ingrate!" he cried and drove the messenger from the city. He ordered his wife's younger brother, Fei Guan, to reinforce the defense at Mianzhu. Fei Guan recommended Li Yan (Zhengfang) of Nanyang as his co-commander. They took thirty thousand troops to Mianzhu.⁴ The governor of Yizhou, Dong He (Youzai) from Zhijiang in Nanjun, submitted a proposal to seek help from Hanzhong. Inspector Liu Zhang, however, rejected it. "Zhang Lu is my mortal enemy," he said, "and would never rescue me." Dong He responded, "Nonetheless, with Liu Bei in Luoxian, the situation is critical. And you still serve Lu as a buffer. It would to be his advantage to oblige." And so a messenger was sent to Hanzhong.

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It was now more than two years since Ma Chao had suffered defeat and gone to live among the Qiang; he formed an alliance with them and seized the district of Longxi.⁵ Every city there had surrendered to him; only Jicheng remained unconquered. Imperial Inspector Wei Kang had sent a number of messengers to Chang'an asking Xiahou Yuan for aid, but the latter would not act without Cao Cao's approval. Despairing of assistance, Wei Kang was inclined to surrender to Ma Chao. But his military adviser, Yang Fu, protested bitterly, "How can you submit to a rebel against the Emperor's authority?" "What else can we do?" said Wei Kang, and he ordered the gates opened to the conqueror, despite Yang Fu's strong objection.

Ma Chao said angrily, "You submitted out of desperation, not sincerity," and he executed Wei Kang and all forty members of his clan. Someone urged him to execute Yang Fu for urging Wei Kang not to submit; but Ma Chao said, "He kept his honor. We will not kill him." And so Yang Fu became a military adviser to Ma Chao. Fu in turn recommended Liang Kuan and Zhao Qu, who subsequently joined Ma Chao as officers. Yang Fu appealed to Ma Chao for two months' leave to bury his wife, who had died at Lintao. Ma Chao assented.

On the way, in Licheng, Yang Fu visited his cousin Jiang Xu, General Who Protects Remote Peoples.⁶ (Xu's mother, aged eighty-two, was Yang Fu's paternal aunt.) On entering Jiang Xu's home,

Yang Fu paid his respects to his aunt and then said to her tearfully, "I have failed to defend the city placed in my care. I have failed to follow my lord in death. How can I face you again? Ma Chao is a rebel who has wantonly murdered district officials. He is hated throughout the province. My cousin sits tight here in Li-cheng and has no interest in bringing the traitor to justice. Is that how a servant of the Emperor should act?" So saying, he wept sorely.

Jiang Xu's mother summoned her son and berated him: "Imperial Inspector Wei Kang's death is on your shoulders." She turned to Yang Fu and said, "You have submitted and accepted office; why would you turn around and think of attacking him?" To this reproach Yang Fu responded, "I have followed the traitor and preserved my worthless life only to avenge my lord." "Ma Chao is a fighter of great courage," said Jiang Xu, "not an easy adversary." "Brave but incapable," answered Yang Fu, "no great problem. I've already secretly arranged for the cooperation of Liang Kuan and Zhao Qu should you be willing to take the field." To this Jiang Xu's mother added, "Act now. There will be no better time. All men must die, but to die for loyalty, for honor, is to die nobly. My life matters little; and if you do not heed your cousin's advice, I'll end it and end your worries too."

Jiang Xu took counsel with his commanders, Yin Feng and Zhao Ang. It so happened that Ang's son, Zhao Yue, was a subordinate commander under Ma Chao. The day Ang accepted Jiang Xu's assignment, he returned to his wife, Lady Wang, and said, "Today Jiang Xu, Yang Fu, Yin Feng, and I discussed avenging the murder of Inspector Wei Kang. But I am afraid that once we take the field, our son will be killed immediately by Ma Chao. What can we do?" His wife replied loudly and indignantly, "To cleanse the shame of king or father one should gladly sacrifice even one's own life. If you fail to act simply in order to save his life, I will take my own." Zhao Ang was resolved. The next day he joined the march against Ma Chao. Jiang Xu and Yang Fu stationed their forces in Licheng; Yin Feng and Zhao Ang, in Qishan. Lady Wang personally donated her jewelry and silks to the Qishan army to reward the troops and raise their morale.

When Ma Chao learned that Jiang Xu, Yang Fu, Yin Feng, and Zhao Ang were joining forces against him, he executed Ang's son, Yue. He then ordered Pang De and Ma Dai to attack Licheng in full force. Jiang Xu and Yang Fu went forth to meet them. Both sides assumed battle formation as Yang Fu and Jiang Xu appeared in white battle gowns. "Rebel! Dishonored traitor!" they shouted. Ma Chao plunged toward them, and the two armies fought. Overwhelmed, Jiang Xu and Yang Fu fled in defeat. Ma Chao took after them; but to his rear loud cries announced a fresh attack by Yin Feng and Zhao Ang. Ma Chao tried to reverse course, but pressed front and back, his army became divided.

At the height of the battle a new force came into play. Xiahou Yuan, having received Cao Cao's command, had come to destroy Ma Chao. Ma Chao's army was demolished by the combined strength of the three forces, and the remnant fled. Chao rode through the night, arriving at daybreak at the gates of Jicheng; demanding entrance, he was met with a storm of arrows and curses from Liang Kuan and Zhao Qu standing on the wall. They brought out his wife, Lady Yang, cut her down, and flung her corpse from the wall. Next, three of Ma Chao's infant sons and a dozen close kin were butchered one by one and pieces of their bodies were thrown to the ground. His bosom bursting, Ma Chao nearly toppled from his mount. To his rear Xiahou Yuan was catching up. The danger was too great. Ma Chao lost all taste for battle. With Pang De and Ma Dai, he fought his way free. Jiang Xu and Yang Fu were waiting ahead, but he broke past them after an interval of slaughter. He then battled his way past Yin Feng and Zhao Ang.

After the slaughter a bare remnant of Ma Chao's forces, fifty or sixty riders, reached Licheng. The

guards, assuming that Jiang Xu had returned, threw open the gates to welcome him. Ma Chao began a chain of attacks inside the walls, beginning from the south end and sweeping through the commoners' quarters until he had reached the home of Jiang Xu. Xu's mother was dragged before him, but she showed no sign of fear. Pointing at Ma Chao, she reviled him, and Chao dispatched her personally. The households of Yin Feng and Zhao Ang were also put to the sword. Ang's wife, Lady Wang, happened to be with the army and escaped the massacre.

The next day Xiahou Yuan arrived in force; Ma Chao abandoned the city, broke through the enemy line, and fled west. Less than twenty *li* away he encountered the army of Yang Fu deployed before him. His face contorted with hatred, Ma Chao lashed his horse to top speed as he trained his spear on Yang Fu. Seven of Yang Fu's brothers and clansmen sprang to Fu's defense; but Ma Dai and Pang De blocked off the reinforcement, and Ma Chao slew all seven of them. Yang Fu himself, wounded five times, fought till he fell. To the rear Xiahou Yuan was coming up; Ma Chao fled again, followed by Ma Dai, Pang De, and half a dozen riders.

Xiahou Yuan personally delivered the pronouncement comforting the people of Longxi. He had Jiang Xu and the other commanders defend the various key points, and he sent Yang Fu to the capital in a carriage. There he was received by Cao Cao, who wanted to make him an honorary lord. Declining the offer, Yang Fu said, "I have neither the merit of having suppressed the insurrection, nor the honor of having died with my lord. By law I should be executed. How can I accept office?" Cao Cao regarded him highly and insisted on awarding him the lordship.

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Ma Chao, Pang De, and Ma Dai decided to go straight to Hanzhong and join Zhang Lu. Welcoming them gladly, Zhang Lu thought he now had the strength to gobble up Yizhou to his west and hold Cao Cao at bay to his east. He suggested giving Chao his daughter in marriage, a proposal Yang Bo opposed: "Ma Chao himself brought on the disaster that befell his family. Your Lordship should not give your daughter to him." Zhang Lu agreed and dropped the idea.

Ma Chao learned of the incident and wanted to kill Yang Bo. But Yang Bo found out and, together with his older brother Yang Song, began counterplotting against Ma Chao. Thus was the situation when Liu Zhang's appeal reached Zhang Lu. Lu refused initially, and so Liu Zhang sent Huang Quan, who went first to appeal to Yang Song. Huang Quan said, "Our two regions depend on one another for survival. If the western region falls, will the eastern endure? If you relieve us now, we will yield twenty counties to compensate you." Delighted, Yang Song brought Huang Quan to Zhang Lu and explained the new proposal. This time Zhang Lu agreed. Yan Pu of Baxi now took up the protest: "Liu Zhang and Your Lordship are mortal enemies. He has made this deceitful offer in desperation. Do not accede."

At this moment a man came forward. "I have little merit," he said, "but grant me a small force and I can bring Liu Bei back alive as a hostage to guarantee the twenty counties." Indeed:

No sooner does a true lord reach the Riverlands
Than crack troops from Hanzhong go forth against him.

Who was the man?

READ ON.



***Ma Chao Attacks Jiameng Pass;
Liu Bei Assumes the Protectorship of the Riverlands***

THE SPEAKER, MA CHAO, ROSE TO HIS FEET and cut short Yan Pu's argument against helping Riverlands Inspector Liu Zhang: "Allow me to thank Your Lordship for his kindness," Ma Chao said to Zhang Lu. "Give me a company of soldiers; I'll seize Jiameng Pass, take Liu Bei alive, and see to it that Liu Zhang hands over those twenty counties." Delighted, Zhang Lu sent Huang Quan back by a short route to inform Liu Zhang that help was coming; he also gave Ma Chao twenty thousand troops. Pang De remained behind in Hanzhong due to illness. Zhang Lu ordered Yang Bo to supervise the army. Ma Chao and his nephew Ma Dai selected a day for the campaign.

Liu Xuande's forces were in Luo. Fa Zheng's messenger reported to him: "Zheng Du has advised Liu Zhang to burn all crops and stores of grain and to lead the people of Baxi over to the west bank of the Fu. He means to dig in and refuse battle." Alarmed, Xuande and Kongming said, "That would put us in great danger." But Fa Zheng smiled and replied, "Fear not, my lord. Liu Zhang will not use so vicious a tactic." Sure enough, to Xuande's relief Liu Zhang's rejection of Zheng Du's plan was soon reported. Kongming said, "We must capture Mianzhu at once; then Chengdu will be easily taken." He sent Huang Zhong and Wei Yan to Mianzhu with an advance force.

Fei Guan had Li Yan deploy three thousand troops against Xuande's approaching force. Huang Zhong rode out and fought forty or fifty bouts with Li Yan, but neither prevailed and Kongming sounded the gong. On rejoining the line, Huang Zhong said, "I was on the verge of capturing Li Yan. Why did you recall me, Director General?" "His martial skills are too great for you to win by force. Tomorrow feign defeat, lure him into the gorges; we'll surprise him there." Huang Zhong agreed to carry out his assignment.

The next day Li Yan and Huang Zhong met in combat. After less than ten bouts Zhong feigned defeat and fled. Yan gave chase and tracked him into the gorges. Suddenly, sensing danger, he tried to turn back, but the troops of Wei Yan were already before him. Kongming called down to Li Yan from a hilltop: "Surrender! Crossbowmen on both sides of the gorge are ready and eager to avenge the death of our Pang Tong." Li Yan dismounted at once, dropped his armor, and surrendered. Not a single soldier fell.

Kongming brought Li Yan to Xuande, who treated him courteously and generously. Li Yan said, "Although a relative of Inspector Liu Zhang, Fei Guan is a close friend of mine. Let me see if he will join us." Xuande approved. Li Yan reentered Mianzhu; he praised Xuande's humanity and virtue to Fei Guan, urging him to surrender to save himself. Fei Guan, convinced, threw open the gates of the city, giving Xuande possession of Mianzhu. Planning for the campaign against Chengdu had hardly begun when an urgent message came: "Zhang Lu has sent Ma Chao, Yang Bo, and Ma Dai against Jiameng Pass. The pass guardians, Meng Da and Huo Jun, are hard-pressed. The pass will fall unless

we help now." Xuande was alarmed. "Only generals Zhang Fei and Zhao Zilong can deal with this," Kongming said. "Zilong is still away," Xuande said. "But Zhang Fei is back. He should go at once." "Say nothing to him yourself, Your Lordship," Kongming responded. "I know how to get him to do his best."

Zhang Fei had heard of Ma Chao's attack and went to see Xuande. "I come to say farewell," he cried, "and be off to fight Ma Chao." Pretending not to hear, Kongming turned to Xuande and said, "Ma Chao is attacking the pass, but we have no one to match his strength—unless we call Lord Guan from Jingzhou." "Director General," said Zhang Fei, "do I rank so low with you? If once I held Cao Cao's million-man army in check, one miserable lout like Ma Chao won't bother me!" To this Kongming replied, "Yide, when you held the river and cut the bridge, Cao Cao's ignorance of the art of deception saved you. In this case, Ma Chao's bravery is known to all. In six battles around the River Wei, Cao Cao had to cut his beard and discard his battle gown, choosing to disguise himself rather than face Ma Chao; Cao nearly lost his life then. Ma Chao is no ordinary warrior. I'm not sure Lord Guan himself could defeat him." "I'm set," Zhang Fei responded. "If I fail, let martial law apply." "Since you're willing to make the pledge," Kongming went on, "then take the lead. I would also like Lord Liu to go but to allow me to remain in Mianzhu until Zhao Zilong returns." "I should go, too," said Wei Yan.

Kongming sent Wei Yan ahead with five hundred scouts; Zhang Fei followed, and Xuande brought up the rear. Wei Yan reached Jiameng Pass first and closed with Yang Bo. After ten bouts Bo fled in defeat. Wei Yan wanted to take the top honors from Zhang Fei, so he gave chase. Ahead, Yan saw a company in position, headed by Ma Dai. Thinking it was Ma Chao, he charged forward wielding his blade. After a brief clash Ma Dai, too, fled. Wei Yan gave chase. Ma Dai wheeled and shot an arrow through his pursuer's left arm. Wei Yan retreated swiftly.

Ma Dai chased Wei Yan to the front of the pass, where he was met by a thunderous cry from a commander racing out to confront him. Zhang Fei had reached the pass and heard the din of combat. Spotting Wei Yan wounded, he dashed down to save him. He shouted at Ma Dai, "Who are you? First your name. Then fight." "Ma Dai of Xiliang, none other!" was the reply. "Then you're not Ma Chao? Begone! No match for me! Send that wretch to me—Zhang Fei of Yan!" "You despise me?" said Ma Dai. He cocked his spear and charged. The battle went less than ten bouts before Ma Dai turned and fled. Zhang Fei began to pursue but was halted by a call from Xuande, who had just arrived. Together, Fei and Xuande returned to the pass. "Your temper is too hot," Xuande said. "That's why I came after you. Ma Dai is defeated. Rest tonight, and tomorrow we'll fight Ma Chao."

At dawn the enemy began drumming heavily below the pass as Ma Chao arrived with his troops. In the shadows of his command banners Xuande watched Ma Chao gallop forth, spear held firm, helmet bearing a lion emblem, belt of worked animal forms. His silvery armor gleamed over a white battle-gown. Such extraordinary raiment bespoke his uncommon ability. Xuande sighed and said, "Men tell of Ma Chao the Splendid. The man confirms the name." Zhang Fei wanted to descend, but Xuande checked him, saying, "Do not engage him now when he is keen." Down below, Ma Chao demanded to fight no one but Zhang Fei; Fei ached to charge down and devour his foe. Time and again Xuande had to restrain him.

By afternoon Xuande noticed signs of fatigue among Ma Chao's forces, so he picked five hundred to ride down with Zhang Fei. Ma Chao motioned his men back the length of a bowshot. Zhang Fei's company stood its ground. More men were coming down from the pass. Spear raised, Zhang Fei

finally raced out, thundering, "Remember Zhang Yide of Yan?" "I come from an old family of distinguished lords. How would I know a village lout like you?" Ma Chao replied, rousing Zhang Fei to fury. The two horsemen took the field and exchanged blows with their spears. After one hundred bouts neither had prevailed. "He's a tiger," Xuande sighed. Then, fearing for Zhang Fei, he sounded the gong, and the two warriors returned to their lines.

After resting his mount, Zhang Fei removed his helmet and wound a scarf around his head. He rode forth to challenge Ma Chao, and the two came to mortal grips once again. Uncertain of Zhang Fei's superiority, Xuande donned his armor and descended from the pass. Standing before his lines, Xuande watched the two warriors clash. After another hundred bouts their energies seemed doubled. Again Xuande sounded the gong and the fighting broke off; each warrior returned to his side.

Toward nightfall Xuande said to Zhang Fei, "Ma Chao is bold and brave. Grant him his due. Retire to the pass. Tomorrow is another day." But Zhang Fei's blood was up. How could he desist? "I'll die first," he cried. "It is dark," Xuande urged. "Fight no more." "Light the torches and we'll fight," Fei demanded. Ma Chao had returned to the field on a fresh horse. "Zhang Fei! Dare to fight in the dark!" he taunted. Zhang Fei's bloodlust quickened. He got a change of horses from Xuande and came tearing out of the line. "I won't go back until I have you alive," he swore. "If I don't win," answered Ma Chao, "I won't return to camp." Wild shouts rose from both sides, and hundreds of torches lit the field like day.

The two warriors resumed the ordeal of combat. At the twentieth clash Ma Chao wheeled and fled. "Where are you running?" thundered Zhang Fei. Ma Chao, realizing he could not prevail, decided to trick Zhang Fei into pursuing so that he could twist round and catch him with the brass hammer he held in his hand. Ma Chao's feint, however, had not fooled Zhang Fei. He ducked as the hammer flew at him, and it whizzed past his ear. Zhang Fei turned back, and Ma Chao gave chase again. Zhang Fei fitted an arrow to his bow, but Chao dodged the shot. At last the two generals returned to their lines.

Xuande stepped forth and shouted, "I treat people humanely and honorably; I never use deception. Ma Chao, recall your men and rest them. I will not exploit the advantage." At these words Ma Chao guarded the rear himself as his commanders slowly retreated. Xuande took his troops back up to the pass.

The next day Zhang Fei again prepared for combat. When the arrival of Director General Kongming was announced, however, Xuande went first to receive him. "I hear," Kongming began, "that Ma Chao is a ferocious fighter. In a fight to the finish, he or Zhang Fei will certainly fall. I therefore left Zilong and Huang Zhong at Mianzhu and rushed here. I have a little trick that should win Ma Chao over, Your Lordship." "Ma Chao is bold and brave. I admire him greatly. Can we get him?" Xuande replied. "Zhang Lu, Ma Chao's lord, means to set himself up as 'king of Hanning' in the eastern Riverlands," Kongming went on.¹ "Since Zhang Lu's adviser, Yang Song, craves bribes, first send someone to Hanzhong to buy his friendship; then write Zhang Lu and say that your struggle with Liu Zhang over the Riverlands is intended to avenge him, that you give no credence to others' divisive purposes, and that when it's all over you will recommend him as king of Hanning. He should order Ma Chao to withdraw, and we will be able to induce Ma Chao to surrender."

Elated, Xuande wrote the letter and entrusted the mission to Sun Qian; Qian reached Hanzhong along narrow bypaths, bearing gold and pearls that would serve for the bribe. Yang Song was delighted with Xuande's proposal and introduced Sun Qian to Zhang Lu. On hearing Xuande's offer,

Zhang Lu said, "How can a general of the Left² make me king of Hanning?" "The imperial uncle," Yang Song replied, "is entitled to petition the Emperor." Delighted, Zhang Lu sent orders for Ma Chao to cease fighting. Sun Qian remained in the home of Yang Song awaiting news from the battlefield.

Word came that day: "Ma Chao says, 'No victory, no retreat.'" Zhang Lu repeated the command, but Chao would not come back. After the third refusal Yang Song said, "The man was never dependable. If he won't suspend fighting, he means to rebel." Yang Song circulated rumors that Ma Chao meant to seize the western Riverlands and make himself lord of Shu in order to avenge his father, Teng, rather than remain Zhang Lu's vassal. Zhang Lu heard the rumors and turned to Yang Song for advice. "First," Yang Song told him, "have someone tell Ma Chao that if he is determined to win merit, we will give him one month more, but only on three conditions. If he fulfills them, we will reward him; if not, we will execute him. One, we want the Riverlands; two, we want Liu Zhang's head; and three, we want the removal of Xuande's Jingzhou troops." Yang Song went on: "Have Zhang Wei reinforce our strongpoints in case Ma Chao's troops rebel." Zhang Lu approved these measures.

Ma Chao was astounded at Zhang Lu's conditions. "What a turnabout!" he cried, and told Ma Dai that they would have to suspend hostilities. Meanwhile, Yang Song spread more rumors to the effect that Ma Chao planned to revolt on his return. As a result, Zhang Wei divided his men into seven units and put all strongpoints under strict guard to keep Ma Chao out.

Ma Chao's situation was hopeless. Kongming said to Xuande, "In his present dilemma, Ma Chao could be talked into surrendering. Let me go to his camp and put my arts of persuasion to work." "Master," replied Xuande, "you are my indispensable right arm, my most trusted counselor; what if something happens to you?" Kongming insisted on going, but Xuande would not agree.

At this juncture a letter from Zhao Zilong arrived recommending a defector from the Riverlands. Xuande summoned the man to his presence—Li Hui (De'ang) of Yuyuan in Jianning. "We have heard lately," Xuande said to him, "that you strenuously opposed Liu Zhang's cooperation with us. Now you offer your allegiance. Why?" Li Hui replied, "It is said that a wise bird chooses the tree it will nest on, and a wise vassal the lord he will serve. My protests to Liu Zhang went as far as a vassal's could; but when he rejected my views, I knew his cause would fail. General Liu, since all in Shu acknowledge your humane virtue, I know your cause will prosper and have come to offer my service." "There is much you can do for me," Xuande replied. "Ma Chao is on the horns of a dilemma," Li Hui continued. "I met him once in Longxi. Let me go and try to talk him into joining us." "We were just looking for someone to go," Kongming said. "Tell us what you plan to say." Li Hui whispered his arguments into Kongming's ear, to the latter's great satisfaction; the volunteer was sent.

On reaching Ma Chao's fortifications, Li Hui was announced. "I know the man," Ma Chao said. "A skilled advocate. He must have come to argue their case." He hid twenty axemen behind the curtains with instructions to hack the visitor to pieces on command. Moments later Li Hui strode in. Ma Chao was in the tent, sitting erect, not stirring. "What are you here for?" he asked harshly. "I come as an advocate," Li Hui replied. "There's a fine sword in this box," Ma Chao said, "newly sharpened. Try your speech. If it's not convincing, we'll try the sword!" Li Hui smiled and said, "General, the end is near for you. My only fear is that your newly sharpened sword may prove itself on your own neck, not mine." "What?" said Ma Chao. "Do you remember Lady Xishi of Yue," Li Hui said, "whose beauty the most skillful slanderer could not cover up? Or Wuyan of Qi, whose ill favor the greatest eulogy could not disguise? The sun starts to set at noon; the moon starts to wane when full. These are

universal principles. For killing your father, Cao Cao is your mortal enemy. In Longxi you have bitter foes. There is no way you can save Liu Zhang and force back Xuande's Jingzhou troops; nor can you break Yang Song's hold on Zhang Lu. Who in the world wants you, man without a master? One more defeat like the one at Wei bridge or Jicheng, and you will reap the world's scorn."

Ma Chao nodded and said appreciatively, "What you say makes sense. Have I a way out?" "If you are willing to listen," Li Hui said. "But what are the axemen for?" Shamed by the question, Ma Chao dismissed them. "Imperial Uncle Liu," Li Hui went on, "is courteous to the worthy and humble before men of ability. I have confidence in his success, and for that reason have transferred my allegiance from Liu Zhang to Liu Xuande. Your honorable father once made common cause with the imperial uncle in order to bring the traitor Cao to justice.³ Won't you turn from the benighted Zhang Lu and make your future with the enlightened Xuande, not only to avenge your father but also to establish your own merit?" Ma Chao was delighted. He summoned Yang Bo and cut him down; then he took the head and went with Li Hui to Jiameng Pass to submit to Xuande. Xuande welcomed Ma Chao in person and treated him as an honored guest. Chao touched his head to the ground in appreciation. "Today meeting an enlightened lord is like seeing the bright heavens break through clouds and mist," he declared.

Sun Qian had already returned from his mission to Zhang Lu. Xuande had Huo Jun and Meng Da guard the pass, and sent his army to capture Chengdu. Zhao Zilong and Huang Zhong welcomed Xuande into Mianzhu. There was a report that Liu Jun and Ma Han had come to contest Mianzhu. Zhao Zilong said, "I'll take care of them." He mounted and rode off with his men. On the city wall Xuande feted Ma Chao with wine. Before the banquet had begun, Zhao Zilong presented the heads of Liu Jun and Ma Han. The astonished Ma Chao felt redoubled respect. "Do not tire your forces, my lord," he said. "I will call on Liu Zhang to surrender. If he refuses, my brother Dai and I will deliver Chengdu to you ourselves." Xuande was delighted. The day had proved a perfect success.

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Remnants of Liu Zhang's defeated army reached Chengdu with the news of Ma Chao's defection. The alarmed inspector sealed the gates and would not appear. But when told that Ma Chao and Ma Dai were coming to help, he mounted the north wall and faced the two brothers. "We want to speak to Liu Zhang," they cried. Liu Zhang responded from the wall, and Ma Chao, remaining mounted, pointed with his whip and said, "I started out with Zhang Lu's troops to rescue you. Imagine my surprise when Zhang Lu heeded Yang Song's slanders and tried to murder me. Now I have submitted to Imperial Uncle Liu; I suggest you tender your territory to us and surrender rather than subject your people to further misery. Should you persist in your misguided resistance, we are prepared to attack your city now."

Liu Zhang turned the color of ash and fell over. His officials rushed to revive him. "How blind I was!" Liu Zhang said. "Now it's too late for despair. Open the gates and spare the people." Dong He, however, said, "We still have over thirty thousand troops in the city and the means to support them for one year. What's the point of simply surrendering?" "In our more than twenty years in Shu," Liu Zhang replied, "what benefits have my father and I conferred on the people?⁴ In three years' warfare they have left their life's blood in the fields—and it is my fault. What peace can I know? Better to surrender and make them secure." All shed tears at these words.

Suddenly a man appeared and said, "Your Lordship's words accord with Heaven's wish." Everyone turned to Qiao Zhou (Yunnan), a man from Xichongguo in Baxi and a skilled reader of the stars. Questioned by Liu Zhang, he said "Observing the constellations, I have seen stars clustering over Shu, the main star bright as the moon. It is the imperial sign. Moreover, a year ago, there was a children's ditty: 'If you want fresh rice, you must wait till First Ruler comes.'⁵ A clear omen: Heaven must have its way." Huang Quan and Liu Ba were angered, but Liu Zhang prevented them from executing the fortune-teller. Suddenly another report came in: the district governor of Shu, Xu Jing, had left his city and surrendered. Liu Zhang returned to his quarters in great distress.

The next day Liu Zhang was told that Jian Yong, ranking envoy from Imperial Uncle Liu, was at the city gate. Liu Zhang ordered the gate opened to receive him, but Jian Yong remained seated smugly in his carriage, eyeing the inspector. Suddenly someone with sword drawn shouted, "Upstart! Think you're above us all? How dare you snub the worthies of Shu?" Jian Yong descended quickly and offered his respects to the speaker, Qin Mi (Zilai) of Mianzhu in Guanghan. With a smile Jian Yong said, "Forgive me. I did not recognize my worthy brother."

Qin Mi took Jian Yong to Inspector Liu Zhang. Jian Yong explained that Xuande was a generous and understanding man who bore him no ill will. On this assurance Liu Zhang made up his mind to submit and showed Jian Yong every consideration. The following day Liu Zhang personally tendered his seal and cord and other official documents to Jian Yong, who then escorted him out of the city by carriage. Xuande came out of his campsite to receive Liu Zhang, taking his hands and weeping freely as he said, "Do not think we have forsaken the principles of humanity and honor. The situation was beyond our control." Together they entered the camp and, after transferring the instruments of office, rode side by side into the capital of the Riverlands.

Xuande entered Chengdu to a joyful reception. The people welcomed him at the city gate with incense and flowers and lanterns. He arrived at the government buildings, ascended the main hall, and seated himself. All the officials of the capital district prostrated themselves below, save Huang Quan and Liu Ba who refused to appear. The commanders wanted to put them to death, but Xuande hastily issued an order forbidding anyone to harm them on pain of clan-wide execution. Xuande went in person to their quarters and invited them to enter his service. Huang Quan and Liu Ba, moved by Xuande's gentle courtesy, finally accepted.⁶

Kongming said to Xuande, "We have the Riverlands. But there is no room for two lords: Liu Zhang should be sent to Jingzhou." "We have hardly taken possession of the capital district of Shu," Xuande answered. "We cannot command Liu Zhang to leave." "Indecision has cost him his estate," Kongming continued. "My lord, if you rule with womanish benevolence, this land will not long be yours." Xuande was persuaded. He held a grand banquet, requested Liu Zhang to gather up his goods, bestowed on him the insignia of General Who Exhibits Might, and had him take his family and household servants to Gong'an in Nanjun that very day.⁷

When Xuande assumed the protectorship of Yizhou, he richly rewarded all civil and military officials who had submitted and distinguished them with important titles. Yan Yan was made general of the Van; Fa Zheng, governor of Shu district; Dong He, Imperial Corps commander; Xu Jing, first lieutenant to the general of the Left; Pang Yi, officer in charge of the camps; Liu Ba, general of the Left; Huang Quan, general of the Right. Wu Yi, Fei Guan, Peng Yang, Zhuo Ying, Li Yan, Wu Lan, Lei Tong, Li Hui, Zhang Yi, Qin Mi, Qiao Zhou, Lü Yi, Huo Jun, Deng Zhi, Yang Hong, Zhou Qun, Fei Yi, Fei Shi, Meng Da, and all the surrendering officers and officials, over sixty in number, were

advanced to positions of influence.

Zhuge Liang was confirmed as director general; Lord Guan, General Who Scours the Predators and lord of Hanshou precinct;⁸ Zhang Fei, General Who Conquers the Barbarians and lord of Xin precinct; Zhao Zilong, General Who Keeps Order Afar; Huang Zhong, General Who Conquers the West; Wei Yan, General Who Displays Prowess; Ma Chao, General Who Pacifies the West. Sun Qian, Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, Liu Feng, Wu Ban, Guan Ping, Zhou Cang, Liao Hua, Ma Liang, Ma Su, Jiang Wan, Yi Ji, and other officials and officers from Jingzhou were also promoted and rewarded.

A special envoy was sent to Lord Guan bearing five hundred catties of gold, one thousand of silver, fifty million copper coins, and one thousand rolls of Riverlands silk. Other officials and commanders were rewarded according to their deserts. Oxen and horses were slaughtered to provide a great feast for the soldiers, and the granaries were opened to relieve the suffering of the common people. Soldiers and civilians alike rejoiced.

Having conquered the Riverlands, Xuande proposed to grant his officials Chengdu's most desirable lands and buildings. Zhao Zilong, however, protested: "The people of this province have been through the flames of war so long that they have deserted their fields and dwellings. These properties should be restored to those who live here, for resettlement and economic revival—not taken away for rewarding our own. In that way, our rule will gain acceptance." Xuande gladly followed this advice.⁹

Next, Xuande instructed Director General Zhuge to revise the legal code, which provided for severe corporal punishment. Fa Zheng said, "When the Supreme Ancestor entered the Qin capital at Xianyang, he reduced the legal code to three provisions,¹⁰ and the common people rejoiced in his benevolence. I would like the Director General to satisfy our people's expectations by easing the punitive provisions and curtailing the scope of the laws." "You don't see the whole problem," Kongming replied. "The laws of Qin were punitive and harsh, and the people detested them. That is why the Supreme Ancestor's kindness and leniency won their allegiance. But in this case, Liu Zhang was foolish and weak. His benevolence inspired no dedication, his severity no respect, so relations between lord and vassal have gradually broken down. Vassals he favored with office became cruel as their authority increased; vassals his generosity kept dependable became indifferent as his generosity was exhausted. Herein lies the true cause of Liu Zhang's failure. Our new administration must win respect through legal authority; when the laws are carried out, then the people will appreciate our kindnesses. Moreover, we must use rank to limit ambition so that when rank is granted, the honor will be appreciated. Balanced bestowing of kindness and honor will restore proper relations between lord and vassal, and the principles of good governance will again be manifest." Fa Zheng was persuaded and withdrew his suggestion. Henceforth there was good order in the army and among the population.

The Riverlands' forty-one subdistricts were placed under military control and pacified. Fa Zheng, serving as governor of Shu district, repaid the smallest favor and avenged the slightest grievance. Someone complained to Kongming that Fa Zheng should be rebuked for his overzealous administration. But Kongming replied, "I remember when Lord Liu was a virtual prisoner in Jingzhou, dreading Cao Cao to the north and fearful of Sun Quan to the east. Thanks to Fa Zheng, who lent our lord wings, he soared beyond anyone's reach. How can we restrict Fa Zheng or deny him his way?" Thus, the matter was dropped; but when the complaint came to Fa Zheng's attention, he began to show

restraint in his conduct.

One day Xuande and Kongming were chatting, when a message came that Lord Guan had sent his son Ping to thank Xuande for the gold and silk he had been awarded. Xuande summoned the lad. After performing the ritual prostration, Guan Ping delivered Lord Guan's letter. "My father knows that Ma Chao's martial skill surpasses that of other warriors," Ping said. "He wants to come to the Riverlands for a trial of skill and has asked me to petition you, uncle, on this matter." Xuande was shocked. "If Lord Guan comes now to test his strength against Ma Chao," he said, "we will lose one of them." But Kongming said, "I see no harm. Let me send an answer." Xuande, fearing Lord Guan's hasty temper, had Kongming reply; Guan Ping sped the letter to Jingzhou. Lord Guan asked his son, "Did you discuss my trial of strength with Ma Chao?" "Here is the director general's response," Guan Ping replied. Lord Guan unsealed the letter, which read:

I understand you wish a trial with Ma Chao. In my judgment, although Ma Chao is a fiercer warrior than most, he belongs in the category of Ying Bu and Peng Yue. He might prove the equal of your worthy brother, Yide, but could hardly compare with the unique and incomparable ability of our Long-Bearded Lord. Your present governorship of Jingzhou is no slight responsibility. If you came here and Jingzhou were lost, it would be the gravest offense. Please favor us with your discernment.¹¹

After reading the letter, Lord Guan stroked his beard and said with a smile, "How well Kongming knows me." He had the letter shown to his companions, and lost all interest in traveling to the west.

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In the Southland Sun Quan learned that Xuande had taken possession of the Riverlands and moved the former inspector, Liu Zhang, to Gong'an. Sun Quan summoned Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong. "At the beginning," he told them, "Liu Bei pledged to return Jingzhou province after taking the Riverlands. He already holds the forty-one subdistricts of Ba and Shu and is about to extend his rule to the Hanzhong districts on the River Han. Either he returns the province now, or the time has come for war." Zhang Zhao objected. "Our land is at peace," he said. "We must not start a war. I have a plan to make Liu Bei restore Jingzhou to us with all humility and respect." Indeed:

As a new day dawns in the Riverlands,
The Southland seeks to satisfy its longstanding claim.

What was Zhang Zhao thinking?

READ ON.



A Lone Swordsman, Guan Presents Himself at Lu Su's Feast; Empress Wu Lays Down Her Life for Her House

ZHANG ZHAO OFFERED A PLAN for recovering Jingzhou. "Liu Bei relies above all on Zhuge Liang," he said to Sun Quan. "His older brother, Jin, is in our service. What if we arrest Jin's family and send him to the Riverlands with this message: 'My family's safety depends on the return of the province'? Out of fraternal sympathy Liang should agree."¹ Sun Quan replied, "Zhuge Jin is an honorable man. How can I arrest his family?" "Tell him outright it's part of the plan," Zhang Zhao returned, "and spare him any worry." Sun Quan approved. He sequestered Zhuge Jin's family in his headquarters and sent Jin west with a letter for Xuande. Not long after, Jin reached Chengdu.

Xuande asked Kongming, "Why did they send your brother here?" "To recover Jingzhou; why else?" was his reply. "How to respond?" Xuande asked. "Just do as I say," Kongming answered. Having set his course, Kongming received his brother outside the city wall and took him directly to the government guesthouse rather than his own home. After the ritual of expressions of respect, Jin let out a sharp cry. "Brother," said Kongming, "is there a problem? You have only to speak. What makes you express such grief?" "My family is done for," Jin said. "Not because of Jingzhou?" Kongming asked. "If your family has been seized on my account, how can I have a moment's peace? Set your anxieties aside. I have a very simple plan for returning it, once and for all." Elated, Zhuge Jin went with Kongming to see Xuande and deliver his letter.

On reading it Xuande said angrily, "First Sun Quan gave me his sister in marriage, then during my absence from Jingzhou he spirited her away. Imagine how I felt. I could have invaded the Southland to avenge the insult. And now you tell me he wants Jingzhou back!"² At this point Kongming flung himself to the ground, weeping, and implored Xuande: "Lord Sun has arrested my elder brother's family. If the province is not returned to Sun Quan, they will all be cruelly executed. If I lose my elder brother, how will I survive? I beg Your Lordship, if only for my sake, return Jingzhou to Lord Sun; preserve the fraternal ties that bind my brother and myself." After a show of resistance to Kongming's tearful pleas, Xuande softened and said, "In that case, in view of the director general's personal appeal, I will return one half—the three districts of Changsha, Lingling, and Guiyang."

"Since we have received your gracious consent," Kongming continued, "would you write to Lord Guan ordering him to make the three districts over to Lord Sun?" Xuande replied, "When Zhuge Jin reaches Jingzhou, it is imperative that he himself put this request to my brother in the most diplomatic terms. You know how volatile my brother can be; I fear him myself. Zhuge Jin, you must exercise the greatest delicacy." Provided with the letter, Zhuge Jin took leave of Xuande, bid his brother good-bye, and went to Jingzhou.

Lord Guan invited Zhuge Jin into the main hall, and host and guest exchanged salutations. Jin produced Xuande's letter. "The imperial uncle," he said, "has consented to restore three districts to

Lord Sun. I trust, General, that you will arrange the transfer at once, so that I may return and face my master in good conscience." But Lord Guan's face darkened as he said, "My brother and I swore in the peach garden to make common cause in upholding the house of Han. Jingzhou is Han's sovereign territory. How could I give anyone an inch of it for no good reason? As they say, 'The general abroad may disregard the king.' Despite this letter, I simply will not 'restore' anything." "Lord Sun has imprisoned my family," Zhuge Jin pleaded, "and will kill them if he doesn't get Jingzhou back. Have pity, General." "That little ruse won't work on me!" responded Lord Guan.³ "Have you no consideration, General?" said Jin. Lord Guan reached for his sword. "Enough!" he cried. "This sword has even less!" Guan Ping added his own appeal: "Father, for the sake of the director general, restrain your anger." "If it were not for the director general, you wouldn't get back to the Southland alive," was Lord Guan's final word to Zhuge Jin.

Thoroughly humiliated, Zhuge Jin exited speedily and sailed west to see Kongming. Kongming was away on a tour of inspection, so it was to Xuande that Zhuge Jin complained that Lord Guan meant to kill him. "My brother is swift to anger," Xuande said, "it is nearly impossible to reason with him. Return to the south for now, and give me some time to complete the conquest of the eastern Riverlands' Hanzhong districts. I will bring Lord Guan over to defend them, and then Jingzhou can be yours once again."

Zhuce Jin had no choice. He returned to Lord Sun and explained all that had taken place. "Your trip," the outraged Sun Quan cried, "dashing back and dashing forth—perhaps it's all a part of Zhuge Liang's plan." "Not at all!" replied Zhuge Jin. "My brother, too, pleaded tearfully with Xuande who finally consented to give back three districts. But Lord Guan stubbornly refused to comply." "In that case," Sun Quan responded, "send our officials on to govern those three districts and see what happens next." "An excellent decision, Your Lordship," Zhuge Jin said. Sun Quan let Jin take his family home.

The southern administrators Sun Quan sent were soon expelled from the three Jingzhou districts that Xuande had promised. "Lord Guan refused to accept us," they complained on returning to the Southland. "He drove us back the night we arrived and ordered anyone resisting to be killed." Enraged, Sun Quan summoned Lu Su. "Did you not serve as Liu Bei's guarantor when he borrowed Jingzhou? Now he has conquered the western Riverlands, but he does not return Jingzhou. Are you content to sit back and watch?" "I have a plan," Lu Su responded, "which I was on my way to offer to you." "Well?" Sun Quan said. "Station troops at Lukou and invite Lord Guan there to a meeting. If he comes, try diplomacy. If he resists, have hidden henchmen kill him. If he does not accept the invitation, sent troops for a showdown and recover Jingzhou." "I approve," Sun Quan replied. "Carry out the plan." But Kan Ze spoke in opposition: "Guan Yunchang is one of the fiercest generals of the age. No ordinary general can match him. Failure will be all the worse for us." "And when do we get Jingzhou back?" Sun Quan asked irritably, and commanded Lu Su to go ahead with the plan.

At Lukou, Lu Su arranged with commanders Lü Meng and Gan Ning to hold a banquet at the Pavilion on the River outside the camp at Lukou. Su prepared the letter of invitation and selected a skillful speaker from his staff to go across the river. On landing, the envoy was questioned by Guan Ping and then brought before Lord Guan to whom he conveyed Lu Su's good wishes and the letter of invitation. Lord Guan read it and said, "Since Lu Su invites me to dinner, I will come tomorrow. You may return."

After the envoy's departure Guan Ping said, "Father, Lu Su means us no good. Why did you

accept?" "Do you think I don't know?" Lord Guan replied. "Zhuge Jin has informed Sun Quan that I won't give back the three districts. Sun Quan has therefore sent Lu Su to fortify Lukou and call me to a meeting to press his demand. If I don't go, they'll call me coward. Tomorrow I shall take a light craft down there, a dozen attendants, and my own trusty blade. Let Lu Su try to touch me!" But Guan Ping protested: "Father, for a man as valuable as you to walk into that den of wolves and tigers will compromise your duty to Uncle Xuande." Lord Guan replied, "When I faced a thousand spear points, ten thousand blades and arrows, and missiles flying from all sides, I charged in all directions as if traveling through uncontested ground. Do you think I fear a pack of rats from the south?"

But his adviser Ma Liang also voiced objections: "Although Lu Su has always behaved in an upright, self-respecting manner, he is unlikely to be altogether aboveboard in so vital a matter. Do not go, General." Lord Guan met this objection too. "Long ago in the time of the Warring States," he began, "Lin Xiangru of Zhao was too weak to tie up a chicken, but at the Mianchi meeting he held the king and ministers of mighty Qin in contempt. Need I, a master of 'one-against-many' battle tactics, feel fear? I cannot go back on my word." "If so, General, you must take precautions," Ma Liang said. "Then let my son, Ping, follow me with ten swift craft holding five hundred skilled marine fighters and wait on the river. Watch for my raised flag, then sail across," said Lord Guan; Guan Ping departed to carry out his order.

The messenger reported Lord Guan's ready acceptance and promise to come the next day. Lu Su asked commander Lü Meng, "What does it mean?" "In case he is bringing armed forces," Meng replied, "Gan Ning and I will each hide a company by the riverbank and at the sound of the bombard fall upon them. Also, have fifty men behind the banquet hall. If he comes without a company, kill him during the feast." Thus they laid their plan.

The next day at midmorning, Lu Su's lookouts on the shore spotted a boat manned by a few sailors and a helmsman. On it, a red flag boldly inscribed "Guan" flapped in the wind. As the boat drew nearer, they saw Lord Guan seated on deck. He wore a blue-green scarf and a green battle gown. Beside him Zhou Cang was holding a long sabre; and eight or nine husky westerners had broadswords at their waists. Perplexed, Lu Su welcomed the guest into the pavilion. After the exchange of courtesies Lu Su guided Lord Guan to his seat and offered him drink. But he seemed unable to look up into Lord Guan's eyes. Lord Guan, meanwhile, chatted away, perfectly relaxed.

Warmed by the wine, Lu Su said, "I have a small complaint to make, my lord. Vouchsafe your attention. Once your esteemed elder brother, the imperial uncle, required me to guarantee personally to Lord Sun Quan that his occupation of Jingzhou would be temporary; he gave his word that the province would be returned after the Riverlands was taken. Now the Riverlands has been taken, but Jingzhou has not been returned. Is this not a betrayal of his word?" "State business," Lord Guan replied, "hardly makes a fit subject of conversation for a banquet." "Lord Sun Quan," said Lu Su, "has but a modest territory in the Southland. He consented to lend Jingzhou only out of his concern to provide for you and your brother in your time of need. Now you have the Riverlands. Jingzhou should be returned. But you refuse to turn over even the three districts designated by the imperial uncle. Doesn't this seem unreasonable?"⁴

"After Red Cliffs, in the battle at the Black Forest," Lord Guan replied, "General of the Left Liu Bei braved arrow and flying stone to join you against the common enemy. Why should he have toiled for naught, have not even a foot of soil in return? Sir, are you demanding the territory again?" "Such is not the case," said Lu Su. "My lord, when you and the imperial uncle were defeated at Steepslope,

you were nearly done for; flight was your only option. Lord Sun did not begrudge the imperial uncle a place to plant his feet and aim for future accomplishment. But the imperial uncle has failed to reciprocate this kindness; he has failed to preserve friendly relations. He has the Riverlands and keeps Jingzhou—a greedy and dishonorable act, a scandal for all to witness.⁵ If only Your Lordship would take cognizance."

Lord Guan responded, "This is entirely my elder brother's business, in which I should not interfere." "It is my understanding," Lu Su went on, "that Your Lordship and the imperial uncle are honor-bound by the peach garden oath to live and die as one. Indeed, Your Lordship and the Imperial Uncle are as one. How can the responsibility be shifted?" Before Lord Guan could respond, Zhou Cang shouted harshly from the foot of the dais, "The territory of the empire is for the virtuous to occupy and cannot be reserved for the Southland alone." Lord Guan's expression turned ugly. He rose and snatched the long sabre Zhou Cang was holding. Standing in the center of the yard, eyeing Zhou Cang, he shouted, "This is government business. What have you to say? Get out of here!" Zhou Cang apprehended Lord Guan's real intent and went to the riverbank. He waved the red flag, and Guan Ping raced to the southern shore.

Lord Guan held the sword in his right hand; his left was wrapped around Lu Su. Feigning intoxication, he said, "I have been your guest at dinner. May we drop the subject of Jingzhou while I am drunk, for the sake of our old friendship? I am planning a banquet in Jingzhou for you, when we can continue the discussion." Lu Su felt his affrighted soul part from his body as Lord Guan dragged him to the river's edge. Lü Meng and Gan Ning, set to strike, held off, seeing Lord Guan armed and Lu Su's life in danger. Lord Guan reached his boat and released his hostage. Then, standing in the prow, he bid his host farewell. Numbly, Lu Su watched Lord Guan sail away on a favoring wind. A poet has left this verse in praise of Lord Guan:⁶

Less than men to him were southern liege men;
Alone, he faced them down right at their feast.
By this display of his heroic vein,
Xiangru's feat at Mianchi was surpassed.⁷

After Lord Guan had set out to return to Jingzhou, Lu Su said to Lü Meng, "Our plan has failed. What can we do?" "Report to Lord Sun," he answered. "Ask him to order up troops for a deciding battle." The outcome of the banquet of Lukou was promptly made known to Sun Quan, who wanted to make an all-out attack on Jingzhou. Another report came in, however: Cao Cao was coming south with an army of three hundred thousand. Sun Quan, alarmed, reversed himself. He told Lu Su not to provoke the Jingzhou forces, and he shifted his army to Hefei and Ruxu in an effort to hold back the northern enemy.

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When Cao Cao was preparing for his next southern expedition, the military adviser Fu Gan (Yancai) submitted a protest, which read:

It is my view that a fearsome reputation is a precondition for military action, while the art of

civil government depends upon a reputation for virtue. When might and virtue are in balance, true kingship can be achieved. In times past Your Enlightened Lordship used military might to dispel the great disorders in the land, succeeding nine times out of ten. Today those who have yet to accept royal authority hold the Southland and the Riverlands. These two lands are difficult to overawe, for the one enjoys the protection of the Great River, the other of steep mountains. In my humble opinion, therefore, it would be preferable to cultivate civil government and personal virtue and to lay the weapons of war to rest. Raise up scholars and put down the sword until the time to act is ripe. If today you deploy a few hundred thousand men on the bank of the Great River, all the traitors have to do to check our divine authority is hide behind their deep defenses. That will deny us the chance to display our powers and to utilize our expedient tactics. Your Heavenly might will be adversely affected. If only Your Enlightened Lordship would consider this most carefully.

On reading this petition, Cao Cao canceled his southern expedition; instead, he established schools to which he invited men of learning. As a result, the privy counselors Wang Can, Du Xi, Wei Kai, and He He proposed honoring Cao Cao with a new title, king of Wei. This proposal was opposed by Chief of the Imperial Secretariat Xun You,⁸ who said, "His Excellency has already been honored as lord patriarch of Wei, and his glory enhanced by the Nine Dignities. This is the highest honor one can hope to attain. Further promotion is unjustifiable." Cao Cao, angered by Xun You's objections, said, "He is simply following in Xun Wenruo's footsteps." When Xun You heard this, he was so exasperated that he fell ill and died some ten days later. Xun You was fifty-eight at the time of his death. Cao Cao buried him with honors; he did not pursue the kingship of Wei.⁹

One day Cao Cao entered the palace armed with a sword. Emperor Xian and Empress Fu were sitting together. Seeing Cao Cao enter, the Empress stood up hastily. The Emperor began to tremble. Cao Cao said, "Sun Quan and Liu Bei now rule their corners of the empire. They show the court no respect. What is to be done?" "That is entirely within Your Lordship's competence," the Emperor replied. "These words," Cao Cao retorted, "could lead outsiders to think I wrong my liege." "If you are willing to support me," said the Emperor, "it is most fortunate. Otherwise, I will be grateful to be left alone." Cao Cao glared at the Emperor, then left his presence with hate in his heart.

The royal attendants said to the Emperor, "We have heard that the lord patriarch of Wei wants to establish himself as king of Wei. Before long he will usurp your throne." Emperor and Empress wept. "My father, Fu Wan," the Empress said, "always wanted to kill Cao Cao. Let me write to him now in secret so that he can attempt it." "Once," the Emperor said, "Dong Cheng tried to do that. He was discovered and executed. If they caught us, we would be doomed." "Day and night we sit on pins," the Empress continued. "I prefer death to a life like this. Among our eunuchs Mu Shun is loyal and true. He could deliver the letter." Thus, Mu Shun was summoned into the Empress's presence for a private conference.

Weeping, the royal couple appealed to Mu Shun: "The traitor Cao wants to be king of Wei and may soon try for the throne. We want the Empress's father, Fu Wan, to move against Cao. But everyone works for Cao. Whom can we trust to take him a secret message from the Empress? We know your sense of loyalty and honor will not permit you to refuse us." Tearfully, Mu Shun replied, "I would gladly give my life to repay Your Majesties' generosity. With your leave I shall go directly." The Empress wrote the letter and handed it to Mu Shun. He concealed it in his hair, slipped out of the

forbidden chambers, and delivered it to Fu Wan.

Fu Wan, recognizing his daughter's hand, said to the bearer, "Cao Cao's creatures are legion. We cannot act precipitately. Sun Quan and Liu Bei will have to mobilize and draw Cao Cao into the field. At this stage we must look for loyal and honorable men at court to join with us. Only united action inside and out offers any chance of success." Mu Shun replied, "Then, Your Worship, write back to the Emperor and Empress and request that secret edicts go out to the Southland and to the Riverlands summoning them to arms to punish the traitor and rescue the sovereign." Fu Wan wrote the letter, which Mu Shun carried hidden in his topknot.

Unfortunately, Cao Cao had already been informed of Mu Shun's movements and was awaiting him at the palace gate. "Where have you been?" Cao asked Mu Shun. "The Empress was ill," he replied, "and had me fetch a physician." "Where is he?" Cao pressed. "On his way," Mu Shun answered. Cao had the man searched but, finding nothing, let him pass. Suddenly a gust of wind knocked off Mu Shun's hat; Cao called him back and examined the hat thoroughly before returning it. Using both hands Mu Shun replaced it backward, reawakening Cao Cao's suspicions. He had his men look in Mu Shun's hair and there discovered the letter calling for an alliance with Sun Quan and Liu Bei. Angered, Cao Cao had Mu Shun detained and questioned in a secret chamber. Mu Shun would not confess. That night Cao Cao surrounded Fu Wan's home with three thousand men and seized the entire family. When he found the Empress's original letter, he arrested every member of the Fu clan. The following morning he authorized Chi Lü, general of the Royal Guard, to seize the Empress's seal and cord.

That day the Emperor was in an outer hall when he saw Chi Lü and three hundred guards enter the palace. "What is your business?" the Emperor asked. "The lord patriarch has empowered me to seize the Empress's seal," the general answered. The Emperor went weak inside, knowing the plot was discovered. When Chi Lü reached the royal couple's private quarters, the Empress had just risen. Chi Lü commanded the keepers to bring forth the seal. The Empress realized her part in the plot was known and hid herself behind the false wall of the Pepper Chamber at the rear of the main hall.¹⁰

After a short time the imperial secretary, Hua Xin, led five hundred armed men to the rear of the palace and demanded the Empress. The palace attendants pretended not to know where she was. Hua Xin ordered the vermilion doors opened but did not find her. He then had his men break through the suspicious-looking wall; and with his own hand he pulled the Empress out by her chignon. "Spare me," she pleaded. "Plead with the lord patriarch yourself," he shouted. The Empress, disheveled and barefoot, was hustled out by two guards.

Hua Xin, known as a talented man, was a close friend of Bing Yuan and of Guan Ning. At the time the trio was called "The Dragon" ; Hua Xin was the head, Bing Yuan the stomach, and Guan Ning the tail. One day Guan Ning and Hua Xin turned up a piece of gold while planting some garden vegetables. Guan Ning continued working, but Hua Xin picked it up, examined it, and threw it down again. Another day, Guan Ning and Hua Xin were reading together, when they heard a commotion outside as a man of importance passed by their gate in his carriage. Guan Ning remained seated and did not stir, but Hua Xin put down his book to look. From then on, Guan Ning held a low opinion of Hua Xin and eventually ended the friendship. In later years Guan Ning secluded himself in a storied building in remote Liaodong. He always wore a white cap; and he lived and slept upstairs, never letting his feet touch the ground, thereby demonstrating that he had never served the kingdom of Wei. Hua Xin, however, entered Cao Cao's service after leaving Sun Quan. Such was his story up to the

day he arrested the Empress. A poet of later times lamented Hua Xin's conduct:

Hua Xin furthered Cao Cao's foulest scheme:
Breaking down the wall, he seized the queen.
For one day spent, Cao's cruelty to abet:
A name forever cursed, "Dragon Pate."

Another poet praised Guan Ning:

Liaodong still keeps historic Guan Ning House;
The name alone survives, no dweller there.
He scorned the wealth and fame that Hua Xin craved,
Who never had the "White Cap's" manly air.

Hua Xin marched the Empress to the outer hall. The Emperor saw her, embraced her, and wept. "The lord patriarch's order must be executed with dispatch," the imperial secretary snapped. Weeping, the Empress said to the Emperor, "Our life together is done." "My time, too, is uncertain," he replied. The guards removed the Empress. The Emperor beat his breast in despair. Seeing the general of the Royal Guard beside him, the Emperor said, "Lord Chi, how could such a thing come to pass?" He then collapsed in tears. Chi Lü ordered his men to assist the Emperor back into the palace.

Hua Xin took Empress Fu before Cao Cao. "I treated you all with sincerity," he ranted, "yet you planned to murder me. I must kill you first!" He ordered his men to beat her to death.¹¹ He then removed the Empress's two sons from the palace and had them poisoned. That evening he had Fu Wan, Mu Shun, and more than two hundred of their clansmen executed in public. Those in office and out were terror-stricken. This occurred during the eleventh month of the nineteenth year of Jian An (A. D. 215). A poet has left these verses lamenting Cao Cao's deed:

Once in an age a man so fell and cruel! —
Though loyal and true, Fu Wan could not oppose.
We sorrow for the sundered king and queen:
A better life a common couple knows.

After the loss of his Empress, Emperor Xian did not eat for many days. Cao Cao went to see him and said, "Your Majesty, be free of care. Your servant has no disloyal thoughts. My daughter is already a part of your harem, a woman both worthy and filial. She should occupy the Empress's place." How could the Emperor say no? On the first day of the first month of Jian An 20 (A. D. 215), on the celebration of the new year, Cao Cao's daughter, the concubine Cao, became the Empress of Han. And no courtier dared object.

Cao Cao's power and influence continued to grow. He summoned all the major ministers and officials to discuss absorbing the Southland and conquering the Riverlands. Jia Xu said, "We should recall generals Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren to take part in these discussions." Cao Cao immediately sent for them. Cao Ren arrived first and went straight to Cao Cao. But Cao had just lain down after drinking. Xu Chu, holding a sword, was guarding the entrance to the room and would not let Cao Ren

pass. "How dare you block a member of the clan," Cao Ren cried angrily. "Though you are a kinsman," replied Xu Chu, "your office is to control the outer regions; mine, though I am unrelated, to guard the inner sanctum. I cannot admit you when His Lordship lies drunk in his chamber." Cao Ren backed down. Cao Cao, hearing of the incident afterwards, exclaimed, "Xu Chu—a loyal servant indeed!"

A few days later Xiahou Dun arrived and the discussion on the campaigns began. Xiahou Dun said, "Neither Wu nor Shu can be attacked hastily. Attack Zhang Lu of Hanzhong first, and our victorious troops will subdue Shu easily." "Exactly my thinking," replied Cao Cao. And so troops were ordered up for a western campaign. Indeed:

First he carried out an evil plot against the weakling Emperor,
Then he sent a puissant host to sweep the regions west.

Would Cao Cao's imperial designs succeed?

READ ON.



Cao Cao Conquers Hanzhong; Zhang Liao Prevails at Xiaoyao Ford

FOR THE WESTERN CAMPAIGN Cao Cao divided his army into three. Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He had the van; Cao Cao led his commanders in the center; Cao Ren and Xiahou Dun had the rear, guarding and distributing the supplies.

Cao Cao's movements were soon reported in Hanzhong, where Zhang Lu and his brother Wei discussed ways of repulsing their enemy. Zhang Wei said, "Yangping Pass is Hanzhong's strongest point; I'll fortify a dozen positions in the hills and woods on either side of it to oppose Cao's army. Once there, brother, dispatch grain from Hanning to meet my needs." Zhang Lu agreed and sent generals Yang Ang and Yang Ren to accompany his brother. The force reached Yangping Pass and built the camps.

Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He reached the pass and learned of the defensive preparations. They encamped fifteen *li* away and allowed their exhausted soldiers to rest. Suddenly the rear of their camp was ablaze; the two Hanzhong generals had moved in and struck. Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He took to their horses as troops stormed in from all sides. Badly defeated, Cao's army beat a retreat. Cao Cao received the two generals irately: "Two veteran commanders like you didn't know that 'troops tired by a long march must expect a raid on their camp'? How could you be so lax?" He would have executed the two to exemplify martial law but was dissuaded by the appeals of their peers.

The next day Cao Cao himself took the van. He viewed the formidable hills and dense woods and realized that their unknown pathways hid many dangers, so he returned to camp. To commanders Xu Chu and Xu Huang, Cao Cao said, "I would never have brought the army here had I known how treacherous the terrain is." "We are here now, my lord," replied Xu Chu, "do not shrink from the task ahead." The following day Cao rode forth with the two commanders to inspect Zhang Wei's fortifications. Rounding a hill, the three horsemen caught sight of Wei's positions in the distance. Pointing with his whip, Cao said, "Such well-built defense works will be difficult to break down." As he spoke, they heard a cry from behind, and arrows rained down on them as Yang Ang and Yang Ren closed in. Cao panicked. Xu Chu shouted to Xu Huang, "I will stand off the enemy. You protect His Lordship." Raising his sword, Chu charged ahead, strenuously opposing the Hanzhong generals. Overwhelmed by Xu Chu's charge, Yang Ang and Yang Ren retreated, followed by their men. Xu Huang hustled Cao Cao around a slope. There a friendly force under Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He, alerted by the commotion, had come to their rescue. The reinforcement troops beat Yang Ang and Yang Ren back and got Cao Cao safely to camp. Cao Cao rewarded the four commanders handsomely.

After this incident the two armies held each other at bay for more than fifty days. Finally Cao Cao ordered a retreat. Jia Xu said, "The enemy's strength remains to be tested. For what reason are you withdrawing, Your Lordship?" "They seem to me," Cao replied, "to be in full readiness every day.

Victory is doubtful for us. I thought a retreat would make them careless; then we could have our light cavalry swoop down on their rear. That way we will certainly win." "Your Excellency," Jia Xu replied, "your ingenuity is unfathomable." Thereupon Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He were ordered to take three thousand light horsemen each around behind Yangping Pass while Cao Cao had the main camp completely pulled up.

Yang Ang, hearing of the retreat, proposed an attack. But Yang Ren said, "Cao Cao has an infinite number of tricks. We can't pursue him before we know the actual situation." Yang Ang, however, said, "I'll go alone, if you won't," thus overriding Ren's strenuous objections. Ang threw all five of his armed camps into the assault, leaving only a small force behind. It was a day of dreadful fog and mist, widespread and dense; even face-to-face the soldiers could not see each other. After marching a good distance, Ang had to call a halt and bivouac.

Meanwhile, Xiahou Yuan, having made a shortcut behind the hills, watched the heavy fog settle. Hearing the sounds of men and horses, he feared ambush and pressed his advance; unwittingly, he came to Yang Ang's base camps. The guards, assuming the hoof-beats meant the return of Ang, opened the gates. Cao's troops poured in and, finding the camps empty, burnt everything down. The men left guarding the five camps fled for their lives.

The fog lifted. Yang Ren brought his troops to the rescue and fought briefly with Xiahou Yuan; but Zhang He attacked Ren from behind. Yang Ren managed to fight his way to safety in Nanzheng.¹ When Yang Ang tried to return, he found his bases occupied by Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He; and Cao Cao's main force was coming on swiftly. Hemmed in all around, Yang Ang tried to break through the enemy lines, but Zhang He confronted him and killed him after a brief struggle. Ang's defeated troops returned to Yangping Pass, expecting to find Zhang Wei. Wei, however, had already learned of the flight of the two Yangs and the loss of the camps, so he had abandoned the pass himself and dashed for safety. Thus Cao Cao took possession of the pass and the campsites.

Zhang Lu was furious when Zhang Wei and Yang Ren informed him of the losses. He wanted to execute Yang Ren, but Ren said, "I pleaded with Yang Ang not to go after Cao's men. He refused to listen. Hence the defeat. Let me have another detachment to challenge the enemy. I'll kill Cao Cao for you or gladly face any consequences that the military code prescribes." Zhang Lu accepted his written pledge; and Yang Ren camped at a distance from Nanzheng with twenty thousand men.

Before advancing on Nanzheng, Cao Cao had Xiahou Yuan explore the roads. Yuan and his five thousand men met up with Yang Ren, and the two armies squared off. Ren sent out Chang Qi, a lieutenant commander. Xiahou Yuan engaged him and killed him in a brief encounter. Yang Ren himself then came forth, spear held high, and fought Yuan more than thirty bouts; neither prevailed. Yuan feigned defeat and fled, Ren in pursuit. Wheeling about, Yuan used the trailing sword maneuver and slashed Ren to pieces. Yang Ren's soldiers, badly beaten, went back to their base.

As soon as Cao Cao found out that Xiahou Yuan had killed Yang Ren, he advanced in force and camped before Nanzheng. Zhang Lu desperately called together his counselors. Yan Pu said, "I know one man who can hold off Cao's commanders." Zhang Lu asked who he was. "Pang De from Nan'an," Yan Pu replied. "He surrendered to Your Lordship along with Ma Chao. Afterward, when Ma Chao defected to the Riverlands, Pang De fell ill and never went. He is still a beneficiary of Your Lordship's generous care. Why not have him go?"

Pleased by this proposal, Zhang Lu called for Pang De and provided handsomely for him. He then ordered up ten thousand men and commanded Pang De to take the field. Some ten *li* from the city,

Pang De confronted Cao Cao's force and rode forth to challenge the foe. Cao Cao, having experienced Pang De's prowess in the disastrous battle at the Wei Bridge, advised his commanders: "Pang De is a bold Xiliang warrior who originally served Ma Chao. Though in Zhang Lu's service, he is not content there. I want this man for myself. You are to drag out the fighting—wear him down—then capture him."

Zhang He was first into the field. He fought several bouts, then retired. Xiahou Yuan, followed by Xu Huang, did the same. Next, Xu Chu came forth and fought fifty bouts before retiring. Pang De battled each of Cao's four generals fearlessly, and they praised his martial skill to Cao Cao. Inwardly pleased, Cao Cao said, "How can we get Pang De to surrender?" Jia Xu answered, "Zhang Lu has an adviser named Yang Song whose appetite for bribes is insatiable. Send him gold and silk secretly; have him slander Pang De in front of Zhang Lu. Then we can succeed." "How can we get someone into Nanzheng?" Cao asked. "In tomorrow's fighting," replied Jia Xu, "pretend you are defeated and abandon the camps to Pang De. At night we can raid our own camp and drive Pang De back into the city. We'll find a soldier who speaks well, have him mingle in disguise among the enemy, and thus get into the city."

Cao Cao accepted this proposal and chose an officer shrewd enough to carry it out. He paid him generously, supplied him with a gilded breastplate to be worn against the skin and the outer garments of a Hanzhong soldier, and sent him on toward the enemy. The next day Cao Cao had Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He conceal two detachments a good distance down the road and had Xu Huang go forth to challenge Pang De. After a few encounters Xu Huang retreated, and Pang De waved his army on for the kill. Cao Cao's troops withdrew entirely, and Pang De took possession of their camp.

Pang De was delighted to find Cao's ample stores of grain and reported the fact to Zhang Lu. He then held a banquet in the camp to celebrate the victory. That night shortly after the second watch, three companies of troops suddenly appeared in a blaze of torchlight: in the middle, Xu Huang and Xu Chu; on the left, Zhang He; on the right, Xiahou Yuan. The three squadrons moved in together and sacked the camp. Having no time to defend his position, Pang De took to his horse and fled toward the city, the three squadrons in hot pursuit. Frantically, Pang De shouted to open the gate, and his soldiers swarmed in.

Cao Cao's spy had already smuggled himself into the city and gone directly to Yang Song's residence. To Yang Song he said, "The lord patriarch of Wei, His Excellency, Prime Minister Cao Cao, has long known of your splendid virtue and has sent me with this gilded breastplate as a token of good faith. He has also sent this confidential communication." Yang Song was pleased and, after reading the letter, replied, "Tell the lord patriarch to set his mind at ease. I have a sound plan which will repay his generosity." Song sent Cao's envoy back and went directly to tell Zhang Lu that Cao Cao had bribed Pang De to lose. Zhang Lu angrily called in Pang De and condemned him. He would have executed him but for Yan Pu's strong appeal. "Tomorrow you fight," Zhang Lu told him, "and win—or I'll put you to death." Containing his resentment, Pang De withdrew.

The next day Cao Cao attacked, and Pang De went forth to oppose him. At Cao's command Xu Chu engaged De, then feigned defeat. Pang De gave chase. From horseback on the side of a hill Cao Cao called down to Pang De, "Why not surrender?" Pang De thought: "I can take Cao Cao; he's worth more than a thousand commanders." He raced up the hillside. Suddenly he uttered a loud cry as Heaven and earth seemed to collapse: man and horse had tumbled into a pit. From four sides hooks and nooses went into action; Pang De was delivered to Cao Cao alive. Cao Cao dismounted and

dismissed his guards. After personally undoing Pang De's bonds, he asked him if he would surrender. Remembering Zhang Lu's hardness of heart, Pang De did so willingly. Cao Cao helped him onto a horse, and together they rode back to camp, intending that they be seen from the city wall. Someone reported to Zhang Lu that Pang De and Cao Cao had ridden off together, so Zhang Lu now credited Yang Song's slanders.²

The next day Cao Cao erected scaling ladders on three sides of the wall and attacked with stone-throwing machines. Zhang Lu realized his position was untenable and said so to his brother Wei. "Burn out our granaries and treasury and flee into the southern hills," Wei advised. "We can defend ourselves again in Bazhong." "Better to surrender," said Yang Song. Zhang Lu wavered. "Just burn everything," Zhang Wei reiterated. "All along," Zhang Lu said, "I have wanted to offer service to the Han, but I have never fulfilled this ambition. Now though I must flee, the granary and treasury belong to the dynasty and should not be destroyed." He therefore sealed up all the buildings. That night during the second watch Zhang Lu took his whole clan out of the city through the south gate. Cao Cao ordered no pursuit. Entering Nanzheng, Cao found the buildings intact and pitied Zhang Lu's plight. He sent a man to Bazhong to call on Lu to surrender. Lu was willing; his brother Wei was not.

Yang Song secretly assured Cao Cao that an attack on the city would have his cooperation. On receiving Song's letter, Cao Cao led his army to Bazhong. Zhang Lu sent Zhang Wei to meet the enemy. Xu Chu cut him down in the first clash. The troops reported the defeat to Zhang Lu, who wanted to continue holding the city. Yang Song said, "To stay inside is to await death passively. Let me defend the city while Your Lordship decides the issue with the enemy." Zhang Lu agreed, overriding Yan Pu's objections.

No sooner was Zhang Lu in the field than his rear guard deserted. Retreating swiftly before Cao's troops, Lu reached Bazhong; but Yang Song had barred the gates, leaving Zhang Lu no recourse. Closing in, Cao Cao shouted, "Surrender now!" Zhang Lu dismounted and submitted. Cao Cao was pleased and, grateful to Lu for securing the granary and treasury, treated him well and enfeoffed him as General Who Controls the South. Yan Pu and the others received honorary fiefs. And so Hanzhong finally came into Cao Cao's possession. Cao Cao ordered every district to appoint a governor and a commander and rewarded his troops well. Yang Song, however, was publicly executed for betraying his lord in search of profit. A later poet left these verses describing Yang Song:

Thwarter of able men, betrayer of his lord,
Hoarder of gold and silver—all for naught!
No glory for his house, his death a shame—
A laughingstock for all and for all time.

After the conquest of the eastern Riverlands, Cao Cao's first secretary, Sima Yi, advanced a proposal: "Liu Bei has overthrown Liu Zhang by deception and force; the people of Shu have yet to give him their true allegiance. Attack at once and they will fall apart. Wise men know the value of timely action. This is a unique opportunity." Cao Cao sighed and said, "As they say, 'Man never knows when to stop; that's the trouble. Once you have Longxi, next you want Shu.'"³ Liu Ye responded, "Sima Yi is correct. The slightest delay will enable Prime Minister Zhuge Liang, who is enlightened in governing, and Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, and the other generals to control the population and make the Riverlands impregnable." "Our troops are suffering from the long trek," Cao Cao argued

back. "We must think of them." In the end he took no action.

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When the people of Riverlands heard that Cao Cao had taken the eastern Riverlands, they assumed he would march on and take the western Riverlands. Fear and anxiety were rampant. Xuande asked his director general for advice. "I have a plan," Kongming replied. "Well?" said Xuande. "Cao Cao keeps an army near Hefei," Kongming continued, "because he fears Sun Quan. So, if we return the three districts of Jiangxia, Changsha, and Guiyang to the Southland and have a skilled spokesman argue the case, we may be able to get the south to attack Hefei. That would destabilize the northern position and force them to shift troops to the south."⁴ "Whom could we send?" Xuande asked. "I volunteer," Yi ji said.

A relieved Xuande wrote the letter and prepared suitable gifts. Yi Ji went first to Jingzhou to inform Lord Guan and then on to the Southland.⁵ In Moling, he was received by Sun Quan. After the exchange of courtesies Sun Quan asked, "What brings you to the Southland?" "Some time ago," Yi Ji began, "we were fortunate to have a visit from Zhuge Jin, who came to recover Changsha and two other districts for the Southland. Unfortunately, due to the director general's absence, the transfer was not made. I have here the documents confirming your possession. Originally, we wanted to hand over all the districts of Jingzhou, including Nanjun and Lingling, but with Cao Cao seizing the eastern Riverlands, General Guan had to have a place to go. Now Hefei is vulnerable. We hope Your Lordship will attack it and force Cao Cao to move his army south. Once Lord Liu takes the eastern Riverlands, the rest of Jingzhou will be turned over to you." "Could you wait in the guesthouse," Sun Quan replied, "while I discuss this with my advisers?"

Zhang Zhao spoke first. "It's only a scheme," he said. "Liu Bei fears Cao Cao will take the western Riverlands. All the same, Cao Cao's campaign in the west means that we can take Hefei; and that is what we should do." Sun Quan approved. He sent Yi Ji back and began mobilizing for war with Cao Cao. He dispatched Lu Su to take possession of Changsha, Jiangxia, and Guiyang, stationed troops at Lukou, and recalled commanders Lü Meng and Gan Ning. He also sent for Ling Tong, stationed in Yuhang.

In a short while Lü Meng and Gan Ning arrived. Meng proposed a plan. "At present," he said, "Cao Cao has Zhu Guang, governor of Lujiang, stationed at the city of Huan. They are growing rice on a large scale there and furnishing grain to Hefei. We should capture Huan first, then attack Hefei." "Exactly my thinking," said Sun Quan. He put Lü Meng and Gan Ning in the van, had Jiang Qin and Pan Zhang take the rear, and assumed command of the main army himself, assisted by Zhou Tai, Chen Wu, Dong Xi, and Xu Sheng. Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang had been posted elsewhere and did not join the campaign.

The southern army crossed the river and captured Hezhou, then marched straight to Huan. Governor Zhu Guang sent to Hefei for help, all the while strengthening his defenses and refusing to come out. When Sun Quan reached the city walls, arrows rained down on him, and one struck his plumed helmet. Sun Quan returned to camp and asked his commanders how to capture Huan. Dong Xi replied, "Have the soldiers raise mounds of earth." Xu Sheng said, "Set up scaling ladders and towers so that we can see inside and then attack." "Either would take too long," said Lü Meng. "Once they get help from Hefei, anything could happen. Our men have just arrived and their morale is high. This is

the moment for an energetic attack. We advance at dawn and by midday should have broken through the wall." Sun Quan approved.

The next day after mess at the fifth watch the whole army set out. From the walls of Huan arrows and missiles poured down on them. Gan Ning, wielding an iron chain, climbed up the walls, braving the volleys. Zhu Guang ordered his bowmen to mass their shots at him, but Ning fended off the bolts and knocked Zhu Guang down with his chain. Lü Meng beat the drums himself, and his men stormed the wall. Zhu Guang was slain in the wild slashing of sword blades; his force surrendered, and Sun Quan took possession of Huan by early evening. Zhang Liao, on his way to rescue Zhu Guang when his scouts told him of the loss of Huan, returned to Hefei.

Sun Quan entered the captured city, and Commander Ling Tong arrived with his men. After receiving them, Quan feasted the army and rewarded Lü Meng, Gan Ning, and the other commanders. All celebrated at a grand banquet. In the seating Lü Meng deferred to Gan Ning and proclaimed his merits and achievements.

Then something untoward occurred. Ling Tong, seeing Lü Meng praise the man who had killed his father, stared angrily at Gan Ning. Suddenly he took an attendant's sword and, standing in the center of the company, cried out, "We lack for entertainment. Allow me to perform a sword dance." Gan Ning knew exactly what Ling Tong wanted to do. He pushed over the table loaded with fruit and rose to his feet. Claspng a halberd under each arm, he strode forward. "Let me show the company how I handle these," Gan Ning said. Lü Meng saw that both were looking for trouble and, taking a shield in one hand and a sword in the other, he stepped between them.

"Neither of you is so skillful as I," Lü Meng boasted and, dancing with shield and sword, he succeeded in separating the antagonists. Sun Quan, who had already been told of the incident, rushed to the scene, and all parties put down their weapons. "I have told both of you more than once to set aside your enmity," Sun Quan said. "How could this have happened?" Weeping, Ling Tong threw himself to the ground. Sun Quan reiterated his admonition. The next day he led the entire army in the assault on Hefei.

Zhang Liao returned to Hefei, his heart heavy over the loss of Huan. Unexpectedly he was greeted by Xue Ti with a wooden box bearing Cao Cao's seal and inscribed "Open only when the rebels come." Having been told of Sun Quan's arriving with one hundred thousand soldiers, Zhang Liao opened the box. Inside was a note reading, "If Sun Quan attacks, Zhang Liao and Li Dian are to meet him, Yue Jin to guard the city." Zhang Liao showed the directive to the two generals. Yue Jin said, "What do you think, General?" "His Lordship is campaigning afar," Zhang Liao replied, "and the Southlanders think they have a sure victory. We should send our forces into the field to do battle with them and blunt their drive. That will reassure our own army. Then we can go back to the defensive."

Li Dian, who was often at odds with Zhang Liao, made no response. Yue Jin, seeing Li Dian remain silent, said, "The enemy is too numerous for us to engage. Better to mount a strict defense." "Gentlemen," answered Zhang Liao, "are you not regarding your private interests and forgetting our common cause? I will go out and fight—or die." He ordered his horse readied. Li Dian rose and said grandly, "In that case, General, how can I let my personal chagrin distract me from public duty? I will do as you command." Delighted, Zhang Liao said, "If you are willing to help, bring a company north of Xiaoyao Ford tomorrow and place them in ambush. When the southern troops approach, cut the Xiaoshi Bridge, and Yue Jin and I will strike." As commanded, Li Dian went to order up the troops.

Sun Quan directed Lü Meng and Gan Ning to lead the van while he and Ling Tong took the center.

The other commanders set out one after another to join the battle at Hefei. Lü Meng and Gan Ning confronted Yue Jin; Gan Ning and Yue Jin charged at each other and fought several rounds. Then Yue Jin feigned defeat and fled. Gan Ning called to Lü Meng to join the chase. Sun Quan, in the second battalion, heard of the victory of the van and was pressing on to the north side of Xiaoyao Ford when a string of bombards echoed around him. On the left Zhang Liao's company was coming; on the right, Li Dian's. Sun Quan panicked and called for Lü Meng and Gan Ning to turn back and help, but Zhang Liao was upon him.

Ling Tong had only three hundred riders and could not stand up against the onslaught of Cao's forces. "Quick, cross Xiaoshi Bridge, Your Lordship," Ling Tong shouted. That moment Zhang Liao's two thousand horsemen stood before them. Ling Tong dove into the fray as Sun Quan rode to the bridge. But it had been torn down at the southern end, leaving a ten foot gap. Sun Quan was at a loss. Gu Li, a garrison commander, shouted to him, "Back up, Your Lordship, then race forward to vault the gap." Sun Quan retreated more than thirty spans, then loosening the reins and swinging the whip, he urged the horse over the missing planks. A poet of later times has left this verse:

Once White Forehead took Liu Bei o'er the Tan,⁶
And then Lord Sun vaulted onto land.
He pulled back, laid on, sprinted hard;
At Xiaoyao Ford a jade dragon soared.

Safely across, Sun Quan was met by boats piloted by Xu Sheng and Dong Xi. Ling Tong and Gu Li, the garrison commander, checked Zhang Liao. Gan Ning and Lü Meng came back to the rescue but suffered heavy losses, caught between the armies of Yue Jin and Li Dian. All of Ling Tong's three hundred soldiers were killed. Tong himself, badly wounded, fought his way to the bridge but, finding it impassable, skirted the river to make his escape. Sun Quan, watching from his boat, had Dong Xi row over and take Ling Tong on board. Then they all crossed again to the southern shore.

Lü Meng and Gan Ning also made it to the southern shore after desperate fighting. This bloody engagement became so notorious and terrified the southerners so, children crying in the night would hush at the mere mention of Zhang Liao's name. The southern commanders got Sun Quan safely back to camp. Quan rewarded Ling Tong and Gu Li handsomely. Then he led the army back to Ruxu to put his ships in fighting condition and lay plans for a counterattack by land and sea. He also sent a call for reinforcements to the Southland.

Zhang Liao heard that Sun Quan was at Ruxu preparing for a fresh campaign. Concerned that Hefei was too thinly defended, he sent Xue Ti to Hanzhong to solicit a rescue force from Cao Cao. Cao Cao put the key question to his counselors: "Can we take possession of the western Riverlands at this time?" Liu Ye replied, "The area is somewhat stable now and rather well defended. Instead of attacking, we should relieve our forces at Hefei and then descend on the Southland."

So Cao Cao left Xiahou Yuan guarding the Dingjun Mountain strongpoint in Hanzhong, and Zhang He guarding Mengtou Cliff; he pulled up all the remaining camps and hastened back to the Ruxu barricade. Indeed:

No sooner had his strong cavalry conquered Longxi
Than he turned his war banners southward once again.

How would Cao Cao's southern campaign turn out?⁷

READ ON.



Gan Ning's Band Sacks the Northern Camp; Zuo Ci Throws a Cup, Teasing Cao Cao

SUN QUAN REGROUPED HIS FORCES at the RUXU naval base. Informed suddenly that Cao Cao was shifting four hundred thousand men from Hanzhong to Hefei, Sun Quan and his advisers decided to deploy fifty large concealed war-junks at Ruxu under Dong Xi and Xu Sheng. Sun Quan ordered Chen Wu to keep the shore of the river patrolled.

Zhang Zhao said, "Cao Cao has come a long way. Our first act must be to blunt his thrust." Quan put the matter to his commanders. "Cao Cao," he said, "is coming a long way. Who dares to strike first and blunt his thrust?" Ling Tong stepped forward and volunteered. "How many troops will you need?" Quan asked. "Three thousand will do," was the reply. But Gan Ning said, "Give me a hundred riders and I can do the job. Why use three thousand?" Angered, Ling Tong began wrangling with Gan Ning. "Cao Cao's power is enormous. Do not underestimate the enemy," Sun Quan said and sent Ling Tong with three thousand to scout the mouth of the Ruxu and to engage Cao's forces should they appear. As assigned, Ling Tong took his force near the Ruxu barrier. Soon dust filled the air and Cao's troops arrived. In the van Zhang Liao crossed spears with Ling Tong. They fought fifty bouts, but neither prevailed. Sun Quan, fearing for Ling Tong, ordered Lü Meng to bring him back to camp.

Gan Ning, seeing Ling Tong return, appealed to Sun Quan, "Tonight I want one hundred men to raid Cao's camp. If I lose a single one, count it no achievement." Impressed by Ning's courage, Sun Quan assigned him one hundred crack horsemen from his own command and in addition gave him fifty jars of wine and fifty catties of lamb to feast his men. Back at camp Gan Ning had the hundred seated in rows before him. Pouring himself two silver cups of wine, he addressed the warriors: "Tonight we have orders to raid their position. Drink deeply and advance boldly." At these words the warriors stared at one another. Seeing the men's reluctance, Gan Ning drew his sword and cried angrily, "I, a general, give no thought for my own life. How can you hesitate?" Before Gan Ning's wrathful look the men touched their heads to the ground and said, "We are with you to the death."

Gan Ning and the men consumed the wine and meat and set the action for the second watch. Each was identified by a white goosefeather in his helmet. They donned their armor and mounted; then they raced to the side of Cao Cao's stockade. They broke down the defensive staves, plunged inside with tremendous shouts, and headed for the site of the central army to kill Cao Cao. But Cao's command headquarters was sealed tight as a iron barrel by an impenetrable circle of chariots and wagons. Gan Ning and his hundred horsemen thrust to the left and charged to the right, throwing Cao's troops, uncertain of the attackers' number, into great confusion. Gan Ning's hundred crossed the camp at full tilt, slaying anyone they encountered. All the camp was in an uproar as torches were raised, numerous as the stars overhead. The ground trembled from the shouting. Gan Ning cut his way out of the southern entrance of the camp. No one could withstand him. Sun Quan ordered Zhou Tai to bring

up a detachment as Gan Ning and his hundred pulled back to Ruxu. Cao's men, fearing ambush, did not pursue. A poet of later time expressed his admiration for Gan Ning's charge:

Army drums a-beating shook the ground;
Southland soldiers struck; ghosts and spirits howled.
Those hundred goose-plumes deep behind Cao's line
Testified to Gan Ning's martial power.

Gan Ning returned to camp. Not a man nor a mount had been lost. Reaching the entrance to his camp, he ordered the hundred to beat their drums, blow their flutes, and give their battle cry. The southerners cheered wildly. Sun Quan welcomed the force in person. Gan Ning dismounted and prostrated himself. Quan helped him up and, taking Ning's hand, said, "Your raid should strike fear into the old traitor. I let you go only to witness your display of valor; it was not because I could spare you." He presented Ning with a thousand rolls of silk and one hundred fine swords, which Ning received respectfully and shared with his men. Sun Quan said to his commanders, "My Gan Ning is the equal of Cao Cao's Zhang Liao!"

The next day Zhang Liao came out to challenge the southerners. Ling Tong, having witnessed Gan's exploits, cried, "Let me face him." Quan granted his permission and Tong led five thousand out of Ruxu. Quan invited Gan Ning to observe the field. As the lines formed, Zhang Liao rode out, Li Dian to his left, Yue Jin to his right. Ling Tong dashed forth, flourishing his sword, and confronted them. Liao sent Yue Jin forth. They fought fifty bouts in a drawn battle. Cao Cao was told of the great conflict and rode to the beflagged entrance of his camp to watch. Seeing the antagonists absorbed in combat, Cao ordered Cao Xiu to shoot from hiding. Xiu ducked behind Zhang Liao and shot Ling Tong's horse, which reared and threw its rider. Yue Jin raced forward, spear poised for the kill, when an arrow struck him full in the face and he toppled from his mount. Soldiers on both sides came out to rescue their generals. Gongs sounded, and combat ceased. Ling Tong returned to camp and touched the ground in apology to Sun Quan. "It was Gan Ning whose arrow saved you," Quan said, and Ling Tong pressed his forehead to the ground to show his respect to Gan Ning, saying, "I never expected such kindness from you, sir." From that time forward the two men became sworn friends and buried their grudge.

Cao Cao sent Yue Jin to have his wound treated in his tent. The next day he detailed five armies to strike Ruxu: Cao led the central force; to his left, Zhang Liao and Li Dian; to his right, Xu Huang and Pang De. Each army had ten thousand men. They moved toward the riverbank to attack. On the southern side Dong Xi and Xu Sheng watched the enemy approach from their multistoried boats. Their soldiers wore worried expressions. Xu Sheng said, "The lord feeds you; you serve the lord. What are the frightened looks for?" Then he took several hundred of his fiercest warriors across the river on small boats. They struck deep into Li Dian's camp, taking a heavy toll. Dong Xi ordered those still on their ships to beat their drums and shout, thereby to heighten the fears of Dian's men. Suddenly a strong wind began blowing on the river. White waves leaped heavenward. Breakers churned and tumbled. Sensing that the boats might capsize, the soldiers struggled toward the lifeboats, but Dong Xi drew his sword and shouted, "We are under our lord's command, defending against the rebels. How dare you abandon ship!" He struck down a dozen of his own men. Moments later the ship went over, and Dong Xi perished in the river. Xu Sheng meanwhile continued slaughtering Li Dian's

men.

By this time Southland commander Chen Wu had heard the cries of mayhem and brought his troops up. He was confronted by Cao's commander Pang De. A wild melee ensued. Sun Quan, at the Ruxu barrier, heard Cao's troops nearing shore and, together with Zhou Tai, came to help. Quan saw Xu Sheng wreaking havoc in Li Dian's camp and signaled his men to support Sheng, but Zhang Liao and Xu Huang trapped Quan between them. From an elevation Cao Cao saw Sun Quan surrounded and immediately ordered Xu Chu to fall upon the southern force. The shock of Xu Chu's attack caused the southern army to split; and neither part could help the other.

From the thick of the fighting, Zhou Tai reached the river but could not find Sun Quan. Wheeling round, he plunged back into the lines. "Where is our lord?" he asked his men. They pointed to the converging soldiers. "His Lordship is surrounded," they said. "It's serious." Zhou Tai broke through and found Sun Quan. "Follow me out of here, my lord," Tai said. By dint of hard fighting, Zhou Tai reached the shore but again lost Sun Quan.

He turned back into the fray and again found his lord. "We can't get out," Quan said. "Shafts and bolts are flying everywhere." "This time," Zhou Tai said, "you go first, and I'll follow." Quan raced forward as Zhou Tai fended off attacks left and right. He took several wounds and an arrow had pierced his armor; but he brought Sun Quan out. At the shore Lü Meng's detachment of sailors got Sun Quan safely on board. "I only made it thanks to Zhou Tai; he plunged three times into the thick of the fighting. But Xu Sheng is still trapped. How will he escape?" "I will go back," Zhou Tai said. He turned around, charged into the midst of the encirclement, and brought Xu Sheng to safety. The two commanders, severely wounded, climbed down to the boat as Lü Meng's archers raked the shoreline to cover them.

At this time Chen Wu, with no support, was battling Pang De. Pang De had chased him into the mouth of a gorge where trees grew dense. Time and again Chen Wu tried to turn and fight, but bushes snagged his sleeves and Pang De cut him down before he could defend himself.

Cao Cao, seeing that Sun Quan had fled, urged his soldiers to the shore; from there they shot their arrows to the opposite side. Lü Meng, his arrows spent, began to panic. But a boat came from the opposite bank, a general at its prow. It was Sun Ce's son-in-law, Lu Xun. He had brought one hundred thousand men, who, in a short spell, drove Cao's troops back with volleys of arrows. Seizing the advantage, Xun's troops climbed ashore and made off with thousands of war-horses. Cao Cao's army suffered countless casualties and went back to camp badly beaten. Chen Wu's corpse was found later in the carnage.

Sun Quan grieved bitterly over the loss of Chen Wu and Dong Xi. He had the river searched, and Dong Xi's body was found; it was buried together with Chen Wu's. Sun Quan then held a feast to thank Zhou Tai for his heroic rescues. Lifting the cup, Sun Quan rested his arm on Zhou Tai's shoulders and, face wet with tears, said, "Twice you brought me to safety, each time risking your own life, suffering so many wounds that they have patterned your flesh. What else can I do but show you a kinsman's kindness; what else but place in your hands a high command? You are my most deserving vassal, with whom I shall share every glory and success."

He ordered Zhou Tai to remove his coat and display his wounds: his entire body was carved with crosswise slashes. Sun Quan pointed to each and asked the occasion of infliction. Zhou Tai answered in full detail. For every wound he was ordered to quaff a flagon of wine; Zhou Tai became thoroughly drunk that day. Sun granted him the blue-green silk umbrella of chief command, ordering him to leave

the feast and reenter with it raised to enhance his dignity.¹

At Ruxu, Sun Quan held off Cao Cao for more than a month but could not gain the upper hand. Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong put forth a proposal: "Cao Cao's strength is too great for us to overcome. In a protracted war we stand to lose many men. It is better to seek a truce and give the people peace." Sun Quan approved. He sent Bu Zhi to Cao's camp for that purpose and promised to send tribute annually. Cao Cao, too, realized that no quick decision was possible and agreed to the truce. "Sun Quan is to remove his forces first," he stipulated. "Then I will withdraw to the capital." Bu Zhi returned this answer to Sun Quan, who shipped his entire army back to Moling, leaving only Jiang Qin and Zhou Tai guarding Ruxu.²

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Cao Cao withdrew to the capital, leaving Cao Ren and Zhang Liao stationed at Hefei. The entire court, civil as well as military branches, proposed establishing Cao Cao as king of Wei. The only strong opposition came from the chief of the Secretariat, Cui Yan, to whom the assembly said, "Have you forgotten the fate of Xun Wenruo?"³ Cui Yan, in a fury, replied "Oh, what times, what times! The thing will come, but you will have to do it without me!" Those opposing Cui Yan reported his words to Cao Cao, who had him jailed and interrogated. But the prisoner—a man of tiger-round eyes and curling whiskers—simply denounced Cao Cao for treachery and treason against the throne. The security chief informed Cao Cao, who had Cui Yan beaten to death in jail. These verses of a later poet express his admiration for the secretary:

Cui Yan of Qinghe,
By nature hard and strong,
Had curly beard and tiger eyes
And insides hard as iron.
Treachery must back away
Before his high integrity.
For loyalty to the lord of Han
His name will live eternally.

In the fifth month of Jian An 21 (A.D. 216) the college of courtiers collectively petitioned Emperor Xian, lauding the merits and virtue of Cao Cao, lord patriarch of Wei: "To the ends of Heaven and earth he surpasses even Yi Yin and the Duke of Zhou; he should be advanced in rank to king." Emperor Xian commanded Zhong Yao to draft the edict confirming Cao Cao's elevation to king of Wei. Cao Cao unctuously made the three ritual refusals; but after three repetitions of the imperial will, Cao respectfully accepted the order making him king of Wei and at once assumed the appropriate trappings: imperial headdress with twelve strings of jade beads, a gilt chariot with a team of six horses, an imperial carriage with regalia.⁴ Wherever he went, heralds cleared the way as if for the Emperor. In the city of Ye he built the palace of the king of Wei and initiated discussions on establishing his heir.⁵

Cao Cao's principal wife, Lady Ding, had had no issue. His concubine, Lady Liu, was the mother of Cao Ang, who had died in Wancheng during the campaign against Zhang Xiu. Lady Bian had four

sons: the eldest was Pi; the second, Zhang; the third, Zhi; the fourth, Xiong. Consequently, Cao Cao displaced Lady Ding and made Lady Bian queen of Wei.⁶ Cao Zhi (Zijian), her third son, a brilliant scholar who could produce polished compositions in a single writing, was the heir apparent of choice.

The eldest son, Pi, who had been discouraged, asked Imperial Mentor⁷ Jia Xu for a plan to improve his prospects. Jia Xu gave him certain advice. From that day forward, whenever Cao Cao went on a campaign and his sons saw him off, Cao Zhi would celebrate his achievements and his virtue in long rhapsodies. Cao Pi alone would bid his father good-bye, prostrate and weeping.⁸ Cao Cao's attendants were deeply moved by this, and soon Cao Cao began to compare his favorite, Zhi, to his son Pi and to suspect Zhi of cunning and insincerity. Cao Pi reinforced his father's inclination by bribing Cao's close attendants to sing Pi's praises. As a result, Cao became torn over whom to name as heir. He took the matter to Jia Xu. "I want to establish my successor," he said. "Who should it be?" Jia Xu did not answer. Cao Cao asked why. "I am thinking," replied Jia Xu. "I cannot answer right away." "What are you thinking?" Cao asked. "I am thinking of Yuan Shao and Liu Biao and of their sons," said Xu.⁹ Cao Cao laughed and subsequently named Cao Pi, his eldest son, heir apparent.¹⁰

The palace of the king of Wei was completed in winter, during the tenth month. Men were sent all over the realm to gather exotic flowers and fruit to plant in the royal gardens. One of Cao's messengers came to the Southland and was received by Sun Quan. After communicating the wishes of the king of Wei, he proceeded to Wenzhou where he acquired sweet oranges. At this time Sun Quan wanted to show his respect for the king of Wei, so he ordered someone in that city to select forty loads of large oranges and dispatch them to Ye. On the way, however, the porters had to stop and rest at the foot of a hill. There they were approached by an older man, blind in one eye and crippled in one leg. He wore a bonnet of white vine-stems and an informal grey Taoist robe. The man greeted the carriers, saying, "You have much to carry. Do you want this poor priest to lend a shoulder?" The workmen were delighted. And so the priest carried the entire load five *li* ahead. But to the workmen's surprise the loads he had carried suddenly became lighter. When he was about to leave, the priest said to the officer in charge of the shipment, "This poor priest, Zuo Ci, styled Yuanfang, with the Taoist name of Master Black Horn, is an old acquaintance of the king of Wei—from his native village. If you reach Ye, convey my best wishes to him." And with a flick of his sleeves, the priest was gone.

When the shipment reached Ye, the officer in charge presented it to Cao Cao. Cao Cao split a fruit and found an empty peel.¹¹ Astonished, Cao questioned the officer, who recounted his meeting with Zuo Ci. Cao Cao was incredulous. Suddenly a gateman announced, "An elderly man calling himself Zuo Ci seeks audience with the great king." Cao summoned the priest, and the officer identified him as the one they had met en route. Cao rebuked him sharply. "What black art did you use," he asked, "to draw the pulp from my precious fruit?" With a smile Zuo Ci replied, "How ridiculous!" and opened a fruit, showing him the succulent flesh inside. But the ones Cao opened were all dried out.

Beside himself, Cao bade the priest sit and explain it. Zuo Ci asked for wine and meat, which Cao saw to. Five measures later, Ci was still sober; after eating a whole sheep, he was still hungry. "What is your method?" Cao asked. "This poor priest," he replied, "has studied the Tao for thirty years on Emei Mountain¹² in Jialing of the Riverlands. One day I heard someone calling my name from within a stone wall on the mountain. I went to look but saw nothing. Suddenly a peal of thunder split the wall and I found three scrolls of divine text entitled *Avoidance Days*, *Text of Heaven*. The first was

Avoidances, Heaven; the second, *Avoidances, Earth*; the third, *Avoidances, Men*. The first teaches how to spring into the clouds and straddle the winds in order to soar through middle space; the second, how to pass through hills and stone; the third, how to move freely within the realm hiding one's shape, changing one's form, taking an enemy's head with a flying sword or a well-thrown knife. Your Highness has reached the highest ministerial office. Why don't you retire and come with this poor priest to Emei Mountain and practice the disciplines of the Tao? I will hand the three scrolls over to you."¹³

To this invitation Cao Cao responded, "I have long thought of retiring, having ridden the crest of success. The only thing stopping me is that we have yet to find the right man to assist the court." Zuo Ci smiled and said, "Liu Xuande of the Riverlands is a scion of the royal house. Why not yield this position to him? Otherwise, this poor priest will send a sword for your head!" Rage seized Cao Cao. "He is an agent of Liu Bei!" he cried, and ordered his guards to arrest the man. Zuo Ci only continued laughing. Cao Cao ordered a dozen of the jailers to take hold of Zuo Ci and beat him. They used all their might, but Zuo Ci remained as if deeply asleep, snoring away, showing no sign of discomfort. Next, Cao ordered a cangue fixed tightly on Zuo Ci's neck and wrists and had him imprisoned under close guard. Later the guards found the cangue and lock on the ground and Zuo Ci sleeping, unscathed. They kept him in prison for seven days with neither food nor drink. When next they looked, he was sitting erect on the floor, his face ruddy. The jailers informed Cao Cao, who had the prisoner brought forth for questioning again. "I can go for decades without eating—or I can consume a thousand sheep in one day!" he declared. Cao Cao was powerless to deal with him.

That day all the officials gathered at the royal palace for a banquet. As the wine was circulating, Zuo Ci appeared standing before the diners, wooden clogs on his feet. The assembly was shocked. Zuo Ci said, "Your Highness's table is fully furnished with fish and meat, and for the courtiers gathered at this great feast there is an abundance of rare delights. If anything is lacking here, I would like to volunteer to fetch it." "I want dragon liver to make a stew," Cao replied. "Can you get it for me?" "Nothing difficult about that!" was Zuo Ci's answer. With brush and ink he drew a dragon on the chalky wall. He waved his sleeve over it, and the stomach opened. Zuo Ci plucked out the liver, streaming with fresh blood. Cao Cao said contemptuously, "You had that in your sleeve!"

Zuo Ci said, "This is the coldest time of year, when all vegetation is dead. Is there any fine flower Your Highness might like to have?" "A peony, nothing else," was Cao's reply. "Easy enough," said Zuo Ci. He ordered a large flower basin brought before the company and sprayed water on it. In moments a peony stalk sprang up, bearing two blossoms. The assembly was astonished. Zuo Ci was invited to join the feast.

Soon after, the cook served minced fish. Zuo Ci said, "For mincing only a fine perch from the River Song will do." Cao Cao said, "How can we get one from so far away?" "It's not difficult," was the reply. The priest had a fishing pole brought to him and dropped a line into the pond below the hall. In a short while he had pulled up several dozen large perch and placed them in the palace hall. "Those fish were in my pond all along," said Cao. "Is Your Majesty trying to fool me?" retorted Zuo Ci. "Every perch in the world has two cheek pouches, except those from the Song, which have four. This can prove it." The officials verified the priest's claim.¹⁴

"You'll need purple sprout ginger to poach these fish," Zuo Ci went on. "Can you get that for us too?" Cao asked. "Easy enough," Ci answered. He had a gold basin brought out and covered it with his robe. In a few moments the basin was filled with ginger. Ci presented the basin, and Cao took it in

his hands. To his surprise, there was a book inside bearing the title *New Writings of Mengde*. Finding every word in its pages to be correct, Cao was puzzled. Zuo Ci took a jade cup from the table, filled it with choice wine, and offered it to Cao Cao. "Drink this, Your Highness," he said, "and you will live a thousand years." "You drink first," said Cao. Zuo Ci removed a jade hairpin from his cap and with a single stroke divided the contents. He drank one half and proffered the second to Cao Cao, who scoffed at him. So Zuo Ci flung the cup into the air, where it turned into a white turtledove that flew around the hall. As the guests watched entranced, Zuo Ci vanished from sight.

"He left by the palace gate," said Cao's attendants. "This kind of black magician has to be eliminated or he will prove a scourge," Cao Cao said; he ordered Xu Chu to pursue him with three hundred armored soldiers and take him prisoner. Xu Chu raced to the city gate and there saw Zuo Ci in his wooden sandals sauntering along ahead of him. Xu Chu pursued him but could not seem to overtake him.

Chu dashed into a group of hills, where he saw a little shepherd driving a flock of sheep into the center of which Zuo Ci walked. Xu Chu shot an arrow at him, but he disappeared. Xu Chu slew the entire flock before returning to the palace, leaving the little boy in tears. Suddenly the lad saw a sheep's head on the ground speaking in human tongue. It called to him, "Place the severed heads against the necks of the dead sheep." The terrified lad covered his face and fled. But a voice behind him said, "Don't panic. I'm returning your sheep alive." Turning round, the lad saw that Zuo Ci had already put the sheep back together and was driving them toward him. Before the lad could question Zuo Ci, he was on his way with a flick of his sleeves, faster than the wind; in a flash he was gone from sight.

The shepherd boy reported the event to his master, who, fearing to keep it secret, reported it to Cao Cao. Cao had a sketch of the man made and sent it to various points with orders to arrest him. Inside of three days hundreds of men were arrested—in town and outside the walls—who resembled Zuo Ci exactly: one drooping lid, one lame leg, white vine-stem cap, grey casual gown, wooden sandals. A tremendous hubbub erupted in the city streets. Cao Cao ordered his commanders to sprinkle the prisoners with pig's and sheep's blood and then march them to the training field south of the city. Led by Cao Cao himself, five hundred soldiers surrounded and executed them. From each severed trunk a trail of blue vapor arose. The vapors coalesced in the sky and became Zuo Ci. Hailing a passing crane, he sat on its back, clapped his hands, and laughed, saying, "Earth rat follows golden tiger; the villain is shortly doomed."¹⁵ Cao Cao ordered his commanders to shoot. But a great wind blew up, carrying stones and scattering sand. The bodies of those executed sprang up and, heads in hands, raced to the reviewing arena as if to strike Cao Cao. Officials and officers covered their faces and collapsed in disbelief, too frightened to help each other. Indeed:

If the villain had power enough to overthrow the dynasty,
The unearthly powers of the Taoist priest were even more amazing.

Was Cao Cao himself about to die?

READ ON.



***Conning the Changes, Guan Lu Sees Things to Come;
Chastening Han Traitors, Five Vassals Die Loyal***

STUNNED, CAO CAO WATCHED THE MASS OF CORPSES coming to life in the darkening day; then he fell to the ground. Moments later the wind ceased, the corpses vanished. Cao Cao was helped to his palace, suffering from shock. A poet of later times wrote in awe of Zuo Ci's black magic:

He sprang to cloud and swept around our realm,
Freely, harmless, avoiding days malign.
Casually he worked his conjuries;
But Cao Cao never understood his signs.

No medicine could cure Cao Cao. By chance, the assistant grand astrologer, Xu Zhi, was in the capital to see Cao. Cao ordered him to divine the matter from the *Book of Changes*. "Has Your Majesty ever heard of Guan Lu, the marvelous diviner?" asked Xu Zhi. "The name is familiar," Cao replied. "But I am unfamiliar with his craft. Can you tell me more?" "Guan Lu (styled Gongming) is from Pingyuan," Xu Zhi told him. "He is crude and ugly, fond of wine and unpredictable. His father was the elder of Jiqui in the district of Langye. As a lad, Guan Lu was so fascinated by the constellations that his parents could not get him to bed at night. He would often say, 'Even chickens and swans know the time of day; how about men living in the world?' Once, playing with the neighbor's children, he drew the heavens on the ground, showing sun, moon, and star clusters. When Guan Lu got a little older, through a deep understanding of the *Changes*, he was able to observe the angles of the wind¹ and make miraculous numerical calculations; in addition, he was skilled at reading a man's fortune in his appearance.²

"The governor of Langye, Shan Zichun, invited Guan Lu to audience on the strength of his reputation. Attending the session were over one hundred scholars skilled in argument. Guan Lu said to Zichun, 'As I am young and diffident, I beg three jars of fine wine to drink before speaking.' Though surprised, the governor satisfied his request. Done drinking, Guan Lu asked Zichun, 'Are those seated here in Your Lordship's hall the ones to match wits with me?' 'I consider myself a worthy opponent,' was the governor's reply; and he began to discuss the logic of the *Changes*. Guan Lu waxed eloquent, speaking to the essence of the governor's questions. Zichun tried every way he could to confound the young man, but Guan Lu answered fluently from dawn to dusk; no win or food was served. Zichun and the company were conquered by the child prodigy, as he came to be known.

"Some time after this event, Cuo En and his two brothers, residents of Langye, asked Guan Lu to cast a divination concerning the lameness afflicting each of them. Guan Lu replied, 'There is a female ghost haunting your family graves, according to my reading of the hexagrams; it is the wife of either

your father's older brother or of his younger brother. Some time ago, in a period of famine, she was pushed into a well and her head crushed with a rock for the sake of a few pecks of grain. Her desolate spirit now appeals to Heaven for justice, and the three of you suffer a retribution which cannot be warded off." The brothers wept and acknowledged the crime.³

"Wang Ji, governor of Anping, on learning of Guan Lu's divining powers, invited him to his home. It so happened that the wife of the prefect of Xindu was suffering from fainting spells,⁴ and her son from pain around the heart. The prefect therefore invited Guan Lu to divine for him. Guan Lu said, 'There are two male corpses in the western corner of this hall: one holding a spear; the other, a bow and arrow. Their heads are inside the wall, their feet outside. The former augurs stabbing in the head—hence your wife's spells; the latter, piercing of the chest and abdomen—hence your son's pain.' They began digging and eight spans down unearthed two coffins. One contained a spear, the other a bow and arrow. The wood had rotted away. Guan Lu had the bones reburied ten *li* outside of the city, and the symptoms disappeared.

"When the prefect of Guantao, Zhuge Yuan, was promoted to governor of Xinxing, Guan Lu went to see him off. One of the governor's men mentioned that Guan Lu could locate anything hidden. The incredulous governor secretly took a swallow's egg, a bees' nest, and a spider, placed them separately in three boxes, and ordered Guan Lu to perform his divination. After forming his hexagram, Guan Lu wrote four lines on each box. On the first:

After brooding, it transforms;
Till then, it needs its warm redoubt
To let the male and female form
And the fledging wings stretch out—
A swallow's egg here!

On the second box he wrote:

In homes hanging upside down,
They throng at gates and doors;
Hiding essence, brewing bane,
Come the fall, the change occurs—
A bees' nest here!

On the third Guan Lu wrote:

On long and trembly legs he moves,
Spitting gauzy silken thread;
Seeing food upon the web,
His advantage comes when we're abed—
A spider here!

The entire company was astonished at Guan Lu's skill.

"Once an old village woman had lost an ox and wanted a diviner to locate it. Guan Lu's opinion

was:

North where a streamlet runs,
A tasty meal for seven men!
Swiftly go and look for him—
Skin and flesh may still remain.

Indeed, the old woman found her ox. Seven men behind a thatched hut were dining on it, and some of its skin and meat was still left. The woman reported this to the district governor, Liu Bin, who arrested and convicted the seven. When the governor asked the woman how she had found the culprits, the woman told him of Guan Lu's divination. The incredulous governor invited Guan Lu to his quarters and bade him divine the contents of two boxes in which he had hidden a seal and a pheasant's feather. After divining, Guan Lu wrote on the first:

Square within, outside round,
A pattern in five colors,
Holding the jewel of trust:
Removed, the emblem of office!—
A seal sack!

On the second Guan Lu wrote:

Birds are perched upon those cliffs,
Bodies brocade, vermillion coat,
And wings a dusky yellow:
Morning's never-failing note—
A feather of the pheasant!

Liu Bin was astonished at Guan Lu's performance and treated him as an honored guest.

"One day while strolling outside the town limits, Guan Lu came across a young man tilling a field. Lu stood by the roadside watching. After a long time he asked, 'What is your honored name and age?' 'Zhao Yan,' the youth replied. 'I am nineteen. May I ask who you are, sir?' 'I am Guan Lu,' was the reply. 'I see the sign of death between your eyebrows. You are fated to die in three days. Alas, though handsome, you cannot live long.' When Zhao Yan returned home, he anxiously reported the prediction to his father, who ran out and overtook Guan Lu. Throwing himself to the ground, the father said tearfully, 'Please come home with me and save our son.' 'How can the decree of Heaven be forestalled?' The father reiterated his appeal: 'This old man has but one son. I crave your assistance.' The boy added his own pleas.

"Guan Lu saw how anxious father and son were for his help, so he said to Zhao Yan, 'Prepare a jar of pure wine and a piece of dried venison as a gift to two men whom you will find tomorrow playing chess on a flat stone under a great tree in the hills to the south. One of the men—unsightly and dressed in white—will be seated facing south; the other—fair of face and dressed in red—facing north. While they are rapt in their game, kneel down and present the wine and meat. After they finish,

plead tearfully for longer life. They will augment your years. But make sure not to mention me.' The father had Guan Lu remain with him.

"The next day Zhao Yan took wine, meat, and serving utensils into the southern hills. After walking five or six *li*, he found the chess players at the foot of a giant pine. They took no notice of him. Zhao Yan knelt and offered the wine and food to them. Intent on their game, the two men consumed the wine and venison without being aware of it. Then a weeping Zhao Yan prostrated himself and pleaded for his life. The two men were astonished. The man in red said, 'This sounds like one of Guan Lu's ideas. After accepting the favor, we have to show him sympathy.' The man in white looked into a register he was carrying and said to Zhao Yan, 'You are to die this year, your nineteenth. I am going to add a 9 before the character *10*, giving you ninety-nine years. And when you see Guan Lu again, tell him to keep the secrets of Heaven to himself or suffer the consequences.'

"As the man in red finished writing, an aromatic breeze passed; both men turned into white cranes and shot into the skies. Zhao Yan went home and questioned Guan Lu. 'The one in red was the Southern Dipper,' Lu replied. 'The other, the Northern.' 'I always thought the Northern Dipper had nine stars,' Zhao Yan said. 'Why was there only one man?' 'Dispersed, there are nine; concentrated, they make one. The Northern Dipper marks death: the Southern, life. Since they have already extended your span, what else are you worried about?' Father and son prostrated themselves in gratitude. From that day forth, Guan Lu was reluctant to divine lest he betray the secrets of Heaven. At present, he lives in Pingyuan. If Your Highness wishes to know what fortune holds in store, I suggest you summon him."⁵

Delighted with Xu Zhi's recommendation, Cao Cao sent for the diviner. Guan Lu arrived and, after paying his respects, was asked to divine the meaning of the wonders Zuo Ci had performed. "Simple black magic to delude you," he told Cao. "What are you worried about?" Cao Cao took comfort from the seer's words and his illness gradually passed.

Cao Cao ordered Guan Lu to divine the state of the empire. The answer was: "Three and eight run crisscross; a yellow pig meets a tiger. South of the outpost, you will lose a limb." Cao ordered him to foretell the length of his line of succession. The answer was: "In the palace of the lion, the ancestral tablet takes its place. Kingship is renewed, his posterity will know the ultimate honor." Cao Cao asked for further explanation. Guan Lu said, "Vague and vast are Heaven's determinations. No man can foretell them. But in retrospect they are confirmed."

Cao Cao wanted to appoint Guan Lu grand astrologer, but the diviner replied, "My lot is meagre; my features bespeak adversity. Unfit for the office, I must decline." Cao Cao asked the reason, and Guan Lu replied, "My forehead is misshapen; my eyes lack luster; my nose has no bridge; my feet, no Achilles tendons; the marks of long life are absent from my back and stomach. I'm good for dealing with the ghosts on Mount Tai, but not with living men." "Then," responded Cao, "will you read my destiny from my looks?" "You are already the highest vassal in the land. What need is there?" said Guan Lu smiling, and he refused to answer despite Cao's repeated requests. Cao Cao then ordered Guan Lu to read the character of each of his officers and officials. To this, Guan Lu replied, "Officers to rule the age, one and all." Cao Cao asked his fortunes, but Guan Lu would not divulge them fully. These verses written in later times express admiration for the diviner:

Guan Lu (Gongming), of Pingyuan, was a seer
Who kenne'd the stars of north and southern poles.

By the trigrams' arcana he reached the occult realm;
By hexagrams' mystery he probed the house of Heaven.
His predictions and readings sensed those doomed;
His innermost depths could activate the spirits.
Alas, the secrets of his ingenuity
Were never written down for posterity.

Once again Cao Cao ordered Guan Lu to divine, this time the prospects for the Riverlands and the Southland. Lu cast the hexagrams and said, "The south has lost a chief general. The west sends hostile troops." Cao Cao was incredulous. But at that moment a messenger from Hefei reported the death of Lu Su, the Southland general guarding Lukou. Cao Cao was astonished. Next, he sent someone to Hanzhong, who reported that Liu Xuande had sent Zhang Fei and Ma Chao to take the pass at Xiabian. Cao Cao was enraged and asked Guan Lu to predict what his fortunes would be if he took his army back into Hanzhong. Guan Lu answered, "Your Highness, do not be reckless. Next spring the capital will have a disastrous fire." Cao Cao, impressed by Guan Lu's successful predictions, declined to act and kept to his regional capital at Ye. Instead, he sent Cao Hong with fifty thousand troops to help Xiahou Yuan and Zhang He defend the eastern Riverlands; he detailed Xiahou Dun to patrol the capital with thirty thousand and guard against the unexpected; and lastly, he had one of his senior advisers, Wang Bi, take command of the Royal Guard.

Cao's first secretary, Sima Yi, said, "Wang Bi is too fond of his drink, too lax to hold that office." "Wang Bi has followed me through thick and thin," replied Cao. "He is loyal and diligent, a man of iron convictions, and more than adequate to the task." Thus, Wang Bi took command of the Royal Guard, which was stationed outside the Eastern Blossom Gate of the capital at Xuchang.

There was a man named Geng Ji (Jixing) from Luoyang, who had served on the prime minister's staff and was later transferred to the post of privy treasurer. He became close friends with Wei Huang, security director to the prime minister. Geng Ji was outraged by the fact that Cao Cao had been granted the title of king and that he went about in an emperor's carriage. In the first month of the twenty-third year of Jian An (A.D. 218), Geng Ji spoke confidentially to Wei Huang: "The treachery of the traitor Cao worsens. He is bent on usurpation, and we servants of the house of Han should not be helping him to do so." Wei Huang replied, "There is someone we can turn to: Jin Yi, a descendent of the former prime minister, Jin Midi. Jin Yi has never wavered in his intention to see Cao Cao brought to justice. Also, he is on close terms with Wang Bi. If Jin Yi joins us, we may save the Han." "If he is already a friend of Wang Bi's," Geng Ji said, "why would he want to join with us?" "Let's talk to him and see," was Wei Huang's reply.

Geng Ji and Wei Huang went to the home of Jin Yi, who welcomed them into his private quarters. When they were comfortably seated, Huang said, "Because you and Wang Bi are close friends, I have a special request." "What is it?" Jin Yi replied. "We believe that before long the king of Wei will accept the abdication of the Emperor and ascend the imperial seat. You and Wang Bi are both sure to attain high position; we hope you will remember us and somehow manage to arrange for our preferment. We would be deeply grateful." Jin Yi flicked his sleeves dismissively and stood up. At that moment his attendants came in to present tea, but Jin Yi spilled the tea on the ground. Trying to look startled, Wei Huang said, "Why should an old friend turn so unfriendly?" "We have been good friends," Jin Yi replied, "inasmuch as you are descended from high ministers of the Han court. But

now, instead of being true to your origins, you seek to aid and abet the rebels. I want no part of your friendship!" "Heaven ordains that we do what we must," Geng Ji said. Jin Yi was outraged.

Realizing that loyalty and honor were uppermost in Jin Yi's mind, Geng Ji and Wei Huang told him that they had merely been testing him and actually wanted his cooperation in bringing Cao Cao to justice. Jin Yi responded, "How could a servant of the Han for generations follow a traitor? If you want to uphold the royal house, let me hear your esteemed views." "Although we want to show our devotion to the dynasty, we lack a plan for dealing with Cao," they responded. "I will work with you from within," Jin Yi said. "We will kill Wang Bi, take over the Royal Guard, and thus aid the Emperor. Then we can ally with Imperial Uncle Liu to destroy the traitor." Geng Ji and Wei Huang clapped their hands in approbation.

"There are two men," Jin Yi continued, "in whom I have full confidence and who hold Cao Cao their mortal enemy for killing their fathers. They live outside the city and will lend support to our efforts from there." Geng Ji asked who they were. "They are Ji Mao (styled Wenran) and Ji Mu (styled Siran), sons of the late Imperial Physician Ji Ping. Years ago Cao killed their father because he was involved with Dong Cheng in the secret edict affair.⁶ At the time the two sons ran away to a remote area to escape Cao's vengeance. Now they have secretly returned to the capital. If you want their help, there is nothing they won't do." Geng Ji and Wei Huang were delighted.

Jin Yi quietly summoned the two sons of Ji Ping and explained the situation to them. Both men, so deeply affected that their eyes overflowed with indignation and their sense of justice soared skywards, swore to kill the traitor. Jin Yi then spelled out his plan: "On the night of the fifteenth day of the first month, when the Lantern Festival lights up the city in celebration of the year's first full moon, Treasurer Geng Ji and Security Director Wei Huang, you will bring your armed servants to the camp of Wang Bi's Royal Guard. The moment you see fire in the camp, form two companies and come in fighting. After Wang Bi is killed, follow me directly into the palace. I will request that the Emperor ascend the Tower of Five Phoenixes and in his own right command the officials to bring the traitor to justice. Next, I want the Ji brothers to force their way into the capital and set fires as the signal; they will sound the call for the good people to execute the traitors to the dynasty and block any rescue troops. After the Emperor's edict is delivered with an offer of amnesty to all who cooperate, we will advance on Ye, capture Cao Cao, and summon Imperial Uncle Liu. Today we have come to a decision. During the second watch of the festival night, we will act. Let us be sure not to fail as Dong Cheng did." The five men spoke their oath to Heaven and sealed their pact with blood. Then they went home to prepare men and weapons against the appointed time.

The household servants of Geng Ji and Wei Huang, numbering three or four hundred each, began readying their weapons. The Ji brothers added another three hundred. All arrangements were completed on the pretext of preparing for a hunting expedition.

Jin Yi called on Wang Bi and said, "Things seem calmer now in this vast empire, and the prestige and might of the king of Wei are already widely felt. Tonight, the festival of the first full moon, we shall have to light lanterns to celebrate the atmosphere of peace." Wang Bi agreed and issued instructions to the residents of the capital to greet the holiday with lamps and colored hangings.

When night fell on the fifteenth, the sky was clear and the stars and moon vied in brilliant glory. The whole city was given over to the display of lanterns. The soldiers on patrol let everything pass and did not enforce the discipline of the night watches.

Wang Bi and the commanders of his Royal Guard were feasting in camp, when a great hubbub

broke out some time after the second watch, punctuated by cries of fire to the rear. Wang Bi dashed out and saw wheels of flame rolling every which way. The murderous shouts filling the air told him a coup was under way. He took to his horse and went out the southern gate, only to meet up with Geng Ji. Nearly felled by an arrow in the arm, Wang Bi turned and fled toward the west gate. Closely pursued, he abandoned his mount, ran to the home of Jin Yi and knocked frantically on the door.

Jin Yi's men were away—some had set the fires, others were fighting the Royal Guard—only the women were at home. Hearing the banging at the gate, the women assumed it was Jin Yi returning. His wife called from the other side of the closed gate, "Have you done away with that no-good Wang Bi?" The astonished Wang Bi thus learned that Jin Yi was a conspirator too. Bi fled to Cao Xiu and told him that Jin Yi and Geng Ji were plotting rebellion. Cao Xiu donned his armor and rode into the city with a thousand men to stop the enemy.

In the capital fires raged everywhere. The Tower of Five Phoenixes went up in flames, forcing the Emperor to take refuge in an inner palace while Cao Cao's trusted henchmen fought hard to hold the main gate. All over the city men were shouting, "Kill the traitor Cao! Support the house of Han!"

Earlier, Cao Cao had ordered Xiahou Dun to patrol the capital. He had thirty thousand men stationed five *li* away. Seeing the fires in the distance, Dun moved his men up and encircled Xuchang. Then he sent a detachment inside to relieve Cao Xiu. The battle raged until dawn. Geng Ji and Wei Huang fought on unaided until someone reported the deaths of Jin Yi and the brothers Ji. Geng and Wei then cut a path out of the city, but Xiahou Dun's troops captured them easily. Over a hundred of their attendants were slaughtered.

Xiahou Dun entered the city and put out the fires. The clans of the five conspirators were arrested and Cao Cao was informed of the events. Cao Cao sent back an order for an immediate public execution of Geng Ji and Wei Huang as well as the clans of the five conspirators. Cao Cao also ordered every official, high and low, brought to Ye for judgment.

Xiahou Dun marched Geng Ji and Wei Huang to the marketplace. Geng Ji screamed, "Cao, you barbarian! Alive, I couldn't kill you. But in death I'll be a fierce ghost and drive you to a traitor's death." The executioner thrust his sword into Ji's mouth, drawing gouts of blood. Ji died cursing. Grinding his teeth, Wei Huang struck his head against the ground, crying, "Heinous! Heinous!" until he died. A poet of later times commemorated their deaths in these lines:

Geng Ji, loyalty pure; Wei Huang, integrity—
With bare hands struggling to sustain the Han,
Not knowing the mandate was soon to cease,
Down to the Nether Springs they bring their grief.

Xiahou Dun exterminated the five clans and delivered all the court and palace officials to Ye. There, on the training field, Cao Cao set up two flags—red on the left, white on the right—and issued an order: "Geng Ji, Wei Huang, and other rebels burned the capital. Those of you who came to put out the fires, stand by the red flag; those who stayed indoors and did not try to help, stand by the white flag." The officials supposed that those who tried to put out the fires would be exonerated and thronged around the red flag. Only a third of the officials stood by the white flag. But Cao Cao ordered the arrest of everyone standing by the red flag. When the officials protested their innocence, Cao said, "At the time you were not thinking of helping fight the fires but of aiding the rebels." Cao

Cao had over three hundred officials executed on the bank of the River Zhang. Those standing under the white flag were rewarded and sent back to the capital.⁷

The general of the Royal Guard, Wang Bi, had died of his wound and, by Cao's order, was buried honorably. Cao Xiu was given command of the Royal Guard, and Zhong Yao became first minister to the king of Wei. Hua Xin was made imperial censor. Six categories and eighteen grades of titled lordship were established and seventeen grades of lord within the passes. Each received a gold seal and purple cord. In addition, sixteen grades of honorary lord were established. Each received a silver seal, tortoiseshell buttons, and black cord. Lastly, five court retainers in fifteen grades were established. Each received a brass seal, round buttons, and black cord.⁸ With grades established and officials enfeoffed, the court had a complete turnover of personnel. After that Cao Cao bethought himself of Guan Lu, who had predicted the fire. Cao offered him a handsome reward, but he declined it.

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Cao Hong reached Hanzhong with his troops and ordered Zhang He and Xiahou Yuan to secure all strongpoints while he went forth to confront the enemy. Zhang Fei and Lei Tong were defending Baxi; Ma Chao, who had reached Xiabian, ordered Wu Lan to take the van. Wu Lan was scouting for the enemy when he met up with Cao Hong's army. Wu Lan wanted to retreat, but his garrison commander, Ren Kui, said, "The rebels have just arrived. If we don't break their spirit now, how can we go back and face Ma Chao?" So they charged ahead and challenged Cao Hong, who sprang forth at the call. They fought three exchanges; then Hong struck down Ren Kui and, gathering momentum, pressed the slaughter.

Wu Lan, badly defeated, went back to Ma Chao and was denounced. "How dare you engage in battle without my authorization?" Chao cried. "Ren Kui would not heed me," Wu Lan explained. "Hold all the key points and do not fight," Chao ordered and reported to Chengdu for further instruction.

Suspecting a trick when Ma Chao did not come out for days, Cao Hong withdrew to Nanzheng.⁹ Zhang He came to see Cao Hong and asked, "Why did you withdraw after killing their commander?" "I thought Ma Chao might have another plan," answered Cao Hong. "Also, when I was in Ye, the seer Guan Lu said a top general would die in this region. His words made me cautious." Zhang He laughed and said, "General, you have soldiered half your life. How could you let your faith in augury cloud your judgment? Overlook my lack of ability; allow me to capture Baxi with the force I command. If I succeed, the district of Shu will easily be ours." But Cao Hong warned him: "The general guarding Baxi is Zhang Fei—an extraordinary warrior, not to be lightly engaged." Zhang He scoffed, "Everyone is afraid of Zhang Fei. To me he's like a babe. I'll take him this time." "And if you fail?" Cao Hong asked. "I will gladly submit to the martial code," Zhang He replied. Cao Hong had him write his pledge, and Zhang He went to attack. Indeed:

Pride has ever been the ruin of an army;
And few who underrate an enemy prevail.

What would be the outcome of the campaign?

READ ON.



Fierce Zhang Fei Takes Wakou Pass; Veteran Huang Zhong Seizes Mount Tiandang

ZHANG HE DIVIDED HIS THIRTY THOUSAND MEN among three forts built against three strategic hills and named for them: Dangqu Fort, Mengtou Fort, and Dangshi Fort. From each, Zhang He took half the troops for the attack on Baxi.

Apprised of the situation, Zhang Fei summoned Lei Tong for his opinion. "This Lang-zhong region," Lei Tong said, "has rugged terrain and formidable hills well suited for ambushes. Go forth and fight them openly, General, while I mount a surprise attack. Zhang He will be taken!" Zhang Fei sent five thousand crack troops with Lei Tong. Fei himself took ten thousand and confronted Zhang He some thirty *li* from Langzhong. The two armies consolidated their lines, and Zhang Fei rode out to challenge Zhang He to single combat. Lance raised, Zhang He took the field, and they fought twenty bouts. Suddenly a commotion arose among Zhang He's rear troops: they had seen banners of Shu behind the hills. Zhang He lost his taste for battle, swung around, and fled. As Zhang Fei charged him from behind, Lei Tong appeared in his front, catching Zhang He between himself and Fei and worsting Zhang He's army.

Into the night Zhang Fei and Lei Tong pursued Zhang He to Dangqu Hill. Zhang He reconstituted his forces in their respective forts and maintained a strict defense, positioning catapults and missiles. Zhang Fei established a position ten *li* to the front of Dangqu Fort. The next day he came to provoke combat, but Zhang He remained on the hill drinking wine while his military band struck up a martial tune. Zhang Fei had to return to camp. The following day Lei Tong went to the base of the hill, and again Zhang He refused combat. Lei Tong charged up the hill; but timber and rocks pelted him, and he retreated. Troops from the Dangshi and Mengtou forts descended and defeated Lei Tong. The next day Zhang Fei again challenged the enemy; again they refused to respond. Fei had his men hurl up all manner of insults; and Zhang He hurled as many down. At a loss for an offensive strategy, Zhang Fei maintained his position for fifty days, making camp right before the hill. Every day he got drunk and sat before the hill reviling Cao Cao's commander.

Xuande had sent an envoy with gifts to cheer Zhang Fei's men; the envoy reported Zhang Fei's heavy drinking back to him. Alarmed, Xuande consulted Kongming, who said with a smile, "So that's how it is! Well, there's no good wine at the front, so let's send General Zhang fifty kegs of our best Chengdu brew on three stout carriages." Xuande replied, "In the past my brother has ruined things by drinking. Why on earth would you want to send him wine, Director General?" "Your Lordship," answered Kongming, "don't you know your brother after all these years? Although he is willful and hot-tempered, his releasing Yan Yan when we took the Riverlands showed him to be far more than a foolhardy warrior. He has held Zhang He at bay for fifty days; after getting drunk every day, he sits beneath their hill camp reviling them with insolent audacity—this is no love of cups but a plan for

defeating Zhang He." "Nonetheless," Xuande replied, "he should not get overconfident. Have Wei Yan go and assist him."

Accordingly, at Kongming's command, Wei Yan transported the wine to the front in carriages flying yellow flags with the words "Choice Wine for the Troops at the Front." Wei Yan came before Zhang Fei and conveyed Lord Liu's good wishes. Fei bowed low and accepted the gift. He then instructed Wei Yan and Lei Tong to establish themselves on his wings, each with a detachment, and to be ready to advance on the hoisting of a red flag. Finally, he distributed the wine, and the army drank heartily amid great flourishes of the drums and displays of banners.

Heeding the reports of his spies, Zhang He went to the hilltop and watched Zhang Fei drinking in front of his tent, enjoying a wrestling match between two soldiers. "Zhang Fei provokes me beyond endurance," he cried and ordered a coordinated raid on Zhang Fei's camp with the units at Mengtou and Dangshi. That night when the moon was dim, Zhang He led his men down the hillside to the enemy camp. Farther ahead there were lanterns and candles alight while Zhang Fei drank in his tent. Taking the lead, Zhang He gave a great shout and, encouraged by thundering drums on the hill, cut his way into Zhang Fei's camp. But Zhang Fei sat perfectly erect and still as Zhang He plunged on toward him and thrust him through with his spear. It was a figure of straw!

Zhang He wheeled around frantically as a series of bombards shattered the air behind the tent. A commander moved to the fore, blocking his escape. He had the fierce round eyes and thundering voice of the real Zhang Fei! Fei raised his lance and sprang forward, taking He point-blank. The two warriors fought some fifty bouts in the glare of the lanterns. Zhang He was looking for rescue from the other two forts, unaware that their troops had already been beaten back and their positions seized by Wei Yan and Lei Tong. With no rescue in sight, Zhang He was at a loss. Then he saw fires on his own hill: his fort had already been seized by Fei's rear guard. With all his positions destroyed, Zhang He could only flee to Wakou Pass. The triumphant Zhang Fei reported to Chengdu. Xuande was exultant over the victory and delighted to discover that Zhang Fei's drinking was only a part of a plan to lure Zhang He into attacking.¹

Zhang He retreated to Wakou Pass, having lost two-thirds of his army of thirty thousand, and called on Cao Hong for help. Hong was furious. "You ignored my advice not to advance," he said, "and lost a crucial strongpoint. On top of that you come for help!" Cao Hong refused to send relief and had a messenger urge Zhang He into the field once again. Unsure of his next step, Zhang He dispatched two units of troops to concealed positions by a hill in front of the pass. His instructions were: "I shall feign defeat. Zhang Fei should pursue. You cut off his return route."

That day, encountering the forces of Lei Tong, Zhang He turned and fled after a brief clash; Lei Tong pursued. The two ambush forces emerged and blocked the road behind Lei Tong. Zhang He swung swiftly round and stabbed Lei Tong, killing him. The defeated troops reported back to Zhang Fei, who rushed to the scene to challenge Zhang He. Again He feigned defeat, but Fei did not pursue. Zhang He returned to the battlefield, only to flee again after a few clashes. Fei saw through the trick and withdrew to his camp. "Zhang He sprang an ambush on Lei Tong and killed him," Fei said to Wei Yan. "Now he wants to trap me. Why not try and turn the tables?" "How?" Wei Yan asked. "Tomorrow," Fei answered, "I'll go ahead with one company, and you bring up the rear with our best troops. When their ambushers come out, attack. Block off the paths with ten carts of brambles and set them on fire. That will give me a chance to capture Zhang He and avenge Lei Tong." Wei Yan accepted the assignment.

The next day Zhang Fei advanced and Zhang He met him. After some ten clashes Zhang He fled, and Zhang Fei pursued with cavalry and infantry. Zhang He fought and ran, on and off, drawing Zhang Fei past the hill where his men lay in wait. Zhang He then turned his force around, making the rear the front, and staked out positions for another battle with Fei, counting on his two wings to surround Zhang Fei. But Zhang He did not know that his troops were trapped in the gorge by the fiery carts and the smoky, blinding fires that spread out from them. Zhang Fei pressed his charge, crushing Zhang He, who, fighting now for his life, cut his way through to Wakou Pass. He collected his defeated troops there and did not emerge from his stronghold again.

Zhang Fei and Wei Yan, unable to subdue He's position, gave up and retired twenty *li*. Scouting the surrounding paths with Wei Yan, Fei spied a few men and women with bundles on their backs, clambering along the hill by clutching vines. On horseback, Fei pointed them out to Wei Yan with his whip and said, "Those people are the means to take Wakou Pass." He instructed his men: "Don't scare them. Gently call them before me." The soldiers did so. Fei reassured the travelers and asked why they had come there. The civilians replied, "We are people of Hanzhong, trying to return to our village. We heard that heavy fighting in the area had closed the highway, so we crossed Blue Stream and followed the Zitong Range and the Guijin River into Hanzhong to get back home." Zhang Fei asked, "How far is it down this road to Wakou Pass?" They responded, "There's a small road by the Zitong Range that takes you behind the pass." Delighted, Zhang Fei brought the travelers into his camp and gave them food and drink. He told Wei Yan, "Go down and attack the pass, while I take some light cavalry and hit from the back." He ordered the civilians to lead the way, and he set out with five hundred riders.

Zhang He despaired of rescue. When Wei Yan's assault at the front of the pass was reported, Zhang He donned his battle gear, mounted, and was about to descend when the attack on the rear was reported: "There are fires in four or five places behind the pass, and soldiers are approaching who cannot be identified." Zhang He turned to meet them. Where their flags parted, he saw Zhang Fei. Astonished, Zhang He fled by a side path; but his horse was spent, and Zhang Fei was closing in. Zhang He quit the horse and escaped uphill on foot. With barely ten men accompanying him, Zhang He made his way back to Nanzheng and there presented himself to Cao Hong.

Enraged at seeing Zhang He return with only ten soldiers, Cao Hong cried, "I told you not to go. On the strength of your pledge, I let you go. Now you've destroyed an army. But you're still alive! What else do you want to do?" Cao Hong ordered Zhang He executed. Acting Army Major Guo Huai protested, "An army is easy to get, a general hard to find, as they say. Despite his offense, Zhang He stands high in the king's favor. He cannot be killed. Give him another five thousand men to take Jiameng Pass, contain Liu Bei's troops, and secure Hanzhong. If he fails, he can be doubly punished." Cao Hong approved and sent Zhang He to the pass with five thousand soldiers.

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The defending commanders, Meng Da and Huo Jun, disagreed on how to meet Zhang He's impending attack. Huo Jun wanted a strict defense, but Meng Da was for combat. He descended from the pass alone, therefore, and engaged, only to return badly defeated. Huo Jun sent an urgent petition to Chengdu, and Xuande summoned his director general for advice. Kongming gathered the commanders in the hall and said, "Jiameng Pass is in dire difficulty. We need to recall Zhang Fei

from Langzhong to drive back Zhang He." Fa Zheng said, "Zhang Fei is posted at Wakou. From there he controls Langzhong, a strategic region. We cannot recall him. We will have to choose among the generals here." Kongming smiled. "Zhang He," he said, "is one of Wei's most renowned generals. No one but Zhang Fei will do." But a man stepped forward and said in an arresting tone, "Director! Do you make light of us all? Though I have no talent, I beg the chance to deliver Zhang He's head to your door."

All eyes turned to the veteran general Huang Zhong. Kongming said, "You are brave enough, but you may be too old to take on Zhang He." At these words, Huang Zhong, white beard bristling, replied, "Yes, I am old. But these two arms can still pull a three-hundred-pound bow. And my body has a thousand pounds of strength! Do you think I can't deal with a commonplace like Zhang He?" "General, you are nearly seventy," Kongming responded. Huang Zhong raced down from the hall, seized a great sword from its scabbard, and wheeled it round and round. Then he took stiff bows hanging on the wall and drew them till two of them snapped. Kongming said, "General, if you go, who will be your lieutenant?" "Let the veteran Yan Yan come with me," Huang Zhong replied, "and if anything goes wrong, you can have this white head!" Xuande was delighted and sent the two old warriors off to do battle with Zhang He. Zhao Zilong objected: "Zhang He has come himself to attack the pass. The director general should not play children's games. Losing this position will imperil the Riverlands. Why let two old generals go against so strong a foe?" "You think they are too advanced in years to do the job?" asked Kongming. "I predict it is they who will bring Hanzhong into our hands." Smirking broadly, Zhao Zilong and the others left the meeting.

When Meng Da and Huo Jun saw Huang Zhong and Yan Yan coming to the pass, they laughed inwardly at Kongming's ill-chosen commanders. "Why send those two old ones to such a crucial point?" they thought. Huang Zhong said to Yan Yan, "You can see from the way they're acting, they are scoffing at our age. Let us achieve a striking victory now and conquer their doubts!" "I am yours to command," Yan Yan replied, and the two men decided on their plan.

Huang Zhong led his men down from the pass and deployed them in opposition to Zhang He's. Zhang He issued forth and laughed at Huang Zhong, saying, "A man of your years and not ashamed to take the field?" Stung to fury, Huang Zhong replied, "A stripling like you mocks my years? The sword in my hand is not too old!" Slapping his horse, Huang Zhong raced forward, and the two warriors closed. After some twenty clashes shouts arose behind Zhang He: Yan Yan had quietly worked his way to the rear of Zhang He's army. Squeezed between two armies, Zhang He was defeated and driven some eighty *li* away; Huang Zhong and Yan Yan regrouped, and both sides held to their camps.

Cao Hong wanted Zhang He to answer for this latest defeat. But Guo Huai warned, "You will only force him to join the west. Send a commander to assist him and keep an eye on him so he won't think of defecting." Cao Hong approved and sent Xiahou Dun's nephew, Xiahou Shang, and Han Hao, younger brother of the surrendered general Han Xuan. Shang and Hao took five thousand troops to aid Zhang He. When the two rescuers reached the camp, Zhang He told them: "The veteran Huang Zhong is a great hero, and he has the assistance of Yan Yan. We cannot take them lightly." Han Hao said, "I saw Huang Zhong's ferocity in Changsha. After he and Yan Yan delivered our territory to Xuande, they murdered my older brother. Now that we meet again, I will have my revenge!" Hao and Shang advanced from their fort.

It so happened that Huang Zhong, after several days' patrolling, had learned the roads and pathways. Yan Yan said to him, "Over that way is Mount Tiandang, Cao Cao's grain and fodder

depot. If we can take the position and cut off their supply, Hanzhong will be ours." "My thought exactly," replied Huang Zhong. "Here's how we'll do it." In accordance with their plan, Yan Yan led away a detachment.

Huang Zhong marched forth to meet Xiahou Shang and Han Hao. Hao, standing before his lines, denounced Huang Zhong: "Faithless old traitor!" he cried and rode for his man, spear poised. Xiahou Shang followed to catch Huang Zhong in a pincer. Zhong fought the two commanders mightily, joining with each in ten clashes. Then he fled. Shang and Hao pursued him more than twenty *li* and seized his fortifications. Zhong established a bivouac. The next day Shang and Hao gave chase again. Again Huang Zhong met them and fell back after a few clashes. The two chased him another twenty *li*, seized his campsite and called on Zhang He to defend the one captured the day before.

When they were together, Zhang He warned, "Huang Zhong has been in retreat two days in a row. There's a trick in this somewhere." Xiahou Shang berated Zhang He. "It takes a coward to lose so many battles. Say no more now and watch us make our names!" Flushed with embarrassment, Zhang He withdrew.

The next day the battle resumed. Huang Zhong again retreated twenty *li*. The two commanders followed his track. The day after that, Huang Zhong retreated all the way to the pass and steadfastly refused to show himself. The two commanders pitched camp there. Meng Da secretly notified Xuande of Huang Zhong's situation. Xuande was disturbed and turned to Kongming. "This is merely the old general's trick to make the enemy overconfident," the adviser said. But Zhao Zilong and the others refused to believe it, and Xuande sent Liu Feng to the pass to support Huang Zhong. When Feng arrived, Huang Zhong said, "What do you mean, young general, by coming to 'help' me?" Feng replied, "My father sent me because of your recent defeats." Huang Zhong smiled. "I am only trying to make them overconfident. In tonight's engagement I shall recover all my camps and take the supplies and horses they've put there. The camps are 'on loan' for them to restock! Tonight leave Huo Jun guarding the pass. General Meng Da can help me move the supplies and horses. And you, young general, can watch me break the foe."

During the second watch Huang Zhong opened the barriers and raced down with five thousand men toward Xiahou Shang and Han Hao, who had grown lax watching the closed pass day after day. When Huang Zhong burst upon them, the two generals fled for their lives before their men could don armor or saddle a horse. In the stampede that ensued, the defenders killed many of their own. By dawn Huang Zhong had recaptured his three camps, and he transported the weapons, saddles, and horses acquired to Jiameng Pass.

Huang Zhong pressed his pursuit of the defeated army, refusing Liu Feng's plea that he rest. "To get the cubs, go to the tiger's lair," they say," Huang Zhong replied and took the lead. His soldiers pushed forward. Now the retreating units of the two northern commanders barged into Zhang He's own troops, forcing them out of their positions and sweeping them into the rearward flight, which took them to the shore of the River Han. All the camps and barricades were left to Huang Zhong.

Zhang He sought out Xiahou Shang and Han Hao and said to them, "We are near Mount Tiandang, our grain and fodder depot. Moreover, it connects to Mount Micang, another storage point. These are the lifelines of our troops in Hanzhong. If we lose them, we lose Hanzhong. We must think of a way to protect them." Xiahou Shang answered, "My uncle, Xiahou Yuan, has part of his force guarding Micang, which is adjacent to Dingjun Mountain.² No need to worry. And my older brother Xiahou De is defending Tiandang. We should go there and help defend it." Zhang He and the two

commanders subsequently went to Tiandang and told Xiahou De what had happened. "I have one hundred thousand men here," Xiahou De said. "Use them to retake your positions." But Zhang He said, "It would be better to maintain the defense and take no imprudent action." At that moment the air was filled with gongs and drums announcing the arrival of Huang Zhong's army.

Xiahou De laughed loudly and said, "That old thief is no master of tactics. He relies on courage alone." But Zhang He answered him, "He plans well; he is more than a brave general." "It's hardly good planning for him to take troops fatigued from a long trek straight into battle," said Xiahou De. "Still," cautioned Zhang He, "it's better for us to defend than engage." Han Hao broke in, "Give me three thousand crack troops and victory will be almost certain." Xiahou De detailed the men, and Han Hao descended the mountain.

Huang Zhong deployed his troops to receive the attack. Liu Feng objected. "The sun has set," he said, "and the troops are weary from the long march. Shouldn't we rest a while?" "Not at all!" said Huang Zhong. "Heaven is handling us a rare victory; not to take it would offend Heaven itself!" So saying, he had the drums roll and the army move. Han Hao advanced for the battle. Whirling his sword, Huang Zhong raced for Han Hao, cutting him down in a single encounter. The soldiers from the west charged up the mountain. Zhang He and Xiahou Shang met them. Shouts went up, flames jumped skyward, and everything turned red. Xiahou De came to put out the fires, but he was accosted by the veteran general Yan Yan, who dispatched him with one swift stroke.

Earlier, Huang Zhong had had Yan Yan conceal men to await Zhang He's arrival. They put piles of branches and hay to the torch so that fierce flames stretched upward, illuminating hill and dale. After killing Xiahou De, Yan Yan came on from behind the mountain. Zhang He and Xiahou Shang, in utter disarray, had to abandon Mount Tiandang; they dashed headlong for Dingjun Mountain, which Xiahou Yuan then controlled. Huang Zhong and Yan Yan fortified Mount Tiandang and reported the victory to Chengdu.

Xuande gathered his commanders to celebrate the news. Fa Zheng said, "Previously, Cao Cao gained Hanzhong by Zhang Lu's surrender. But he failed to use his advantage to complete the conquest of the Riverlands—the Ba and Shu regions—only leaving two generals to hold Hanzhong while he took the main army back to the capital. What a blunder that was! Now we have our chance—with Zhang He defeated and Mount Tiandang in our hands—for Your Lordship personally to lead a major offensive and conquer Hanzhong. After that we can drill our men, husband our grain, and keep alert for any opportunity to bring the traitor to justice; we can also retreat and protect our position. Let us not pass up a moment vouchsafed by Heaven." Xuande and Kongming approved this suggestion strongly and ordered Zhao Zilong and Zhang Fei to take the vanguard. Xuande and Kongming led an army of one hundred thousand and picked the day to conquer Hanzhong. Orders circulated throughout the territory to remain on alert.

It was the twenty-third year of Jian An (A.D. 218); on an auspicious day in the seventh month Xuande's army came out of Jiameng Pass and established its camps. Huang Zhong and Yan Yan were summoned and richly rewarded. Others said you were too old, "Xuande said," but the director general knew what you could do. Now you have rendered an extraordinary service. All the enemy has is Dingjun, which screens Nanzheng and holds their grain and fodder. If we take Dingjun Mountain, we will face no threat all the way to Yangping. General, are you game for another campaign? "

Huang Zhong was eager to take up his lord's challenge, but Kongming checked him. "Veteran general, though you are brave and brilliant, Xiahou Yuan is nothing like Zhang He. He is versed in the

ways of war and wise in military movements. Cao Cao used him as a buffer against Xiliang. First, Yuan stationed his men in Chang'an and drove back Ma Chao; now his army is firmly planted in Hanzhong. Cao trusts his generalship above all others'. Your victory over Zhang He does not portend another over Xiahou Yuan. I think we should consider sending a man to Jingzhou to substitute for General Guan and bring Guan back before we go into battle." Indignantly, Huang Zhong retorted, "At eighty years of age, Lian Po, the famous veteran of Zhao, ate a bushel of grain and ten pounds of meat each day. The feudal lords feared him so much that none dared breach the borders of his state. And what of me? Not yet seventy. You say I am old, Director General. This time I am not taking a lieutenant commander, just my own corps of three thousand; and I'll deliver Xiahou Yuan's head to your command post." Kongming remained unyielding, but Huang Zhong insisted on going. Finally, Kongming said, "Since you are determined, General, let me send a military supervisor with you. Agreed?" Indeed:

Even a great general has to be stirred;
A youth may not compare to the man of years.

Whom did Kongming send to help Huang Zhong?

READ ON.



***Huang Zhong's Fresh Fighters Conquer a Fatigued Foe;
Zhao Zilong's Few Overcome Many***

"SINCE YOU ARE DETERMINED TO DO BATTLE with Xiahou Yuan," Kongming told Huang Zhong, "I will have Fa Zheng back you up. Work out every angle of the campaign with him before you start. I will follow with reinforcements." To these conditions Huang Zhong agreed; then he set out with Fa Zheng.

"One really has to stir up the old general before he will accomplish anything," Kongming explained to Xuande. "But this time support troops will be needed." He instructed Zhao Zilong: "Take a brigade along the side roads and reinforce him. But stay put unless Huang Zhong is being defeated." Next, Kongming gave orders to Liu Feng and Meng Da: "Take three thousand troops and cover the key points in the mountains. Plant plenty of flags and banners to impress and intimidate the enemy." The three—Zhao Zilong, Liu Feng, and Meng Da—departed to carry out their orders. Kongming also sent a man to Ma Chao with certain instructions. Finally, he sent Yan Yan to defend key points in Baxi and Langzhong and to relieve Zhang Fei and Wei Yan so they could join in the conquest of Hanzhong.¹

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Zhang He and Xiahou Shang went to Xiahou Yuan and confessed, "Mount Tiandang is lost, Xiahou De and Han Hao have been killed. Liu Bei himself is said to be leading an army to Hanzhong. We must petition the king of Wei at once for fresh forces to meet this threat." Xiahou Yuan notified Cao Hong, who raced to the capital and presented the news to Cao Cao. Cao hurriedly gathered his counselors to discuss sending troops to save Hanzhong. Liu Ye, one of his chief advisers, said, "If Hanzhong is lost, the northern heartland will be shaken. Your Highness must accept the heavy responsibility of leading the campaign yourself." Cao Cao responded ruefully, "This is what I get for not heeding your advice to complete the conquest of the Riverlands," and ordered four hundred thousand men put under his personal command.

It was the seventh month, autumn, of Jian An 23 (A. D. 218). Cao Cao divided his force into three field armies: the vanguard of the forward army was under Xiahou Dun; Cao Cao himself had the center army; and Cao Xiu had the rear. All three units departed in order. Cao Cao rode a white horse. He had a gilt saddle, a jade-starred belt, and damask clothes. His elite guard held a large gold-threaded red silk canopy over him, and the regal golden mace and silver broadaxe to his left and right. The guard raised their clubs and spears, and they flew banners bearing images of the sun, the moon, the dragon, and the phoenix. Protecting Cao Cao's person was an imperial guard of twenty-five thousand men divided into five units designated by color: blue-green, yellow, red, white, and black.² Their pennants and their horses' armor bore the color of their respective units. It was a glorious panoply, majestic and overwhelming.

As his troops moved through Tong Pass, Cao Cao sighted a flourishing wood in the distance. "What place is that?" he asked an attendant. "Indigo Field," was the reply. "Cai Yong's manor is somewhere in there. His daughter Yan and her husband, Dong Si, occupy it now." Cao Cao had always been on good terms with Cai Yong. In earlier days his daughter Yan had been the wife of Wei Zhongdao. Later, she was taken captive by the northern tribes and bore two sons while among them. Her poems, "Eighteen Tunes for Foreign Flute," circulated in northern China. Cao Cao himself sympathized with her and had someone ransom her for one thousand ounces of gold. The Xiongnu chief, worthy king of the Left, fearful of Cao's power, sent Cai Yan back to the land of Han, and Cao Cao gave her in marriage to Dong Si.

Standing before the manor, Cao Cao was reminded of the Cai Yong incident. He ordered his army to go on ahead while he dismounted, accompanied by a hundred guards. Dong Si had left to take up an official post; Cai Yan was at home. She rushed to welcome the visitor. When Cao reached the upper hall, Cai Yan stood to one side after completing the customary ritual reception. Cao Cao happened to notice a stone rubbing and went over to examine the text. He questioned Cai Yan about it. "It's taken from the tablet of Cao E," she explained to him. "During the time of Emperor He [r. A. D. 89-106] in Shangyu there was a shaman named Cao Xu whose whirling dances could have entertained the gods. On the fifth day of the fifth month, while performing on a boat, he fell, drunk, into the river and drowned. His daughter, fourteen at the time, went along the river weeping and wailing for seven days and seven nights, then jumped to her death herself. Five days later she surfaced bearing her father's body. The local folk buried them beside the water. Du Shang, prefect of Shangyu, notified the court and hailed the daughter's filial devotion. The prefect had Handan Chun compose this text to mark the event and then had it inscribed on the tablet. Though Handan Chun was only thirteen at the time, he wrote it in one sitting without revising. His monument was set beside the grave and attracted great interest.

"My father, Cai Yong, went to look at it. The sun had already set that day, but he was able to feel the characters in the darkness with his hands. Then he found a brush and wrote eight large characters on the back of the stone. An engraver who recut the stone also cut these eight words." Cao Cao read the words: "Yellow spun silk—a young woman; a distaff grandchild—mortar and pestle." "Can you explain this?" Cao asked Cai Yan. "Though it's by my own father, I'm afraid I cannot," she replied. Cao turned to his counselors and repeated his request. But none of them could unriddle it, either. Then Yang Xiu, his first secretary, stepped forward and offered to interpret the writing, but Cao Cao asked for more time to think about it. He bid Cai Yan good-bye and left the manor with his retinue.

Cao Cao had ridden three *li* when the answer came to him. Laughing, he said to Yang Xiu, "Now, try and explain it." "It is a cryptic saying," Yang Xiu began. "Yellow silk is colored silk; and the graph *silk* beside the the graph *color* makes the graph *superb*. A young woman is a junior miss; and *junior* beside *miss* makes the graph *exquisite*. A distaff grandchild is a daughter's son; and *daughter* beside *son* makes the graph *excellent*. Mortar and pestle are tools that can be held to crush the five spicy herbs; and *hold* beside *spicy* forms the graph *words*. In short, we have four words, 'superbly exquisite, excellent words'" Cao Cao was amazed and said, "Exactly my own thought!" Everyone present sighed in admiration at Yang Xiu's quick mind.

In less than a day Cao Cao reached Nanzheng. Cao Hong welcomed him and detailed Zhang He's failures. "Don't blame him," Cao said. "The fortunes of war are nothing unusual to the military man." Cao Hong continued, "Liu Bei has sent Huang Zhong to attack Dingjun Mountain. Xiahou Yuan know

Your Highness is coming and has kept strictly to the defensive." "That only shows weakness," Cao Cao observed, and dispatched a man with his credentials to order Xiahou Yuan to advance. But Liu Ye objected: "Yuan's rigid nature is vulnerable to deception." And so Cao Cao penned a letter for an envoy to present to Xiahou Yuan. It said:

Every general must learn to balance hard and soft tactics. Bravery alone counts for little; bravery is for fighting a single foe. At present, my forces are stationed at Nanzheng. I would like to see a demonstration of your "superb talent." Do not fail to live up to your reputation.

Encouraged by his lord's letter, Xiahou Yuan sent the envoy back and said to Zhang He, "The king of Wei brings his host to Nanzheng to chasten Liu Bei. How can we distinguish ourselves by defensive tactics? Tomorrow I aim to capture Huang Zhong alive!" "Huang Zhong is shrewd and brave, and he has Fa Zheng's help. You'd better be careful. These mountain roads are hard-going. Let's continue our strict defense," Zhang He advised. But Xiahou Yuan answered, "If others win the day, how will you and I face the king of Wei? You continue guarding the mountain; I will go forth to battle." He challenged his commanders, "Who will probe and provoke the enemy?" Xiahou Shang volunteered, and Xiahou Yuan said to him, "Scout their positions. If you make contact, fight to lose. I have the perfect plan..." In accordance with his uncle's plan, Xiahou Shang went down from the camp on Dingjun Mountain with three thousand troops.

Huang Zhong and Fa Zheng were stationed at the approach to Dingjun. Although their repeated taunts had failed to make Xiahou Yuan come out and fight, they had decided against an attack up the mountain because the narrow, uncertain paths made the enemy positions difficult to reconnoitre. But that day, informed of the descent of Cao's troops, Huang Zhong was ready to meet the enemy. A garrison commander, Chen Shi, volunteered to make the first stand. Delighted, Huang Zhong gave Chen Shi one thousand men, which he deployed into line at the approach to the mountain. Xiahou Shang and Chen Shi engaged. Shang feigned defeat and fled; Chen Shi gave chase but, bombarded by timber and rocks from both sides, could not advance. As he began to turn around, Xiahou Yuan's troops surprised and overwhelmed him. Chen Shi was captured, and most of his men surrendered. Those who escaped brought the news back to Huang Zhong.

Huang Zhong and Fa Zheng took counsel. "Yuan is a volatile man," said Fa Zheng. "He trusts to his courage and rarely plans well. We must inspire our troops to break camp and advance, bivouacking at each stage, then draw Xiahou Yuan into battle and capture him. This is what military science calls 'reversing the roles of host and guest.'" Huang Zhong adopted the ruse, rewarding the army heavily beforehand; the valley resounded with the men's oaths to fight to the death. Huang Zhong broke camp and went forward, staging a few days at each point along the way.

Xiahou Yuan heard of Huang Zhong's movements and wanted to engage. But Zhang He warned, "This is the 'reversing host and guest' ruse. Take no offensive action or you will suffer defeat." Yuan ignored the advice and sent Xiahou Shang down with several thousand men. When they came directly in front of the camp, Huang Zhong rode forth, sword high, and in a single encounter captured his man and brought him back. Shang's troops dispersed and reported the defeat to Xiahou Yuan, who immediately sent an envoy offering to exchange Chen Shi for Xiahou Shang. Huang Zhong agreed and set the exchange for the following day before the opposed lines.

The next day the two armies deployed in a broad valley between the mountains. Huang Zhong and

Xiahou Yuan rode to the bannered opening of their respective lines, each with his prisoner dressed in ordinary clothes. At the sound of the drums, the prisoners dashed across the field to their own sides. But before Xiahou Shang reached safety, Huang Zhong had shot him in the back with an arrow. In a fury, Xiahou Yuan charged Huang Zhong. This was the moment Huang Zhong had been hoping for. The two generals closed in combat more than twenty times. Suddenly the gong sounded in Cao's camp, and Xiahou Yuan wheeled and returned to his side, with Huang Zhong in hot pursuit. Yuan asked the keeper of the line why he had sounded the gong. "I saw Shu banners where the hills dip," he replied. "Fearing ambush, I summoned you back." Yuan believed the explanation and did not go forth again.

Huang Zhong moved closer to Dingjun Mountain; then he consulted with Fa Zheng. Pointing west, Fa Zheng said, "West of Dingjun, a high mountain with arduous roads on all sides overlooks the enemy. If we gain control of it, Dingjun is as good as in our hands." Huang Zhong observed the small plateau at the top and noted how lightly it was defended. At the second watch, to the clang of gongs and the roll of drums, he stormed the summit. The defender, Du Xi, Xiahou Yuan's lieutenant, had only a few hundred men. He saw Huang Zhong's force surging up and abandoned his position. Huang Zhong took the summit; Dingjun Mountain was directly opposite. Fa Zheng said, "General, defend the middle section of the mountain. I will hold the summit and signal with a white flag when Xiahou Yuan arrives. You must restrain your troops until he tires and lets down his guard. When I raise a red flag, descend and attack. Fatigued, their soldiers will be no match for our fresh forces." Huang Zhong was delighted with this plan.

Du Xi, after being driven from the mountain, returned to report his defeat to Xiahou Yuan. Angrily, Yuan said, "If they control that mountain, we have to go out and fight." Zhang He, however, objected. "This is one of Fa Zheng's tricks. Hold your position and do not show yourself," he said. "How can I do that when they have a full view of our positions?" Yuan asked and dismissed Zhang He's protest.

Xiahou Yuan surrounded the hostile hill with a company of soldiers who hurled up taunts to provoke battle. But Fa Zheng, positioned at the summit, raised the white flag warning Huang Zhong not to respond to the volleys of curses. After midday Fa Zheng observed a slackening of the enemy's discipline and a waning of their zeal for battle, for many of them had dismounted and were idling on the ground. So Fa Zheng raised the red flag, and Huang Zhong—to beating drums and blaring horns—descended at the head of his men with all the force of an avalanche. Before Xiahou Yuan could defend himself, Huang Zhong had chased him to his command canopy. Zhong's shouts rang out like thunder. Overpowered, Xiahou Yuan fell to Huang Zhong's sturdy sword, which severed his head and part of his shoulder. A poet of later times left these lines in admiration of Huang Zhong's feat:

He faced the foe, though old and greyed,
But, oh, what wondrous might displayed!

His arm to bend the bow availed;
He dashed ahead with snow-white blade.
His manly cry, a tiger's roar!
A winged dragon, his flying horse!
Yuan's head won him ample fame

For adding to the imperial realm.

The death of Xiahou Yuan put Cao Cao's troops to chaotic flight. Huang Zhong followed up his advantage and headed for Dingjun Mountain. Zhang He tried to defend it, but a combined assault by Huang Zhong and Chen Shi forced him from the field. Zhang He's escape was blocked, however, by a band of men that flashed into view along the side of the mountain. The awesome general at their head shouted, "I am Zhao Zilong of Changshan." Zhang He panicked and led his troops hurrying toward Dingjun. He was met by Xiahou Yuan's lieutenant, Du Xi, who told him that Liu Feng and Meng Da had already seized Dingjun Mountain. In great distress Zhang He and Du Xi camped their broken forces along the River Han and sent a man to Cao Cao to report the day's losses.

As he wept and wailed for Xiahou Yuan, Cao Cao realized the meaning of Guan Lu's predictions. "Three and eight run crisscross" meant the twenty-fourth year of Jian An. "A yellow pig meets a tiger" was fulfilled when Yuan died in the first month of the *ji hai* year.³ "South of the outpost" referred to the battle south of Dingjun Mountain. Finally, "you will lose a limb" expressed the fraternal love between Xiahou Yuan and himself. Cao Cao sent men to look for Guan Lu, but the seer was not to be found.

Hatred for Huang Zhong took possession of Cao Cao, and he personally led the main army to Dingjun Mountain to exact vengeance for Xiahou Yuan's death. The vanguard of this force was led by Xu Huang. When Cao Cao reached the River Han, Zhang He and Du Xi welcomed him and said, "Dingjun Mountain is lost. Let's move our supplies on Mount Micang over to the campsites on the northern hills before we advance." Cao Cao approved this measure.

. . . .

At Jiameng Pass, Huang Zhong presented himself before Liu Xuande and announced his victory over Xiahou Yuan. Delighted, Xuande made Huang Zhong Chief General Who Conquers the West. A great celebration banquet followed.

Suddenly a garrison commander, Zhang Zhu, reported: "Cao Cao is coming with two hundred thousand under his personal command to avenge Xiahou Yuan. And Zhang He is moving their supplies over to the foot of the hills north of the river." Kongming said, "Cao has halted because he needs more supplies for so large a force. We need someone to get inside his camp, burn out his grain and fodder, and seize his transport wagons; that should blunt his mettle." Huang Zhong replied, "I volunteer for this task." "Cao Cao is no Xiahou Yuan," warned Kongming, "do not be rash." And Xuande added, "Although Xiahou Yuan was their chief general, he was no more than one bold warrior and hardly compares to Zhang He, whose elimination would be ten times more valuable to us." Aroused, Huang Zhong answered, "I will take his head!" Kongming said, "You and Zhao Zilong should share the command of one detachment. Consult one another on your course of action and then set out and see who achieves the greater merit." Huang Zhong agreed and went forth. Kongming ordered Zhang Zhu to accompany him as a lieutenant commander.

Zilong said to Huang Zhong, "Cao Cao's two hundred thousand are stationed among ten camps. General, in front of His Lordship you committed yourself to seize their grain—no trifling matter. But what plan will you use?" "Let me go first," Huang Zhong said. "Rather, you wait while I go," countered Zilong. "I am the commanding general," Huang Zhong replied, "you are the lieutenant. How

can you challenge me for the lead?" "What are you quibbling for?" Zhao Zilong retorted. "You and I labor equally for our lord. We will cast lots to see who goes first." Huang Zhong agreed—and won the draw. "Since you have the lead," Zilong said, "I will give you my full support. Let us set a time for your return; I will hold back my men until then. After that, I will reinforce you." "Well and good," Huang Zhong said. The two commanders agreed upon the midday period. Zilong returned to his camp and told a unit commander, Zhang Yi, "Tomorrow, Huang Zhong will try to capture the enemy's supplies. If he's not back by the end of the midday period, I shall have to go and help him. Our camp on the River Han is quite vulnerable. If I go, you will have to defend the forts vigilantly and make no risky moves." Zhang Yi agreed.

Huang Zhong, meanwhile, had returned to camp and informed his lieutenant, Zhang Zhu, "I have killed Xiahou Yuan, and Zhang He has lost the will to fight. Tomorrow I go to raid their supply depot. That means that only five hundred will be left here guarding the camp. You will come with me. At the third watch everyone is to eat a full meal; at the fourth we set out, advance to the foot of the mountain, seize Zhang He and the supplies both." Zhang Zhu accepted his orders.

That night Huang Zhong led the way and Zhang Zhu took the rear as they quietly crossed the River Han, reaching the foot of the mountains by dawn. In the early light they saw great mounds of grain. The few soldiers on guard spotted the western troops and fled. Huang Zhong ordered his men to dismount and pile kindling atop the grain. They were about to start the fires when Zhang He arrived. A wild battle ensued. Cao Cao sent Xu Huang to reinforce Zhang He. Xu Huang succeeded in trapping Huang Zhong. Zhang Zhu, his lieutenant, tried to escape with three hundred men but was intercepted by a detachment led by General Wen Ping. More of Cao's troops came up to the rear, and Zhang Zhu was surrounded.

During this time Zhao Zilong was in camp waiting for the midday hours. When Huang Zhong did not return, he donned his fighting gear and leaped on his horse. Three thousand men followed him to the grain depot. Before setting out, Zilong had said to Zhang Yi, "Guard this camp well, placing enough archers and crossbowmen along each side." Zhang Yi had repeatedly voiced his understanding. Zhao Zilong now hoisted high his spear and charged the enemy. But a subcommander of Wen Ping's named Murong Lie came flying directly at him, sword dancing in the air. Zhao Zilong killed him with a single spear thrust. As Cao's forces retired, Zilong broke through the rings of troops. Then another detachment appeared before him, this headed by Jiao Bing, a general of Wei. "Where are the western troops?" Zilong shouted to his opponent. "Slaughtered, to a man," came the reply. Zilong charged furiously, ran his man through, and scattered his troops. Finally he reached the northern hills where he saw Zhang He and Xu Huang surrounding Huang Zhong. The encirclement had lasted many hours. Zilong gave a great whoop and plunged into the rings of soldiers, thrusting left and lunging right as if working on empty air. His deft spear work was as hard to follow as the scattering of pear blossoms or the dancing of snowflakes. Trembling with panic, Zhang He and Xu Huang shrank from battle, enabling Zilong to pull Huang Zhong to safety, fighting as he broke away. No one dared to block his path.

From a high vantage point Cao Cao watched the action. "Who is that commander?" he exclaimed. Someone replied, "Zhao Zilong of Changshan." "So the hero of Steepslope still lives!" Cao said and ordered his men to take care in engaging him. After Zilong had rescued Huang Zhong and broken through the encirclement, one of the soldiers pointed and said, "Zhang Zhu must be trapped to the southeast." Instead of returning to camp, Zilong headed southeast to save him. The opposing soldiers

recognized the name "Zhao Zilong of Changshan" on his banner. Knowing of his valor and exploits, many scurried for safety; and Zilong was able to rescue Zhang Zhu. After watching Zhao Zilong carry out the double rescue unopposed, Cao Cao, seething with indignation, took his commanders in pursuit of the great warrior.

Zhang Yi welcomed Zilong back to camp; then, seeing the dust clouds of pursuit in the distance, he said to Zilong, "The enemy is coming. Seal up the gates and defend from the watchtower." "No such thing," Zilong shot back. "Have you forgotten Steepslope, when, with one spear and one mount, I stared down Cao's multitudes? What should we fear today when we have men and leaders?" So saying, Zilong deployed archers and crossbowmen in ambush trenches beyond the perimeter of the camp. At the same time he had those inside the camp down their spears and flags and put away drum and gong. Then with a single spear, Zilong rode alone to the front of the entrance.

Zhang He and Xu Huang had pursued Zilong to his camp. In the fading daylight, they noted that no flags were flying and the drums were still. They also saw Zilong, riding alone with his spear, just outside the open entrance to the camp. Cao's two generals were debating what to do when Cao Cao himself rode up and pressed them to advance. At Cao's order the troops, yelling madly, rushed headlong toward the camp. But something about Zilong's motionless stance made Cao's troops stop in their tracks and turn around. Then Zilong waved his spear, and the hidden archers and bowmen stood up in their trenches, releasing volleys of arrows.

By this time it was dark and Cao's troops could not tell the number of their enemies. Cao Cao first guided his horse around and fled; but behind him a great cacophony, mingled with horn and drum, announced the pursuing western soldiers. The northern troops stumbled over each other in confusion as they thronged toward the edge of the River Han, and many were lost in its waters. Three contingents—Zilong's, Huang Zhong's, and Zhang Zhu's—harried the fleeing army. Cao Cao himself was in headlong flight when the two contingents of Liu Feng and Meng Da swept down from Mount Micang and burned the supplies. Cao Cao abandoned the supplies he had recently moved to the northern hills and raced back to Nanzheng. Zhang He and Xu Huang, unable to make a stand, abandoned their positions as well.

Zilong occupied Cao Cao's camp; Huang Zhong seized grain and fodder and occupied enemy positions on the River Han. In addition, they took great quantities of the military equipment left behind. The victory was reported to Xuande, who went to the river, accompanied by Kongming. There they asked Zilong's soldiers how he had fought and were informed in detail how he had rescued Huang Zhong and held the line at the River Han. Xuande was delighted and, after looking over the arduous slopes, said appreciatively to Kongming, "The man has valor through and through." A poet of later times left this verse:

Then at Steepslope, no less now:
A mighty man of power,
Tearing the enemy lines,
Breaking through their traps.
Ghosts moaned below, spirits howled above;
Heaven quaked, and earth grieved sore.
Zhao Zilong of Changshan—
"Valor through and through."

On this occasion Xuande dubbed Zilong "General of Tiger Might," rewarded commanders and troops generously, and feasted late into the night.

Suddenly a report came that Cao Cao had sent another large force through the paths of Ye Gorge toward the River Han. Smiling, Xuande said, "Cao Cao will accomplish nothing by that. I am certain we will take the river," and led his troops west of the river to meet the enemy.

Cao Cao ordered Xu Huang to be the vanguard for the deciding battle. At that moment someone stepped forward and said, "I am well versed in the topography here. Let me help General Xu destroy the westerners." Cao Cao regarded the man: Wang Ping (Zijun) from Dangqu in Baxi, currently serving as a general of the Standard. Cao Cao was delighted and appointed Wang Ping lieutenant commander of the vanguard to assist Xu Huang. Cao Cao had his own troops stationed north of Dingjun Mountain.

Xu Huang and Wang Ping led their men to the River Han. Huang told his men to cross and take up positions on the opposite shore. Wang Ping said, "In an emergency will you be able to get back to this side?" Xu Huang answered, "The great Han general Han Xin once deployed his men with their backs to the water, forcing them to fight to the death so they might survive." "I think you're wrong," Wang Ping continued. "When Han Xin used that plan, he foresaw that the enemy would have no plan of action. Can you tell what Zhao Zilong and Huang Zhong will do?" But Xu Huang replied, "You lead the infantry. Watch me defeat them with the cavalry." Then he had a floating bridge set up and quickly passed over the River Han to do battle. Indeed:

The foolish northern men of Wei made Han Xin their guiding light;
They little knew that the chief minister of Shu would be another Zhang Liang.⁴

What was the outcome?

READ ON.



Zhuge Liangs Cunning Captures Hanzhong; Cao Cao's Army Retreats to Ye Gorge

WANG PING'S PROTEST DID NOT DETER XU HUANG; he led Cao's troops across the Han and camped on the west bank. Huang Zhong and Zilong informed Xuande and volunteered to meet Cao's army; Xuande approved. Huang Zhong said to Zilong, "Courage is all Xu Huang has, for now we should not fight. By evening, when his men will have tired, you and I can divide our forces and strike." Zilong agreed, and each kept his men waiting behind their barricades.

Xu Huang's calls to combat began at sunrise and went on all day. But the western troops did not respond. Finally, Xu Huang ordered his archers to advance and let fly on the Riverlands positions. Huang Zhong said to Zilong, "Actually, this barrage means that he's pulling back. It's time to strike." At that moment word came confirming the enemy's departure. The hubbub of drums and voices arose in the western camps as Huang Zhong led his men out on the left and Zilong led his on the right. At once they struck from two sides and dealt Xu Huang a major defeat: forced back into the river, the northerners suffered heavy losses.

Xu Huang escaped in desperate fighting. Back at camp he charged Wang Ping: "You saw the danger and did not come to the rescue. Why?" Wang Ping answered, "I'd only have lost this base. Didn't I warn you not to go? This is what comes of ignoring my advice." Xu Huang was in a murderous rage. That night Wang Ping had his men set fires in the camp, forcing Xu Huang to flee. Then Wang Ping crossed the river and submitted to Zhao Zilong, who took the defector to Xuande. Wang Ping described for him the geography of the Han River area. Delighted, Xuande said, "Your help encourages me to conquer Hanzhong," and made him an assisting general and army guide. Xu Huang reported Wang Ping's defection to Cao Cao, who, in great anger, personally led the main army to recover the base camps on the east shore of the Han. Rather than resist the enemy alone, Zilong retreated to the western shore, leaving the two armies facing each other across the water.

Xuande and Kongming came to observe the situation. Kongming noticed at the headwaters of the river a patch of earthen hills which could conceal a thousand men or more. Returning to camp, Kongming instructed Zilong: "Take five hundred men with drums and horns and conceal them by those hills. During the night or at dusk you will hear my bombards; give the drums a roll at once and stay down." Zilong went off to carry out Kongming's orders.

Kongming meanwhile quietly installed himself on a hilltop to watch. The next day Cao's troops came to offer battle, but not one of the western troops showed himself, not an arrow was shot. Cao Cao went back to his camp. The night deepened; Kongming watched the lights die away in Cao's camps as the soldiers settled in. Then he released the signal bombard. In response Zilong sounded his drums and horns. Cao's men, unnerved, feared a raid. They scouted the outer area but found no one. No sooner did they start to settle in again, however, than the bombard sounded again, followed by the

drums and horns and the cries of battle in the hills. Cao's troops could not rest that night. The next two nights, too, they spent in agitation. Cao Cao, beginning to give in to the fear, decamped and withdrew thirty *li*, recamping in open ground. Smiling, Kongming said, "Cao Cao may know military science, but not the art of deception," and suggested that Xuande cross the river and pitch camp with his back to the water. Xuande wanted to know the plan, and Kongming whispered some details to him.

That Xuande had camped on the eastern shore bewildered Cao Cao, who sent a written challenge; Kongming approved the following day for combat. The next day the two armies met midway before Five Boundaries Mountain and deployed themselves into formation. Between two rows of dragon-and-phoenix standards Cao Cao rode to the bannered opening in his line. Three rounds of drumrolls sounded; then he called to Xuande, who came forth, flanked by Liu Feng, Meng Da, and a group of Riverlands commanders. Cao Cao, raising his whip, denounced Xuande: "Liu Bei! Dishonored ingrate and rebel against the royal court!" "I am myself a royal kinsman," Xuande replied, "empowered by the Emperor to bring the real traitor to justice. You have murdered the Empress, set yourself up as king, and arrogated the imperial carriage. What is that if not treason?" Angered, Cao Cao ordered Xu Huang into the field. Liu Feng dashed forth. The warriors came to grips. Xuande returned to his line. Liu Feng, unable to withstand Xu Huang's charge, wheeled and fled. Cao Cao sent down an order: "Whoever takes Liu Bei rules the Riverlands!" At these words the entire army began shouting and charging toward the western army. The westerners headed for the river to avoid the enemy onslaught, abandoning all camps and bases and scattering horses and weapons on the road. Cao Cao's soldiers vied for the booty, and so Cao rang the gong calling them back.

The commanders said to Cao, "We were on the verge of capturing Liu Bei. Why did Your Majesty recall us?" "The first thing that made me suspicious," Cao answered, "was that they were backed against a river. The second thing was that they left too many horses and weapons behind. Retire at once and refrain from snatching objects of value." Cao ordered an immediate retreat and the execution of anyone caught pilfering. The moment the retreat began, Kongming sent out his signals. Xuande emerged with the center contingent; Huang Zhong and Zhao Zilong charged out from the left and the right. Cao's soldiers ran in disorder. Kongming pursued the same night. Cao Cao ordered his army back to Nanzheng, only to see flames rising on five approaches. It was then Cao Cao learned that Wei Yan and Zhang Fei, after putting Langzhong in Yan Yan's hands, had jointly seized Nanzheng.

Cao's fear turned to panic as he headed for Yangping Pass while Xuande's main army arrived at Nanzheng and Baozhou. After assuring the people of their security, Xuande asked Kongming, "What made Cao Cao lose so quickly this time?" "Cao Cao has always had a suspicious nature," Kongming explained. "And he usually loses when his mind is overcome by uncertainty. I defeated him with decoys."¹ Xuande said, "He has retreated to Yangping Pass, completely isolated. How will you drive him back, master?" "My plans are made," Kongming answered and sent Zhang Fei and Wei Yan to cut Cao Cao's grain route, and Huang Zhong and Zilong to set fires on the hill. The four commanders departed, conducted by guides.

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Cao Cao guarded the pass. His scouts reported: "The western soldiers have sealed off all the small roads near and far and set fire to all the woods. But we can't find their men." Torn by indecision, Cao Cao received another report: Zhang Fei and Wei Yan were on the way to seize the

grain. "Who dares to stop Zhang Fei?" he asked. His commander Xu Chu volunteered. On Cao Cao's order Xu Chu took a thousand crack troops and went down from the pass to protect the grain wagons; the officer in charge of delivery welcomed him gratefully and said, "But for you we couldn't get this grain to the pass," and presented Xu Chu with the wine and meat they were carrying. Xu Chu drank heavily; then, animated by the wine, he pressed the wagons to advance. "It is late," the grain officer warned. "Though Baozhou is just ahead, those hills are hard to cross in the dark." "I am bolder than ten thousand," Xu Chu boasted, "and fear no man. We have the moon tonight. It's a favorable time to move."

Xu Chu, sword leveled, led the way. Shortly after the second watch they were approaching Baozhou, when suddenly from the natural depressions in the hills came a clamorous uproar of drums and horns: a troop of soldiers stood before them, General Zhang Fei at their head. Fei raised his spear and charged Xu Chu. Xu Chu waved his sword and met the charge but, still drunk with wine, could not maintain his defense. Zhang Fei stabbed his shoulder and he fell from his horse. Xu Chu's men rescued him in good time; then they fled. Zhang Fei returned with a haul of grain and wagons.

The commanders guarding Xu Chu came before Cao Cao, who had a surgeon treat the wound. He then took personal command of the troops and went to settle his score with the western army. Xuande led his army to meet Cao Cao, and the two moved into formation. Xuande sent Liu Feng forth. Cao Cao reviled him: "Cheap sandal-maker!" he cried. "Do you always send your bastard to the field? If I call my little yellowbeard Cao Zhang over, he'll make meatballs of him." Fired by these insults, Liu Feng raised his spear and charged Cao Cao. Cao Cao sent Xu Huang forth. Feng feigned defeat and fled.

Cao led his men in pursuit. From their camp the western troops hurled bombards to all sides and beat their drums and blew their horns. Cao Cao feared ambush and quickly ordered retreat. Cao's lines became confused and many soldiers were trampled to death as they scrambled back to Yangping Pass; but before they could compose themselves, the pursuers were at the very walls. Western troops built fires at the east and south gates, hooted and hollered at the west, and pounded their drums at the north. A panicked Cao Cao abandoned the pass and fled.

The westerners kept up the chase. Cao Cao's flight was blocked by Zhang Fei and Zhao Zilong ahead and behind; and Huang Zhong soon brought in another contingent from Baozhou. This three-part assault inflicted a major defeat on Cao Cao. Protected by his commanders, Cao Cao fled to the entry to Ye Gorge. There again he saw dust ahead in the distance heralding another force. "I am done for this time if it's another ambush," he cried. But it turned out to be Cao's second son, Zhang.

Cao Zhang (Ziwen) was from his youth an expert shot and a fine horseman. He had limbs of surpassing strength and could grapple barehanded with fierce animals. Once Cao Cao had warned him: "You love your bow and horse but not your books. This is the bravery of a common fighter. What is it worth?" To this reproach Cao Zhang had replied, "A man of action should follow in the footsteps of Wei Qing and Huo Qubing, both for their great victories in the Gobi² and for their mastery of leadership over hundreds of thousands of men as they traversed the empire. I couldn't stand to be a scholar." Once Cao Cao asked his sons about their ambitions, and Cao Zhang replied, "To be a general!" "What do you think that means?" Cao Cao pressed the lad. "Strapping on the hard shell of armor and hefting the pointed weapon; facing danger without looking back; leading my men by taking the van; making rewards unstinting and punishments sure." Cao Cao laughed with delight.

Earlier in the year, Jian An 23 (A. D. 218), the Wuhuan nation had revolted in Dai district and Cao

Cao had given Cao Zhang fifty thousand men to pacify the region.³ On the eve of Cao Zhang's departure, Cao Cao had warned him, "In my house you are my son; but in the field you are my vassal, bound by the law. Take my words to heart." Cao Zhang went to the north border and marched as far as Sanggan, where his victories brought peace. Hearing of Cao Cao's defeat at Yangping Pass, Cao Zhang had come west to aid him.

Cheered by the sight of his son, Cao Cao said, "With my yellowbeard boy here, Liu Bei will be beaten!" He brought all his troops back to Ye Gorge where he established camps. When Xuande was apprised of Cao Zhang's arrival, he called for a volunteer to do battle with him. Liu Feng and Meng Da came forward. "Both of you go, and we'll see who succeeds," Xuande decided. Each warrior took five thousand men; Liu Feng went first, Meng Da followed.

Cao Zhang and Liu Feng met; Feng, worsted in a brief clash, retired. Next, Meng Da advanced. As the battle began, he saw a great disturbance among Cao's troops—the result of an attack by Ma Chao and Wu Lan. Cao Zhang was caught between two forces. Ma Chao's troops had been training for this encounter and, at the peak of their form, had overwhelmed Cao Zhang's men. Zhang, however, met up with Wu Lan and killed him in a quick engagement with a single halberd thrust. All three armies, Meng Da's, Ma Chao's and Cao Zhang's, strove furiously for mastery. Meanwhile, Cao Cao's soldiers regrouped at the entrance to Ye Gorge.

Cao Cao held his forces at the gorge for many days, unable to advance for fear of Ma Chao, unwilling to retreat for fear of exciting the scorn of the western army. Cao Cao was in a state of indecision. At this moment the chief cook brought in chicken broth for Cao Cao, who noticed pieces of ribs in the bowl. The sight gave rise to a thought. As he was musing, Xiahou Dun entered his tent to ask what the password would be that night. "Chicken ribs. Chicken ribs." Cao replied unthinkingly. Xiahou Dun passed the information to the officers. First Secretary Yang Xiu heard the words and instructed the soldiers assigned to him to pack up and prepare for the journey home. This was reported to Xiahou Dun, who in amazement invited Yang Xiu to his tent and asked why he was preparing to leave. Yang Xiu replied, "I knew by the night signal that the king of Wei would be returning in a few days. You see, chicken ribs have no meat on them, yet one relishes them for the flavor. If we advance, we cannot prevail. Retreat will earn us men's contempt. There's no advantage either way, so a quick return home is the best choice. Tomorrow His Highness will order us home to the capital; I thought I'd better put my things in order and avoid the last-minute rush." "How well you know His Lordship's inmost thoughts," Xiahou Dun said and began arranging his own affairs. Soon all the commanders had begun to do the same.

During the night Cao Cao, agitated and unable to sleep, armed himself and made a private tour of the camp. He was astonished to find Xiahou Dun's men packing up and summoned Dun for an explanation. Dun told him that First Secretary Yang had anticipated Cao's wish to return. Next, Cao Cao summoned Yang Xiu, who attributed his interpretation to the chicken ribs. Cao Cao was enraged and said, "You dare concoct statements like this and ruin my men's morale!" He shouted for his guards to remove and execute the secretary and to post his head at the main gate as a warning to all.

Now Secretary Yang Xiu—a free spirit who presumed on his talent—had crossed Cao Cao more than once. One time, Cao Cao had had a garden built. When it was ready, he went to inspect it. Without uttering a word of praise or blame, Cao Cao took a brush and wrote a single word, "Alive," on the gate to the garden, then departed. No one could interpret what this meant, but Yang Xiu said, "The graph *alive* inside the graph *gate* makes the graph *broad*." His Excellency was simply saying

that the gate is too wide. "The result was that the workmen rebuilt the surrounding wall, thus changing it to suit their lord. They then invited him to make another visit. Cao Cao came and was delighted." Who guessed my meaning? "he asked." Yang Xiu, "they all responded; Cao Cao, though he voiced his admiration, secretly resented the man.⁴ Another time, a box of kumiss was sent to Cao Cao from north of the border. Cao Cao wrote three words on the box, "One box cream, "and placed it in his cabinet. When Yang Xiu entered and happened to see it, he opened the cabinet and distributed the treat. Cao Cao later asked him why he had done it, and Yang Xiu replied, "You wrote quite plainly on the box, 'per man, one mouthful cream. ' How could I deviate from Your Excellency's command? "Cao Cao smiled with pleasure at the play on words, but in his heart he felt hatred.⁵

Cao Cao lived with a constant fear of assassination and was forever warning his attendants: "I like to kill people in my dreams, so when I fall asleep be sure not to come too close." Once while napping during the day, his blanket slipped to the ground and a guard hastened to cover him again. But Cao Cao leaped up, drew his sword and slew the man, then went back to sleep. When he arose a little later, he feigned surprise and said, "Who has killed my man?" When the other attendants told him the truth, he wept sorely and ordered a funeral with full honors. Everyone believed that he had done the killing in his dream—except Yang Xiu, who had read Cao Cao's mind. At the time of the burial Yang Xiu pointed at the dead man and said, "His Excellency was not dreaming; only you were!"⁶ These words were reported to Cao Cao, whose hatred of Yang Xiu only increased.

Cao Cao's third son, Zhi, was a great admirer of Yang Xiu's ability and often had him over for discussions which lasted all night. When Cao Cao had proposed naming Cao Zhi his heir apparent, Cao Pi, the eldest, secretly requested the elder of Zhao, Wu Zhi, to come and advise him. To prevent detection, he had Wu Zhi brought in a large box made to hold bolts of silk. Yang Xiu found out the truth, however, and reported it directly to Cao Cao, who put Cao Pi's quarters under surveillance. Pi nervously informed Wu Zhi, who advised Pi to bring in another container with real bolts of silk to deceive the investigators. Cao Pi did so the next day, and, after searching, Cao Cao's men had to report that silk was all they had found. Cao Cao therefore came to believe that Yang Xiu had intended harm to Cao Pi and hated him the more for it.

Cao Cao then decided to put Cao Pi and Cao Zhi to a test. One day he asked his two sons to appear outside the city gate of Ye, but he told the guards not to let them out. Cao Pi arrived first and was turned back. Cao Zhi heard what had happened at the gate and asked Yang Xiu about it. "When you go forth on the king's command," Xiu said, "it is appropriate to cut down anyone who tries to stop you." Cao Zhi thought this right. And so when he was stopped at the gate, he cried out, "I bear a royal command. Who dares prevent me?" and immediately had the guard cut down. The result was that Cao Cao regarded Zhi as the more capable. Later, however, he was told that Yang Xiu had coached Cao Zhi; he became so angry that he subsequently lost his preference for Cao Zhi.

Yang Xiu had prepared a special primer on state affairs for Cao Zhi's use. As a result, whenever Cao Cao posed questions about state affairs, Zhi responded so eloquently that Cao Cao eventually became suspicious. Later, Cao Pi bribed a few of Zhi's followers, who secretly showed Cao Cao the special primer. In a fury Cao Cao said, "How dare this fellow make a fool of me!" It was at this time that he conceived the idea of killing Yang Xiu. Now, using the "chicken ribs" incident as his pretext, he carried it out. Yang Xiu was thirty-four years old. A poet of later times has left these lines describing Yang Xiu:

Brilliant and all-seeing was Yang Xiu;
His family always wore the cap of state.
Words from his brush sprang magically to life;
And poetry took shape within his breast.
He starts to speak: all hearers are amazed;
His swift replies confound a brilliant throng.
Alas, he died by his own talent wronged;
Cao Cao's retreat was not the cause at all.⁷

After ordering Yang Xiu's execution, Cao Cao pretended to be angry at Xiahou Dun as well for preparing for retreat ahead of time. He proposed putting Dun to death but let his other commanders persuade him instead to dismiss Dun roughly with orders to advance against the enemy the following day.

That next day the troops left the Ye Gorge and faced Wei Yan in the field. Cao Cao invited Wei Yan to surrender but was denounced for his offer. Cao Cao then sent Pang De into the field. As the two generals grappled, fires broke out in Cao's camps and he learned that Ma Chao had raided his two rear positions. Cao Cao drew his sword and cried, "Whoever retreats will die!" and the commanders pressed forward. Wei Yan feigned defeat and fled, and Cao Cao signaled his troops to turn around and fight Ma Chao. Cao himself rode to a hillock to observe the action.

Suddenly a body of men came straight at Cao Cao. The leader shouted, "Wei Yan, here!" He took his bow and fitted an arrow to the string; the shot struck Cao Cao, who tumbled to the ground. Dropping his bow and raising his sword, Wei Yan charged up the slope to kill Cao Cao. But a general cut athwart him shouting, "Don't touch our lord!" It was Pang De. With a burst of energy De advanced, drove Wei Yan off, and protected Cao Cao. Ma Chao had already retreated, and so Cao Cao was brought safely back to camp.

Wei Yan's bolt had struck Cao Cao's upper lip, knocking out two teeth. A physician was called, and while being treated, Cao remembered what Yang Xiu had said about marching home. He had the scholar's body recovered and given an honorable burial. He then ordered the army to withdraw to the capital. Pang De was assigned to prevent pursuit. Cao Cao lay in a felt-lined carriage, guarded by a royal escort. Suddenly a report came: there were fires on both sides of the Ye Gorge hills covering an ambush. Cao Cao's troops panicked. Indeed:

Was this so different from the rout at Tong Pass,
Or his forces' ruin at Red Cliffs?

Was Cao Cao's life in danger?

READ ON.



Xuande Becomes King of Hanzhong; Lord Guan Storms Xiangyang District

KONGMING SURMISED THAT CAO CAO, having retreated to Ye Gorge, would evacuate the Hanzhong region. Accordingly, Kongming sent Ma Chao and other commanders to harry Cao Cao's defenses with a dozen squads. Wounded, unable to maintain a position in Hanzhong, Cao Cao urgently ordered his forces home. Throughout his army morale was fading. The moment Cao's forward units began pulling back, flames whipped up around them, and Ma Chao's hidden troops emerged and pursued them. Cao's soldiers lost all courage. Cao Cao ordered the pace quickened, and the army pressed on without resting. Only after reaching Chang'an did Cao Cao feel secure.

On Xuande's order Liu Feng, Meng Da, and Wang Ping captured the Shangyong districts of eastern Hanzhong.¹ Shen Dan and others surrendered to Xuande as soon as they learned of Cao Cao's flight. Xuande calmed the populace and rewarded his troops. There was general rejoicing.

The military leaders wanted to raise Xuande to the imperial dignity; but, reluctant to broach the subject directly, they petitioned Director General Zhuge Liang. "I have already decided on that," he told them and went with Fa Zheng to see Xuande. "Cao Cao has so aggrandized his power, the people have lost their rightful sovereign," Kongming began. "But Your Lordship, celebrated for humanity and justice, now has full control of the Riverlands. It might be well to accept the will of Heaven and follow the mood of the people—to assume the throne."² Thus, rightfully and justifiably you could bring the traitor to justice. This brooks no delay; we appeal to you to select an auspicious time."

Xuande was taken aback. "You are quite mistaken, Director General," he said. "I may be of the royal house, but I am a subject nonetheless. If I do this, it will be an act of opposition to the dynasty." "That is not so," Kongming went on. "At present the empire perishes of its divisions. Contenders arise one after the other declaring their dominion over one portion or another, while throughout the realm virtuous and talented men who have faced death in the service of a sovereign long to clamber onto a dragon, to attach themselves to a phoenix, thereby to establish their merit and their fame. If now, merely to deflect criticism, you cling to a narrow sense of honor, you will risk failing the expectations of the people. I beg Your Lordship to reconsider."³

To this appeal Xuande replied, "If you mean for me to occupy the imperial dignity unlawfully, I must refuse. Try to come up with a better plan." His commanders said, "If you decline, my lord, the commitment of the people will slacken."⁴ Kongming added, "Your Lordship, for whom honor is principle, may be reluctant to proclaim the imperial title outright. But now that you hold Jingzhou and the Riverlands, you might become king of Hanzhong."

To this proposal Xuande replied, "Though you would all honor me as king, without the Emperor's public edict, it would be usurpation." "It would be more appropriate to depart from the norm in this case," Kongming responded. "Do not cling to convention." At this point Zhang Fei shouted, "Other

men who bear surnames other than Liu are trying to become sovereign, yet you, brother, are a branch of the lineage of the Han dynasty. Never mind 'king of Hanzhong'—declare yourself August Emperor. There is no reason not to!"⁵ "You have said too much," retorted Xuande in a tone of rebuke. Kongming spoke again: "Merely as an expedient, Your Lordship, you might first assume the title of king; then memorialize the Emperor. It will still be in good time."⁶

After declining repeatedly, Xuande finally acceded. In the seventh month of Jian An 24 (A. D. 219), an altar for the ceremony was erected at Mianyang in a space nine *li* around. The five directions, symbolizing the sphere of Xuande's rule, were marked out, flags and honor guard assigned to each. The whole body of officials assembled by rank. Xu Jing and Fa Zheng bade Xuande ascend the altar, and after the presentation of the cap of state and the seal with its silken cord, Xuande faced south and seated himself while—now a king—he received the respectful felicitations of all his officers and officials.⁷

His son Shan (Ah Dou) was established as his heir; Xu Jing was honored as imperial guardian; and Fa Zheng was named chief of the Secretariat. Zhuge Liang was made director general and given overall direction of military and state affairs. Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, Zhao Zilong, Ma Chao, and Huang Zhong were honored as the "Five Tiger Generals." Wei Yan was made governor of Hanzhong. Others were awarded rank in accordance with their merits.

As king of Hanzhong, Xuande composed a memorial and had it taken to the Emperor in the capital. The document read:⁸

As a servant of Your Majesty—though one unworthy of the name—I assumed a senior command and, exercising broad military authority, bore your writ abroad. But my inability to suppress the criminal conspiracy at court and stabilize the royal house caused Your Majesty's edifying example to lose its sagely influence years ago. Within the six conjunctions of the universe things have reached their nadir, with no return to the heights yet in prospect. My anxiety over this torments me, and the anguish sears my mind.

Some time ago Dong Zhuo contrived to depose and replace the lawful sovereign, letting loose a host of evils that have ravaged the realm. Nonetheless, depending on Your Majesty's sage virtue and awe-inspiring presence, I and many another subject have risen to your call. Sometimes men loyal and true have acted vigorously to bring traitors to justice; sometimes Heaven itself has sent down divine punishment. Violence and rebellion are being quelled, and the situation is slowly being resolved.

Only Cao Cao remains to be executed and his corpse publicly displayed. He began by encroaching on, then usurping, the powers of the ruling house until his ambitions culminated in blatant sedition. There was a time when I planned together with General of Chariots and Cavalry Dong Cheng to bring Cao Cao to justice. But a failure of security at the critical moment cost Dong Cheng his life; and I was thrown on my own, moving from place to place, my commitment to loyalty and honor unfulfilled. This enabled Cao Cao to commit the ultimate evil: the Empress was put to death; the royal heir was poisoned. Though we formed a league, intending to exert our utmost efforts against him, we proved weak and ineffectual in arms and accomplished little over the years. We fear our time will pass before we can requite the benevolence of the ruling house. In the night we heave long sighs, apprehensive for the dangers that bode.

Now this is the considered view of the advisers and retainers who serve your vassal Bei: The *Counsels of Gao Yao* says: "Scrupulously order the nine degrees of kinship, and the wise men of the realm will lend their aid." In our long tradition of emperors and kings, this teaching has never been set aside. The Zhou, reflecting on the lesson in the fall of the two preceding houses, widely established its own clan, the Ji. The two powerful kingdoms of Jing and Zheng guided and supported the Zhou. When the Han was founded and the Supreme Ancestor assumed the Dragon Throne, he honored his sons and brothers as kings. He inaugurated the nine kingdoms and terminated the various branches of the Lü clan, thus ensuring the security of the ancestral clan of Liu.⁹

But now Cao Cao, who detests the true and corrupts the upright, multiplies his henchmen; and his malevolent ambition, the usurpation of the throne, is becoming manifest. With the imperial house enfeebled and the clan without position or influence, my advisers have adjusted time-honored protocol and fallen back on the temporary expedient of elevating your vassal Bei to serve as grand marshal and king of Hanzhong.

Humbly and often have I reflected on my motives and conduct. Having received the bounteous favor of the Han, I was authorized to govern an important region. But my efforts bore no fruit. My rewards having exceeded my merits, it is hardly fitting for me now to add to my status and thus add to the weight of criticism I must rightly bear. So many advisers and retainers have exerted pressure on me in the name of honor and duty, however, that I have retired and reconsidered. The criminal traitor has not been publicly executed; the threat of usurpation has not yet passed; the ancestral temple stands in dire peril; and the shrine to soil and grain is on the verge of being thrown down. Truly, this is a time when your vassal's aching heart could well drive him to self-destruction. But if by rising to this unique occasion I can resolve the crisis and bring peace to your sagely court, I would shirk no risk. I have therefore, albeit arbitrarily, acceded to the general wish and respectfully accepted the seal of these offices out of respect for the authority of the court.

I think both of station—titles high and favor rich—and of duty—deeply conscious of a grave task. I breathe in trepidation, alert and fearful as if at a precipice, and dare do no less than give my all in complete sincerity. I shall renew the morale of the armed forces and lead the multitudes of the loyal so that, as Heaven and occasion seem to require, our sacred shrine may know peace. With cautious reverence I submit this memorial to your notice.¹⁰

Xuande's memorial reached the capital at Xuchang. Cao Cao was in Ye when he learned that Xuande had installed himself as king of Hanzhong. In a great rage he cried, "The low-down mat-weaver presumes too much. I vow now to annihilate him," and ordered a general mobilization for a march into the Riverlands to settle the question of supremacy with the king of Hanzhong. One man, however, stepped out from the ranks to object: "Do not engage in remote campaigns for the sake of a moment's anger, Your Highness. There is a way to bring about Liu Bei's ruin in the Riverlands without expending a single arrow; and when the strength of his forces is exhausted, a single general will suffice to crush him." Cao Cao regarded the man. It was Sima Yi (styled Zhongda). Cao Cao asked amiably, "Zhongda, what is your esteemed view?" "Sun Quan, lord of the Southland," Sima Yi replied, "married his sister to Liu Bei, only to seize the occasion to steal her back again. Liu Bei holds Jingzhou and refuses to return it. Thus, bitter enmity exists between the two. Now is the time to

send a man of persuasive powers with a letter to convince Sun Quan to send an army to capture Jingzhou. That should force Liu Bei to send his entire army to rescue it, and Your Highness will be able to capture Hanzhong while Liu Bei, unable to coordinate his fronts, will be in peril."

Immensely pleased by this proposal, Cao Cao ordered Man Chong to visit Sun Quan as his representative. Sun Quan learned of Man Chong's arrival and summoned his counselors. Zhang Zhao proposed a receptive response. "There is no real enmity between the kingdom of Wei and the Southland," he said. "In the past we bought Zhuge's arguments, with the result that military conflict between us and the north has gone on year after year, to the detriment of the living souls in both our lands. Now Man Chong can be coming only to talk peace. He should be greeted with courtesy."

Sun Quan approved Zhang Zhao's plan and arranged for Man Chong to be escorted into the city. The ceremonies concluded, Sun Quan treated Man Chong as an honored guest. Submitting Cao Cao's letter, Man Chong said, "The Southland and Wei have no quarrel; Liu Bei has been the cause of the hostilities between us. The king of Wei has sent me here to work out an agreement whereby you, General, will attack and take over Jingzhou while he brings his army up to Hanzhong so that we can attack Liu Bei on two fronts. Once he is destroyed, we can divide his territories, pledging to respect the boundary between." After reading the letter, Sun Quan held a grand banquet for Man Chong and then had him escorted to the government's guesthouse to rest.¹¹

Again Sun Quan turned to his advisers. Gu Yong said, "Although their plan is self-serving, it is reasonable. Let us send the messenger back with our agreement to coordinate against Liu Bei; but send an agent over the river, too, to probe the activities of Lord Guan. That is the way to proceed." Then Zhuge Jin suggested, "I have heard that Liu Bei found Lord Guan a wife when he came to Jingzhou. First she bore him a son, then a daughter. The daughter, still young, has not yet been promised in marriage. I would like to seek her hand for your heir. If Lord Guan consents, we can begin planning joint action against Cao Cao. Otherwise, we help Cao Cao take Jingzhou."¹² Sun Quan adopted the plan; he sent Man Chong back to Xuchang and Zhuge Jin on to Jingzhou.

Zhuce Jin presented himself before Lord Guan. The ceremonies concluded, Lord Guan asked Zhuge Jin's purpose in coming. "I come for one particular purpose," responded Zhuge Jin, "to bind the amity of our two houses. My master has a son, a youth of high intelligence. And, I understand, you have a daughter; it is her hand I come to seek. If our two houses form this union and combine to destroy Cao Cao, it will be truly splendid. I beg you to consider it, my lord." Lord Guan's answer came in a burst of anger: "My tiger-lass married off to a mongrel? I'd have your head if you weren't Kongming's brother! Speak of it no more!" Lord Guan called for his aides, who drove Zhuge Jin scurrying off.

Back in the Southland Zhuge Jin could not conceal what had happened. Hearing the report, Sun Quan exclaimed, "What insolence!" and summoned Zhang Zhao and others to consult on a strategy for taking Jingzhou. Bu Zhi argued, "Cao Cao has been planning to usurp the dynasty for a long time; all he fears is Liu Bei. Now he wants us to attack Liu Bei, deflecting the blow intended for him." But Sun Quan said, "I have waited too long for Jingzhou!" "Cao Ren has troops in Xiangyang and in Fan," Bu Zhi replied. "No river bars his way; he could take Jingzhou by land, yet he wants to get you to do it. Why? This shows his real mind. Your Lordship, send a representative to Xuchang with a proposal that Cao Cao first have Cao Ren move by land against Jingzhou. Lord Guan will surely try to capture Fan. And once Lord Guan takes that step, a single Southland general will suffice to make the province ours, and with little trouble."

Sun Quan approved the suggestion and sent a man across the river to present the proposal to Cao Cao. Cao Cao was delighted and sent his acceptance back by the same messenger. He then ordered Man Chong to Fan to assist Cao Ren in planning the operation. At the same time he sped a call to the south to have marine forces ready to reinforce his land troops in the attack on Jingzhou.

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Xuande, king of Hanzhong, having made Wei Yan responsible for the defense of the east Riverlands region, brought his court back to Chengdu. There he assigned officials to supervise construction of a palace. In addition he had way stations built for a post road; from Chengdu northeast to Baishui more than four hundred were set up. Grain was widely stored and many weapons manufactured. All these measures envisioned the eventual capture of the northern heartland.

Spies brought word that Cao Cao and Sun Quan had formed an alliance for the purpose of taking Jingzhou; the king of Hanzhong, Xuande, hastily called Kongming to counsel. "This plan of Cao Cao's is not at all unexpected," the director general said. "And the Southland is well provided with advisers of its own who will make sure Cao Ren takes the field first." The king replied, "And what do we do then?" "Send a messenger to inform Lord Guan of his new office," Kongming advised, "then have him capture Fan. That should scare the enemy and make them scatter." The king, delighted, sent Fei Shi, a captain in the forward unit, to perform the mission.

Lord Guan received Fei Shi personally in front of the city walls and led him to the government buildings. The amenities concluded, Lord Guan asked, "With what rank has the king invested me?" "Chief of the 'Five Tiger Generals,'" was the reply. "What 'Five Tiger Generals'?" Lord Guan wanted to know. "Yourself, Zhang Fei, Zhao Zilong, Ma Chao, and Huang Zhong," Fei Shi answered. Lord Guan said angrily, "Zhang Fei is my younger brother; Ma Chao comes from a family of long-standing eminence. Zilong has followed my elder brother for many years and is as good as my younger brother, too. For them to have a position equivalent to my own is perfectly understandable. But who is Huang Zhong to rank alongside me? No self-respecting warrior would ever league himself with an old common soldier." Thereupon Lord Guan refused the seal and cord that Xuande had sent to confirm his appointment.¹³

Fei Shi smiled and said, "You are making a mistake, General. Remember that prime ministers Xiao He and Cao Shen participated with the Supreme Ancestor in creating the dynasty. No man was closer to the Emperor than those two; yet Han Xin, a general who had defected from the enemy, was honored as a king—a position greater than Xiao He's or Cao Shen's. Neither of the prime ministers, however, is known to have complained. In this case, although the king of Hanzhong has named you as one of the 'Five Tiger Generals,' there is also the bond of brotherhood between you and him. To him, you and he are one. General, you are as good as king of Hanzhong; and the king of Hanzhong, you. How could you be classed with those others? You have the king's generous favor and should share joy and grief with him, blessing and misfortune, without niggling over status and titles. I beg you to consider this, General."

Lord Guan realized his mistake and saluted Fei Shi with clasped hands. "My ignorance, but for your advice, might have ruined the whole endeavor," he acknowledged, and received the seal of office with due reverence.

Now Fei Shi produced the royal writ directing Lord Guan to capture Fan.¹⁴ Lord Guan accepted

his assignment and sent Fu Shiren and Mi Fang, forming the vanguard, to station their men outside the city wall. At the same time he feted Fei Shi inside the city. They caroused on into the second watch. Suddenly fires were reported in the camps outside the wall. Lord Guan donned his armor and took to his horse. He found that Fu Shiren and Mi Fang had been drinking and had neglected a fire behind their tent, which touched off the incendiary bombards. The whole camp was in an uproar: weapons, grain, and fodder had all been destroyed. Lord Guan and his own unit fought the fire, managing to extinguish it by the fourth watch. He then summoned the two vanguard leaders.

"I ordered you to take the vanguard," Lord Guan said, "yet before even setting out, you have lost weapons, grain, and fodder in the fire and your own men have been killed by the bombards. If you ruin things in this way, what good are the likes of you to me?" He gave the order to behead the commanders. But Fei Shi spoke in their behalf. "Before battle," he said, "it is bad luck to execute important commanders. Their crime could be excused for the time being."

Too angry to be assuaged, Lord Guan said sharply, "If Fei Shi were not here, I would have your heads." He called on his armed guards to give each forty strokes of the stave, and he stripped them of their instruments of command. Mi Fang was sent down to defend Nanjun, and Fu Shiren to Gong'an. Lord Guan added, "The day I return victorious, I will apply the law for the least infraction—including this." Their faces suffused with shame, the two commanders withdrew making obeisance.

Lord Guan now placed Liao Hua in the vanguard and made his son, Ping, Hua's lieutenant. Lord Guan himself took command of the main force; Ma Liang and Yi Ji were his counselors. Together they set forth to conquer Fan. Prior to these events, Hu Ban, son of Hu Hua, had arrived in Jingzhou and surrendered to Lord Guan. And Lord Guan, mindful that Hua had saved him in the old days,¹⁵ treated him with sincere affection, and sent him on to the Riverlands with Fei Shi to receive a rank from the king of Hanzhong. Fei Shi took his leave and went back with Hu Ban to the Riverlands.

That same day Lord Guan performed sacrifice before his banner inscribed "Chief Commander," and that night he slept fully clothed in his tent. He dreamed that a black boar the size of a bull charged into the tent and bit his foot. Angrily he snatched his sword and killed it. Its squealing sounded like the tearing of silk. At that instant Lord Guan awoke and realized it had been only a dream; but his foot continued to hurt. Troubled by the dream, he mentioned it to his son, Guan Ping, who said, "The boar can, after all, symbolize the dragon. Its coming to your foot implies a sudden rise in your position. No need to be suspicious."

When Lord Guan told his assembled officers of the sign in his dream, some interpreted it as auspicious, but others did not. Lord Guan said, "Death no longer moves a man near sixty." Even as he spoke, a royal communication from the king of Hanzhong arrived designating him forward general, conferring the dual credentials of seal and broadaxe, and giving him full authority over the nine districts of Jingzhou.¹⁶ Lord Guan accepted the commission, and the officers respectfully congratulated him, saying, "This shows that the boar signifies the dragon." His confidence restored, Lord Guan moved his army swiftly toward Xiangyang.

Cao Ren was holding the city of Fan when he was told of Lord Guan's advance. Alarmed, Red wanted to defend from the walls and not to take the field. But a lieutenant, one Zhai Yuan, argued, "The king of Wei has arranged with the Southland to capture Jingzhou. The enemy is walking to their doom. There is no need to avoid engaging them." Man Chong advised, "I know Lord Guan for a brave and wily warrior, one to be reckoned with. To hold tight is the best policy." But Valiant Cavalry Commander Xiahou Cun said, "A pedant's logic. Don't you know that 'floods are met with earthworks

and enemy generals with an army'? We are rested and they are worn: the victory should be ours."

Cao Ren heeded this counsel and ordered Man Chong to defend Fan while he went forth to engage Lord Guan. Lord Guan summoned his two commanders, Guan Ping and Liao Hua, and sent them off to carry out orders. The opposed armies consolidated their lines, and Liao Hua rode forth to issue the challenge. Zhai Yuan opposed him. After a brief combat Hua feigned defeat and fled; Zhai Yuan pursued. Lord Guan's Jingzhou troops withdrew some twenty *li*.

The following day Liao Hua returned, and Xiahou Cun and Zhai Yuan rode forth to meet him. Again the Jingzhou troops fell back twenty *li*, and Cao's commanders pursued another twenty. Suddenly, to the rear, Xiahou Cun and Zhai Yuan heard a rumbling clamor above the sound of drums and horns. Cao Ren urgently ordered his vanguard back, but Guan Ping and Liao Hua struck hard from behind and routed his troops.

Cao Ren realized a trap was closing and pulled his men back toward Xiangyang. But a few *li* from the city his eye caught an unfurled banner under which Lord Guan stood before him, mount poised, sword leveled. Cao Ren's courage failed, his gall shivered, his heart pounded. Cao Ren turned onto a side road to Xiangyang and raced off. Lord Guan did not pursue. Moments later Xiahou Cun arrived and rushed furiously into combat with Lord Guan. They closed but once, and Lord Guan cut him down. Zhai Yuan fled, but Guan Ping overtook him and killed him with one stroke. Lord Guan's army carried the day. More than half of Cao Ren's troops perished in the River Xiang, and Ren himself withdrew to a defensive position in Fan.

Lord Guan occupied Xiangyang, rewarded the troops, and quieted the populace's fears. Wang Fu, a commanding officer in the army, said to him, "General, you have subdued Xiangyang in a single battle. Cao's army may be demoralized; but, if I may say so, Lü Meng of the Southland stands posted at Lukou, and Lü Meng has ever coveted Jingzhou. What if he makes a direct move?" "That has occurred to me, too," Lord Guan replied. "You take care of it. Pick out some high spots twenty or thirty *li* apart up- and downstream for signal-flare stations. Have fifty men guard each one. If Southland troops cross the river by night, light the flares; if by day, raise smoke. I'll lead the counterattack."

Wang Fu said, "Mi Fang and Fu Shiren may not defend the two access points as vigorously as they should. We need another man to put in charge of Nanjun." Lord Guan replied, "I have already assigned Lieutenant Inspector Pan Jun to defend the city. Is there anything to worry about?" "Pan Jun is a suspicious sort, always looking out for his own interests. I wouldn't trust him. He should be replaced by Zhao Lei, field director of the Commissary; he is loyal, sincere, and straightforward. With him in charge, nothing will go wrong." Lord Guan replied, "I know Pan Jun well, but I can't change an assignment once it's made. Besides, I need Zhao Lei to take charge of food supplies, an equally important job. Don't be so suspicious, just get those beacon stations built for me." Dismayed, Wang Fu took his leave. Lord Guan ordered Guan Ping to prepare the boats to cross the river and attack Fan.

After losing two commanders, Cao Ren retreated to Fan. He said to Man Chong, "I should have taken your advice. My army is broken, my commanders killed; Xiangyang is lost. What can I do?" Man Chong replied, "Lord Guan is a fierce general, clever and cunning, not to be lightly opposed. All you can do is hold tight here." But even as they spoke, Lord Guan's approaching force was reported. He had crossed the river. Cao Ren was terrified; Man Chong repeated, "Hold tight." But one of Ren's commanders, Lu Chang, said spiritedly, "Give me a few thousand men and I'll meet the advancing

enemy on the river." Man Chong objected, and Lü Chang answered angrily, "If we follow the 'hold tight' advice of you bookish officials, how will we ever repel the enemy? Don't you know the basic principle of warfare, 'Catch the enemy while he's crossing the water'? Lord Guan is halfway across. This is the time to attack. If they get close to our walls, to the edge of the moat, resistance will be most difficult."

Cao Ren put two thousand men under Lü Chang's command and ordered him to meet the attackers. Lü Chang reached the mouth of the river; there he saw Lord Guan in front of his bold banner, riding forth with leveled sword. Lü Chang prepared to engage, but the soldiers behind him fled at the spectacle of Lord Guan's awesome presence, and Lü Chang's shouts had no power to stop them. Lord Guan came on in force and wiped out more than half of Cao Ren's cavalry and infantry. The beaten remnant raced back to Fan.

Cao Ren sent for help at once. His messenger reached Chang'an and informed Cao Cao: "Lord Guan has overrun Xiangyang. We need a large force at Fan to relieve his siege." Cao Cao singled out a man in his ranks and said, "You're the one to raise the siege." All eyes turned to Yu Jin, who responded instantly. Yu Jin said, "I will need another commander for the van." Cao Cao asked those present, "Is there a volunteer for the van?" Another rose fearlessly and said, "I will do what must be done to deliver that fellow Guan." Cao Cao regarded the man with satisfaction. Indeed:

Before the Southland got the chance the strike,
The northerners were adding to their strength.

Who was the volunteer?

READ ON.



Pang De Carries His Coffin to His Final Battle; Lord Guan Floods the Enemy's Seven Armies

PANG DE WAS THE MAN WHO PROMPTLY ANSWERED Cao Cao's call for a volunteer to take the vanguard of Yu Jin's rescue force. Elated, Cao Cao said, "That fellow Guan has terrified the entire north; he has yet to meet his match. But Pang De will be a formidable opponent." He promoted Yu Jin to General Who Conquers the South, and Pang De to Vanguard Leader Who Conquers the West. They brought seven armies into the field and headed for Fan.

The seven armies were formed of the northerners' toughest fighters. That day the two subcommanders, Dong Heng and Dong Chao, brought the various captains before Yu Jin to offer their respects. Dong Heng said, "General, today you have called up seven strong units to break the siege at Fan. This is a battle we must win. Yet you have placed in the van a man sure to ruin our campaign." Yu Jin was startled and asked Dong Heng to explain himself. "Pang De once served Ma Chao as deputy commander," Dong Heng replied. "He surrendered to Lord Cao by force of circumstance. Now his former lord is in the Riverlands, holding the position of 'Five Tiger General.' In addition, his brother Pang Rou is an official in the Riverlands. To make him vanguard leader is like pouring oil on a fire. General, why don't you and the king of Wei find another leader?"

Yu Jin went to speak to Cao Cao that same night. Cao Cao understood the problem; he summoned Pang De and ordered him to hand over his seal of vanguard leader. Astonished, Pang De said, "This is the day before I will show Your Highness what I can do. Why are you unwilling to use me now?" "I myself have no reservations," Cao Cao replied, "but Ma Chao is in the Riverlands, as is your brother Rou. And both serve Liu Bei. Even if you have my confidence, what about the troops?" At these words Pang De removed his cap and knocked his head on the ground until blood covered his face. "I surrendered to Your Highness in Hanzhong; and I have never forgotten your generous favor, which my very life's blood could not repay. Why does Your Highness doubt me? Long ago in my home village when I was living with my elder brother, his wife did not behave as a virtuous sister-in-law; while I was drunk I killed her. My brother has hated me ever since, swearing never to see me again. We have severed all relations. My former lord, Ma Chao, was brave but foolish. His army defeated, his territory lost, he went alone to the side of the Riverlands. Now he and I serve different masters, and our bonds too are broken. After all your kind treatment, how could a disloyal thought sprout in me? If only Your Highness would consider this." Cao Cao helped Pang De to his feet and consoled him, saying, "I have always believed in your loyalty and honor. What I said was simply to quiet the minds of the others. Strive and accomplish! If you are true to me, so will I be to you."

Pang De prostrated himself in gratitude; then he returned home, had a coffin made, and invited a few friends to view it at a banquet the following day. They reacted with astonishment. "General," they said, "what use has something so inauspicious before the campaign?" Raising his cup, Pang De

replied, "Honored by the generous favor of the king of Wei, to whom my very life is sworn, I go today to Fan to fight Lord Guan to the finish. If he does not die at my hands, then I will die at his. This coffin demonstrates my determination not to return without achieving my objective." The company was aghast. Pang De called his wife, Lady Li, and his son Pang Hui. "This time I go in the vanguard," he said to her. "For honor's sake I face death on the field of battle. If I die, take good care in bringing up our boy. He has unusual signs and will grow up to avenge me." Lady Li and the child wept sorely, seeing him off. Pang De had the coffin carried along as he prepared to set out.

Before departing, Pang De said to his commanders, "I will fight Guan to the finish. If he kills me, put my body in this coffin. If I kill him, I will use it to carry his head back to the king." His five hundred commanders answered in unison, "General, we will spare no effort in supporting one so loyal and brave." After that, Pang De led the advance.

Someone reported the incident to Cao Cao, who said, "Pang De is loyal and brave; we have nothing to fear." But the adviser Jia Xu said, "Pang De is counting on raw physical courage for his battle. But I have my doubts." Cao Cao agreed and had a warning communicated to Pang De: "Lord Guan has a full measure of wit and courage. Do not underestimate him. If you can take him, take him; if not, defend with caution." Pang De acknowledged the command and said to his commanders, "Why does His Highness place such emphasis on Guan? I predict that this time I will put an end to his reputation of thirty years." To this boast Yu Jin responded, "What the king of Wei wishes we must obey." Pang De urged his army on to Fan; and there to the sound of gongs and the beat of drums he flaunted his martial powers.

Meanwhile, Lord Guan had received a surveillance report in his command tent: "Cao Cao has sent Yu Jin in command of seven detachments of picked troops. Pang De, the vanguard, has brought a coffin with him and defiantly vows to fight you to the finish, General. They're some thirty *li* from here." At these words Lord Guan's face darkened and his fine curly beard quivered. Wrathfully he cried, "Heroes of the realm cower at the sound of my name. How dare this punk scorn me! Guan Ping, you attack Fan. I myself will dispatch this skunk to vent my outrage." But Guan Ping replied, "Father, does mighty Mount Tai challenge a common stone? Let me engage Pang De." "Try one turn," Lord Guan replied. "I will follow and relieve you." Guan Ping left the tent, armed himself, and rode off with his men to meet Pang De.

The opposing lines formed. Above the northern camp flew a black flag inscribed "Pang De of Nan'an." Pang De had a black battle gown and silvery armor, a steel sword, and a white horse. Thus he stood before his line, five hundred warriors close behind. Several foot soldiers appeared bearing the coffin. Guan Ping denounced Pang De: "Traitor! Villain!" Pang De turned to his men and asked, "Who is that?" "Guan's adopted son," was the reply. Pang De called over to him: "I hold the mandate of the king of Wei to take your father's head. Scabby urchin, you're not worth the killing. Call out your father." Guan Ping dashed forth swinging his blade. Pang De leveled his own and they closed. The combat raged for thirty clashes; then the fighters broke and rested. Neither had prevailed.

Lord Guan was furious at the news from the field. He sent Liao Hua to attack Fan and went himself to deal with Pang De. Guan Ping met his father and described his battle with Pang De. Lord Guan rushed out, sword leveled, and hurled his challenge at De. "Yunchang is here!" he cried. "Come quickly—and die!" To the beat of drums Pang De emerged. "I hold the king of Wei's command to take your head. If you doubt it, the coffin stands ready. If you fear death, dismount and surrender." Lord Guan hurled back his curses: "What can a low-down nobody do to me? What a shame to waste my

dragon blade on a rodent like you." Racing forward, blade dancing, Lord Guan made for Pang De. De met him, making circles with his sword. The two warriors clashed more than one hundred times, but their energies seemed only to redouble. On both sides the armies watched, transfixed. Finally, the northern army of Wei, fearing for Pang De, sounded the recall gongs. And Guan Ping, concerned for his father who was no longer young, also rang the gong; the two generals returned to their lines.

Back at camp, Pang De said to his followers, "Lord Guan is reputed to be a great hero. Today I am convinced." At that moment Yu Jin entered and said to him, "I heard that you had fought over a hundred bouts with Lord Guan but could not get the better of him. Why not pull the army back for a while and avoid the enemy?" Pang De replied hotly, "You are the king of Wei's chief general. Don't be chicken-hearted! Tomorrow I will fight Guan to the finish. As for pulling back—never!" Yu Jin could not object further, and returned to his camp.

Back at his camp, Lord Guan said to his son, "Pang De is a past master of swordsmanship. Truly my equal." Guan Ping replied, "You know the saying, 'The newborn calf has no fear of tigers.' Even if you kill him, Father, he's no more than a run-of-the-mill Qiang warrior. And what if something goes wrong? What a way to show respect for our weighty charge from Uncle Xuande!" Lord Guan replied, "There is no other way to settle the score. My mind is made up. The matter is closed."

The following day Lord Guan rode forth, and Pang De met him. The armies deployed into lines as the opposing generals came out. No time was wasted on words. They joined battle at once. After some fifty clashes Pang De drew his horse around and fled, letting his sword drag behind him. Lord Guan pursued closely, followed by Guan Ping, who feared some mishap. "Scoundrel!" cried Lord Guan, cursing. "You think that old trick will scare me!" In fact, Pang De's "trailing-sword trick" was only a pretense. He had actually hooked the weapon onto his saddle and stealthily drawn his bow; then fitting an arrow, he made his shot. The acute Guan Ping had spotted Pang De's maneuver and shouted, "Villain! No sneak shot!" But even as Lord Guan watched, the bow hummed and the shaft struck his left arm. Riding alongside, Guan Ping saw his father safely back to camp. Pang De, stabbing the air with his weapon, started to give chase when the gongs in his own camp sounded furiously. Fearing trouble in his rear ranks, Pang De rode back.

What had happened was this: Yu Jin had seen Pang De's arrow hit Lord Guan and rang the gongs of retreat to prevent Pang De from achieving merit that would eclipse his own reputation. Riding back, Pang De demanded, "Why were the gongs sounded?" Yu Jin replied, "The king of Wei warned us, Lord Guan is a master of strategy and combat. Although he was hit, I was afraid of deception." "If you had not recalled us, I would have killed the man by now," retorted Pang De. "You know, 'A swift course, an easy fall.' Let's plan this more carefully," was the explanation, and Pang De, never realizing Yu Jin's true motive, had to resign himself to his frustration.¹

Lord Guan returned to camp and had the arrow removed from his arm. It had not penetrated far, luckily for him, and the wound was treated with medicine for injuries from weapons. With intense hatred Lord Guan said to his commanders, "I will avenge this wound." The commanders answered, "Rest a few days first, General, before fighting again." But the next day when Pang De came and delivered his challenge, Lord Guan wanted to go forth. The commanders pleaded with him not to go. Pang De had his men hurl abuse at Lord Guan. Guan Ping kept the points of access closed, however, and ordered all commanders to report nothing to his father.

Pang De issued challenges for more than ten days; but when no one responded, he said to Yu Jin, "It seems that the wound is having its effect. He cannot act. This is our chance to storm their positions

with our seven armies and relieve the siege at Fan." But again, fearing Pang De's success, Yu Jin reiterated the king of Wei's insistence on caution and would not accede to Pang De's pleas for military action. Instead, Yu Jin shifted the armies over to the approaches to the hills and established new positions some ten *li* north of Fan. Yu Jin took his army to cut off the main road and had Pang De station his forces at the rear of the gorge, thus preventing him from winning any victories.

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Guan Ping was overjoyed to see that his father's wound had closed. Suddenly he learned that Yu Jin had shifted his seven armies north of Fan. Unable to decide what they were planning, he went to inform his father. Lord Guan rode with a few companions to a high knoll to observe the city. He saw that the flags on the walls were disorderly and the soldiers slovenly. He noted that troops were deployed in a ravine ten *li* north of the city and that the waters of the River Xiang were unusually swift. After looking over the terrain for some time, he summoned a local guide and asked, "What do they call that ravine north of Fan?" "Zengkou, 'Open Net Stream,' " was the reply. Lord Guan said with satisfaction, "Then Yu Jin is mine!" "How do you know that?" his officers asked. "Once a fish enters the mouth of the net," Lord Guan answered, "how long can it live?"² The commanders looked skeptical. Lord Guan returned to his camp.

It was autumn, the eighth month (A. D. 219). Heavy rainstorms struck and lasted for several days. Lord Guan ordered his men to prepare rafts, poles for punting, and the like. Guan Ping asked him, "We will confront them on land; why do we need these things?" "You wouldn't understand," Lord Guan replied. "Yu Jin has not positioned his forces on broad and open ground but has concentrated them by the narrow point called Open Net Stream. Now the seasonal rains have been coming down for days; the Xiang is bound to overflow. I have already had several points dammed. When the flood crests, we'll take to our boats. Then we'll release the waters and turn the troops around Fan and Open Net into fishes and turtles." Guan Ping expressed admiration for his father's strategy.

The forces of Wei kept to their positions at Open Net as the rains continued unabated. Army Inspector Cheng He came to Yu Jin and said, "It's low ground here at the mouth of the stream where the army is stationed. The elevations are too far from our main camps. The rains have made the troops miserable. The latest news is that the men of Jingzhou have moved to higher ground and are preparing rafts for combat at the mouth of the River Han. Now—before the waters rise and endanger our army—now is the time to plan for them." Yu Jin rebuked the speaker sharply, saying, "A nobody like you wants to disturb the army? The next man to complain dies." Humiliated, Cheng He withdrew and went to Pang De, who said, "I agree with you. If General Yu won't move the men tomorrow, I will." They worked out a plan.

During that night of fierce wind and heavy rain Pang De, sitting in his tent, heard the restless movements of ten thousand horses and the ground-shaking roll of war drums. Alarmed, he went outside and rode off to look. From all sides, floodwaters were rushing in; the seven armies, thrown into panic flight, had already lost untold numbers in the tide. On level ground the water reached a depth of more than ten spans. Yu Jin, Pang De, and the commanders climbed to safe heights. By dawn Lord Guan and his commanders, waving flags and beating drums, were bearing down in large ships. Yu Jin saw no way out and, with barely fifty or sixty men around him, declared his willingness to surrender. Lord Guan ordered Yu Jin and his men to strip off their armor and took them on

board under guard. He then went for Pang De.

At this time Pang De, Dong Heng, Dong Chao, and Cheng He were standing on an embankment with five hundred foot soldiers; none had armor. At Lord Guan's approach, Pang De went boldly to meet him. Lord Guan had his boats ring the group; then his archers went to work, killing the greater part of the northern troops. Dong Heng and Dong Chao pleaded with Pang De: "More than half our men are gone. We are trapped here. Surrender is our only hope." But Pang De, enraged, replied, "As a beneficiary of the king's favor, I will never bow to another," and cut down the two men with his own blade. He cried sternly, "Whoever else urges surrender will follow them!" This stand roused his troops, and they battled the enemy from dawn to midday with redoubled vigor.

Lord Guan urged his own forces to strike harder; they poured stones and arrows down on the enemy. Pang De ordered his men into close combat with short swords. Turning to Cheng He, he said, "You know the saying, 'Not even death can make the brave general look for an easy out or try to survive at the cost of his integrity.' This is the day I will die. And I want all of you to fight to the death."

Cheng He advanced as ordered. A single arrow from Lord Guan dropped him into the river. The rest of the soldiers surrendered. Pang De alone fought on. He came upon a few dozen Jingzhou soldiers guiding a small craft near his embankment. Pang De shouted and sprang to the deck. At once his whirling sword claimed ten men. The rest jumped into the water. Pang De, his sword in one hand, the boat's rudder in the other, tried to escape to Fan. But a large raft hit his boat, overturning it and dumping him into the river. The commander of the raft—Zhou Cang—leaped into the water and captured Pang De. Zhou Cang was used to the water, and his many years in Jingzhou had made him all the more adept. In addition, he had great physical strength; thus, he captured Pang De. The seven armies under Yu Jin's command perished; the others, who saw no way out, surrendered. A poet of later times has left these lines:

Battle drums beat hard throughout the night
As Lord Guan sent a flood across their flats.
Inspired tactics forced the foe's defeat:
Immortal now, the name the heartland feared.

Lord Guan returned to his high vantage point, entered his tent, and seated himself. A throng of armed guards hustled Yu Jin into his presence. Jin threw himself to the ground, begging piteously for his life. "How dared you resist me?" Lord Guan said. "I acted on orders," Yu Jin answered. "It was not my own doing. Have mercy, Your Lordship, and I will repay you with lifelong devotion." Fondling his beard, Lord Guan laughed. "Killing you would be like killing a dog or a pig," he said at last. "Why dirty a good axe?" He ordered Yu Jin sent back to jail in Jingzhou, adding, "I'll deal with you when I return." And thus he disposed of Yu Jin.

Lord Guan then ordered Pang De brought before him. Pang De stared Lord Guan full in the face, rage in his glare, and refused to kneel. "Your elder brother is now in Hanzhong," Lord Guan said. "And your former lord, Ma Chao, is a chief general in the Riverlands. Why not surrender to me?" "I'll die under the knife first," was Pang De's angry retort, and curses poured from his lips. In a fury Lord Guan barked the order for execution to the axemen, and Pang De stretched forth his neck, eager for the blow. Afterward Lord Guan, touched by Pang De's spirit, had him buried properly. Then, while the

flood waters were still high, Lord Guan and his men took to their war-boats and began the attack on Fan.³

. . . .

Around the besieged city white breakers surged against the horizon, and the increasing pressure of the water undermined the city walls. The entire population worked relentlessly with earth and brick but could not shore them up. Fear-stricken, the northern military leaders rushed to Cao Ren. "The crisis is past relieving," they said. "Let us flee tonight by boat before the enemy arrives. We can save ourselves even if we lose the city." Cao Ren agreed and was about to order the withdrawal, when Man Chong objected. "It is a mistake," he said. "Among these mountains the floods come on in a flash, but never remain for long. They are sure to recede within ten days. Before attacking, Lord Guan sent auxiliary commanders on to Jiaxia, which shows that he cannot advance at will for fear we will ambush him from behind. If we abandon the city of Fan today, nothing south of the Yellow River will remain in the possession of the dynasty. I urge you, General, to maintain the defense of this point, the outer shield of our security."

Clasping his hands before his chest, Cao Ren expressed appreciation. "If not for your advice, Man Chong," he said, "everything might have been ruined."⁴ Ren rode his white horse up to the wall and swore before his commanders: "The king of Wei has mandated me to defend this city, and I will execute anyone who speaks of deserting it." The commanders responded by vowing to hold the city to the death. Well pleased, Cao Ren placed several hundred archers and crossbowmen on the wall. Day and night the soldiers mounted strict guard, never slackening for a moment, while the old and young worked at carrying earth to fortify the walls. Within ten days the waters had begun to recede.

Lord Guan's capture of General Yu Jin made him a power feared throughout the realm. Unexpectedly Guan's second son, Xing, came to see his father at the camp. Lord Guan ordered him to go to Chengdu and present the king of Hanzhong with a list of the accomplishments of his officers and requests for promotion. Guan Xing bade his father good-bye and headed for the capital of the Riverlands.

Next, Lord Guan sent half his army against Jiaxia while he led the other half in a four-sided assault on Fan. That day Lord Guan went himself to the north gate of the city. Astride his horse, he flourished a whip and issued a challenge: "The time to surrender has long passed, you rats!" At that very moment, from his watchtower Cao Ren noticed that Lord Guan was wearing only his breastplate and that from the side his green battle gown was exposed. Ren hurriedly summoned five hundred bowmen to let fly at him together. Lord Guan swung his horse swiftly around, but a bolt caught his right arm, and he dropped from his horse. Indeed:

Amid the flood, the seven armies quailed;
From the wall, a single shot—a leader felled.

Would Lord Guan survive?⁵

READ ON.



***Hua Tuo Scrapes the Poison from Lord Guan's Bone;
Lü Meng Sends Mariners Across the River in Disguise***

THE MOMENT HE SAW LORD GUAN FALL, Cao Ren and his men came charging out of the city for the kill. But Guan Ping fought the northerners off and brought his father safely back to camp. There the arrow was removed from his right arm. The arrowhead, however, had been poisoned; ulceration had reached the bone, and the arm, greenish and swollen, would not move. Guan Ping hastily convened the commanders and said, "If my father loses his arm, he will never fight again. It will be best to go back to Jiangling and take care of it." He then went with the commanders to see their leader. "What have you come for?" Lord Guan asked. "In view of Your Lordship's wound," they replied, "we are afraid the shock of battle could be bad for you. Our consensus is for all to return to Jiangling with you for treatment."

Lord Guan responded angrily, "Fan is within our grasp, and once we have it, we can reach Cao's capital at Xuchang by forced march. Then we can flush out the traitor, destroy him, and secure the house of Han. I cannot ruin this enterprise for the sake of a minor wound. Don't sap the morale of the troops." Guan Ping and the rest retired silently.

Lord Guan would not retreat, and the wound would not heal. His commanders were searching high and low for a good doctor when one arrived unexpectedly by boat from the Southland. A petty officer led him to Guan Ping, who studied the man. He had a square cap and loose-fitting clothes. A black satchel hung from his arm. Volunteering his name, he said, "I am Hua Tuo (styled Yuanhua) from the Qiao district in the fief of Pei. Hearing that General Guan, the world-renowned hero, has been wounded by a poisoned arrow, I have come especially to cure him." "I believe you are the man who once treated Zhou Tai of the Southland," Guan Ping said. "That is true," Tuo replied. Guan Ping was delighted, and in company with the commanders he took Hua Tuo in to Lord Guan.

Lord Guan was in terrible pain and worried about morale in the army. He was playing chess with Ma Liang to divert himself when they arrived. He invited the doctor in and, after the formalities, offered him a seat. Tea was served and drunk. Hua Tuo then asked to examine the wound. Lord Guan bared his arm and stretched it out. "This is from a crossbow," Hua Tuo said. "There is aconite infiltrating the bone. The arm will be useless if not treated soon." "What would you use?" Lord Guan asked. "I can save it," Hua Tuo answered, "but I am afraid Your Lordship would shrink from the treatment." With a smile Lord Guan responded, "To me, death is my homecoming. I will not shrink."

Hua Tuo continued, "In a quiet room we will have to set up a post with a loop nailed to the top. I will ask you to put your arm through the loop and let us tie it. We will cover your head with a blanket. I will cut through to the bone with a razor and scrape the poison off the bone; then after applying some medicine, I will sew up the wound. Nothing will happen to you; I am only afraid you will shrink from the surgery." "Is that all? It won't bother me a bit," Lord Guan replied. "And you can dispense with

post and loop." With that he ordered a feast set forth.

After a few cups, Lord Guan resumed his game of chess with Ma Liang as he extended his arm and instructed the doctor to start the operation. An attendant held a basin under the arm to catch the blood. Hua Tuo took up his knife and said, "I am ready. Have no fear, Your Lordship." "Do what is required," said Lord Guan. "Don't think I shrink from pain like any common fellow." Hua Tuo parted the flesh, exposing the bone: it was already coated green. The knife made a thin, grating sound as it scraped the surface, until everyone present blanched and covered his face. But Lord Guan continued eating and drinking, laughing and talking as he played, showing no sign of pain.

In a short time the basin filled with blood. Hua Tuo finished the scraping, applied medicine, and sewed the wound shut. Lord Guan got up, smiled, and said to his commanders, "The arm is as flexible as ever. There is no pain at all. Master, you are a marvelous physician." Hua Tuo replied, "In a lifetime of practice I have never seen anything like this! It is Your Lordship who is more than human!" A poet of later times left these lines:

Physic and surgery—two branches of one art—
The rare and subtle science of the mortal world.
For superhuman might, Lord Guan may take the crown;
For sacred skill in healing, Hua Tuo wins renown.

When his wound was better, Lord Guan held a banquet to thank Hua Tuo. "Your Lordship's wound is cured," the doctor said, "but it must still be protected from any shock of anger. It will take a hundred days before everything is normal." Lord Guan offered Hua Tuo one hundred taels of gold, but the physician said, "I seek no reward. Your reputation for a high-minded sense of honor brought me here." Firmly refusing payment, Hua Tuo left a prescription for medicine to put on the wound; then he took his leave and departed.¹

After Lord Guan's stunning victories—the capture of Yu Jin and the execution of Pang De—his name resounded across the northern heartland, impressing one and all. When spies reported Lord Guan's triumph in the capital, Cao Cao summoned his advisers and said in alarm, "I have always known that Lord Guan surpassed all others in wisdom and valor. Now he holds Xiangyang: the tiger has grown wings! Yu Jin has been captured, Pang De killed, and our own keen mettle blunted. What if they come straight to the capital? I think we should take the precaution of transferring the government."

Sima Yi objected to this proposal: "Yu Jin's men drowned in the flood, not in battle. Jin's defeat does not affect the government's position. Moreover, current discord between the Liu and Sun houses means that if Lord Guan gets what he wants, Sun Quan will be very unhappy. This is the time, Your Highness, to send someone down there who, by judicious argument—and by offering the entire Southland to Sun Quan as his fief once peace is restored—will be able to convince Sun Quan to muster a force and quietly pounce on Lord Guan from behind. That is how to relieve the siege at Fan."²

First Secretary Jiang Ji added, "Sima Yi is right. Send a man to the Southland. There's no need to move the capital and disturb the people. Cao Cao assented, and the idea of moving the capital was dropped. In a tone of dismay Cao said to his commanders, "Yu Jin followed me for thirty years. It surprised me that at the moment of truth he didn't measure up even to Pang De. Now I want a man to

take the letter to the Southland, and I also want a ranking commander to check Lord Guan's advance. " Even as he spoke, a commander standing below volunteered. Cao Cao turned to him. It was Xu Huang. Well pleased, Cao Cao put fifty thousand picked men in Xu Huang's command, with Lü Jian as his deputy. On the appointed day the army advanced to Yangling Slope and camped there, waiting for an answer from the Southland before marching on.

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On receiving Cao Cao's letter, Sun Quan readily accepted the proposed plan and swiftly dispatched his answer. He then assembled his counselors. Zhang Zhao made the first argument: "The recent news is that the north is so shaken by Lord Guan's victories over Yu Jin and Pang De that Cao Cao wants to move the capital and thus avoid the brunt of Guan's attack. Now that Fan may fall, he sends to us for help. But after the situation is stabilized, he will only go back on his word." Before Sun Quan had time to speak, a report came in: "Commander Lü Meng has arrived by boat from Lukou with important business to present in person." Sun Quan summoned the commander, who said, "Lord Guan has deployed around Fan. Now is the time to attack Jingzhou, when he is on a far-off campaign." "I was thinking rather of going north and taking Xuzhou," Sun Quan replied. "Cao Cao, too, is far from his base on the north side of the Yellow River," Lü Meng said, "and has no time to look east to Xuzhou, it's true. Moreover, the province is lightly defended and should fall easily. However, the terrain favors the army rather than the navy. Even if we capture it, holding it will be another matter. I would take Jingzhou first; and then with the whole of the Great River secured, we can consider our next move." "Exactly my thought," Sun Quan responded. "I only wanted to sound you out. Quickly devise a plan. I will follow you with my army."³

Lü Meng bade Sun Quan good-bye and returned to Lukou. There, mounted scouts informed him: "Up and down the river there are warning-fire beacons, some twenty, some thirty *li* apart." Lü Meng also learned that the Jingzhou forces were magnificently marshaled and fully prepared for attack. Startled, he said, "If that is how things stand, our plans are in trouble. A day ago I was trying to convince Lord Sun to capture Jingzhou. And now—how am I going to put my words into deeds?" Unable to come with a solution, Lü Meng hid from his lord under cover of illness.

Sun Quan was deeply saddened by the news of Lü Meng's illness. Another commander, Lu Xun, came forward and said, "Lü Meng's illness is not real; it is put on." "If you are sure of that," Sun Quan said, "look into it." As ordered, Lu Xun went to Lukou and saw Lü Meng, whose face, as he had expected, showed no sign of illness. Lu Xun said to him, "I have been instructed by Lord Sun to inquire most respectfully into what has given discomfort to your esteemed self." Lü Meng replied, "Some unforeseen disorder afflicts my humble person—hardly worth troubling yourself to inquire after." "Lord Sun has entrusted a heavy responsibility to you," Lu Xun went on. "But instead of seizing the time to act, you vainly nurse this melancholia. Why?" Lü Meng studied his visitor a long while but said nothing. Lu Xun continued, "I would be so foolish as to proffer a little prescription that should remedy your disorder, General. However, I am not certain it applies." Lü Meng dismissed his attendants and said, "Vouchsafe the precious remedy, and soon." With a smile Lu Xun said, "Your disorder is due to the magnificent marshaling of the Jingzhou army and its flare warning system along the river. But I have a plan to keep the guardians of the flare stations from raising the signal, a plan that will bring the armies of Jingzhou to surrender tamely. Would that suit you?" Lü Meng blurted

out startled thanks, saying, "You speak as if you could see into my vitals. I would learn your worthy plan."

"Lord Guan counts too much on his heroic valor," Lu Xun explained, "and assumes he has no equal. You alone cause him concern. General, take this opportunity to resign your office, pleading ill health. Yield your command here at Lukou to someone else, someone whom we will instruct to acclaim and exalt Lord Guan with self-deprecatory phrases in order to feed his arrogance. Then he will be sure to pull back from Jingzhou and concentrate on Fan. If he leaves Jingzhou unprepared, a surprise attack by one of our contingents will yield control of it with a minimum of effort." Lü Meng was delighted with the ruse. He persisted in claiming he was too sick to appear, and finally submitted a written resignation.

Lu Xun returned and explained the strategy to Sun Quan, who accordingly summoned Lü Meng back to Jianye to convalesce. Coming before Lord Sun, Lü Meng was told, "Originally, Zhou Yu recommended Lu Su as his replacement for the post you hold; Lu Su recommended you. Now you, too, should recommend someone able and well regarded to replace you." "If we appoint an important person," Lü Meng said, "Lord Guan will be on his guard. Lu Xun is a profound strategist and, having no more than a local reputation, is unlikely to cause Lord Guan anxiety. If you appoint him in my place, our plan should carry." Delighted, Sun Quan made Lu Xun subordinate commander and inspector on the Right, replacing Lü Meng as defender of Lukou.⁴

Lu Xun declined the honor, saying, "I am too young and inexperienced to assume so heavy a task." But Sun Quan said, "Lü Meng's recommendation could not be wrong. I will not take no for an answer." And so Lu Xun accepted the seal of office and departed at once for Lukou. After assuming command of all infantry, cavalry, and naval forces, Lu Xun drew up a letter to Lord Guan and sent it by messenger together with champion horses, rare silk damasks, wine, and other gifts.

While Lord Guan was recuperating from his wound and refraining from military action, the announcement came: "The Southland's chief commander at Lukou, Lü Meng, is dangerously ill. Sun Quan has recalled him for treatment and assigned Lu Xun to replace him. Lu Xun has sent a man with a letter and gifts as a gesture of respect." Lord Guan summoned the messenger and, pointing at him, said, "It seems rather shortsighted of Sun Quan to appoint a mere boy as general." The messenger bowed down to the ground and said, "General Lu presents this letter and these ceremonial gifts not only to honor Your Lordship, but with an earnest desire for accord and amity between the houses of Liu and Sun. I pray your indulgence in accepting them."

Lord Guan unsealed the letter and studied it. The language was the ultimate in self-deprecation and reverence. After perusing it, Lord Guan looked up and laughed, ordered his aides to receive the gifts, and sent the messenger back. The messenger told Lu Xun: "Lord Guan was appreciative and delighted. The Southland should not concern him any further."

Lu Xun could not have been more pleased. He sent spies into Jingzhou who reported that Lord Guan had indeed shifted most of his men to the siege at Fan and was waiting only for his wound to heal before launching the attack. After verifying the details, he dispatched the news to Sun Quan overnight. Sun Quan summoned Lü Meng and told him, "As expected, Lord Guan has pulled troops out of Gong'an and Jiangling in order to attack Fan. We can prepare the tactics to surprise the province. You and my younger cousin, Sun Jiao, shall lead the offensive. What do you say?" Sun Jiao (Shuming) was the second son of Quan's uncle Sun Jing.

Lü Meng responded, "If Your Lordship has confidence in me, use me alone. If you have

confidence in Sun Jiao, use him alone. You must remember how much conflict there was when Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu were left and right field marshals; that was because Cheng Pu felt his senior status compromised by Zhou Yu's authority to make decisions. Cheng Pu had to see Zhou Yu's talents at work before he paid him the respect he deserved. My own talents fall far short of Zhou Yu's, and Sun Jiao is closer to you than Cheng Pu was; I'm afraid things wouldn't balance out."

Sun Quan saw the wisdom of Lü Meng's point and made him chief commander with authority over all armed forces. He ordered Sun Jiao to oversee supply and support operations from the rear. Lü Meng prostrated himself in gratitude; then he called up thirty thousand men and eighty swift craft. He selected a group of able sailors, disguised them in the plain clothes that merchants usually wear, and placed them at the oars. Concealed in the hulls were crack troops. Next, he assigned seven ranking commanders—Han Dang, Jiang Qin, Zhu Ran, Pan Zhang, Zhou Tai, Xu Sheng, and Ding Feng—to advance in series. The rest of the commanders were to remain with Sun Quan to provide support and reinforcement. The preparations complete, Lü Meng sent a letter to Cao Cao telling him to attack Lord Guan from the rear; and Lu Xun in Lukou was informed of all steps taken. Finally, the sailors dressed as merchants began their mission. They steered their light craft to the Xunyang River, moving at full speed day and night until they hit the north shore.

When challenged by Lord Guan's soldiers at the signal-flare stations, the Southlanders replied, "We are all merchants from afar. The wind blocked our course on the river, so we have come to take refuge here." They offered gifts to the station guards, who took their word and permitted them to anchor along the shore. Toward the second watch, the troops hidden in the boats emerged as a body, seizing and binding the station guards. At a silent signal the troops in all eighty boats appeared, captured the soldiers at the key signal stations, and hustled them back to the boats. Not one escaped. The Southlanders then struck out for Jiangling in unimpaired secrecy.

As they approached Jiangling in Jingzhou, Lü Meng used fair words to placate the men he had captured by the river; by means of various generous gifts he got them to agree to deceive the gate guards and, once inside, to start signal fires.⁵ The captives followed orders. Lü Meng had them lead the way. Late that night when they reached the walls, the gatekeepers recognized their own men and opened at their call. A united shout arose from the crowd of soldiers, and just inside the gate they set the signal fires. The Southlanders rushed in and took the city by surprise.

Lü Meng immediately issued a decree: "If any soldier kills one man or takes one article, he will be dealt with by strict military law." The city's administrators were told to continue in their current duties. Lord Guan's family was moved to different quarters and placed under protective custody. A report was sent to Sun Quan.

During a day of heavy rains, Lü Meng and his attendants were riding around inspecting the four gates of the city. They spotted one of Meng's men wearing a common cape and straw hat over his armor. Meng ordered the man held and interrogated; he turned out to be a fellow villager of Lü Meng's. "Although you come from my home region," the commander said, "you have violated my publicly proclaimed order and military law must therefore be applied." Tearfully, the man appealed: "I only feared that the rains would damage the armor issued to me, so I took the cape and cap to protect it. It was not for my personal use. Please, General, consider our bond as fellow townsmen." "I fully appreciate your intention," Lü Meng replied, "but when all is said and done, it is forbidden to take any article belonging to the people." He ordered the man removed and executed, and then ordered his head displayed publicly. Afterward he had head and body gathered up and buried. At the

interment Lü Meng wept. From then on, strict discipline prevailed throughout the armed forces.

Within a day Sun Quan and his forces arrived; Lü Meng received his lord outside of the city walls. After paying tribute to the achievement of the troops, Sun Quan ordered Pan Jun to resume control of civil administration of all Jiangling's affairs. He released Yu Jin from jail and sent him home to Cao Cao. Then he comforted the population, rewarded his men, and held a great banquet to celebrate the victory. On that occasion Sun Quan said to Lü Meng, "Jingzhou is now ours. But how can we recover Gong'an, which Fu Shiren holds, and Nanjun district, which Mi Fang governs?" As he spoke, someone stepped forward and said, "I think I can talk Fu Shiren into surrendering, and save us the effort of military action." The assembly turned to Yu Fan. Sun Quan said to him, "You must have some exceptional plan to induce Fu Shiren to surrender." "He and I have been close friends since childhood," Yu Fan responded. "If I can show him where his true interests lie, I am sure he will come over." Sun Quan was delighted and sent Yu Fan with five hundred soldiers straight to Gong'an.⁶

Fu Shiren, when he learned of the loss of Jingzhou, ordered a strict defense of his city. Yu Fan arrived to find the gates shut tight, so he wound a letter round an arrow and shot it over the wall. It was brought to Fu Shiren who studied carefully its call to surrender. Putting the letter aside, he thought, "When he departed, Lord Guan showed hatred for me.⁷ I'm better off surrendering." So he opened the gates and bade Yu Fan enter. The two men exchanged courtesies and discussed their old friendship. Yu Fan spoke of Sun Quan's magnanimity and honorable treatment of able men. Shiren was delighted and went with Yu Fan to Jiangling to deliver the seal of his office.

Greatly pleased, Sun Quan asked him to resume control of Gong'an. But Lü Meng whispered to Sun Quan, "Don't put him back in Gong'an while Lord Guan is still free, or he will turn on us before too long. Why not send him on to Nanjun to urge Mi Fang to surrender?" Accordingly, Sun Quan said to Shiren, "You and Mi Fang are old and good friends. If you can induce him to join our side, you will be richly rewarded." Fu Shiren agreed eagerly. Taking a dozen riders, he went to Nanjun. Indeed:

Fu Shiren lacked the will to defend his post.

If only Lord Guan had heeded Wang Fu's warning!

What was the outcome of Fu Shiren's mission?⁸

READ ON.



Xu Huang Wages War on the River Mian; Lord Guan Flees to Mai in Defeat

THE NEWS OF THE LOSS OF JIANGLING left Mi Fang completely nonplussed. Suddenly the arrival of Fu Shiren was announced. Mi Fang received him excitedly and asked his purpose in coming. "It is not that I am disloyal," Fu Shiren began, "but circumstances overwhelmed me. I could not maintain my position, and have surrendered to the Southland. I think, General, that an early surrender would be in your best interests, too." "We here," Mi Fang responded, "have enjoyed the favor of the king of Hanzhong. I could not bear to betray him." Shiren said, "At the time of his departure Lord Guan had little love for either of us. And the day he returns victorious, there will be no easy clemency for us, you can be sure. Look clearly at the situation." "My brother and I have long served the king of Hanzhong," Mi Fang went on. "I cannot simply turn against him without warning."

Torn between two choices, Mi Fang was informed of the arrival of a messenger from Lord Guan. Ushered into the reception room, the messenger said, "The army is short of grain. Lord Guan is looking particularly to Gong'an and Nanjun for one hundred thousand piculs of rice. He orders both of you generals to deliver it to the front immediately."¹ Astounded, Mi Fang said to Fu Shiren, "Jiangling has been taken by the south. How can I send this grain over to him?" Shiren retorted sharply, "Enough shillyshallying!" He drew his sword and killed the messenger right in the main hall. "Why did you do that?" Mi Fang exclaimed. Shiren replied, "Guan's purpose was nothing less than to have us killed. Are we supposed to tie our hands and wait quietly for that? If you don't surrender to the south, Guan is sure to kill you." At that moment it was reported that Lu Meng was marching on the city, and so the frightened Mi Fang went with Fu Shiren outside the walls and surrendered. Lü Meng was delighted and brought Mi Fang before Sun Quan, who rewarded both defectors richly. After reassuring the population, Sun Quan held a grand feast for the entire army.

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Cao Cao was in Xuchang meeting with his counselors on the Jingzhou situation when a messenger from the Southland arrived with Sun Quan's letter. The letter described the coming attack on Jingzhou and appealed to Cao Cao for joint operations against Lord Guan, closing with an admonition not to disclose the contents and thereby give Lord Guan the chance to prepare. In the ensuing discussion Cao Cao's first secretary, Dong Zhao, argued, "Lord Guan has Fan surrounded. The people there are desperate for relief. I think we should have this letter shot into the city of Fan to improve the morale of the troops and also to let Lord Guan know that the south is going to attack Jingzhou. Guan will withdraw rather than lose Jingzhou. We should then have Xu Huang fall upon Guan and his men and complete the victory." Cao Cao adopted Dong Zhao's proposal. He sent a man to urge Xu Huang to

fight at once; and he took personal command of a large force and marched to Yangling Slope, south of Luoyang, to aid Cao Ren. Zhao, argued, "Lord Guan has Fan surrounded. The people there are desperate for relief. I think we should have this letter shot into the city of Fan to improve the morale of the troops and also to let Lord Guan know that the south is going to attack Jingzhou. Guan will withdraw rather than lose Jingzhou. We should then have Xu Huang fall upon Guan and his men and complete the victory." Cao Cao adopted Dong Zhao's proposal. He sent a man to urge Xu Huang to fight at once; and he took personal command of a large force and marched to Yangling Slope, south of Luoyang, to aid Cao Ren.

Xu Huang was in his tent when Cao Cao's messenger arrived. "Today the king of Wei and his troops have passed Luoyang," he announced. "He commands you, General, to do battle with Lord Guan and relieve the siege at Fan without delay." At this moment a spy reported: "Guan Ping has encamped at Yan and Liao Hua at Sizhong in a string of twelve well-constructed bases in good communication with each other." Xu Huang immediately sent his lieutenant commanders, Xu Shang and Lü Jian, to fight Guan Ping at Yan—but they were to fly Xu Huang's colors as a decoy. Xu Huang himself took five hundred picked troops and, skirting the River Mian, went to surprise Yan from the rear.

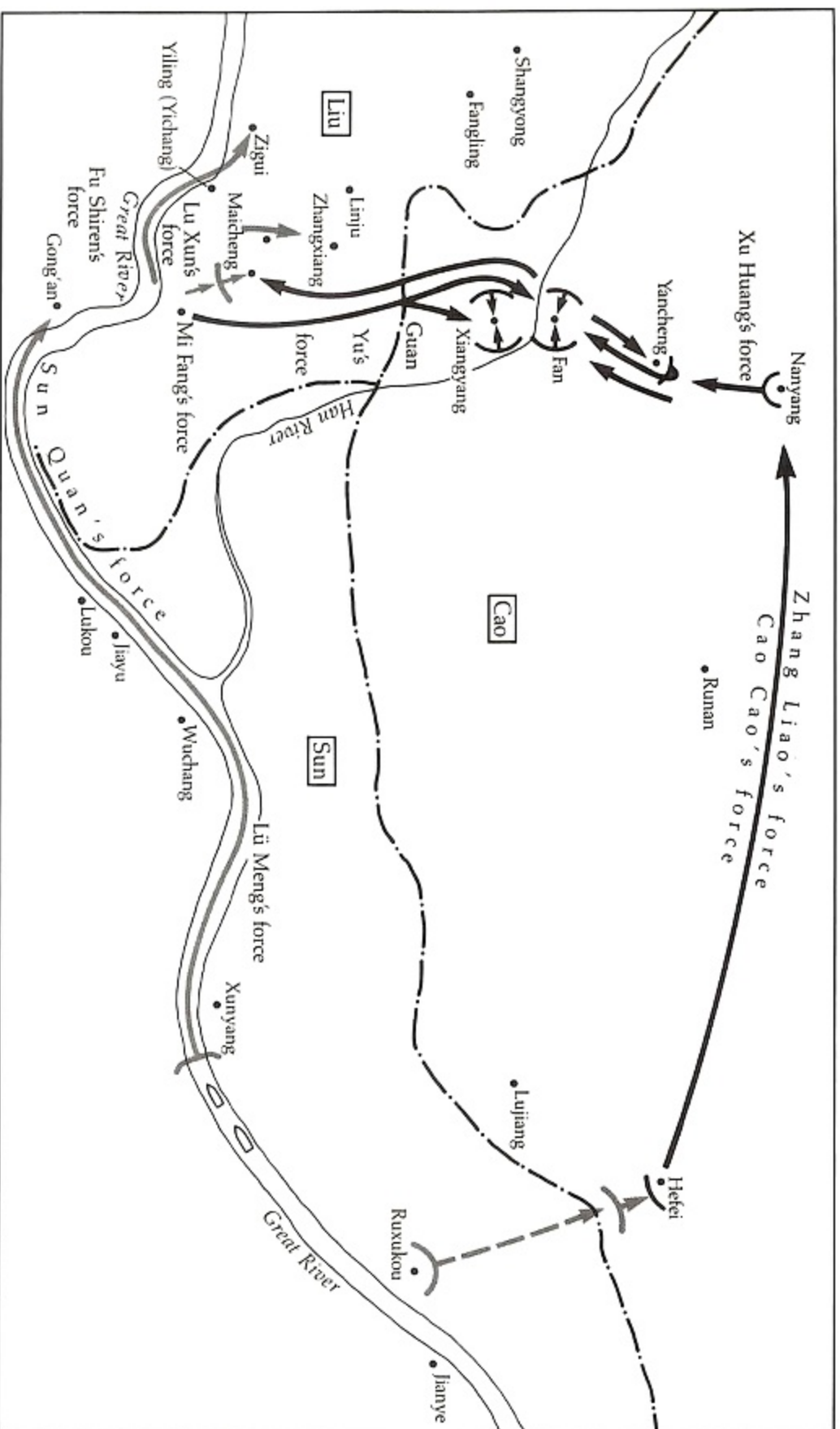
When Guan Ping heard that Xu Huang was marching toward him, he went to meet the enemy with his own unit. The two armies faced off and Guan Ping rode forth. After three clashes with Xu Shang, Guan Ping was victorious and Xu Shang fled. The second lieutenant commander, Lü Jian, took the field; but he too fled in defeat after five or six clashes. Guan Ping gave chase some twenty *li*, dealing bloody slaughter as he rode. A report of fire in his city brought him up short. Realizing he had fallen into a trap, Guan Ping wheeled around and went back to save Yan. But a force of well-deployed troops confronted him; at their head was Xu Huang. Poised on his horse, banners flying above him, he called out, "Guan Ping, worthy nephew. Have you no fear of death? The southerners hold your Jingzhou now, yet you refuse to behave yourself here!"

In great anger Ping gave rein, wheeling his blade and making straight for Xu Huang. But after they had locked weapons and broken three or four times, his men began shouting: Yan was burning down. No longer able to give himself to the fight, Guan Ping cut a great bloody swath as he charged headlong toward the second camp at Sizhong. Liao Hua received him, saying, "I hear that Lü Meng has taken Jingzhou. Our troops are close to panic. What are we going to do?" "It's a lie!" retorted Ping. "Execute anyone repeating it!" At that moment an express messenger brought word that Xu Huang had attacked the first position north of Yan. Guan Ping said to Liao Hua, "If that position is lost, our camps will not be secure. Here, however, we are right on the River Mian. The bastards won't dare approach. Let's go and relieve it."

Liao Hua instructed his own unit commanders: "You are to hold these camps and outworks at all costs. Signal by fire if the bastards come." The commanders replied, "The outworks at Sizhong are guarded by many rings of tree branches and defensive stakes. Not even a bird could get through. Never mind them!" So Guan Ping and Liao Hua mustered their best troops and headed for the first camp. Observing northern soldiers stationed on a low hill, Ping said to Liao Hua, "Xu Huang did not exploit the geography of this place. We can raid that camp tonight." "General," Liao Hua said, "you take half the troops and make the raid. I will hold the fort with the rest."

That night Guan Ping and a detachment of men fell upon the northern camp. Finding it empty, Ping realized he had entered a trap and withdrew swiftly, but Xu Shang and Lü Jian struck from both sides.

Ping, badly defeated, made it back to the first camp. Pressing their advantage, the northerners surrounded it. Guan Ping and Liao Hua abandoned the camp and struck out for Sizhong; but it was too late. Already flames were visible in the distance, and they arrived to find the walls of Sizhong flying northern flags. Guan Ping withdrew and fled down the main road to Fan.



MAP 7. The Southland retakes Jingzhou: key places and persons. Source: Wuhan budui silingbu junshi ziliao yanjiuzu, ed., *Zhongguo gudai zhanzheng yibai li* (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1979), p. 214.

Guan Ping and Liao Hua, blocked on the road by a detachment led by Xu Huang, managed to get away in desperate fighting. Back at camp they came before Lord Guan and said, "Xu Huang has taken Yan and the other bases. Cao Cao is bringing a major force in a three-pronged advance to the relief of Fan. And other reports say that Lü Meng has taken Jingzhou." "Lies!" Lord Guan shouted. "Lies spread by the enemy to weaken our morale. Lü Meng is seriously ill; some young fellow, Lu Xun, took his place. Nothing to worry about."

At this moment Xu Huang's army arrived. It was reported to Lord Guan, who called for his horse. Guan Ping said, "You cannot engage the enemy, Father, while your strength is still impaired." "I've known Xu Huang many years," Lord Guan replied, "and am fully aware of what he can and cannot do. If he doesn't pull back, I will take the initiative and kill him; that'll give the generals of the north a good scare!"

Lord Guan emerged, vigorous and fearless, appointed with sword and armor. As he rode, he struck fear into the northmen who saw him. He reined in and called out his challenge: "Xu Huang, where are you!" Where banners parted at the entrance to the northerners' camp, Xu Huang rode forth. He bowed deeply. "My lord," he began, "since we parted, many years have fled. Who would have thought your hair and beard would turn so grey! Yet well and fondly do I remember the lusty years of our companionship, when I gained much from your tutelage. Today the effect of your triumphs is felt throughout our land. It makes an old friend sigh in admiration. Here fortune grants us a meeting, and long-endured yearnings are appeased."

To this Lord Guan replied, "The friendship between us is deep indeed—deeper than any other. Why, then, have you time and again driven my son so utterly to the limit?" Xu Huang turned to the commanders behind him and cried out harshly, "A thousand pieces of gold to the man who takes his head!" Lord Guan was astonished. "My friend," he said, "how can you say this?" Xu Huang answered, "Today I serve the government. I am not one to set public duty aside for personal sentiment." With that, he took on Lord Guan in direct combat, his poleaxe whirling. In a fury Lord Guan met him with circling blade. After some eighty bouts Lord Guan finally felt his right arm begin to weaken, though his fighting skill was at its peak. Fearful for his father, Guan Ping hastily sounded the gongs, and Lord Guan rode back to the base.

All of a sudden a deafening clamor surrounded the camp. What had happened was this: the moment Cao Ren had heard that Cao Cao was coming to relieve Fan, he had led his troops out of the city and joined forces with Xu Huang. Together they attacked and routed the Jingzhou troops. Lord Guan took flight, riding pell-mell with his men to the upper reaches of the Xiang River, the troops of Wei in hot pursuit. Lord Guan crossed quickly and headed south for Xiangyang. On the way, an express courier found him and informed him that Jiangling had fallen and that Lü Meng had his family in custody. Lord Guan began to panic. Xiangyang was no longer safe, so he led his men toward Gong'an. But scouts brought a new report: "Fu Shiren has surrendered Gong'an to the south." Lord Guan was furious. Then his quartermaster arrived and announced, "Fu Shiren has gone to Nanjun, killed your messenger, and induced Mi Fang to surrender."

At this latest news, Lord Guan exploded in anger. His wound split open, and he passed out on the ground. When his commanders revived him, he said to Major Wang Fu, "Things would never have turned out so badly had I only heeded your advice." Lord Guan then asked, "What happened to the beacon flares along the river?" The scout replied, "The guards never got to raise their flares. Lü Meng crossed the river with his mariners dressed like merchants. The boats held crack troops, who

overwhelmed the station guards." Lord Guan staggered and groaned. "Trapped by the cunning enemy! How can I face my elder brother again?" Commissariat Chief Zhao Lei said, "The situation is critical. We must send to Chengdu for help. And we must take the land route to try and recapture Jiangling." Lord Guan agreed. He sent Ma Liang and Yi Ji racing west to Chengdu with letters seeking aid. Lord Guan himself set out for Jiangling; he took the van, Guan Ping and Liao Hua the rear.

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The siege of Fan was lifted. Cao Ren led his commanders to see Cao Cao, before whom he prostrated himself and tearfully confessed his fault.² Cao Cao said, "What Heaven ordains is no fault of yours." Cao Cao rewarded the army richly and then personally inspected the outworks at the recently conquered Sizhong. Turning to his commanders, he said, "For Xu Huang to have penetrated their moat and barricades of branches is a great achievement. In more than thirty years of soldiering I have never been able to break through enemy outworks straightaway. Xu Huang excels in tactics as well as courage." The commanders, too, expressed great admiration.

Cao Cao withdrew and repositioned at Mopo. When Xu Huang arrived, Cao Cao received him outside of the base, noting with satisfaction how Xu Huang's troops moved in orderly ranks with great precision. "General Xu upholds the great tradition of Zhou Yafu!"³ Cao Cao exclaimed, and he honored Xu Huang with the title General Who Vanquishes the South. Xu Huang and Xiahou Shang then went to Xiangyang to check Lord Guan while Cao Cao posted his troops at Mopo, awaiting word of the pacification of Jingzhou.

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Lord Guan had no base and nowhere to turn. He said to Zhao Lei, "The southern forces are ahead, the northern behind. I am caught in the middle, and no rescue has come."⁴ What are we to do?" Zhao Lei answered, "Lü Meng once wrote to Your Lordship from Lukou committing himself to the common effort to punish the traitor Cao. Now, instead, he is helping Cao Cao by attacking us. I advise you to station the army here, Your Lordship, and write to Lü Meng reproving him for betraying the alliance. See what he says." Lord Guan sent a messenger to Jiangling.

In Jiangling in Jingzhou, Lü Meng had issued orders that the families of the warriors accompanying Lord Guan, whatever district they might be in, were to be issued monthly rations, shielded from any harassment, and provided with medical care. The grateful families went on with their lives peacefully. When Lord Guan's representative arrived, Lü Meng met him outside the wall and welcomed him into the city as an honored guest. On delivery of Lord Guan's letter, Lü Meng told the messenger, "In concluding an accord with General Guan, I acted on my own. Today I am under orders. I am not my own master here, and I must trouble you, when you report back to the general, to convey my view as amicably as you can." Lü Meng ordered a banquet for the representative and escorted him to the post station, where the families of Lord Guan's warriors surrounded him for news. Some pressed letters on him and some gave him spoken messages, all to the effect that the families were well and had enough food and clothing. Lü Meng escorted Lord Guan's courier outside the city.

When the messenger brought back Lü Meng's answer and the tidings of Lord Guan's and his commanders' families, Lord Guan was moved to rage. "Treacherous, treasonous tricks!" he cried.

"But I will take revenge, for I will kill him while I live, or else after I am dead!" Lord Guan roughly sent the messenger out, and the man was quickly surrounded by commanders seeking news of their families. As they took in hand the letters from home and learned of the security and comfort their loved ones enjoyed and the pains Lü Meng had taken to be considerate, the commanders felt grateful and began to lose their will to fight.

Lord Guan led his army on toward Jiangling, but during breaks in the march many there deserted and fled. Hate and anger rose up in him, and he pressed the army to advance. Suddenly there was a thunderous clamor. A band of soldiers blocked his way, at the head a chief commander—Jiang Qin. Reining in, he raised his spear and shouted, "Guan! Surrender now!" Lord Guan swore back, "I am a Han general and will never surrender to a rebel!" Laying on the whip, his blade dancing, Guan went for Jiang Qin. The clash was brief. Qin fled in defeat. Lord Guan had pursued him some twenty *li*, when more shouting began. On the left Han Dang came charging out of a ravine; on the right Zhou Tai came out of another. Then Jiang Qin reversed direction and gave battle. Caught between three forces, Lord Guan pulled back and fled.

After proceeding several *li* Lord Guan saw groups of men on the ridges of some hills to the south. Near them, a white flag bearing the words "Natives of Jingzhou" caught the breeze. They shouted down a plea: "All native warriors surrender quickly!" Lord Guan wanted to rush the hills and kill them. But he was assaulted by two more units, which had sprung from the shady side of the hills: to the left, Ding Feng; to the right, Xu Sheng. Their men now joined those of Jiang Qin, Han Dang, and Zhou Tai. Amid earth-shaking yells and drums and horns that filled the sky with noise, they closed in. Lord Guan's immediate commanders were slowly being eliminated as the fighting wore on into the sunset. Lord Guan saw Jingzhou troops on the surrounding hills, brothers calling to brothers, sons searching for fathers and fathers for sons. It went on and on; the men were turning against him, quitting in response to the calls, ignoring Lord Guan's commands. Soon he was left with only three hundred followers.⁵

The fighting went on into the third watch. Due east a great cry went up. It was Guan Ping and Liao Hua. They had broken through the encirclement to rescue Lord Guan. Guan Ping said, "The troops are out of control. We have to get to a fortified place and hold it until help comes. The town of Mai, though small, should serve." Lord Guan approved and urged his remnant force toward the town. After entering, they sealed the four gates tight. Then they took counsel. Zhao Lei said, "We are close to Shangyong. Liu Feng and Meng Da are defending it. Send to them for help. Even a small contingent, just to relieve us until a larger force comes from the Riverlands, will restore morale."

At this moment it was reported that Southland troops had surrounded Mai. Lord Guan asked, "Who will break out and go to Shangyong for help?" Liao Hua volunteered, and Guan Ping agreed to escort him through the enemy lines. Lord Guan composed a letter, which Liao Hua concealed on his person. The two volunteers supped well, mounted, and went out the gate. Ding Feng of the Southland confronted them. Guan Ping attacked valiantly and drove him off. Seizing the moment, Liao Hua got through the siege and made for Shangyong. Guan Ping reentered the city and resolutely refused to appear.

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Liu Feng and Meng Da, since occupying Shangyong, had received the submission of Shen Dan, the

district governor. As a result, the king of Hanzhong appointed Liu Feng deputy general to guard the city together with Meng Da. Liu Feng and Meng Da were conferring about Lord Guan's defeats when Liao Hua arrived and was conducted to their quarters. "Lord Guan's army is defeated," Liao Hua announced. "He is under siege at Mai. The danger is great, and the Riverlands relief force needs time to get there. He sent me through the enemy lines for help. We are counting on you two to rally your troops to aid us. The slightest delay could mean the fall of my lord." Liu Feng suggested that Liao Hua rest himself while he considered the request. Liao Hua went to the guesthouse to await the muster of the troops.

Liu Feng said to Meng Da, "Uncle Guan is in deep trouble. What can we do?" "The Southland has superb troops and fearless commanders," Meng Da replied. "Moreover, all of Jingzhou now belongs to them. He has only Mai—a pitiful piece of ground. Further, we have heard that Cao Cao has marched to Mopo with four or five hundred thousand. I don't see how our little mountain-town army can do anything about two powerful enemies. We should not risk it." "That makes sense to me," Liu Feng replied. "But Lord Guan is my uncle. I can't sit back and watch without doing something." Meng Da smiled as he replied, "You say you hold him as your uncle, General. I am afraid he does not necessarily hold you as his nephew. I have heard that Lord Guan was awfully upset earlier when the king of Hanzhong adopted you. After the king of Hanzhong formally assumed the kingship, he asked Kongming about the selection of the heir apparent. Kongming said he was reluctant to interfere in family affairs and suggested the king ask Lord Guan and Zhang Fei, so the king sent a man to Jingzhou for Lord Guan's opinion. Lord Guan said that a foster son⁶ could not rightfully be instated and advised the king to send you to this remote outpost to avoid trouble in the future. This matter is widely known. I am surprised that you know nothing of it. Why should you now run the risk of going to war out of sentimental attachment to 'the bond of uncle and nephew'?"

To this advice Liu Feng responded, "What you say is true, but what excuse can I make?" "Simply tell him," Meng Da answered, "that the town has just become part of our kingdom and we might lose it if we rush into war before the people have fully accepted us." Liu Feng agreed. The next day he summoned Liao Hua and told him: "We have just established ourselves here and cannot spare any troops for the rescue." Liao Hua was astounded. He knocked his head on the ground, crying, "Then my lord is done for!" "Even if we went," Meng Da said to him, "how could one cup of water put out a cartload of burning wood? Return, General, and await patiently the forces of the Riverlands." Liao Hua pressed his appeal passionately. But Liu Feng and Meng Da flicked their sleeves and withdrew. Liao Hua knew the situation was hopeless and decided to appeal to the king of Hanzhong. With a great shout of defiance, then, he left the city and headed for Chengdu.⁷

. . . .

In Mai, Lord Guan waited expectantly for relief from Shangyong. But no sign came. Only five or six hundred men remained to him, and most of those had been wounded. A shortage of rations was causing severe suffering. Suddenly a man appeared at the town wall; he called out, "Hold your arrows!" and asked for an audience. Lord Guan ordered the gates opened, and Zhuge Jin entered. The formalities concluded, tea was served. Zhuge Jin began, "At the command of my lord, Sun Quan, I come to appeal to your reason. The ancient saying runs, 'Whoever recognizes the exigencies of the occasion is a paragon of men.' The nine districts of Jingzhou no longer belong to you. You are

reduced to this single paltry town, bereft of resources within and assistance without. If you do not fall in the morning, you will in the evening. Therefore take this advice: give your allegiance to the lord of the Southland, and he will restore your position as guardian of Xiangyang and preserve your family. Favor this suggestion, my lord, with your fullest consideration."

His expression all rectitude, Lord Guan replied, "I am but a warrior from Jieliang. By my lord's favor he and I became brothers. I cannot betray my honor and throw in my lot with the enemy. If this town falls, what is left to me is death. Jade may break, but its whiteness will never change. Bamboo may burn, but its joints will always remain. The man may fall, but his name will come down through history. You may say no more. Be pleased to withdraw. I wish to decide all with Sun Quan in a fight to the finish." To this, Zhuge Jin replied, "Lord Sun wanted to form an alliance with you, based on marriage, so that we could unite against Cao Cao and uphold the house of Han. We harbor no other ambition. Why must you cling to these misconceptions, my lord?" Before Zhuge Jin could finish, Guan Ping had pulled his sword and was making for the visitor. Lord Guan stopped him. "His younger brother Kongming is in the Riverlands serving as your uncle's right-hand man. If you kill him, you will offend his brother." Lord Guan then ordered Zhuge Jin driven away. His face suffused with humiliation, Zhuge Jin left Mai and rode back to see Sun Quan. "Adamant," Jin reported to Sun Quan, "no one can persuade him." "A model of loyalty," said Sun Quan. "What is our next step?"

Lü Fan suggested, "Let me forecast with the *Book of Changes*." Sun Quan ordered the forecast. Lü Fan drew the milfoil and the stalks formed a pattern—the hexagram "Master" composed of earth above water.⁸ In addition, Dark Tortoise, the northern quadrant of the sky, hovered overhead, meaning that an enemy would flee a great distance. "If the hexagram indicates distant flight," Sun Quan said to Lü Meng, "what would be the manner of apprehending the fugitive?" Lü Meng smiled as he said, "The hexagram's patterns fit perfectly with our plans. Lord Guan may have Heaven-mounting wings, but he cannot outfly our nets!" Indeed:

When a dragon's in a ditch, the shrimp will tease it;
When a phoenix enters the coop, the hens will mock it.

How did Lü Meng intend to capture Lord Guan?

READ ON.



***At Mount Yuquan Lord Guan Manifests a Divine Presence;
In Luoyang City Cao Cao Feels the Force of His Soul***

LU MENG OFFERED SUN QUAN the following plan: "Guan has few troops and is unlikely to flee by the main road. He'll take the steep path just north of Mai. Have Zhu Ran place five thousand of our best men there in ambush twenty *li* down the way and strike after the enemy passes. They'll be in no mood to fight and will flee toward Linju. Then let Pan Zhang hide another five thousand men in the hills by Linju—we will have Lord Guan! For now, attack Mai on all sides except the north and wait for them to go out through there." Sun Quan agreed and asked Lü Fan to judge the prospects of this plan in the light of the *Book of Changes*. When the hexagram had been formed, Lü Fan announced, "The hexagram signifies an enemy fleeing northwest. Well before midnight¹ Guan is sure to be caught." Satisfied, Sun Quan ordered Zhu Ran and Pan Zhang to carry out Lü Meng's plan.

Inside Mai,² Lord Guan counted up his forces. Of infantry and cavalry there remained a mere three hundred all told. His grain and fodder were exhausted. During the night southern soldiers called out the names of their brethren within the walls, many of whom slipped over and fled, for no sign of rescue was to be seen. At his wits' end, Lord Guan said to Wang Fu, "How I regret ignoring your good advice. In the present crisis, what more can be done?" Wang Fu wept as he answered, "Not even the ancient strategist Jiang Ziya could find a way out!" And Zhao Lei said, "We have had no relief from Shangyong because Liu Feng and Meng Da won't act on our appeal. Why not abandon this isolated town and flee for the Riverlands, reorganize an army and plan the reconquest of Jingzhou?" "That's my own inclination," Lord Guan replied. Then he ascended the wall and saw few enemy troops around the north gate.

Lord Guan asked a resident of Mai, "What is the terrain like going north?" "North of here," the reply went, "are paths in the foothills that lead to the Riverlands." "That's the route I want to take," Lord Guan said. But Wang Fu objected: "Small roads are vulnerable to ambush. Take the main road." "Even so," Lord Guan answered, "I'm not afraid." With that, he issued an order for all his soldiers and officers to pack and dress for the evacuation. Again Wang Fu wept as he said, "My lord, take care on the roads. I will remain here with one hundred men and hold Mai to the death. If they take the town, we will not submit but wait for you to rescue us.

Lord Guan and Wang Fu parted tearfully. Then, leaving Mai in the hands of Wang Fu and Zhou Cang, Guan bolted out the north gate accompanied by Guan Ping, Zhao Lei, and two hundred followers. Lord Guan rode with his sword leveled for action. By the end of the first watch, when he had gone about twenty *li*, drums and gongs began sounding from the pockets and hollows in the hills. Voices rang in the air as a band of troops appeared, Zhu Ran at the head. He charged, spear raised, and shouted: "Go no further! Surrender or die!" Lord Guan advanced, whirling his blade. Zhu Ran fled at once; Lord Guan pursued hotly. At the sound of the drum, troops sprang up on all sides.

Resistance was unthinkable; Lord Guan fled by a narrow road toward Linju. Zhu Ran harried the rear, reducing Lord Guan's retinue.

After another four or five *li* Lord Guan was confronted with earth-shaking cries and sky-reaching flames as Pan Zhang charged in for the kill. Maddened, Lord Guan met him. After three clashes Pan Zhang fled in defeat; but Lord Guan could not afford to continue fighting, and headed out toward the hills. Guan Ping overtook him and reported that Zhao Lei had fallen in the melee. Sorrow and despair overcame Lord Guan. He ordered Ping to cover the rear while he forged ahead. A dozen followers were all that remained to him.

Lord Guan came to a place called Breach in the Rocks where the hills squeezed the road. Reeds and shriveled grass grew against the hills, crowded by tangles of shrubs and trees. The fifth watch had nearly ended. Suddenly a voice cried out, springing another ambush. Spear-length hooks and loops reached out and yanked Lord Guan from his mount. As he tumbled to the ground, Pan Zhang's commander, Ma Zhong, took him prisoner. Guan Ping rushed to his father's aid. But Pan Zhang and Zhu Ran had surrounded him. Ping fought on, alone, until he was spent; then they took him, too. As the day broke, Sun Quan was informed of the capture of Lord Guan and his son. Immensely pleased, he called his commanders together.

After a short while Ma Zhong hustled Lord Guan into Sun Quan's tent. Sun Quan said, "General, out of long-standing admiration for your splendid virtues, I sought to work out a liaison through marriage. Why did you spurn the offer? You have ever clung to the view that you are without peer in the empire. How has it come about that you are my prisoner today? Do you, General, acknowledge yourself beaten?" Lord Guan damned him harshly: "Green-eyed scamp! Red-whiskered rodent! I gave my allegiance to Imperial Uncle Liu in the peach garden when we swore to uphold the house of Han. What would I be doing in the ranks of traitors in revolt such as you? Now that I have blundered into your treacherous devices, death alone remains. There is no more to say."

Sun Quan turned to his assembled officers. "Lord Guan," he said, "is one of the valiant champions of our time, a man I cherish deeply. I propose that we treat him with the utmost courtesy to encourage him to come over to us. What do you say?" First Secretary Zuo Xian said, "It will not work. That time when Cao Cao had him, he enfeoffed him as a lord, granted him rank, and feasted him—every third day a minor banquet, every fifth day a major one. Whenever he got on his horse, Cao handed him gold. Whenever he got down from his horse, Cao handed him silver. With such kindnesses Cao failed to hold him, and saw Guan leave and kill his pass guards on the way. And today Cao Cao is on the verge of shifting his capital to avoid the thrust of Guan's offensive. My lord, Guan is our captive. If you do not do away with him immediately, I fear the consequences."

Sun Quan pondered for some time until he admitted the truth of the secretary's words and ordered the prisoner removed. And so Lord Guan and his son, Ping, were beheaded in the twelfth month of the twenty-fourth year of Jian An (A. D. 220). Lord Guan was fifty-eight years of age. A poet of later times has left these lines expressing his sorrow and admiration:

Unrivaled in the latter years of Han,
Lord Guan towered high above all men.
Bold in arms by dint of godlike might,
He knew his letters in a scholar's right.
Like glare of day, his heart reflected true,

His *Spring and Autumn* honor touched the clouds—
A shining spirit to live through history,
Not just the crowning glory of a world in three.

Another verse says:

For the paragon of men, look back to Jieliang;
There men vie to honor Lord Guan of the Han.
For the peach grove brother oath he sealed one day,
A thousand autumns' tribute of royal rites.
His manly soul had power like wind or thunder;
His glowing purpose shone like sun or moon.
And now the realm abounds in statued shrines
With winter-braving crows on olden boughs.

After the passing of Lord Guan, his glorious steed, Red Hare, captured by Ma Zhong, was presented to Sun Quan, who made Ma Zhong a gift of the horse. But Red Hare refused to eat and died after several days.

Inside the town of Mai, meanwhile, Wang Fu, trembling and fearful, asked Zhou Cang, "Last night our lord came to me in a dream. Covered with gore, he stood before me. As I questioned him, I woke with a violent start. What does it signify?" Then came the report: the southerners were at the gate with the heads of Lord Guan and Guan Ping, calling for the surrender of the town. Wang Fu and Zhou Cang quickly climbed the wall and looked down at the heads. The report was all too true. Wang Fu let out a cry and fell to his death. Zhou Cang cut his throat. Thus, the town of Mai, too, came into the possession of the Southland.

The vapor from Lord Guan's soul remained undissolved, floating attenuated until it came to rest on Jade Springs Hill in Dangyang county, Jingmenzhou. On the hill lived an old monk whose Buddhist name was Pujing, or Universal Purity. He was the abbot of Zhenguo Temple at the Si River pass.³ In his jaunts through the realm, he had come to the mountain and, attracted by its charming scenery, had built himself a thatched shelter there. In this hermitage he would seat himself for meditation each day, searching for the truth of life. Beside him was a single novice; they lived on the food they could beg.

The night Lord Guan died, the moon glowed pale and a breeze blew cool and fresh. Some time after the third watch, as the monk was sitting in meditation, a voice in the sky called out, "Return my head." Pujing scrutinized the air. A man was riding the steed Red Hare and brandishing the sword Green Dragon. Two men were in his train, a general of fair complexion and a swarthy man with curling whiskers. Together the three alighted from a cloud onto the summit of Jade Springs Hill. Pujing realized that it was Lord Guan and struck the door with a deer-tail whisk for protection against the spirit. He said, "Lord Guan, where are you now?" Lord Guan's glowing cloud-soul seemed to comprehend instantly as it dismounted and dropped on the wind before the monk's hut. Palms together, the wraith spoke: "Who are you, master? I would know your name-in-Buddha." "This old monk is known as Pujing," he replied. "We met once before at the Zhenguo Temple, my lord. Can you have forgotten?"

Replied Lord Guan: "My gratitude for the help you once gave me is engraved in my memory. A

calamity has befallen me, and I appeal to you now for the redeeming counsel that will point me out of the darkness of my wandering." "Right and wrong, past and present are relevant no more; retribution follows human action with the certainty of fate," the monk answered. "Now you cry out for your head, having met your death at the hands of Lü Meng. From whom shall Yan Liang, Wen Chou, Cao Cao's six pass guards, and the countless others whom you killed seek their heads?" In a flash Lord Guan realized the truth and, bowing his head in submission to Buddha's law of Karma, he departed.⁴ Thereafter he frequently manifested himself in divine form on Jade Springs Hill to afford protection to the common people. And the local dwellers showed their gratitude by building a temple on the summit, where they made offerings each season. Later someone inscribed the following couplet on the temple wall:

Behind the ruddy face, a ruby heart—
Lord Guan astride Red Hare outrode the wind.
But far as he rode, he served the Fire King.⁵

By oil lamp light he studied history;
In war he trusted to his dragon sword.
His inmost thought would welcome light of day.⁶

Now that Lord Guan was dead, Sun Quan consolidated his hold on all the territories of Jingzhou. After rewarding all units of the army, he held a grand banquet for the commanders in honor of Lü Meng. Turning to the assembly, Sun Quan said, "After long frustration, our easy acquisition of Jingzhou is owing to the meritorious service of Lü Meng." Lü Meng tried repeatedly to decline the testimonial, but Sun Quan continued, "At an earlier time, Zhou Yu, a man of exceptional talent and vision, defeated Cao Cao at Red Cliffs. Alas, he died prematurely and was replaced by Lu Su, who in his very first interview with me broached a grand imperial strategy for the Southland—the first boon. When Cao Cao descended upon us, I was universally counseled to surrender. Lu Su alone urged me to call in Zhou Yu, to oppose and attack Cao Cao—the second boon. The only fault I found in Lu Su is that he talked me into allowing Liu Bei to borrow Jingzhou. But today it is you, Lü Meng—you worked out the strategy for retaking Jingzhou, and thus you excel the other two by far."

Sun Quan personally poured out wine and presented it to Lü Meng. Lü Meng received it and was about to drink, when he dashed the cup to the ground instead and seized Sun Quan with one hand. "Green-eyed scamp!" he screamed. "Red-whiskered rodent! Have you forgotten me? Or not?" The assemblage looked aghast. Everyone moved to rescue Sun Quan, but Meng knocked him to the ground, strode to his throne, and seated himself upon it. Meng's eyebrows arched, his eyes grew round and prominent as he bellowed, "I have crisscrossed the empire for thirty-odd years since defeating the Yellow Scarves, only to have your treacherous trap sprung on me. But if I have failed to taste your flesh in life, Lü Meng, I shall give your soul no peace in death—for I am Guan Yunchang, lord of Hanshou precinct!"⁷

Fear-stricken, Sun Quan led the assemblage in offering obeisance. But lo! Lü Meng collapsed on the ground, blood ran out of his orifices, and he died. There was general terror. Sun Quan had Lü Meng's corpse coffined and buried, and posthumously appointed Meng governor of Nanjun and lord of Chanling; Meng's son, Ba, inherited his rank. Thereafter Sun Quan was tormented with anxiety over

the execution of Lord Guan.

Unexpectedly, Zhang Zhao arrived from the southern capital, Jianye; he was summoned by Sun Quan. "My lord," Zhang Zhao said, "when you put Lord Guan and his son to death, you brought the Southland to the verge of disaster, for the man had bound himself to Liu Bei. By the peach garden oath they swore to live and die as one. Today Liu Bei controls the forces of all the Riverlands. Add to that the cunning of Zhuge Liang and the valor of the remaining 'Tiger Generals,' Zhang Fei, Huang Zhong, Ma Chao, and Zhao Zilong—when Liu Bei learns how Lord Guan and Guan Ping died, he will mobilize the whole kingdom and do his utmost for revenge, a threat the Southland is going to find difficult to meet." Badly shaken by Zhang Zhao's words, Sun Quan stamped his feet as he said, "I have miscalculated. What can we do about it?"

"All is not lost, my lord," Zhang Zhao replied. "I have a plan to keep the westerners from attacking and thus keep Jingzhou as secure as a rock." "Tell us," said Sun Quan. Zhang Zhao went on, "Cao Cao has command of a million men. His glance scours the empire like a tiger's. But Liu Bei's urgent wish for revenge will require him to come to terms with Cao Cao. The Southland will hardly survive if those two combine forces and invade, so you would be well advised to make the first move. Have Lord Guan's head sent to Cao Cao in such a way as to make it appear to Liu Bei that it was all at Cao's direction. His animosity will be redirected toward Cao Cao and his armies will turn on the kingdom of Wei while we observe the fortunes of both and from a neutral vantage seize our opportunity."

Sun Quan agreed, and the head was taken in a wooden box to Cao Cao. At the time Cao Cao had just returned to Luoyang from Mopo. Hearing that Sun Quan had sent Lord Guan's head, Cao Cao exclaimed delightedly, "With him dead, I shall spend my nights secure indeed." But a member of the court stepped forward and said, "This is actually a device for transferring disaster away from the Southland." Cao Cao studied the speaker, First Secretary Sima Yi. Cao Cao demanded an explanation, and Sima Yi replied, "At the time when Liu, Guan, and Zhang pledged their honor in the peach garden, they swore to die for one another. Now, having put Lord Guan to death, the Southland fears the brothers' reprisal. That is why Sun Quan presented the head to Your Majesty—to make Liu Bei shift his hatred and attack us instead of them, while they look for ways to exploit the situation."

"What you say is correct," Cao Cao responded to Sima Yi, "but how do we get out of it?" "It is not difficult at all," Sima Yi replied. "Let Your Highness have Lord Guan's head fitted with torso and limbs carved of fragrant wood so that he may be buried whole with the ceremony due a high minister. When Liu Bei learns of it, his hatred for Sun Quan will deepen, and he will concentrate on the southern expedition. Then we can sit back and await developments. If the Riverlands is winning, we attack the Southland; if the Southland is winning, we attack the Riverlands. Once one falls, the other cannot last."

Delighted with the scheme, Cao Cao called in the messenger from the Southland. The messenger presented the wooden box. Cao Cao opened it and saw Lord Guan's face, just as it had been in life. With a smile, Cao Cao said, "You have been well, I trust, General, since we parted?"⁸ Before Cao Cao could finish, the mouth opened, the eyes moved, and the hair and beard stood up like quills. Cao fell in a faint, reviving only after a long spell. He said to the officers who had rushed to his aid, "General Guan is no mortal!" The messenger told Cao Cao how Lord Guan had taken possession of Lü Meng, reviled Sun Quan, and then hounded Meng himself. Cao Cao shivered at the report.

Adopting Sima Yi's advice, he held a grand ceremony with sacrificial animals and libations honoring the great man as a prince before burying his head and the wooden corpse outside the southern gate of Luoyang. Cao Cao ordered officials of all ranks to attend the funeral, and he personally made offerings and advanced Lord Guan's rank to prince of Jingzhou. Guards were then dispatched to the tomb, and the Southland messenger was sent home to report.

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When the king of Hanzhong returned to Chengdu from the eastern Riverlands, Fa Zheng petitioned him: "Your Majesty's former wife has left the world, and Lady Sun has gone home to the south, unlikely to return. But this great principle of human relations cannot be ignored forever. You shall have to take another royal wife to aid in domestic matters." When the king consented, Fa Zheng continued, "Wu Yi has a younger sister who is attractive and virtuous. Once a reader of faces predicted that she would rise high. She had been promised to Liu Mao, son of the late Protector Liu Yan. But due to Mao's premature death, she has lived in widowed retirement. She would make a suitable consort for Your Highness." The king replied, "It is unthinkable. Liu Mao was my kinsman." "In terms of propinquity," Fa Zheng argued, "how is it different from the case of Duke Wen of Jin, Chong Er, and Huai Ying?"⁹ And so the king of Hanzhong relented and accepted Lady Wu as his royal consort. Later, she bore him two sons, Liu Yung (Gongshou) and Liu Li (Fengxiao).

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In both the eastern and the western sections of the Riverlands the population was contented, the kingdom was prosperous, and the harvests were large. Suddenly a report came from Jingzhou that the Southland had sought a state marriage with Lord Guan and that he had rejected it. "Jingzhou will fall," Kongming said. "Lord Guan must be recalled and someone sent to replace him." As they were speaking, more reports streamed in, followed by Guan Xing, who told them how Lord Guan had flooded seven armies at Fan. Soon another rider brought word that Lord Guan had set up an impenetrable net of signal stations along the river. This last report eased Xuande's worries.

One day, however, Xuande was seized with trembling. Walking or sitting, he could find no peace. That night, unable to sleep, he sat in his inner chamber reading by candlelight. Feeling his senses darken, he sank, unconscious, onto the table. A chilly gust sprang up inside the room; the candle blew out, then rekindled. Xuande raised his head and saw a man's form standing by the lamp. "Who comes to my room in dead of night?" he demanded, but there was no reply. Puzzled, Xuande arose to examine him: it was Lord Guan, moving back and forth evasively beside the lamp. "Worthy brother, have you been well since we parted?" Xuande asked. "You must have some serious reason for coming here in the dead of night. You and I are as kindred. Why do you avoid me?"

Lord Guan appealed through his sobs: "I beg my brother, raise an army; avenge me." So saying, he was no more as another chilly gust swept by. Waking from the dream to the beating of the third drum, Xuande rushed bewildered from his room calling for Kongming. Kongming came, and Xuande reported his alarming dream. "This is all because Lord Guan is much on Your Highness's mind. Do not vex yourself so." Xuande voiced his anxieties, and Kongming tried his best to soothe him.

After taking leave of his lord, Kongming came upon Xu Jing at the gate. Jing said, "I was just at your residence, Director General, to deliver a secret report. They said I'd find you here in the

palace." "What is it?" asked Kongming. "The rumor is that Lü Meng of the Southland has surprised Jingzhou and that Lord Guan has been killed." "Last night I was observing the heavens," Kongming said. "A martial star fell over the Jingzhou area. It told me that Lord Guan must have met his doom. But I chose to keep silent because of His Highness's anxieties." As the two men were speaking, someone came out of the building and seized Kongming's sleeve. "How can you try to keep such evil news from me!" It was Xuande! Kongming and Xu Jing made obeisance and said, "These rumors cannot be taken seriously. Let Your Highness be calm and free of anxiety." "Yunchang and I swore to die as one," Xuande cried. "I would not be able to live on without him."

Kongming and Xu Jing tried to calm him. But at that moment an attendant announced the arrival of Ma Liang and Yi Ji. The two men were rushed before Xuande. They reported the fall of Jingzhou, Lord Guan's defeat, and his request for aid; they also submitted his letter of appeal. Before Xuande had time to read it, the arrival of Liao Hua from Jingzhou was announced. He too was brought swiftly before Xuande. Liao Hua threw himself to the ground, weeping as he told how Liu Feng and Meng Da had refused to send forces to rescue Lord Guan. Xuande was astounded. "In that case, my brother is done for," he exclaimed. Kongming added, "For spiting us so, death is too gentle for those two. Stay calm, Your Highness, and I will take an army to Jingzhou myself and save the province." But Xuande cried out, "I cannot endure life without my brother. I will go to his rescue tomorrow myself." Xuande sent someone to Langzhong to notify Zhang Fei while he himself set about mustering the army.

Before day had dawned, reports of the catastrophe in Jingzhou were streaming in, telling of Lord Guan's night flight to Linju, his capture by the southerners, his refusal to dishonor his pledge of loyalty to Xuande, and his final dispatch together with his son, Ping. After hearing the whole tale, Xuande uttered a dreadful cry and fell unconscious to the ground. Indeed:

Thinking of their vow to die as one,
Could he bear to let him die alone?

Would Xuande revive?¹⁰

READ ON.



***Treating an Affliction, a Famous Practitioner Dies;
Delivering the Last Command, the Tyrant Ends His Days¹***

THE KING OF HANZHONG DROPPED TO THE GROUND, grieving for Lord Guan and his son. Military officers and court officials rushed to offer him assistance. Finally the king revived, and they helped him to his rooms. "Try to stay calm," Kongming urged him. "From the beginning of time, death has been ordained. Lord Guan's willful arrogance caused this catastrophe.² Your Highness must guard your precious health while we plan revenge step by step." "I took an oath of brotherhood with Lord Guan and Zhang Fei," Xuande answered. "We vowed to die as one. With Lord Guan gone, what meaning do wealth and honor have for me?"

As Xuande was speaking, Guan Xing entered, wailing piteously. At the sight of Lord Guan's son, Xuande cried out and fainted again. Officers rushed to his side. Five times Xuande fell from grief that day. For three days, refusing all food and drink, he howled out his pain until his cries brought flecks of blood to his tear-soaked robes. Kongming and the officers pressed him to desist, but he said, "Neither this sun nor this moon shall I share with the Southland: so I swear." "They say," Kongming responded, "that the Southland has presented Lord Guan's head to Cao Cao, who has interred him with royal ceremony." "What does it mean?" Xuande asked. "It means," Kongming replied, "that the Southland is trying to shift the blame for his death to Cao Cao—who, however, has seen through the scheme and buried Lord Guan with full honors so that your revenge may fall on the Southland." "Then," Xuande answered, "we must bare our weapons now and visit that vengeance on the south."³

Kongming objected: "That we must not do, for the south would have us embroiled in the north just as the north would have us in the south, each evolving its own schemes and awaiting the opportunity to strike. Your Highness needs to refrain from action for now and simply initiate the funeral services for Lord Guan. When the accord between north and south breaks down, we can start our punitive expedition."⁴ The assembly of officials joined in earnest appeal, and Xuande finally accepted food; then he ordered the armed forces from the generals down to the rank and file to go into mourning. In front of the southern gate of the capital the king personally led the rites for summoning the souls of the dead and performed the sacrifices. His lamentation continued the entire day.

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Lord Guan had been interred at Luoyang, but he continued to appear in Cao Cao's mind's eye. Cao put the matter to his officials, who said, "Vengeful ghosts haunt the old buildings in the supplementary palace here. You must build a new residence." "I have been planning," Cao Cao responded, "to construct a residence to be called Foundation Hall, but I lack a skilled architect." "Su Yue is one of Luoyang's best," Jia Xu suggested. At Cao Cao's invitation, Su Yue designed a large-scale building of

nine sections, surrounded by corridors, elevated galleries, and towers. The drawings were presented to Cao Cao. After examining them, he said, "Exactly what I had in mind. But we do not have the lumber for the main beams." Su Yue replied, "Thirty *li* from the city in front of the Vaulting Dragon Pool there is a temple of the same name. Beside the temple grows a giant pear tree over a hundred spans tall. That should provide the beams for Foundation Hall."

Elated, Cao Cao sent workmen to cut the tree down. But they could not penetrate it with saws or open it with axes. In disbelief Cao Cao led several hundred men to the shrine to inspect the tree, which soared straight up and spread out a leafy canopy that seemed to reach to the Milky Way. Cao Cao ordered his men to cut the pear tree down, but some local elders came forward to object. "The tree is already several hundred years old," they said, "and a spirit has always occupied it. It should not be cut." Cao Cao made an angry reply: "In all my time, over forty years, I have gone far and wide across the realm. And I am held in fear and respect by all, from the Son of Heaven himself to the common man. What perverse spirit here dares challenge my wishes?" He struck at the tree with his sword. There was a metallic sound; then blood splashed over Cao, who threw his sword to the ground and rode home in hysteria.

That night at the second watch, unable to sleep, Cao Cao was seated in his chamber, resting against a low table. Suddenly he saw a man dressed in black, hair disheveled, hand on sword, advancing straight at him and shouting, "I am the spirit of the pear tree. Building Foundation Hall signals your intent to usurp the dynasty. That explains your striking at a sacred tree.⁵ I know your number is told, and I come to take your life!" Cao Cao called in panic for his guards. The black-robed figure swung his sword. Cao Cao screamed and awoke, his head throbbing unbearably. Physicians were sought, but none could bring relief. The court officials were depressed.

Hua Xin submitted a proposal: "Your Highness knows of the marvelous physician Hua Tuo?" "The man who cured Zhou Tai of the Southland?" Cao asked. "The same," Hua Xin said. "I have heard the name, but am unacquainted with his technique," Cao said. Hua Xin continued, "Hua Tuo (styled Yuanhua) is from the Qiao district in the fief of Pei. He has worked miraculous cures unknown to any other doctor. For the sufferer he prescribes salves or acupuncture or moxibustion, and patients seem to heal at his touch. In cases of disease of the internal organs, where applied compounds will not work, he feeds the patient a narcotic potion to induce a deep sleep; then he cuts open the stomach and irrigates the affected areas with medicinal fluids. The patient feels not the slightest pain, and after the irrigation Hua Tuo sews up the wound with treated sutures and spreads salve over it. Recovery takes a month, maybe twenty days. That's the kind of skill he has!

"Traveling one day, he heard someone groaning. 'Inability to ingest,' he said—which turned out to be the case. Hua Tuo had three pints of garlic and leek juice given to the sufferer, who spit up a worm over two feet long. After that the man could ingest once again. Governor of Guangling Chen Deng suffered from severe indigestion and inflamed complexion. Unable to eat, he summoned Hua Tuo. After taking medicine, the governor vomited up three pints of worms; their tails wriggled and their heads were reddish. Chen Deng asked for the cause. The doctor told him his condition came from eating too much fish, and that the symptoms could well recur in three years and become incurable even though he was normal at the moment. Three years later the governor died.

"Another time, a man had a tumor by his eyebrow. It itched intolerably, so the sufferer summoned Hua Tuo. After studying the growth, the doctor said that something winged was inside. Everyone laughed, but when he cut it open, a little sparrow flew out, and the man was healed.

"Another time, a dog bit a man's toes, and two lumps of flesh grew there. One hurt and one itched excruciatingly. Hua Tuo said, 'There are ten needles inside the one that hurts, and two chess pieces, one black, one white, inside the other.' No one thought this diagnosis credible; but when Hua Tuo cut them open, it was exactly as he said. He is of the same caliber as Bian Que of the Spring and Autumn period or Master Cang of the Former Han. At present Hua Tuo lives in Jincheng, not too far from here. Your Highness should call for him."

Hua Tuo was speedily summoned and ordered to examine the ailing king. "Your Highness's severe headaches are due to a humor that is active. The root cause is in the skull, where trapped air and fluids are building up. Medicine won't do any good. The method I would advise is this: after general anesthesia I will open your skull with a cleaver and remove the excess matter. Only then can the root cause be removed." "Are you trying to kill me?" Cao Cao protested angrily. "Your Highness must have heard how I treated Lord Guan's right arm after he was wounded by a poisoned arrow," Tuo replied. "I had to scrape the bone, yet he betrayed no sign of fear. Why is Your Highness so apprehensive over a minor affliction?" "An arm can be scraped. How can the skull be opened? You must be Lord Guan's close friend, hoping to use this occasion for revenge." So saying, Cao Cao ordered Hua Tuo imprisoned and interrogated. Jia Xu objected: "So excellent and rare a physician should not be wasted." But Cao Cao replied sharply, "The man was looking for a chance to murder me, as Ji Ping was,"⁶ and ordered the interrogation to proceed.

One of the jailers where Hua Tuo was confined was known as Wu the Bailiff. Every day the man provided wine and food for Hua Tuo. Gratefully, Tuo said to him, "My death is imminent. What I regret most is that my *Book of the Black Bag* will be lost to posterity. You have been so kind to me, but I have been unable to repay you. Now I will write to my family. Have someone take them the letter, and they will present the book to you so that my methods can be carried on." Delighted, the bailiff said, "With that book I can be done with this kind of work and cure the sick. That way, master, your benevolence will reach the generations to come." Hua Tuo composed the letter, and Wu the Bailiff took it to Jincheng. Tuo's wife gave him the book, and he brought it back to Hua Tuo, who read it through and then gave it as a gift to the jailer. Wu the Bailiff took it home and kept it there.

Ten days later Hua Tuo died. Wu the Bailiff purchased a coffin and had the body readied for burial. He then resigned his office and returned home, ready to begin his study of Hua Tuo's book. Once home, he could hardly believe his eyes: his wife was putting the book in the fire. Up in arms, Wu the Bailiff tried desperately to retrieve it, but it was already destroyed. Only a couple of pages remained. When the bailiff angrily cursed his wife, she said, "Even if you could become as great a physician as Hua Tuo, you would only end up dead in jail. What's the good of it?" Wu the Bailiff sighed his heart out before he desisted. This is why Hua Tuo's writings have never come down to us, except for the few lines about capons and gelded pigs on the unburned pages. A poet of later times left these lines in praise of the renowned physician:

Hua Tuo's transcendent skill beyond compare
Enabled him to see inside of men.
Alas, his text was lost upon his death:
The book of cures was never seen again.

Cao Cao's condition worsened after he had killed Hua Tuo, and he was depressed over his

problems with the Southland and the Riverlands. As he pondered the situation, an attendant brought a letter from Sun Quan. Cao Cao opened it and studied the contents: "Your subject, Sun Quan, recognizing that the Mandate of Heaven has come to Your Highness, humbly anticipates your early ascension to the imperial throne. If you would dispatch your generals to destroy Liu Bei, I will forthwith lead my subordinates in tendering our lands in loyal submission." Cao Cao laughed aloud and showed the note to his courtiers. "The bastard wants to roast me on the fire!" he said.⁷ But a group around Chen Qun petitioned him: "The house of Han has long been declining,⁸ while Your Majesty's merits and virtues mount ever higher. All living souls look up to you. Now Sun Quan declares his allegiance—a human reflection of the divine, different orders with corresponding signs. You should respond to Heaven and accord with men, Your Majesty, and quickly assume the dynastic throne."⁹

Cao Cao smiled and said, "Many years have I served the Han, and perhaps some merit or virtue of mine has benefited the people. When I was raised to the status of king of Wei, my name and position reached their peak. What further dare I dream of? But if somehow the Mandate of Heaven should come to rest with me, I would remain loyal to the dynasty nonetheless, like King Wen of the Zhou."¹⁰ "Since Sun Quan declares his allegiance," Sima Yi added, "Your Highness could confer rank and office upon him with instructions that he resist Liu Bei." Cao Cao adopted the suggestion and submitted a memorial to the throne recommending that Sun Quan be made general of the Flying Cavalry and lord of Nanchang, as well as protector of Jingzhou. The documents were dispatched that day to the Southland.

Cao Cao's condition worsened. One night he dreamed that three horses (*ma*) were feeding from the same trough (*cao*). The next morning he described the dream to Jia Xu and said, "I've had this dream before. I thought then it meant trouble from Ma Teng and his sons."¹¹ Ma Teng is dead, but the dream has recurred; does it signify something dire or auspicious?" Jia Xu responded, "They are boon (*lu*) horses—a sign of good luck."¹² A boon horse comes home to Cao. There is no need for Your Majesty to be disturbed." Later, a poet left this verse:

Three horses at one trough troubled Cao Cao's mind;
Meanwhile, he overlooked the rooting tree of Jin.¹³
How fruitless all his tyrant treachery:
The men who broke his clan came from within.

Toward the third watch, as he lay in his chambers, Cao felt his head and eyes begin to swim. He got up and rested against a low table. Something sounded like cloth tearing. Frightened, Cao Cao looked up in amazement. Suddenly he saw the murdered queens, Empress Fu and Lady Dong, and the two royal sons, along with Fu Wan, Dong Cheng, and some twenty other high courtiers. Smearred with blood, they stood in the gloom and called for his life in muted voices. Cao Cao jerked his sword free and sliced at the empty air. Then came a crash as the southwest corner of the building fell in. Cao collapsed and was rushed to another part of the palace.

The next night Cao Cao could hear the incessant wails of men and women outside. At dawn he assembled the officials and said, "Throughout the campaigns of thirty years I have never given credence to the monstrous or the abnormal. But what do these things mean?" They replied, "Your Highness should command a Taoist priest to perform rites to ward off evil." But Cao sighed, commenting, "As the sage Confucius said, when you give offense to Heaven, to whom can you pray?"

My mandate is exhausted; I am beyond rescue." He did not allow the services to be held.

By morning Cao Cao felt a pounding in his head, and he could not identify forms. He called Xiahou Dun to his side. But when Dun reached the entrance to Cao's residence, he too had a vision of the murdered Empress Fu and Lady Dong, the royal sons, Fu Wan, Dong Cheng, and the others standing in the gloom. Dun took fright and collapsed. His attendants helped him out, but he never regained his health. Cao Cao called for Cao Hong, Chen Qun, Jia Xu, and Sima Yi; when they were at his bedside, he instructed them on the matter of the succession. Cao Hong and the others touched their heads to the ground and said, "Let Your Highness care well for his precious self. This spell is sure to pass, and soon."

Cao Cao responded, "I have made conquests the length and breadth of the realm these thirty years, and all manner of heroes have I annihilated. There remain but Sun Quan of the Southland and Liu Bei of the Riverlands to be removed. But I will not be able to remain among you, and I shall have to entrust my house to you. My eldest, Ang, son of Lady Liu, died young at Wancheng. Of my other four sons by Lady Bian—Pi, Zhang, Zhi, and Xiong—my favorite has always been Zhi, the third. But I will not have him as heir because he is vain and insincere, as well as overindulgent in wine and unrestrained in conduct. The second, Zhang, is bold but tactless; the fourth, Xiong, is sickly and will not live long. Only the eldest, Pi, is reliable, generous, respectful to others, and scrupulous in word and deed—fit, therefore, to succeed to my estate. I hope you will give him all support and assistance."¹⁴

Cao Hong and the rest wept as they received their king's last command. After they left, Cao Cao had an attendant bring out the rare perfumes he had collected; he apportioned these valuable substances to his harem ladies and instructed them as follows: "After my death devote yourselves diligently to needlework. Make plenty of silk shoes, and you will be able to survive on the sales." Cao Cao also commanded many of the women to remain in the Bronze Bird Tower in order to offer sacrifices to nourish his spirit each day in ceremonies to be attended by female entertainers and accompanied by music.¹⁵

In addition, Cao Cao ordered seventy-two decoy tombs erected outside Jiangwu in Zhangde county lest anyone discover his burial place and excavate it. Shortly afterward, with a long sigh and copious tears Cao Cao passed away at the age of sixty-six. It was the first month of the twenty-fifth year of Jian An (A. D. 220).¹⁶ Cao Cao is mourned in the following "Song of Ye" :

From Ye, the Ye that stands upon the Zhang,
Was sure to come a greatly gifted man:
Grand schemes and poetry from his genius sprang—
Genius shared by liege men, brothers, sons!
The hero who transcends the common scope
Can't tailor his career to please the world.
High merit and great evil—from a single hand,
Fair honors with foulest crime conjoined.
In letters, divine powers; as hegemon, great force—
Could he tamely blend among the mass?
Athwart the tide by Taihang he built towers;
The buildings' spirit fit their setting well.

Here was a man to challenge all tradition!
First he rose to hegemon, then to king.
But in decline he whined as any child.
He can fight no more; fate ordains his lot.
Turning to his womenfolk, he has no hope of help.
Doling out the rare perfumes—call him not unkind.
Alas!
Great men of old took care in every deed;
Deserted or in pomp, their purposes held firm.
The pedant lightly speaks about the dead;
From the grave they mock his pedant's airs.¹⁷

The entire court raised the cry of mourning. The funeral announcement was carried to Cao Cao's heir, Cao Pi; to Cao Zhang, lord of Yanling; to Cao Zhi, lord of Linzi; and to Cao Xiong, lord of Xiaohuai. The officials placed the king's body in a golden coffin with a silver outer casing. The bier was rushed from Luoyang to Ye. Cao Pi broke into unrestrained lamentation at the news. Leading a crowd of officials of all ranks, he prostrated himself in the road ten *li* outside the city to receive his father's coffin; then he had it carried to a side chamber of the palace. The entire court wore mourning vestments and wept together in the main hall of the palace.

Then someone stood and came forward. "Let the heir grieve no more," he said. "We must consider the succession." The assembly turned to the man. It was Sima Fu, attendant to the heir apparent. "The king of Wei is no more," Fu went on, "and the empire trembles. We must instate his successor as soon as possible to calm the minds of the people. Why are you simply wailing and weeping?" "The heir apparent should succeed," the courtiers cried, "but without a mandate from the Son of Heaven, we are not free to act." Chen Jiao, minister of war, said, "The king has died away from the capital. If his sons strive for the succession, causing dissension among themselves, the dynastic shrine itself could fall." So saying, he drew his sword and slashed the sleeve of his surcoat. He cried fiercely, "Today we beg the heir apparent to mount the throne. Any official opposing will suffer the fate of this coat." The assembly shook with fear.¹⁸

The arrival of Hua Xin, who had ridden at top speed from Xuchang, caused fresh consternation. He entered the court and explained his purpose in coming: "The king of Wei is no more. The empire trembles. Shouldn't we instate his successor as soon as possible?" The officials responded, "Because we could not wait for the imperial mandate, we were discussing getting Lady Bian's royal approval for installing the heir apparent." But Hua Xin answered, "I already have a mandate from the Emperor with me." The courtiers elatedly voiced their congratulations. Hua Xin produced the document and read it out. Hua Xin, a fawning follower of the house of Wei, had drafted and compelled the Emperor to issue the decree, which honored Cao Pi as king of Wei, prime minister, and protector of Jizhou.¹⁹ That same day Cao Pi assumed his father's position and accepted the fervent felicitations of the court.

In the midst of the celebration feast it was reported that Cao Zhang, lord of Yanling, was bringing an army of one hundred thousand from Chang'an. In great alarm, Cao Pi turned to his advisers: "My yellow-bearded brother has always been willful. And he knows the martial arts well. For him to come so far with troops means he wants to contest the kingship of Wei. What is to be done?" Below the dais a man came forward and said, "Let me go to see the lord of Yanling. I can turn him around

with a few words." The courtiers cried, "Only a great man like yourself could avert this crisis!"
Indeed:

Cao Cao's two sons were falling out
As Yuan Shao's sons once did.

Who volunteered to dissuade Cao Zhang?

READ ON.



Brother Oppresses Brother; Cao Zhi Composes a Poem; Nephew Entraps Uncle; Liu Feng Answers to the Law¹

THE MAN WHO VOLUNTEERED TO STOP CAO ZHANG'S onslaught was Imperial Officer First Grade Jia Kui.² Delighted, Cao Pi ordered him to go to meet his brother Zhang. The first question Cao Zhang put to the officer was, "Where is the late king's seal?" With a dignified expression Jia Kui replied, "Every family has its eldest; every state has its appointed heir. It is not appropriate for Your Lordship to inquire about the late king's seal." Cao Zhang kept silent and rode into the city with Jia Kui. When they reached the palace, Jia Kui asked him, "Has Your Lordship come to attend the funeral or to contest the succession?" "For the services only," Cao Zhang replied. "I have no hostile intentions." "In that case," responded Jia Kui, "why have you brought an army?" Cao Zhang dismissed his guard and entered the palace alone. He paid his respects to Cao Pi, and the brothers embraced and wept. Cao Zhang turned his armed force over to Cao Pi, who ordered his brother to return to Yanling and guard it. Cao Zhang took his leave and departed.³

Cao Pi was now secure on the throne. He changed the reign year from Jian An 25 to Yan Kang 1 (A. D. 220). He made Jia Xu his grand commandant, Hua Xin his prime minister, and Wang Lang his chief censor. The entire court was given promotions and rewards. Cao Cao, posthumously titled King Wu, was interred at Gaoling in Ye.⁴ Yu Jin was given charge of all matters concerning the tombs.

When Yu Jin reached the site, however, he saw a painting on the chalky wall of the crypt depicting the battle between Lord Guan and himself. The drowning of Cao Cao's seven armies and the capture of Yu Jin were graphically shown, with Lord Guan seated grandly, Pang De defiant and indignant, and Yu Jin pressing himself to the ground, pleading piteously for his life. It so happened that Cao Pi had lost all respect for Yu Jin when, defeated and captured, he failed to die honorably and then returned north after surrendering. In order to humiliate Yu Jin, Cao Pi had ordered an artist to make the painting before sending him to the tomb. The moment Yu Jin looked at the wall, he felt shame and vexation, and the force of his anger made him so ill that he died soon after. A poet of later times has left these lines:

Thirty years bespeaks a friendship rare;
But facing death, Jin proved disloyal to Cao.
Cao Cao never saw into his heart.
To paint a tiger, the bones are where to start.

Hua Xin petitioned Cao Pi: "The lord of Yanling has turned his forces over to you and returned to his own fief. But Cao Zhi, lord of Linzi, and Cao Xiong, lord of Xiaohuai, have not attended the funeral and should be called to account." Cao Pi approved the suggestion and sent messengers to each

to demand explanations.

Within a day there was an answer from Xiaohuai: "Cao Xiong, lord of Xiaohuai, has hanged himself for fear of giving offense." Cao Pi ordered his brother buried with honors and posthumously titled king of Xiaohuai. The following day there was an answer from the envoy to Linzi: "The lord of Linzi spends his days with the Ding brothers, Zhengli and Jingli, indulging in wine. Their manner is rude and arrogant; they violate all norms of civil conduct. When the edict arrived, the lord of Linzi remained seated, erect and motionless. His companion Ding Zhengli chided me, saying, 'The late king wanted my master to be his heir, but slanderers stood in the way. Now they are making flesh and blood answer for offenses so soon after the king's death. Why?' Then his brother, Jingli, added, 'We are of the view that our brilliantly capable master, the foremost man of the age, should have succeeded to the throne as a matter of course. Instead, he has been unable to. But your kind of courtier can ignore a man as able as our lord!' Then the lord of Linzi himself grew angry and had his personal guard drive me from his presence with blows."

Cao Pi, angered by the report, ordered Xu Chu to take three thousand of his personal Tiger Guard to Linzi and bring Cao Zhi and his company before him. When Xu Chu arrived at the town of Linzi, he was stopped by the commander in charge. Xu Chu swiftly cut him down and entered the town. Unopposed, he went into the official headquarters, where he found Cao Zhi and the Ding brothers intoxicated. Xu Chu tied them up, put them on a wagon, and headed back to Ye; he also took into custody all subordinate officials. Cao Pi disposed of the offending Ding brothers by having them publicly executed. They were noted literary men from the Pei district, and many deplored their deaths.

When Lady Bian, mother of Cao Pi, learned of Cao Xiong's death, she was bitterly aggrieved. The news of Cao Zhi's capture on top of that, and the killing of his companions, caused her great alarm. She hurried out of her chambers and summoned Cao Pi before her. Seeing that his mother had left her chamber, Cao Pi rushed to greet her. Tearfully, Lady Bian said, "Your younger brother Zhi has indulged himself in wine and wild behavior all his life; because he counted only on his inborn talents, he let himself go. You are to be mindful of your fraternal ties and spare his life. Only then I will be able to rest in peace in the netherworld." "I, too," Cao Pi replied, "deeply cherish my brother's talent. How could I harm him? I only meant to curb his temper. Put your worries to rest, Mother."

Lady Bian returned to her quarters, crying freely. Cao Pi ordered that Cao Zhi be brought into his presence. Hua Xin asked Pi, "Is it not true that the queen mother just now urged you not to kill Cao Zhi?" "That is so," Pi answered. Hua Xin went on, "Given Cao Zhi's talents and knowledge, he will never be content with what he has and will cause no end of trouble unless you act now." "I cannot violate my mother's command," Cao Pi said. "Everyone says," Hua Xin continued, "that Cao Zhi is so gifted that the very words he speaks become poems, though I myself have never believed it. My lord, summon him and put his reputed abilities to the test. If he fails, kill him. If he really shows talent, then lower his status and put an end to the carping of the literary men." Cao Pi adopted the advice.

Soon after, Cao Zhi came before Cao Pi and anxiously prostrated himself, begging forgiveness for his offenses. "Although in private sentiment we are brothers," Pi said, "in public responsibilities we are lord and vassal. How dare you presume upon your talents to set at naught the formalities of this relationship? When our late father was alive, you were always boasting of your compositions, but I always suspected someone else was actually doing the writing. Here is my challenge: walk seven paces and make a poem before you finish. If you succeed, I will spare your life; if not, your offenses

will be heavily punished without the slightest mitigation. "" On what theme? "Cao Zhi asked. Cao Pi pointed to an ink drawing on the wall. It depicted two bulls by a wall, one of which—after a fight—had fallen dead into a well." There is your theme, "Cao Pi said." But your poem must avoid the words 'Two bulls fought by a wall, one fell dead in a well. ' " Cao Zhi took seven steps and in that time produced this poem:

Upon a narrow road two meat hunks closed
(A U-bone topped each head)
And met by a mound of dirt:
In a flash they butted and gored.

Two foes, but one less tough—
That meat prone in a pit.
Not that his might was less,
But his vital force had been clipped.

Cao Pi and his court were astonished at Cao Zhi's performance. "Still," Pi said, "seven paces takes some time. Can you create a poem on a moment's notice?" "I shall address whatever theme you suggest," Zhi replied. "Our relation as elder and younger brother, then. But you are not to use the word 'brother, '" Cao Pi said. Without pausing to reflect, Cao Zhi spoke these lines:

Beans asimmer on a beanstalk flame
From inside the pot expressed their ire:
"Alive we sprouted on a single root—
What's your rush to cook us on the fire?"

Cao Pi burst into tears. Lady Bian, advancing from the rear of the hall, said, "An elder brother should not push a younger brother so." Pi hastily left his seat and appealed to her: "It is simply that the law can not be ignored." Accordingly, he reduced Cao Zhi's position to lord of Anxiang. Cao Zhi then took his leave and departed on horseback.

Since his succession to his father's throne, Cao Pi had thoroughly remade the laws and regulations of the dynasty; and he harassed the Han Emperor even more harshly than his father had. Spies quickly brought word of these changes to the king of Hanzhong in Chengdu.

Gravely concerned by the new situation, the king took counsel with his civil and military officials. "Cao Cao is dead," he said to them, "and Cao Pi, his successor, harasses the Emperor far worse than Cao Cao ever did, while Sun Quan of the Southland submissively declares allegiance to the new order. It is my desire first to scourge the south and avenge my brother's death, and then to smite the north and rid the land of sedition." Even as Xuande spoke, Liao Hua stepped forward from the ranks and, prostrating himself, said through his tears, "It is the fault of Liu Feng and Meng Da that Lord Guan and his son are dead. I beg Your Lordship to punish the traitors." Xuande would have seized the two at once, but Kongming opposed it. "You had better take your time," he said. "Move too quickly and they'll defect. Instead, make them governors and assign them to separate districts before you arrest them." Accordingly, Xuande appointed Liu Feng governor of Mianzhu.

It so happened that Peng Yang, a close friend of Meng Da, learned of this and rushed home to send a letter to Meng Da. His carrier was apprehended outside the city's south gate, however, and brought before the commander Ma Chao. In order to investigate the matter Ma Chao went to Peng Yang's home, where he was welcomed and offered wine. After several rounds Ma Chao said pointedly, "The king once treated you most handsomely. I wonder why he seems to have grown indifferent." Under the influence of the wine, Peng Yang said heatedly, "That perverse, ridiculous old war-horse. He'll get what he deserves!" Ma Chao probed further, saying, "I, too, have had to bear many grievances." "If you put your own units into action," Peng Yang replied, "and coordinate with Meng Da from without, I'll work with some Riverlands troops from within, and we can carry the day." "Your views are quite to the point," Ma Chao said. "Tomorrow we will discuss this further."

After taking leave of Peng Yang, Ma Chao brought the captured messenger and letter before the king and gave him a detailed account of his conversation with the author of the letter. Xuande was furious and had Peng Yang thrown into jail and interrogated; his regrets availed him not. Xuande asked Kongming, "How should we handle Peng Yang's conspiracy?" "He may be only an idiosyncratic scholar," Kongming responded, "but he will make trouble later if you spare him." And so Peng Yang's fate was sealed, though in consideration of his status Xuande allowed him to die by his own hand.

Meng Da was deeply disturbed by the news of Peng Yang's death. Subsequently he received Kongming's order for his partner Liu Feng to return to Mianzhu to serve as governor. Meng Da quickly called the military commanders of Shangyong and Fangling, the brothers Shen Dan and Shen Yi, to a meeting. "I have done no less for the cause of the king of Hanzhong than Fa Zheng has," he said. "Now Fa Zheng is dead, and the king forgets my former service.⁵ He would even see me harmed. What is to be done?" Commander Shen Dan replied, "I think I know how to prevent the king of Hanzhong from doing you injury." Delighted, Meng Da asked his plan. "My brother and I have long wanted to join the cause of the kingdom of Wei. You might prepare a formal document severing ties with the king of Hanzhong and offering allegiance to Cao Pi, king of Wei—who is sure to use you well. My brother and I will follow you in surrender." Instantly, Meng Da saw the wisdom of his proposal and wrote out a document for Kongming's messenger to take back. The same night, taking fifty riders, he went to serve the king of Wei.

The messenger returned to Chengdu bearing Meng Da's note and the news of his defection. The First Ruler⁶ angrily read over the document, which said:

As your servant, I humbly lay myself at your feet. In the beginning, Your Majesty strove to guide the dynasty toward greatness in the manner of Yi Yin of the Shang and Taigong Wang of the Zhou, to recover something of the grandeur of the hegemon-patriarchs Huan and Wen. Then, the southern powers, Jingzhou and the Southland, lent their strength to your cause. As a result, ambitious and capable talents, attracted by your prestige, tendered their allegiance. Since committing my humble self to your enterprise, I have compiled a long record of errors and offenses. Even I know that; how much more clearly must you see it. Now at Your Highness's court, brilliant men of talent are beyond numbering. But I, lacking the talent to assist the government and the ability to lead an army, would be truly ashamed to take my place among your meritorious vassals.

I am mindful of Fan Li, who knew when he was no longer of use and set himself adrift on

the lakes and rivers; mindful too of Uncle Fan, who, acknowledging his offenses, bade his lord good-bye on the banks of the Yellow River.⁷ At the opportune moment they begged to be released from their vassal's oath. Why? To resolve cleanly the dilemma of leaving or staying. For I, lowliest of those who serve you, can boast no high merit or striking achievement, having merely temporized. These examples of admired ancient worthies help me in my resolve to leave rather than endure the shame of remaining.

In olden days no son was more filial than Shen Sheng, yet his father doubted him; no minister more loyal than Zixu, but his king had him executed. General Meng Tian extended the northern borders for the state of Qin, but he suffered capital punishment. Yue Yi destroyed the enemy state of Qi but fell victim to slander. The stories of these men always move me to passionate tears. Now a like fate confronts me, and I despair.⁸

After the recent catastrophe in Jingzhou, the high officials surrendered. If others fled, I persevered in my duties. But after going to Fangling and Shangyong, I again ask your permission to seek my fortune elsewhere. I humbly hope that your sagely compassion and sympathetic understanding will enable you to indulge my wish and accept, if with sadness, my departing.

Truly unworthy of respect is the man who does not finish what he has begun. No man can excuse the offense committed with knowledge aforethought. It is often said that 'friendships should end without harsh words' and that 'in parting, let lord and vassal utter no complaint.' I have always taken to heart the teachings of the worthies, and I beg Your Highness to do likewise. I am overcome by trepidation.

The letter put Xuande in a rage. "This underling in revolt! How dare he mock me with these fine words?" Xuande's impulse was to send the army, but Kongming checked him, saying, "Simply send Liu Feng and let the two tigers fight it out. Whether he wins or loses, Liu Feng will have to return here. Then we can easily get rid of him—killing two birds." On Kongming's suggestion, Xuande sent a man to Mianzhu with orders for Liu Feng to arrest Meng Da.

. . . .

Cao Pi had convened his civil and military officials when one of his aides announced suddenly: "The Riverlands general Meng Da comes to surrender!" Cao Pi summoned the man and challenged him: "Is this not a false surrender?" "I refused to rescue Lord Guan," Meng Da replied, "so the king of Hanzhong has decided to kill me. I came to avoid punishment, for no other reason." But Cao Pi remained unconvinced. It was reported that Liu Feng was coming to Xiangyang with fifty thousand men for the sole purpose of doing battle with Meng Da. "If you are sincere, then," Cao Pi said to Meng Da, "go to Xiangyang and bring me Liu Feng's head—and I will believe your story." "Let me explain the situation to Liu Feng," Meng Da answered, "and without any action on your part, Liu Feng too will offer his surrender." Delighted, Cao Pi appointed Meng Da mounted royal guard⁹ and General Who Establishes by Arms, as well as lord of Pingyang precinct and governor of Xincheng, to hold Xiangyang and Fan.

It happened that generals Xiahou Shang and Xu Huang had already established the king of Wei's power in Xiangyang¹⁰ and were preparing to take over Shangyong. Meng Da reached Xiangyang and

exchanged greetings with the two northern generals. Liu Feng was camped fifty *li* from the city. Meng Da sent him a letter inviting surrender.¹¹ But Liu Feng responded to Meng Da's suggestion angrily: "This villain would break the bond between nephew and uncle and sunder the love of father and son, making me disloyal and unfilial." So saying, he tore up the letter and executed the messenger. The next day he went forth to challenge the foe.¹²

Enraged by Liu Feng's defiance, Meng Da met him in the field. The opposing armies assumed their formations, and Liu Feng rode out beneath the banners marking the entrance to his position. "Traitor to the house of Han, speak no nonsense!" he cried, pointing his sword toward Meng Da. "Death is at your shoulder; still you dream on!" Meng Da shot back. Feng slapped his steed, flourished his blade, and went for Meng Da. They clashed briefly. Meng Da fled in defeat; Feng pursued his advantage, unopposed for twenty *li*. Then voices cried out, and an ambush was sprung. Xiahou Shang came from the left, Xu Huang from the right, and Meng Da turned and fought again. Squeezed between three armies, Liu Feng fled, badly defeated, and rode straight on to Shangyong, the troops of Wei in hot pursuit. Reaching the town, Liu Feng was met with a barrage of arrows.

From the forward tower Commander Shen Dan shouted down: "I have surrendered to the Wei!" Enraged, Liu Feng made ready to assault the wall, but as his pursuers closed in, he fled to Fangling—only to find the flags of Wei flying on the city wall. From the tower Commander Shen Yi described an arc with his signal banner, and a company of men appeared from behind the wall; their standard read "General of the Right Xu Huang."

Liu Feng could offer no resistance and made a desperate dash westward; Xu Huang gave chase. Hardly a hundred riders remained in Feng's command. Finally he reached Chengdu and was received by the king of Hanzhong, before whom he flung himself to the ground and wept as he recounted the events up to his arrival in the Riverlands. But Xuande said angrily, "Scapegrace! Have you the face to come before me again?" Liu Feng tried to defend himself, saying, "When my uncle was in trouble, Meng Da stopped me from going to him. It was not that I refused." But Xuande's anger only rose higher. "You eat as men do," he said to his adopted son, "wear what men wear. You're not made of clay or wood. How could a slandering traitor 'stop' you?" So saying, Xuande ordered Liu Feng executed. Only after the execution did the king learn how Liu Feng had spurned Meng Da's offer to surrender.¹³ Overcome by remorse and pining for Lord Guan as well, Xuande was taken ill and made no military moves.¹⁴

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Cao Pi, king of Wei since assuming his father's throne, promoted and rewarded all his civil and military officials. Next, he led three hundred thousand armored troops on a southern tour of Qiao county in the fief of Pei,¹⁵ where he held a magnificent feast at the ancestral graves. The village elders swarmed out to greet their native son, bearing flagons of wine as gifts as their forefathers had once done on the Supreme Ancestor's triumphant return. During the festivities, however, Regent-Marshal Xiahou Dun was reported to be ill, and Cao Pi returned early to Ye. By the time he arrived, the famous general had already died. Cao Pi went into mourning and arranged a burial of the most elaborate ceremony for the late regent-marshal.

In the eighth month of the year (A. D. 220), strange manifestations were reported: in Shiyi county a phoenix showed itself, in Linzi a unicorn appeared, and in Ye itself a yellow dragon was seen.

Imperial Corps Commander Li Fu and Grand Astrologer's Assistant Xu Zhi agreed between themselves that these various signs and omens foretold the replacement of the Han dynasty by the Wei and called for a ceremony of abdication at which Emperor Xian would yield the empire to the king of Wei.

Following this, a delegation of more than forty civil and military officials—including Hua Xin, Wang Lang, Xin Pi, Jia Xu, Liu Yi, Liu Ye, Chen Jiao, Chen Qun, and Huan Jie—went directly into the imperial chamber to petition Emperor Xian to yield the throne to Cao Pi, king of Wei. Indeed:

The shrines of Wei were about to be established;
The land of Han was about to pass into another's hands.

What would the Emperor say? And the king of Hanzhong?

READ ON.



***Cao Pi Deposes the Emperor, Usurps the Liu Throne;
The King of Hanzhong Assumes the Throne, Continues the Han Line***

ACCOMPANIED BY A DELEGATION of civil and military officials, Hua Xin entered the court and addressed Emperor Xian: "Reverently we observe that since the new king of Wei has come to the throne, his virtue has spread throughout the land to the benefit of all. Not even the sage founders of our civilization, Tang and Yu, surpass the king. The assembly of the court, after collective consultation, now deeming that the sacrifices of Han have come to term, beseech Your Majesty to emulate the ancient sage-king Yao by ceremonially relinquishing the mountains, rivers, and dynastic shrines to the new king of Wei. This will fulfill the will of Heaven and satisfy the minds of men and also will enable Your Majesty to secure the blessings of untroubled leisure, a boon to your ancestral clan and the living souls of the realm. Our conclusion having been reached, we come to deliver this formal appeal."

The Emperor listened in fear and shock. After a long silence, he turned his gaze to the court of officials and began to sob. "I think back to the time," he said, "when the Supreme Ancestor, founder of the Han, slew the white serpent with his three-span sword and led the rebellion that quelled Qin and crushed Chu. He thus founded this house whose rule has passed from generation to generation in the Liu clan for four hundred years. Small though my talent be, what offense have I committed, what fault have I that justifies abandoning my ancestral right? Let the court reopen discussion!"

Hua Xin then brought forth two astrologers, Li Fu and Xu Zhi, and continued, "If Your Majesty has doubts, let these two answer them." Li Fu addressed the throne: "Since the accession of the king of Wei, the unicorn has descended, the phoenix has manifested itself, the yellow dragon has appeared, prize grains grow luxuriantly, and sweet dew has dropped from the skies. Thus does Heaven give sign and token that Wei shall replace Han." Xu Zhi added: "We who monitor the divine configurations can see that the allotted time of the fire-signed Han has expired. Your Majesty's imperial star has dimmed, while stellar configurations representing Wei, from the cope of Heaven to the margins of the horizon, outnumber all telling. Furthermore, the occult auguries show first the graphs *gui*, 'ghost,' and *wei*, 'consign,' in association. Thus the supplanting of Han is indisputable.¹ Next the auguries show *yan*, 'word,' and *wu*, 'meridian,' side by side; and finally they show two suns, *ri*, vertically aligned. The conclusion is clear: Your Majesty must abdicate, for the graphs properly joined together read 'Wei Xuchang' — that is, 'Wei to receive the abdication of Han in the capital at Xuchang.' I beg Your Majesty to take heed."²

To this Emperor Xian responded, "Your tokens, your graphic riddles—all hollow and preposterous! Would you have me set aside my patrimony on the strength of baseless delusions?"³ Wang Lang came forward next and addressed the throne: "From time immemorial, what has flourished must decay; what has prospered must decline. Every dynasty ends; every house falls. The

house of Han has reigned more than four hundred years; with Your Majesty its line expires. Retire now, do not delay—or who knows what may happen next." Aggrieved, the Emperor retired to his rear chambers. The officials left smirking.

The next day the courtiers reassembled in the great hall and sent a eunuch to request the presence of Emperor Xian. The sovereign, anxious and fearful, refused to appear. Empress Cao⁴ said, "How can Your Majesty obstruct an official request to hold court?" The Emperor sobbed as he replied, "Your brother, who intends to usurp my throne, has instructed the officials to coerce me. That is why I will not go." Angrily the Empress said, "How dare my brother commit lese majesty?" As she was speaking, Cao Hong and Cao Xiu, armed, entered and requested the Emperor to appear before the officials in the great hall. The Empress denounced them. "This comes of your sedition and treachery!" she cried. "Angling for wealth and power has led you into treason and conspiracy. Never did my father, whom the world admired above all others for his high and glorious deeds, covet the hallowed instruments of supreme authority. And yet my brother, who has hardly succeeded to the kingship of Wei, boldly yearns to supplant the Han. August and luminous Heaven will never confer its blessing." So saying, the distraught Empress withdrew to her palace, leaving the attendants weeping emotionally.⁵

Cao Hong and Cao Xiu strenuously urged the Emperor to attend the court session. Unable to resist further, he donned his formal attire and proceeded to the front of the hall. Hua Xin addressed the throne: "Let Your Majesty be guided by our discussions of yesterday lest disaster strike." The Emperor cried bitterly, "All of you have long enjoyed rich recompense as servants of the Han. Can the many sons and grandsons of renowned vassals among you bear to commit this act of insubordination?" "If Your Majesty will not comply with the consensus," Hua Xin continued, "I fear disorder in the inner sanctum could erupt at any time. This is not a case of our disloyalty to Your Majesty." "Who would dare to murder me?" the Emperor demanded.

Stridently Hua Xin replied, "All the empire knows that Your Majesty, lacking the 'great blessing' by which Heaven mandates the ruler of men, must take responsibility for the chaotic state of the realm. If not for the king of Wei, Cao Cao, there would have been more than one who would have put Your Majesty to the sword. But still you refuse to acknowledge his past concern and repay his erstwhile kindness, and seem to want a general assault upon your imperial person." Appalled, the Emperor rose with a sweeping motion of his sleeves. Wang Lang eyed Hua Xin meaningfully. Hua Xin advanced boldly, laid hands on the sacred dragon robe and, his face contorted, said, "Agreed? Or not? Speak. Now."

The trembling Emperor could not respond. Cao Hong and Cao Xiu drew their swords and called for the keeper of the regalia. The keeper, Zu Bi, responded, "Present." Cao Hong demanded the jade seal. Zu Bi protested, "The jade seal is the treasure of the Son of Heaven. How dare you demand it?" Cao Hong called for his guards who removed the keeper and cut off his head. Zu Bi continued to protest until the moment of his death. A poet of later times left these lines of tribute to Zu Bi:

Treachery reigned; the Han passed from the scene:
"Thus Yao yielded to Shun," they falsely cried.⁶
A courtful of courtiers paid homage to the Wei;
In defense of the seal a single vassal died.

The Emperor shook violently. At the base of the stairs leading to his throne all he could see were hundreds of armed men of Wei. Tearfully, the Emperor addressed the assemblage: "We intend here solemnly to abdicate our rule, transferring all under Heaven to the king of Wei. Kindly spare what breath still remains to me, that I may live out my natural years." Jia Xu said, "The king would never dismay Your Majesty. Quickly issue the edict and give peace to the hearts of all." The Emperor had no choice. He ordered Chen Qun to draft the edict; next, he ordered Hua Xin to receive the document and the imperial seal and then to bring the whole court to the king's palace to make the ritual presentation.

Cao Pi was delighted. He unsealed the edict and read it:

My reign of thirty-two years has seen great trouble in the empire. Fortunately, the spirits of my forefathers have rescued me from peril. But today, searching the configurations of the heavens and examining the hearts of the people, I see that the cycle of the fire element has expired and that a new element corresponding to the Cao clan now prevails. Indeed, that change of period is attested by the late King Cao's martial success and the present King Cao's manifest and glorious virtue. The new succession thus fulfills the expectations of all.

It is said, "When the way of the sages prevails, the empire belongs to all." For not favoring his own son, Yao earned an immortal name. I venture to emulate him. Today, abdicating to the prime minister and king of Wei, I follow in the footsteps recorded in the "Canon of Yao." Let Your Highness not decline.

When the edict had been read, Cao Pi was anxious to accept the decree, but Sima Yi warned him, "That would be wrong. Even though the edict and seal were brought here, let Your Highness decline in due modesty so as to forestall criticism in the outside world." On this advice Cao Pi had Wang Lang prepare a memorial which declared his virtue too meagre to assume the throne and advised searching elsewhere for someone of true worth.⁷ The Emperor, perplexed by the memorial, said to his vassals, "The king is modest and self-effacing. What shall I do?" Hua Xin replied, "Previously, when his father, Cao Cao, was offered the kingship of Wei, he declined three times but finally accepted as the edict required. Let Your Majesty send down another edict. The king should accept it."⁸

The Emperor had no recourse. He ordered Huan Jie to draft another edict, and sent Zhang Yin as envoy of the Ancestral Temple to deliver document and seal to the palace of the king of Wei. Cao Pi opened the memorial, which read:

Let the king of Wei be advised with regard to his humble refusal of our throne: we have recognized the slow decline of the Han. How fortunate we were to have the help of King Wu, Cao Cao, whose virtue proved able to cope with all that destiny demanded, eliminating baneful violence, purging and securing our heartland.

The present king, Cao Pi, continues in that great tradition. His splendid virtue shines brilliantly forth. His sagely teachings cover the realm. His humane influence spreads in every direction. In his person the divine succession rests.

In ancient times after Shun had effected twelve accomplishments, Yao resigned the empire into his charge; and after Yu the Great distinguished himself in managing the floodwaters, Shun abdicated in his favor. The Han, in the tradition of Yao, is obliged to transfer its rule to

a worthy sage, conforming to the spirits above and below, properly responding to Heaven's clear Mandate. Thus, we have empowered Imperial Censor Zhang Yin to proffer the imperial seal. Let His Majesty now receive it.

Cao Pi accepted the edict with delight. Turning to Jia Xu, he said, "Despite this second edict, I still fear that the world as well as future generations will condemn the usurpation." "There is a simple solution," Jia Xu replied. "Command Zhang Yin to take the edict back once again with instructions for Hua Xin to have the Emperor build an Altar for Acceptance of the Abdication. Then, on a propitious day, convene the senior and junior officials at the foot of the altar and have the Emperor personally tender the seal as he abdicates. That should resolve all doubts and check all criticism."⁹

Delighted with this advice, Cao Pi had Zhang Yin return the regalia and prepare another memorial announcing his humble refusal of the imperial place. When Zhang Yin presented the new memorial, the Emperor asked his courtiers, "What is the king of Wei's purpose in declining a second time?" Hua Xin said to the Emperor, "Your Majesty, build an Altar for Acceptance of the Abdication, then gather the high officials and commoners around it so that the abdication will be plain and public. That way, the future generations of your line will enjoy the grace of the Wei." The Emperor complied. He sent an officer of the Department of Imperial Sacrifices to divine for a favorable site in Fanyang. There an altar of three levels was set up. They designated the predawn hours of *gengwu*, the seventh cyclical day in the tenth month, for the abdication ceremony to take place.¹⁰

When the appointed time came, Emperor Xian invited Cao Pi, king of Wei, to ascend the altar. Around the base clustered a vast assemblage of four hundred officials, major and minor, as well as some thirty thousand warriors including the Royal Guard, the Imperial Guard, and the Palace Guard. The Emperor held the jade seal in both hands and transferred it respectfully to Cao Pi. Below, the assembly kneeled to hear the declaration of transmission:

Be it known to you, O King of Wei, that anciently Yao solemnly relinquished the mandate to Shun, who in turn passed it to Yu. For the Mandate of Heaven does not abide but finds its home only where virtue is. The way of Han is failing; our generations have lost their proper sequence. When the succession reached my own person in the spreading gloom of great upheaval, a multitude of malefactors ran unchecked and havoc was all within our sphere.

Thanks to the martial genius of King Wu, Cao Cao, who retrieved our empire from rebellions in all quarters, the integrity of our northern region was preserved, and our ancestral sanctum kept safe. Not I alone benefited; the capital and its nine subject domains stand in his debt. You, King, have honorably followed in his footsteps and added glory to his great virtue; you have magnified the great cause of the founders of the Zhou, kings Wen and Wu; and you have given new luster to the boundless fame of your late father.

The spirits of former emperors send down auspicious signs; men and gods affirm the auguries: Cao Pi is the ideal successor to manage the dynasty's affairs. To all I confer my sovereign charge. All concur in enjoining you to model yourself after Shun, so that I may reverently abdicate to you in accordance with the "Canon of Yao." Oh, heed this! "The Heavenly calendar is invested in your person." May you conform to this great ritual with humility before the spirits and thus solemnly receive Heaven's Mandate to preside over the regions and districts of the realm.

After the ceremonial reading, Cao Pi undertook the eight-round inauguration ceremony and ascended the imperial throne. Below the altar Jia Xu led the body of officials in paying homage to the new sovereign. They then changed the reign period from Yan Kang, "Prolonged Prosperity," year 1, to Huang Chu, "Commencement of the Yellow,"¹¹ year 1 of a new dynasty called Great Wei. Next, Cao Pi issued a general amnesty. He gave his father Cao Cao the posthumous title Great Ancestor and August Martial Emperor.

Hua Xin memorialized the new Emperor: ' "Two suns do not shine in heaven; two sovereigns cannot rule. ' The Han Emperor should now retire to a remote feudatory kingdom. We petition for your sage instruction on the enfeoffment of the leader of the Liu clan." With these words, he helped Emperor Xian kneel below the altar to listen to the imperial word. Cao Pi directed that the Han Emperor be honored as lord of Shanyang and depart forthwith. Hua Xin placed his hand on his sword and, pointing at Emperor Xian, said harshly, "Putting one emperor in power and removing another was routine in the old days. The present sovereign is humane and merciful and wishes you no harm; he honors you as lord of Shanyang. You are to leave at once, never to enter the court again except on official summons."

Holding back tears, Emperor Xian made the ritual gesture of appreciation, bowing low; then he mounted and set off under the grieving gaze of the commoners and soldiers around the altar. Cao Pi said to the assembly, "Now I can appreciate the succession of Shun and Yu." The courtiers shouted, "Long life to the sovereign!" In later times a poet, viewing the Altar for Acceptance of the Abdication, left these lines:

The two Hans' governance made a heavy task;
Then all at once they had no "hills and streams."
The Wei in Yao and Shun had found their model;
Too soon the Simas learned this lesson well.

The assembly invited Cao Pi to offer Heaven and earth his thanks. But as the new emperor began descending to prostrate himself, a freak storm sprang up, driving sand and stones before it like a sudden downpour. All went dark; the altar lanterns blew out. Cao Pi collapsed in fright and had to be carried down, regaining consciousness only after a long while. Attendants took him into the palace, where he remained for several days, unable to hold court. Then, feeling stronger, he appeared in the main hall to accept the courtiers' congratulations on assuming the sovereignty. He honored Hua Xin as minister of the interior and Wang Lang as minister of works. Other officials were promoted and rewarded.

Cao Pi did not completely recover, however, and he began to suspect that the capital buildings were haunted. He therefore moved from Xuchang to Luoyang and built a palace complex there.

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Word soon reached Chengdu that Cao Pi had taken the throne as august emperor of the Great Wei and was constructing a new palace in Luoyang. And there were rumors that the Han Emperor had already been killed. The king of Hanzhong grieved the whole day at the news and ordered his court

into mourning. He also arranged sacrifices for the distant Han Emperor, honoring him posthumously as August Emperor Min the Filial.

These events made Xuande too ill to administer government affairs, and he turned everything over to Kongming. Kongming consulted Imperial Guardian Xu Jing and Imperial Steward Qiao Zhou;¹² the three decided to establish the king of Hanzhong as emperor on the grounds that the empire may not be without a sovereign even for a single day. Qiao Zhou said, "Recently we have had the good omen of auspicious winds and clouds. In the northwest corner of Chengdu a yellow haze several hundred spans high rose into the evening sky.¹³ The imperial star was seen in the area of Stomach, Mane, and Net,¹⁴ shining with an august fire and bright as the moon. These correspondent signs indicate that the king of Hanzhong should assume the imperial throne and continue the great line of Han. Their meaning is unmistakable."

And so Kongming, together with Xu Jing, led a general assembly of officials to petition the king of Hanzhong to take the imperial throne. The king read over the memorial and said in astonishment, "Would you urge on me a course both disloyal and dishonorable?"¹⁵ Kongming addressed the king: "Not at all! Cao Pi has usurped the Han and taken power. As a kinsman of the Han, Your Majesty should by rights succeed in the line so as to maintain the ritual sacrifices." The king of Hanzhong, his countenance altered, said angrily, "Shall I emulate the conduct of renegade traitors?" Flicking his sleeves, he arose and retired to the rear of the palace; the assembly dispersed.

Three days later Kongming returned to court with the body of officials and requested that the king come forth. The courtiers prostrated themselves when he appeared. Xu Jing addressed the king: "Cao Pi has murdered the Emperor of Han. Unless Your Majesty assumes the royal seat and takes the field to suppress the renegades, you will fail in your obligations of loyalty and honor. The whole world desires Your Majesty to reign and redeem the humiliation suffered by the August Emperor Min the Filial, Emperor Xian. You will fail the hopes of the people if you decline." The king replied, "Though a descendant of Emperor Jing, I lack sufficient virtue to extend to all the people. Were I suddenly to establish myself, how would it differ from the crime of usurpation?" Kongming's strenuous appeals could not move the king, so he conceived a plan that he shared with the officials. Then, claiming to be ill, he went home and remained unavailable.¹⁶

When the king heard that Kongming's illness was serious, he went to Kongming's, quarters, walked straight to his bedside, and asked, "What ails you, Director General?" "A burning anguish," Kongming replied, "so sharp, I fear I have little time to live." "The cause?" the king asked. He repeated the question a number of times, but Kongming, intending to look too sick to reply, lowered his lids. The king pressed him until finally, with a long sigh, Kongming said, "Since the day I left my thatched hut to serve Your Majesty down to the present, I have stayed beside you. You have had implicit faith in me and heeded my every counsel. Good fortune has placed the whole of the Riverlands in Your Majesty's hands, exactly as I predicted long ago. Now that Cao Pi has usurped the throne, and terminated the ritual sacrifices of the Han, all our officers and officials, both civil and military, earnestly desire to serve Your Majesty as emperor and to share in the glory of eliminating the Cao clan and reviving the Liu. Your refusal was unthinkable; but now the whole court may soon disperse in dismay, leaving the Riverlands vulnerable if Wei and Wu were to attack. How could your devoted servant not despair?"

The king replied, "I do not decline on pretext. I fear the adverse judgment of the world." Kongming said, "Confucius said that incorrect names make for illogical positions. Now Your Majesty

would be entirely justified in taking such an action. There is nothing to criticize. But can you have forgotten the saying, "What Heaven grants is refused only at peril?" The king said, "When your illness improves, there will be time enough to act." At these words Kongming sprang up from his couch and knocked the screen aside. A host of civil and military officials strode in and flung themselves to the ground. "With Your Majesty's agreement, we shall select a day for the ceremony." From the crowd before him the king recognized Imperial Guardian Xu Jing; Mi Zhu, General Who Secures the Han; Xiang Ju, lord of Qingyi; Liu Bao, lord of Yangquan; Zhao Zuo, lieutenant governor; Yang Hong, provincial secretary; Du Qiong, a counselor; Zhang Shuang, an aide; Lai Gong, minister of protocol; Huang Quan, the palace director; He Zong, the libationer; Yin Mo, the scholar-official; Qiao Zhou, the imperial steward; Chief Commander Yin Chun; Auxiliary Commander Zhang Yi; Treasurer Wang Mou; Academician Who Sheds Light on Texts, Yi Ji; Assistant Aide Qin Mi; and many others.

With trepidation the king said, "You are forcing me into a dishonorable position." "Since Your Majesty has already granted our request," Kongming said, "we may build the altar and select a propitious day for the reverent performance of the inauguration." He sent the king back to the palace and ordered Imperial Academician Xu Ci and Court Counselor Meng Guang to take charge of the ceremonies and have an altar built south of Mount Wudan.¹⁷

When all arrangements had been made, the officials had the royal carriage escort the king to the altar, where he performed the sacrifice. Qiao Zhou was on the altar and read out the accompanying text in a loud, clear voice:

It being the day *dingsi*, fifty-fourth of the cycle, twelve days after the beginning of the fourth moon on *bingwu*,¹⁸ the twenty-sixth year of Jian An,¹⁹ I, Bei, the August Emperor, resolve to proclaim to the august shining Heaven and the fruitful earth that the Han hold the empire in unbroken succession. There was one instance of usurpation: Wang Mang seized the throne, but August Emperor Guang Wu made his fury felt, executed the traitor, and restored our sacred shrines.

Now Cao Cao has committed atrocities and cruelly murdered the reigning sovereign, a hideous crime that assails the very skies. His son Pi gives free rein to nefarious treason, unlawfully seizing the sacred instruments of rule. The whole of our civil and military hold that, with the services of the Han lapsed and void, it is proper for me, Bei, to resume them and, as heir to our founders, personally carry out Heaven's retribution.

Fearful lest my virtue prove unequal to the station, I have taken counsel among the common people and the chieftains around our borders. All agree that the Mandate of Heaven must be heeded, that the patrimony must not remain displaced, and that the realm must not be without its ruler. Throughout the land expectation rests on me, Bei.

Yet do I tremble before that clear mandate. Yet do I fear that the estate of the two founders, Han Gao Zu and Emperor Guang Wu, may come to ruin. With deep reverence have we selected an auspicious day to ascend the platform and offer sacrifice, that our acceptance of the royal seal may bring solace throughout the realm. May the gods relish the dynastic offerings and bestow lasting harmony on our domain.

When the reading was done, Kongming led the assembly in tendering the jade seal. The king took it in his hands and placed it reverently on the altar. Again and again he declined the honor, saying "I,

Bei, have neither talent nor virtue; you should find someone else who has, and elevate him." But Kongming addressed the throne thus: "In bringing order to the realm, Your Majesty has illumined the empire with merit and virtue. And since you are a member of the royal house, it is fitting that you occupy the proper seat. The gods above have already received the sacrifice and the announcement. To defer is not possible any longer." A chorus of "Long live the Emperor!" went up from the assembly.

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, they changed the reign title to Zhang Wu, Manifest Might. The Emperor's consort, Lady Wu, was made Empress.²⁰ His eldest son, Shan, was appointed heir apparent; his second son, Yong, was honored as king of Lu; and his third son, Li, was named king of Liang. Zhuge Liang became prime minister; Xu Jing, minister of the interior; and all the other officials, high and low, were advanced. An amnesty was declared throughout the empire, and the people of the Riverlands, soldier and civilian alike, rejoiced.

The next day in full court, before the civil and military in their respective stations, the First Ruler²¹ delivered his first edict: "With Lord Guan and Zhang Fei we bound ourselves in honor and allegiance in the peach garden, swearing to live or die as one. Alas! My second brother, Lord Guan, met his doom at the hands of Sun Quan of the Southland. Unless we take revenge on this enemy, the covenant is betrayed. Therefore we intend full mobilization for war against the south to take alive the renegade traitor and to redeem our shame." But before the First Ruler had finished, someone stepped out from the ranks and threw himself at the First Ruler's feet to object: "No!" he cried. It was one of the "Five Tiger Generals," Zhao Zilong. Indeed:

Before the Emperor could execute the punishment ordained,
His vassal Zhao Zilong brought forward a complaint.

How did the great warrior remonstrate?

READ ON.



***Eager for Revenge, Zhang Fei Is Assassinated;
To Avenge His Brother, the Emperor Goes to War***

ZHAO ZILONG SPOKE AGAINST THE EXPEDITION: "Cao Cao is the traitor, not Sun Quan. Cao Pi has usurped the Han throne, to the common indignation of gods and men. Let Your Majesty first make the land within the passes your target. Station your men along the upper Wei River in order to bring these hateful renegades to justice; and the Han loyalists east of the passes will then bundle their grain and urge on their horses to welcome the royal host. But if, instead of the northern kingdom of Wei, you attack the southern kingdom of Wu, once your forces are engaged, they cannot be quickly recalled. May Your Majesty consider this carefully."¹

The Emperor replied, "Sun Quan murdered my brother, and others have earned their share of my hatred: Fu Shiren, Mi Fang, Pan Zhang, Ma Zhong. Until I've gnawed their flesh and exterminated their clans, my humiliation will not be effaced. Why would you stand in my way?" Zhao Zilong answered, "War against the traitors to Han is a public responsibility. War for the sake of a brother is a personal matter. I urge Your Majesty to give priority to the empire." To this the Emperor replied, "If I should fail to avenge my brother, the possession of these ten thousand *li* of mountains and rivers would make an unworthy prize." Ignoring Zhao Zilong's opposition, the Emperor ordered mobilization, sending envoys to Wuxi to borrow fifty thousand troops from the Qiang nation. At the same time he promoted Zhang Fei, who was in Langzhong, to general of Chariots and Cavalry and commander of the Capital Districts, and further honored him as lord of Xixiang and protector of Langzhong. An envoy took the edict to him.

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Zhang Fei was in Langzhong when he learned that the revered Lord Guan had been murdered in the Southland. Day and night he howled and wept until his shirt was damp with blood. Wine, which his commanders urged on him to calm him, served only to inflame him; whoever crossed him—whether of high rank or low—he had flogged immediately, and many deaths resulted. Each day he would stare into the south, gnashing his teeth in the fury of humiliation, venting cries of anguish. At this time the messenger from the Emperor arrived. He was rushed into Zhang Fei's presence, where he read the edict. After accepting his new honors and offices, Zhang Fei faced north and prostrated himself to show his devotion to the Emperor. He then regaled the messenger.

"My will to revenge my brother's murder is deep as the sea," Zhang Fei said. "Why have the members of court made no appeals to the throne for a general mobilization?" The envoy replied, "The majority urge that Wei be annihilated before we take up arms against Wu." "What words!" Zhang Fei cried out angrily. "We three brothers took an oath to live and die as one. The second has passed from

us before his time. What are wealth and station to me without him? I shall see the Son of Heaven myself and offer to serve in the vanguard. Under the banner of mourning I shall wage war upon the south, bring the traitor home to sacrifice to my second brother, and thus fulfill the covenant." Zhang Fei headed back to Chengdu, capital of the Riverlands, with the envoy.

The Emperor went regularly to the training field to direct army maneuvers. He set the day for the expedition, which he intended to lead personally. The high officers of the court went to the prime minister's quarters and complained to Kongming: "The Son of Heaven has held the throne for too brief a time to be taking personal command of the army. The sacred shrines will be neglected as a result. Your Excellency, you hold the most influential position. Could you not urge him toward a better course?" Kongming responded, "I have protested—many times—to no avail. Come with me today to the training grounds and I'll try again."²

Kongming, at the head of the assembly, addressed the Emperor: "Your Majesty has assumed the throne so recently; if it is your purpose to bring the northern traitors to justice so that the principle of allegiance to legitimate authority may prevail in the empire, then it is altogether right for you to take command of the entire army yourself. But if you simply mean to attack the Southland, ordering one of your superior commanders to lead the campaign should suffice. Why should your own sagely self bear the burden?" In view of Kongming's strenuous objections, the Emperor was experiencing some uncertainty about the invasion when Zhang Fei's arrival was announced.³ The Emperor summoned him at once. Zhang Fei bent to the ground before the reviewing stand, weeping as he hugged his lord's feet. The Emperor wept too.

"Today Your Majesty reigns," Zhang Fei said, "and already the peach garden oath is forgotten! Can you leave our brother unavenged?" "Many officials oppose taking revenge. I cannot act rashly," was the reply. "What do others know of our covenant? If you will not go, I will revenge him whatever the cost to myself. Should I fail, I shall be content to die and see you no more." "Then I shall go with you," the Emperor said. "You start out from Langzhou with your own troops. I shall meet you with an elite force at Jiangzhou. Our joint campaign against the Southland will redeem our shame." Zhang Fei was about to leave when the Emperor added a warning, "You have often turned violent after wine, beaten your stalwarts, and then reassigned them in your personal guard. That is a good way to destroy yourself. Hereafter change your ways; make an effort to be tolerant and understanding." Zhang Fei bowed low, took leave, and departed.

The next day the Emperor organized his forces for the march. Scholar Official Qin Mi addressed the throne: "For Your Majesty to jeopardize the imperial person in pursuit of a trifling point of honor is a course no sage of olden times would approve."⁴ I beg you to reconsider." "Yunchang is I—in sacred union," the Emperor responded, "and I am Yunchang. Who could forget the great obligation this entails?" Qin Mi flung himself to the ground and would not get up. "Heed me," he cried, "lest your plan miscarry." "How dare you speak of failure on the eve of the mobilization?" the Emperor demanded angrily. He ordered the guards to remove Qin Mi and behead him. But Qin Mi, his expression unaltered, turned back and smiled at the Emperor. "I go to die without regret," he said, "but the collapse of your new enterprise makes me sad." All the officials pleaded for Qin Mi, and so the Emperor said, "Imprison him for the time being. We'll deal with him after completing our mission of revenge." Kongming learned of this incident and submitted a memorial in defense of Qin Mi:

It is my earnest belief that the treachery of the Southland led to the disaster in Jingzhou. We

lost our leading star; our pillar of Heaven was broken. But however keen our grief, however unforgettable, we must also remember that the crime of displacing the sacred dynastic vessels of Han arose through Cao Cao. The removal of the holy offerings of the Liu was not Sun Quan's fault. And I would presume to say that if the traitors of the Wei are removed, then the Southland will submit to us of its own accord. I implore you to accept the precious advice of Qin Mi and husband the strength of our armies. There are other worthwhile strategies that will bring great good fortune to our shrines and to our realm.⁵

But the Emperor threw the petition to the ground and said, "We are resolved. Let there be no further opposition." So saying, he commanded Prime Minister Zhuge Liang to take the heir apparent, Ah Dou, into his charge and defend the Riverlands; Flying Cavalry General Ma Chao and his cousin Ma Dai to assist Queller of the North, General Wei Yan, in the defense of Hanzhong against the northern army; Tiger Might General Zhao Zilong to coordinate relief from the rear and to supervise supply operations; Huang Quan and Cheng Ji to serve as military advisers; Ma Liang and Chen Zhen to take charge of documents; Huang Zhong to serve as vanguard of the forward army; Feng Xi and Zhang Nan to serve as lieutenant commanders; Fu Tong and Zhang Yi to be posted as commander's aides in the central army; and Zhao Rong and Liao Chun to coordinate the rear. The expedition, which included several hundred Riverlands generals as well as a number of leaders of the Miao and Yao peoples from the Wuxi region—altogether seven hundred and fifty thousand strong—was to begin on the *bingyin* day, fifty-first of the cycle, in the seventh month of Zhang Wu I.⁶

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Zhang Fei returned to his camp in Langzhong, where he allotted but three days to prepare white banners and white armor so that his armies might set forth against the Southland under the color of mourning. The next day two minor commanders, Fan Jiang and Zhang Da, entered his tent and announced, "The allotted period will have to be extended if we are to arrange for white banners and white armor." Violently angered by these words, Zhang Fei shouted, "My vengeance will brook no delay. The shame is that we can't reach the traitor's borders tomorrow! And yet you dare contravene my command!" He shrieked for them to be bound to a tree and lashed on the back fifty times. Then he pointed at them menacingly and cried, "Everything is to be ready tomorrow! If you fail, I will make a public example with your heads!" And he beat them until blood ran from their mouths.

The two returned to camp to think of a way to save themselves. Fan Jiang said, "After a beating like this, how are we going to carry out our orders? The man's as violent as fire. And unless everything's ready tomorrow, we both will die!" "Better him than us," Zhang Da answered. "But we couldn't get near him," Fan Jiang replied. "If we are fated to live, he will fall asleep drunk. If we are fated to die, he will stay sober," Zhang Da said. Thus, the two men prepared themselves to act.

That night in his tent, anxious and restless, Zhang Fei asked his commanders, "I no longer know peace; I cannot rest—what does it mean?" The officers responded, "It comes from thinking of the revered Lord Guan, Your Lordship." Zhang Fei ordered wine and drank with his officers. Before realizing it, he fell into a drunken stupor. Informed of Zhang Fei's condition, Fan Jiang and Zhang Da slipped into his tent at the first watch with concealed knives. Claiming to have an important secret petition to present, they approached his couch. Now, Zhang Fei always slept with open lids, and the

two traitors, watching the sleeping man's bristling beard and staring eyes, stood paralyzed. Then, hearing the loud drone of breath in his nostrils, they stepped up and plunged their daggers into Zhang Fei's belly. Zhang Fei gave a single cry and died. He was fifty-five years of age. A poet of later times has left these lines:

At Anxi town he flogged the state inspector⁷
And aided the Liu in clearing out the Scarves.
At Tiger Trap his voice rang clear and loud;
By Steepslope Bridge he turned back Cao Cao's horde.
His release of Yan Yan secured the Riverlands;
He tricked Zhang He and gave Liu Bei Hanzhong.
But by dying before the Southland could be won,
He left a lasting sadness in Langzhong.

The two traitors severed Zhang Fei's head and proceeded to the south with a few dozen followers. By the time the deed was known the next day, pursuit was impossible.

At the time of the murder Wu Ban, one of Zhang Fei's commanders, earlier from Jingzhou, had been assigned by the Emperor as garrison commander to help defend Langzhong. This Wu Ban prepared the memorial announcing Zhang Fei's death. After completing it, he had Zhang Fei's eldest son, Zhang Bao, prepare the coffins, inner and outer, and place the body inside; he had the younger son, Zhang Shao, guard Langzhong while Zhang Bao went ahead to inform the Emperor.

The Emperor had already gone forth with the army on the day selected. Kongming, followed by a grand assembly of officials, escorted the Emperor some ten *li*. Afterward, the prime minister, filled with foreboding, returned to Chengdu, where he told the court officials, "Fa Zheng, were he alive, could have prevented this expedition."⁸

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The Emperor spent an anxious night. Unable to sleep, he stepped outside his tent and looked into the sky: in the northwest he saw a meteor large as a dipper plunge toward the horizon. The Emperor sent to Kongming for an explanation of the phenomenon. Kongming responded, "It represents the loss of a senior general. We'll have upsetting news within three days." Kongming's reply kept the Emperor from advancing. Suddenly, an attendant addressed the throne: "General Zhang Fei's commander Wu Ban has sent a man to deliver a memorial." The Emperor stamped his foot on the ground and cried, "Alas! Third brother must be gone!" Then he learned the awful truth from Wu Ban's memorial. The Emperor let out a terrible cry and fell faint. His officers rushed to revive him.

The next day it was reported that a company of troops was fast approaching. The Emperor left his tent to see for himself; after a long wait he saw a young commander in white battle gown and silver-gilt armor ride up, dismount briskly, and prostrate himself, crying. It was Zhang Fei's son, Zhang Bao. "Fan Jiang and Zhang Da," he cried, "have slain your vassal's father and taken his head to the Southland." The Emperor, grief-stricken, refused all food and drink. His officers pleaded, "If Your Majesty means to avenge the death of your two brothers, you must maintain your health." Finally the Emperor accepted food. He asked Zhang Bao, "Are you and Wu Ban willing to put your men in the

vanguard to avenge your father?" Zhang Bao replied, "Yes. For my kingdom and for my father's sake, I will welcome death ten thousand times if need be."

The Emperor was about to dispatch Zhang Bao to ready his troops, when another body of soldiers arrived. The Emperor directed his attendant to find out who they were. Presently the attendant escorted in a young general dressed in a white surcoat and silvered armor; he prostrated himself and cried. It was Guan Xing. The sight of the lad reminded the Emperor of the revered Lord Guan, and he gave voice to his grief. The officials could not assuage him. "I remember when we were commoners in obscurity," the Emperor said. "We pledged our honor to live and die for each other. Now, as the Son of Heaven, I should be enjoying wealth and prestige with my brothers. Alas, both met violent ends. And the sight of these two nephews breaks my heart." So saying, he began to cry again.

The officials said to the young commanders, "Withdraw for now; our liege lord needs rest." The imperial attendants addressed the throne: "Such excess of emotion could be harmful, Your Majesty; you are more than sixty years of age." "Can I carry on alone, without my brothers?" the Emperor said. He knocked his head on the ground and wept. The body of officials asked each other, "How can we relieve the Son of Heaven's distress?" Ma Liang replied, "For our lord to grieve all day when he is personally commanding this great campaign bodes the army no good." Chen Zhen added, "I have heard that west of Azure City Mountain lives an old recluse named Li Yi, said to be over three hundred years old, who can divine a man's years and his fortune. He is one of the holy immortals of our age. Let us petition the Son of Heaven to summon this man and ask his reading of what lies in store. It will be worth more than any suggestions of ours."

Chen Zhen presented this proposal to the Emperor, who approved and sent Chen Zhen to deliver his edict and summon the divine. That night Chen Zhen reached Azure City Mountain and had a man from the area guide him to a recess in the valley from which he could observe the divine's cottage.⁹ Clouds enshadowed it, and a magical aura marked it. Suddenly a lad greeted him and said, "You must be Chen Zhen." The astonished visitor replied, "How do you know me, young immortal?" "Yesterday my master told me that today Chen Zhen would bring an imperial edict," was the reply. "A true seer!" he exclaimed. "What people say is no lie." He accompanied the lad to the cottage, paid his respects to the sage, and announced the imperial summons. But Li Yi declined the summons, pleading his great age. Chen Zhen pursued the matter: "The Son of Heaven urgently desires an interview with the divine elder. Please do not begrudge him this visit." After repeated pleas, Li Yi agreed to go.

Li Yi came to the royal camp. Receiving him, the Emperor observed the old man's crane-white hair and youthful face, his greenish eyes and broad pupils glistening with an inner light, and his body that seemed to have assumed the configuration of an ancient cypress. Recognizing in Li Yi a man of unique gifts, the Emperor treated him with the sincerest cordiality.

"This old man," Li Yi began, "from a remote mountain village lacks both art and wisdom. Your Majesty has graciously summoned me, but what your command may be, I do not know." The Emperor responded, "I formed a life-and-death bond with my brothers, Guan and Zhang, more than thirty years ago. The two have been murdered, and I have undertaken to lead this great army to exact revenge, but I wonder what outcome the future holds. I have long known, divine elder, that you understand the mysterious workings of fate, and I look forward to the benefit of your instruction." Li Yi answered, "What Heaven ordains is beyond my ken." The Emperor pleaded again and again. Finally Li Yi called for brush and paper and drew some forty illustrations of soldiers, horses, and weapons. He then tore each drawing into tiny pieces. Next, he drew a giant sleeping faceup on the ground. Beside him

someone was digging a grave to bury him. At the top of the paper Li Yi wrote the word "white." He knocked his head respectfully to the ground and departed. Displeased, the Emperor said to his company, "A mad old man! Not worth our trust!" He burned the paper and dispatched the order for his army to advance.¹⁰

Zhang Bao entered the command tent and addressed the Emperor: "Wu Ban's forces have come. I beg to be placed in the vanguard." Impressed by Zhang Bao's ardor, the Emperor presented the seal of the vanguard commander to him. Zhang Bao was about to take the seal, when another young commander rushed forward and said, "Leave the seal for me!" It was Guan Xing. "But I have the edict," Zhang Bao protested. "Are you fit for the task?" Guan Xing asked. "I have trained in the military arts since my youth," he replied. "My every arrow finds its mark." The Emperor said, "Let our worthy nephews show their skills, and we shall decide between them." Zhang Bao had some soldiers plant a banner with a red center one hundred paces away. Zhang Bao held his bow and drew three arrows. Each shot hit the center. The crowd shouted its acclamation.

Guan Xing snatched his own bow and cried, "Nothing remarkable about that!" Suddenly, a line of geese flew overhead. Guan Xing pointed up and said, "I'll shoot down the third." He shot into the sky and the bird fell as the string hummed. The officials hailed Guan Xing in unison. Angered, Zhang Bao mounted swiftly and, gripping the eighteen-span spear his father had used, shouted, "A trial of arms with me?" Guan Xing mounted, raised a sword handed down from his father, and dashed out to meet the challenge. "Use your spear; I'll use my sword!"

The two commanders had started to close, when the Emperor cried, "No more wrangling, lads!" The two hastily dismounted, threw down their weapons, and prostrated themselves as they begged the royal pardon. The Emperor continued, "In the district of Zhuo your fathers and I bound ourselves in friendship. Though of different surnames, we were as kinsmen. Now you two must join as brothers and commit yourselves utterly to avenge your fathers. What's the point of pitting yourselves against each other, neglecting the greater duty? Your fathers have been lately slain. If you go on like this, what will it lead to?" The two nephews bowed low and acknowledged their fault.

The Emperor asked, "Which of you is older?" Zhang Bao replied, "I am, by one year." The Emperor commanded Guan Xing to honor Zhang Bao as elder brother, and the two sealed the pledge by breaking an arrow in front of the royal tent, vowing always to help one another. The Emperor placed Wu Ban in the vanguard and ordered Zhang Bao and Guan Xing to serve as his guards. By water and land the western force advanced: war-junks parallel to the cavalry, a vast tide bearing down on the Southland.

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Meanwhile, Fan Jiang and Zhang Da had transported Zhang Fei's head to Sun Quan. Hearing their account of the incident, the lord of the south accepted them and then addressed his officials: "Liu Bei has assumed the imperial throne, and now seven hundred thousand seasoned troops under his personal command are marching toward us. How shall we meet this mighty force?" The officials paled and stared at one another helplessly. Zhuge Jin came forward and said, "Long have I enjoyed Your Lordship's bounty without having rendered due service. I wish, whatever the risk, to go to meet the sovereign of the Riverlands and persuade him of the advantage of restoring friendship between our two states, that we may jointly scourge Cao Pi for his crimes." Well pleased, Sun Quan sent Zhuge Jin

as his representative to persuade the Emperor to halt his armies. Indeed:

A man was sent to the power bent on war;
All hopes for peace rested with the message-bearer.¹¹

What was the fate of Zhuge Jin's mission?

READ ON.



***Sun Quan Submits to Wei, Receives the Nine Dignities;
The First Ruler Marches on Wu, Rewards All Armies***

IN AUTUMN, DURING THE EIGHTH MONTH of the first year of Zhang Wu, the Emperor's army reached Kui Pass and pitched camp at the town of Baidi (which means "White Emperor"); ahead, vanguard squads had already passed beyond Riverlands territory. A close attendant informed the Emperor that Zhuge Jin had come. The Emperor declined to receive the Southland envoy, but Huang Quan said, "Jin is the older brother of Your Majesty's own prime minister. He has not come for naught, and he should be received. Let's hear him out. Perhaps we can satisfy his request. At the least, we can use him to inform Sun Quan that we intend to make him answer for his crime." On this advice the Emperor called Zhuge Jin into Baidi.

Zhuce Jin prostrated himself before the Emperor, who asked him, "What is the purpose of this visit?" Jin replied, "My younger brother has long served Your Majesty. I come today—even at the risk of execution—to put the question of Jingzhou before you once again. While Lord Guan held Jingzhou, Lord Sun of the Southland made several offers of alliance through marriage, which were always refused. After Lord Guan captured Xiangyang, Cao Cao sent several letters to Lord Sun urging him to attack Jingzhou.¹ Lord Sun refused, but Lü Meng, whose relations with Lord Guan were never good, took action against him without Lord Sun's authorization. Lü Meng thus created an unfortunate incident, which Lord Sun deeply regrets; yet the fault was Lü Meng's, not my lord's. Now that Lü Meng is dead, the quarrel between us ends. Moreover, Lady Sun thinks only of returning to her husband.² Lord Sun has sent me here, therefore, to communicate our desire to deliver Lady Sun and to repatriate those commanders of Lord Guan's who surrendered to us. Finally, we desire to restore Jingzhou to you to seal our amity in perpetuity that we may strive to eliminate the traitor and usurper Cao Pi."

The Emperor retorted hotly, "You southerners murdered our brother. Don't ply us with clever arguments!" But Zhuge Jin continued, "Allow me to weigh the merits of the case. Your Majesty is an imperial uncle of the Han; the Han Emperor has been unlawfully deprived of his throne by Cao Pi. Yet instead of dedicating yourself to eliminating the traitors, you compromise your imperial dignity for a kinsman by oath, not by blood, and thereby forsake a sacred obligation for a lesser one. The northern heartland is the core of the realm; Chang'an and Luoyang are the recognized capitals of Han. Your Majesty, forsaking the north to fight for Jingzhou means forsaking what is important to pursue what is petty. The whole empire knows that by assuming the throne you could revive the Han and bring the mountains and rivers of this land within its rule once again. I venture to advise Your Majesty not to ignore Wei in order to wage war against Wu."

In a fury the Emperor said, "That enemy who slew my brother will never share one sky with us. Nothing—save my death—will stop these troops. Were not the prime minister your brother, you

would have already lost your head. However, you may return and tell Sun Quan to wash his neck: the executioner is coming." Thus, the Emperor stood firm, and Zhuge Jin betook himself home to the Southland.

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Zhang Zhao said to Sun Quan, "Zhuge Jin knows the strength of the Riverlands army and intends to defect. His peace mission is a cover. He will not be back." Sun Quan replied, "Zhuge Jin and I are fast friends, friends to the death. He would never betray me, nor I him. The last time Kongming came to Chaisang, Jin was here. I tried to get him to win his brother over, but he said, 'My brother serves Xuande with single-minded loyalty. He could no more remain with us than I could go over to them.' Such words even the gods can hear. Zhuge Jin would never submit to the Riverlands. Our sacred friendship stands proof against outside intrusion." As he was speaking, Zhuge Jin returned. "You see?" Sun Quan said, and Zhang Zhao retreated shamefacedly.

Sun Quan received Zhuge Jin, who told him that the Emperor had rejected reconciliation. Alarmed, Sun Quan said, "In that case, the Southland may fall." But below the platform a man stepped forth and said, "I have a plan to avert the danger." It was Zhao Zi, a ranking adviser at court. "What plan?" Sun Quan asked. "Let Your Lordship declare submission to Cao Pi, Emperor of Wei. Delegate me to deliver the petition, and I will show him that his advantage lies in attacking Hanzhong. That will exert pressure on the Riverlands army." Sun Quan responded, "An excellent plan. But do not lose the Southland's honor on this trip." Zhao Zi replied, "I would throw myself into the river first, for I could never face my countrymen if I committed the least fault in this."

Sun Quan was delighted. He wrote the memorial declaring his allegiance to the Emperor, Cao Pi, and Zhao Zi bore it swiftly to Xuchang. There he was received by Grand Commandant Jia Xu and a number of major and minor officials. The next day at morning court Jia Xu stepped forth from the ranks and addressed the throne: "The Southland has sent Senior Adviser Zhao Zi to present a memorial." Cao Pi smiled and said, "That's because they want the army of Shu driven back." He summoned the envoy, who threw himself to the ground in the vermilion courtyard of the palace.

After reading the memorial, Cao Pi asked Zhao Zi, "What manner of master is the lord of the Southland?" "A man of understanding and insight, humanity and wisdom, valor and military judgment," was the reply. Cao Pi smiled and said, "Perhaps you overpraise him?" Zhao Zi said, "I cannot too much honor my lord. He took Lu Su, a man of ordinary rank, into his confidence: that shows his understanding. He raised up Lü Meng from the ranks of the army: that shows his insight. He seized Yu Jin but spared him: that shows his humanity. He captured Jingzhou without staining his swords: that shows his wisdom. From the vantage of his river-girded realm he has held the empire in awe: that shows his valor. And now he submits to Your Majesty's authority: that shows his judgment. He thus proves no less than all I claim."

Next, Cao Pi asked him, "And is he also a man of learning?" "Lord Sun," Zhao Zi replied, "has a fleet of ten thousand ships and a million men under arms. The men serving him are honest and able. He concerns himself with administrative order, and with what leisure he has he reads the classics and commentaries and studies historical records, extracting their main ideas; he never follows the trifling example of pedantic scholars." Cao Pi responded, "I want to invade the south. Will I succeed?" Zhao Zi answered, "If your great kingdom has the forces for a campaign, our lesser kingdom has strategies

for meeting the threat." "Does Wu fear Wei?" Cao Pi asked. "Why should we," Zhao Zi replied, "with a million men under arms and the Great River for our moat?" Cao Pi went on, "And how many like you are there in the Southland?" "We have eighty or ninety men of insight, vision, and accomplishment," he replied. "As for men like me, we come in cartloads, in bushels." "'Where'er you send him round the land, he never fails his king's command'—the saying fits you," Cao Pi concluded.

Cao Pi issued an edict ordering Master of Ceremonies Xing Zhen to deliver documents honoring Sun Quan as king of the Southland and investing him with the Nine Dignities. Zhao Zi gave thanks for this gracious generosity and left the capital. A high courtier, Liu Ye, protested, "Sun Quan fears the army of Shu, which is why he offered to submit. My humble opinion is that war between those two kingdoms is Heaven's way of destroying them. This is the time to send your best commanders with tens of thousands of troops across the river to surprise Wu. Hit by Shu, their declared enemy, and Wei, their supposed ally, the Southland kingdom should fall in ten days' time; Shu will then be isolated. May Your Majesty take the necessary steps without delay."

Cao Pi responded, "Sun Quan has officially submitted. To attack him will discourage others who might follow his example. The correct course is to accept his surrender." Liu Ye went on, "Brave and capable as Sun Quan is, under the fallen Han he was merely a Flying Cavalry general and lord of Nanchang. His offices were not high and so his influence was limited, yet still the northern lands stand in awe of him. Raise him now to king, and he will be but one step removed from Your Majesty. To put faith in Sun Quan's false surrender, augment his titles, and enrich him with fiefs is but to serve the enemy's ends, to 'lend the tiger wings,' as they say." "I disagree," Cao Pi replied. "I mean to help neither Wu nor Shu but to wait to destroy the one that survives their conflict. How easy it will be then! My mind is made up. Do not refer to this again." With that, Cao Pi ordered Minister of Ceremonies Xing Zhen to accompany Zhao Zi back to the south to present the credentials and ceremonial articles to Sun Quan.

At this time Sun Quan had summoned his court to discuss the Riverlands invasion. Suddenly a courier reported: "The Emperor of Wei honors Lord Sun as king of the Southland. Ceremony requires welcoming his envoy on the road." But the adviser Gu Yong protested: "Your Lordship should declare himself commander in chief and lord of the Nine Provinces and should not accept any title from the Wei emperor." Sun Quan replied, "Did not Liu Bang accept the title king of Han from Xiang Yu? It was appropriate at the time. Why should I refuse this honor?" So saying, he led the court beyond the city wall to welcome the northern envoy.³

Xing Zhen felt so confident in his position as imperial emissary that he did not come down from his carriage after passing through the capital gates. Zhang Zhao, angered by this arrogance, shouted at him, "There can be no disrespect in ceremonies, nor levity in protocol. What are these high and mighty ways? Don't think the Southland is a kingdom without swords!" Xing Zhen hurriedly stepped down and was received by Sun Quan, who escorted him into the city. But someone behind the carriage wailed, "Oh, shame! To allow our lord to accept rank and title from others when we should rouse ourselves and lay down our lives to annex both kingdoms, Wei and Shu, for him!" The assembly turned to Xu Sheng. Hearing this, Xing Zhen reflected, "If the Southland has such generals and ministers, it will never remain under our rule."

In the end, Sun Quan accepted the kingship from Cao Pi. After receiving the congratulations of the entire court, Sun Quan gathered jade and pearls and other articles, which he sent to Xuchang to express his gratitude. But spies had already reported to him: "The lord of Shu is marching against us,

leading a mighty army of his own together with tens of thousands of Miao and Yao tribesmen under Chief Shamoke. In addition, they have naval and land forces under Du Lu and Liu Ning, two Han generals from Dongxi. The very heavens are atremble from the scale of this army. The naval force has already come through Wu Gorge, and the land force is now at Zigui."

Although now a vassal king, Sun Quan despaired of significant help from the Wei ruler. He asked his advisers, "How do we meet this formidable force of Shu?" No one had an answer. Sun Quan sighed aloud and said, "After Zhou Yu we had Lu Su; and after Lu Su, Lü Meng. But Lü Meng is dead, and there is no one now to share my trials." Even as he spoke, a young commander stepped forward boldly, touched his head to the ground, and said to the king, "Though I am young, I know something of the art of war. I would like to ask for troops—several tens of thousands—with which I will defeat the Riverlands armies." Sun Quan regarded the speaker. It was Sun Huan (Shuwu). His real father was Yu He. Sun Ce had kindly allowed Yu He to assume the surname Sun and affiliate with the clan. Sun Huan was the eldest of Sun He's four sons, expert in both marksmanship and horsemanship. He frequently followed the Southland king on his campaigns and had striking achievements to his credit, for which he had been appointed commander of the Military Guard. Sun Huan was twenty-five years old.

"What plan do you have?" Sun Quan asked Sun Huan. "I have two commanders under me," he replied, "Li Yi and Xie Jing—both men of unconquerable courage. I ask for thirty to fifty thousand troops to take Liu Bei alive." Sun Quan responded, "Despite your splendid courage, nephew, you are still too young. Find someone to assist you, and I will grant your request." Tiger General Zhu Ran came forward and said, "Let me accompany the young commander to seize Liu Bei." Sun Quan approved and detailed fifty thousand marine and ground troops. He appointed Sun Huan field marshal of the Left and Zhu Ran field marshal of the Right and began the mobilization. Scouts had already brought word that Riverlands troops were camped at Yidu. Sun Huan took twenty-five thousand men and stationed them at the access point to Yidu, where they drew up a line of three camps to repel the Riverlanders.

The commander of the Riverlands vanguard, Wu Ban, had overawed all opposition since entering Southland territory and had reached Yidu by this time without bloodying a single sword. Informed that Sun Huan had camped there, Wu Ban sent word to the Emperor, who was already in Zigui. Angered, the Emperor said, "How dare that brat Sun Huan oppose us!" Guan Xing then addressed the Emperor: "If Sun Quan saw fit to send this boy as his commander, Your Majesty need not bother sending a top general against him. Allow me to go and capture him." "I am eager for a display of your mettle!" the Emperor responded and ordered Guan Xing to proceed forthwith. As Guan Xing was taking leave, Zhang Bao stepped forth and said, "I wish to join him in punishing the traitors." The Emperor replied, "Although it is a fitting touch, my nephews, for both of you to go, caution is essential. Go, but do not act in haste."

The two young warriors bade the Emperor good-bye and, joining as a vanguard, set out together, their troops in fine formation. Sun Huan soon heard that the Riverlands forces had arrived en masse and established themselves in a string of encampments. The armies formed opposing lines, and Sun Huan led Li Yi and Xie Jing on their mounts to the entrance to his formation. He saw two leading commanders emerge from the Riverlands camp. Each wore a silver-gilt helmet and armor and had a white horse and white banner: Zhang Bao menacingly raised his eighteen-span spear, and Guan Xing held his great sword leveled for combat.

Zhang Bao denounced Sun Huan: "Little scamp! Prepare to die if you still dare to stand against Heaven's ordained army!" Sun Huan returned the taunt: "Your father is already a headless ghost. And now you come courting death—in all folly!" Zhang Bao raised his spear and made for Sun Huan. From behind Sun Huan, Xie Jing sprang forward and fought more than thirty bouts with Zhang Bao, then fled. Zhang Bao pursued, pressing his advantage. Li Yi, seeing Xie Jing defeated, flourished his gilt-metal axe and rushed against Zhang Bao. But neither prevailed in a battle lasting some twenty passes.

Tan Xiong, a lieutenant commander in the Southland army, saw that Li Yi could not best his brave opponent and so shot at him from a concealed position. But the arrow hit Zhang Bao's horse, and sent the wounded animal galloping back. It collapsed before it had reached the home line, throwing Zhang Bao to the ground. Li Yi again rushed forward wheeling his axe and aimed a blow at Zhang Bao's head. But a streak of red cut the air, and Li Yi's head fell first. Guan Xing had seen Zhang Bao racing back and was about to join the fight himself, when he saw the rider fall and Li Yi approach for the kill. Guan Xing shouted, then cut down Li Yi, saving Zhang Bao's life. Guan Xing pressed the attack, and Sun Huan suffered a great defeat. Finally, each side recalled its men.

The next day Sun Huan again appeared in force; Zhang Bao and Guan Xing advanced toward him. Guan Xing rode into position before his line and, standing alone, challenged Sun Huan. Roused to fury, Sun Huan raced toward him, wheeling his sword. After more than thirty bouts with Guan Xing, Sun Huan retired in defeat, exhausted. The two young commanders, Zhang Bao and Guan Xing, pursued Sun Huan and fought their way into his base camp, while Wu Ban led Zhang Nan and Feng Xi in a swift assault on the southerners. Zhang Bao, swept forward by his boundless courage, had crossed into the southern army's line when Xie Jing confronted him. Zhang Bao speared him with one thrust. The Southland forces fled every which way; the Riverlands army recalled its victorious troops. But Guan Xing was not to be seen.

In alarm, Zhang Bao said, "I cannot live without Guan Xing," and remounted, holding his spear. After riding several *li* in search of Guan Xing, Zhang Bao came upon him holding a sword in one hand and an enemy commander fast in the other. "Who is that?" Zhang Bao asked him. Guan Xing smiled as he replied, "I found this foe in the thick of battle and took him alive." Zhang Bao recognized Tan Xiong, the archer who had shot at him from ambush the day before, and took pleasure in bringing the prisoner back to camp, where Bao beheaded him and offered the drained blood in sacrifice to his dead horse. A report of the victory was sent to the Emperor.

The loss of commanders Li Yi, Xie Jing, and Tan Xiong as well as a number of officers and men had left Sun Huan too weak to resist; he called for help from the Southland. Riverlands commanders Zhang Nan and Feng Xi said to Wu Ban, "The southern army is through. This is the moment to raid their camps." Wu Ban answered, "Sun Huan has taken great losses, but Zhu Ran's marine force remains intact on the river. If we raid their camps, the sailors could come ashore and cut off our retreat—what then?" "That's easy enough," Zhang Nan answered. "Have commanders Zhang Bao and Guan Xing place five thousand each in ambush in the valleys. If Zhu Ran comes, he'll be trapped between our two forces and the day will be ours." Wu Ban said, "Why not first send a few soldiers to Zhu Ran to feign surrender and inform him of our planned raid? When Zhu Ran sees the camps afire, he will go to relieve them and we can spring our ambush then. Our triumph will be complete." Feng Xi and the other leaders were satisfied with the plan and proceeded at once to carry it out.

Zhu Ran was preparing to relieve Sun Huan when his sentries led the false defectors onto his

boat. When the soldiers expressed their desire to surrender, Zhu Ran asked for an explanation. "We are Feng Xi's men," one of them said. "Because of his unfair rewards and punishments, we have come to submit—and to report an important secret as well." "What secret?" Zhu Ran asked. One of the soldiers continued, "Tonight Feng Xi wants to raid General Sun Huan's base camp. Fire will be the signal." Zhu Ran immediately forwarded this information to Sun Huan; his messenger was intercepted by Guan Xing and killed. Zhu Ran met with his commanders to plan the rescue of Sun Huan.

Lieutenant Commander Cui Yu said to Zhu Ran, "Their story is doubtful. If this is a trick, our marine and land forces will both be done for. General, I suggest you defend our naval camp and let me go in your place." Zhu Ran approved this plan and gave Cui Yu a command of ten thousand. That night Feng Xi, Zhang Nan, and Wu Ban divided their Riverlands men into three armies and fell upon Sun Huan's camp. Fires rose on all sides as the southern troops panicked and fled.

In the meantime, Cui Yu had been advancing. Seeing the fires, he pressed forward and rounded a hill. Suddenly the beating of drums animated the valley as Zhang Bao and Guan Xing sprang their two-sided ambush. Cui Yu struggled to escape but found himself face to face with Zhang Bao, who took him prisoner after a single exchange of arms. Zhu Ran soon learned of this unfavorable turn of events and withdrew his fleet fifty or sixty *li* downstream. Sun Huan, escaping with his defeated men, asked a lieutenant, "Is there a stout-walled town with ample provisions anywhere ahead of us?" The lieutenant replied, "Due north is Yiling. We can station there." Sun Huan hurried in that direction; he had hardly entered the town, when Wu Ban's pursuit arrived and encircled the walls.

Guan Xing and Zhang Bao took Cui Yu to Zigui. The Emperor was delighted and ordered the prisoner beheaded. Afterward he rewarded his army. As a result of this victory, the Emperor was feared throughout the Southland.

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The men Sun Huan had sent to ask for help reached the Southland. Astounded at the news they brought, the king of Wu summoned his counselors. "Sun Huan is trapped in Yiling," he told them, "and Zhu Ran was badly defeated on the river. The Riverlands army is indeed formidable. What are we to do?" Zhang Zhao addressed the king: "Although many generals have been lost, more than ten remain. Need we fear Liu Bei? Make Han Dang principal general, Zhou Tai his lieutenant, Pan Zhang vanguard leader, and Ling Tong rear commander; hold Gan Ning in readiness to assist where he's needed, and with one hundred thousand men we can resist them." Sun Quan ordered his commanders to carry out Zhang Zhao's proposal. Though suffering from dysentery, Gan Ning went with the army.

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Meanwhile, the First Ruler had created a string of forty camps that stretched from Jianping at Wu Gorge some seventy *li* along the Great River to the vicinity of Yiling. Inspired by the great victories of Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, he exclaimed, "The commanders who have followed me from the early days are getting old; they're not good for much. But now that I have such splendid heroes in these nephews of mine, Sun Quan does not bother me!" At this moment the approach of southern troops under Han Dang and Zhou Tai was reported. The Emperor wanted to send a general to meet them, but an attendant told him, "Our general from the old days, Huang Zhong, has defected to the Southland with five or six men." "He's no turncoat," the Emperor said smiling. "It was a slip of the tongue when

I said the old generals were not much use, and Huang Zhong, who will never give in to his years, has hustled off to the front."

The Emperor summoned Zhang Bao and Guan Xing and said to them, "Something is bound to happen to Huang Zhong this time. My worthy nephews, do not shirk hardship. Go after him and help him. After he accomplishes a little something, order him to return. See that nothing happens to him." The two commanders bade the Emperor good-bye and set out with their men. Indeed:

The old vassals were steeped in loyalty to their lord;
The fresh commanders could do great deeds for their land.

What was to be Huang Zhong's fate?⁴

READ ON.



***Fighting at Xiaoting, the Emperor Takes a Foe;
Defending the River, a Scholar Takes Command***

IN SPRING, THE FIRST MONTH, of the second year of Zhang Wu (A. D. 222), Martial Might, General of the Rear Huang Zhong was marching with the First Ruler against the Southland, when someone told him that the ruler had disparaged the older generals. Zhong took up his sword, leaped to horse, and headed straight for the vanguard camp at Yiling with half a dozen followers. Commanders Wu Ban, Zhang Nan, and Feng Xi welcomed him. "Why have you come, elder general?" they asked. Huang Zhong replied, "I have followed the Son of Heaven through every hardship since we met at Changsha. Today, over seventy, I can still eat ten catties of meat a day, draw a bow two hundred pounds strong, and ride the best of horses. I am not so old. But after our lord cast a slur on us old soldiers the other day, I have come to do battle—to let you see whose heads I will take and whether I should be counted old or not!"

The arrival of the Southland van was reported even while he spoke. As enemy scouts approached the camp, Huang Zhong left the tent with energetic zeal and mounted for battle. Feng Xi and others tried to dissuade him, saying, "Don't plunge into this lightly, elder general." Huang Zhong ignored Feng Xi and rode off. Wu Ban had Feng Xi follow with some troops to support him.

Huang Zhong reined in before the southern line, leveled his sword, and challenged the enemy leader Pan Zhang to single combat. Pan Zhang sent out a lieutenant Shi Ji to answer. Shi Ji scorned Huang Zhong for his years and rode forth, working his spear. But Huang Zhong unhorsed him and killed him in a brief clash. Angered, Pan Zhang spun the dragon blade Lord Guan had once wielded and confronted Huang Zhong. In several exchanges neither prevailed. Huang Zhong fought with vicious fury until Pan Zhong weakened, wheeled, and fled the field. Huang Zhong followed up with a murderous assault, then headed back to camp in triumph. On the way, he met Zhang Bao and Guan Xing. Guan Xing said, "Elder general, we bear the sacred imperial command to assist you. Now that you have distinguished yourself, return to camp quickly; we implore you." Huang Zhong would not listen to them.

The next day Pan Zhang again issued his challenge. Zhang Bao and Guan Xing tried to assist, but Huang Zhong refused; nor would he accept Wu Ban's offer of help. Instead, he went out himself with five thousand to meet the enemy. After several bouts Pan Zhang fled, trailing his sword. Huang Zhong galloped after him, crying hotly, "Stand your ground, traitor! Today I will avenge Lord Guan." Huang Zhong had run for thirty *li*, when shouts erupted on all sides and he was caught in an ambush: to his right, Zhou Tai; to his left, Han Dang; in front, Pan Zhang; and behind, Ling Tong. Suddenly a fierce storm began blowing. Huang Zhong moved swiftly to retreat as Ma Zhong guided his mount down one of the hillsides and shot Huang Zhong in the armpit, nearly unhorsing him. At the sight of the wounded enemy leader, the southern troops poured into the field. But war cries rang out behind them; two

companies attacked the southerners and broke their mass: Guan Xing and Zhang Bao had saved Huang Zhong.

The two young generals escorted Huang Zhong directly to the royal camp. Lacking the vigor of a younger warrior, Huang Zhong suffered keenly from the open wound and was in mortal danger. The Emperor came to see him and, stroking his back, said, "I am to blame for getting you wounded, elder general." Huang Zhong replied, "I am only a warrior whose great good fortune was to serve Your Majesty. Now at seventy-five, I have lived long enough. I pray Your Majesty will keep his sacred person safe for the coming struggle for the northern heartland." So saying, he lost consciousness and passed away later that night in the royal camp. A poet of later times left these lines in his praise:

Huang Zhong, veteran general par excellence,
Won vast renown in the Riverlands campaigns.
He bore again his ringed and gilded mail;
His sturdy hands could strain a bow of steel.
Virile in war, he kept the north in fear;
His prodigies subdued the western sphere.
Though at the end his head was white as hoar,
He showed himself a hero all the more.

The Emperor grieved inconsolably for Huang Zhong. He had a coffin prepared for interment in Chengdu. With a sigh the Emperor said, "Of the 'Five Tiger Generals,' three are gone. In sorrow I reflect that they remain unavenged." So saying, he led the Imperial Guard directly to Xiaoting for a general meeting with his generals and commanders. Afterward he divided his forces into eight field armies, which advanced by land and by water. Huang Quan commanded the naval forces; the Emperor himself led the march of the land armies. It was the middle of the second month, Zhang Wu 2 (A. D. 222).

When Han Dang and Zhou Tai learned of the Emperor's approach, they advanced to oppose him. The two armies drew up in formation, and Han Dang and Zhou Tai rode forth. They watched the Emperor emerge from the bannered entrance to his camp: above him a yellow silk gold-woven canopy; to his left, a white yak-tail banner; to his right, a golden battle-axe; before him and behind, golden and silver insignia. Han Dang called out, "Your Majesty is now the sovereign of Shu; why risk your person so lightly? What if something unforeseen happens? What use will regrets be then?" The Emperor shook his finger at the southern generals as he shouted, "Dogs of Wu! I'll never share this earth with my brother's murderers!" Han Dang turned to his commanders and said, "Who dares set upon them?" Lieutenant Xia Xun cocked his spear and rode out. Behind the Emperor, Zhang Bao held out his eighteen-span spear and, shouting lustily, charged into the field, making straight for Xia Xun. Xia Xun, quaking from the thunderous cry, started to flee; but Zhou Ping, the younger brother of Zhou Tai, raced out, his sword whirling, to support the wavering Xia Xun. Guan Xing, who had been watching the action unfold, now raised his sword and galloped into the fray. At this moment Zhang Bao vented a fierce cry and speared Xia Xun, unhorsing him. Zhou Ping panicked and lost his balance; Guan Xing laid him low with a stroke of his sword.

Next, the two young commanders made for Han Dang and Zhou Tai and sent them scrambling back to their line. Observing the combat, the Emperor exclaimed, "Tigers beget tigers!" Then, answering

the motion of his whip, the soldiers of Shu poured onto the field and slaughtered the men of Wu. The eight western armies advanced like a mighty flood, strewing the ground with enemy corpses. The blood ran in rivers.

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Recuperating from his wounds aboard ship, Gan Ning heard of the westerners' advance. He mounted at once and rode for the front. On the way, he encountered the western contingent of warriors from the Man nation. All wore their hair loose and went barefoot. Their weapons consisted of bows, crossbows, long spears, shields, swords, and battle-axes. The leader of these soldiers was the Qiang king, Shamoke. Shamoke had a deep bloodshot complexion and bulging greenish eyes. He wielded a steel-spiked mace and carried two bows at his waist; he flaunted his martial bearing. Unwilling to engage so formidable an opponent, Gan Ning swung his horse around and took flight; but Shamoke shot an arrow into his skull. With the arrow lodged in his head, Gan Ning rode to Fuchikou, sat down beneath a tree, and died. Strangely, hundreds of crows flew out of the branches and circled his corpse. King Sun Quan of Wu, grief-stricken, had him sumptuously buried. Afterward he built a temple in Gan Ning's honor so that sacrifices and services could be performed. A poet of later times wrote these lines in Gan Ning's praise:

First among Southland heroes, Gan Xingba—
Feared along the Yangzi for his silken sails—
Pledged fealty to the lord who knew his worth,
And befriended the son of the man he slew.
Before his famous raid on Cao Cao's camp,¹
He let his fighting men carouse their fill.
Gan Ning's ghost ensouled those sacred crows;
His temple flame shall burn forevermore.

The Emperor, riding on the momentum of his victory, captured Xiaoting. Their ranks broken, the southern troops ran for their lives. But when the Emperor called a halt, he could not find Guan Xing; anxiously he sent Zhang Bao and others to make a search.

This is what had happened to Guan Xing. After penetrating the southern battle line, he met up with his archenemy Pan Zhang and raced after him. Pan Zhang panicked and darted into a ravine, where he soon lost himself. Guan Xing assumed he was in the hills and searched about, but without success. The day was ending, and Guan Xing could not find his way. Luckily, the moon and stars were bright. As Guan Xing pursued his enemy in the hills, he came upon a farm during the second watch. Dismounting, he knocked at the door. An old man appeared and asked who he was. "A warrior," Guan Xing replied, "lost, who comes by chance to beg a bowl of food." The old man conducted him into a chamber lit with candles burning before a portrait of Lord Guan. With a cry Guan Xing flung himself to the ground. "What does this mean?" the old man asked. "That is my father," Guan Xing answered. The old man prostrated himself, too. Guan Xing asked, "Why these offerings to my father?" The old man replied, "His spirit is most revered in these parts. Every family revered him when he lived, and all the more so now that he is gone. I have prayed for the western army to avenge his death

swiftly. Your coming, General, is a blessing to the people." The old man put food and drink before him; then he unsaddled Guan Xing's horse and fed it.

After the third watch another man knocked on the farmhouse gate. The old man went out to the door; it was the southern commander Pan Zhang seeking a night's refuge. The moment Guan Xing saw the commander come into the thatched cottage, he gripped his sword and cried, "Filthy traitor! Halt!" Pan Zhang had turned to leave, when another man came to the door. He had a face ruddy as dates, eyes like the crimson-faced phoenix's, brows like nestling silkworms; his beautiful beard in three strands moved delicately. He entered, hand to sword, wearing a green battle gown and metal armor. Pan Zhang recognized the divine presence of Lord Guan. A cry burst from him, and panic seized his faculties. He tried to turn, but Guan Xing cut him down, plucked out his heart, drained off the blood, and offered it in sacrifice before his father's portrait. Guan Xing recovered from Pan Zhang his father's crescent-moon blade, Green Dragon, and hung Pan Zhang's head from the neck of his mount. Bidding the old man good-bye, he climbed onto Pan Zhang's horse and rode back to camp. The old man dragged off the corpse and cremated it.

Guan Xing had not gone far when he caught the sound of human voices and horses neighing. Suddenly, a body of soldiers flashed into view; their leader, Ma Zhong, a subordinate commander under Pan Zhang. Ma Zhong spied his master's head swinging from Guan Xing's horse and the dragon blade that Guan Xing had seized. Overcome by anger, he raced for Guan Xing. Guan Xing recognized his father's murderer, and his fury mounted to the stars. He raised the Green Dragon in preparation to strike, when Ma Zhong's three hundred yelling soldiers surrounded him. In mortal danger, the outnumbered Guan Xing spotted a troop of riders to the northwest fighting their way toward him: Zhang Bao had come to his rescue. Rather than fight on, Ma Zhong led a retreat. Guan Xing and Zhang Bao both started out after him; after a few *li's* chase they came upon Mi Fang and Fu Shiren looking for Ma Zhong. The two companies skirmished; then Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, having too small a force, hastily returned to Xiaoting. They offered the Emperor the captured head and delivered their tale, which he followed with amazement. The Emperor ended by rewarding the whole armed forces.

Ma Zhong reported back to Han Dang and Zhou Tai, regathered his defeated fighters, and posted them to various positions. An appalling number had been wounded. Ma Zhong then led Fu Shiren and Mi Fang to occupy a spit of land in the river. That night at the third watch the soldiers vented their grief and despair as Mi Fang listened silently. One group said, "We are all Jingzhou men, fooled by Lü Meng into sending Lord Guan to his doom. Now the imperial uncle has started a war the Southland is sure to lose. But if we killed those he hates most—the two traitors Mi Fang and Fu Shiren—and surrendered ourselves in the western camp, it would be well appreciated." Another group of soldiers said, "Not so fast. Wait for the right moment to act."

Astounded by all he had heard, Mi Fang said to Fu Shiren, "The soldiers have turned against us. Our lives are at risk. The one man the ruler of Shu, Liu Bei, hates is Ma Zhong. What if we took his head to him and said, 'We joined the South against our will. The moment we heard of Your Majesty's approach, we came to answer for our crime?'" Fu Shiren said, "No! That would be our ruin." "The ruler of Shu," Mi Fang persisted, "is tolerant and humane, a man of ample virtue. The present crown prince, Ah Dou, is my late sister's son. His father is bound to keep us from harm, if only for the sake of family feeling." Thus, the two men concluded their little dispute and readied their horses. During the third watch they entered Ma Zhong's tent and severed his head, then headed for Xiaoting with a few dozen followers.

Sentinels brought them first before Zhang Nan and Feng Xi, to whom the defectors told their story. The next day they offered Ma Zhong's head to the Emperor, explaining bitterly as they stood before him, "We never meant to rebel. Lü Meng tricked us. He said Lord Guan was dead, and induced us to open the gate and surrender the city against our will. But once we heard Your Lordship was marching east, we killed the traitor to satisfy Your Majesty's desire for revenge. We humbly beg forgiveness."

In great anger the Emperor said, "You never came to confess before, in all the time since I left Chengdu! Only now do you come forth with cunning fables to save your skins in a moment of peril. If I spared you, I could not face Lord Guan in the world below." So saying, the Emperor ordered Guan Xing to set up a tablet to Lord Guan in the royal camp; he then personally carried Ma Zhong's severed head in both hands and offered it in sacrifice before the altar. Finally, he commanded Guan Xing to remove Mi Fang's and Fu Shiren's clothing and to have them kneel before the altar while he personally sliced them up as an offering to Lord Guan.²

Zhang Bao suddenly came into the Emperor's tent and flung himself to the ground before the Emperor. "My uncle's enemies," he cried, "have all been executed. When will my own father's death be avenged?" "Do not be anxious, good nephew," the Emperor replied. "When I have conquered the Southland and slain every southern dog, we will catch the two traitors who murdered him and you can make mincemeat out of them as an offering to your father's spirit." Zhang Bao retired with tearful thanks.

By this time the Emperor's awesome reputation had so intimidated the southerners that they wept aloud day and night. In alarm Han Dang and Zhou Tai urgently informed King Sun Quan of Wu that Mi Fang and Fu Shiren had killed Ma Zhong and offered their allegiance to the western king only to be executed themselves. Feeling his own courage failing, Sun Quan gathered his advisers for a conference.

Bu Zhi addressed the king: "The ruler of Shu hated Lü Meng, Pan Zhang, Ma Zhong, Mi Fang, and Fu Shiren. Now they are all dead, although Fan Jiang and Zhang Da are still alive in our homeland. Why not send them, along with Zhang Fei's head, back to the ruler of Shu, hand Jingzhou over to him, return his wife Lady Sun, and submit a memorial suing for peace so that you two kings can meet again in the former spirit of friendship and concert your efforts for the elimination of the kingdom of Wei? That should make the western soldiers withdraw." Sun Quan approved the suggestion. He had Zhang Fei's head put in a fragrant aloeswood case, and the two defectors bound and put in cage-carts. Sun Quan entrusted the mission to Cheng Bing, provided him with his personal letter, and sent him to Xiaoting.

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As the Emperor was preparing his invasion, a personal vassal addressed him thus: "The Southland has sent an envoy with General Zhang Fei's head, together with the two murderers Fan Jiang and Zhang Da under guard." The Emperor touched both hands to his forehead in a gesture of rejoicing and said, "This comes from Heaven! And the spirit of third brother has helped!" He immediately ordered Zhang Bao to set up an altar to his father. When the Emperor looked at Zhang Fei's head, its features unchanged, a sharp cry broke from his lips. Zhang Bao took a sharp knife and slowly sliced the murderers to death as an offering to his father's spirit.

When the ritual was over, the Emperor, still unassuaged, reaffirmed his intention to destroy the

Southland. But Ma Liang said, "The culprits are dead; your grievance is answered. Cheng Bing, a high official, has come to return Jingzhou, send back Lady Sun, and seal an everlasting amity with a view to the destruction of Wei. He humbly awaits your royal decree." But the Emperor said angrily, "Sun Quan I hate. To ally with him now would be to betray my fraternal covenant. We will destroy Wu first, and then Wei!"³ The Emperor would have executed the southern envoy, but was dissuaded by his officers. Cheng Bing fled in humiliation and reported to the lord of Wu: "The kingdom of Shu will not talk peace. They have sworn to destroy the south first and then attack Wei; they are deaf to the protests of their officials. What are we to do?"

Sun Quan was in a quandary. Kan Ze stepped forward to address him: "We have among us a pillar of strength. Why not use him?" Sun Quan eagerly asked whom he meant, and Kan Ze continued, "In times past all great affairs of the south were entrusted to Zhou Yu. After Zhou Yu's death, Lu Su assumed the responsibility, and after he died, Lü Meng. Now Lü Meng, too, is dead. But in Jingzhou we have Lu Xun (styled Boyan). Though known only as a scholar, Lu Xun's ability compares, I judge, to Zhou Yu's. Lord Guan's defeat was entirely his doing. If Your Lordship can use his talents, we will surely defeat the kingdom of Shu. If he fails, I beg to share whatever punishment Lu Xun is condemned to suffer." Sun Quan replied, "Kan Ze, your words have saved the day."

But Zhang Zhao said, "Lu Xun is a mere pedant, no match for Liu Bei. I doubt that he can be of service to us." Gu Yong seconded this opinion. "Lu Xun," he said, "is too young and too little known for our leaders to accept his authority. His appointment will cause disorder and ruin our cause." Bu Zhi added his view: "Lu Xun may have the talent to administer a district but not to undertake such a major responsibility." To these negative views Kan Ze shouted back, "Without Lu Xun's services, the Southland is done for! I will guarantee him with the lives of my family." "I have long known of Lu Xun's rare ability and have decided to employ him. You gentlemen need say no more," Sun Quan said, and he summoned Lu Xun.

Lü Yi was the man's original name; later he changed it to Lu Xun and adopted the style Boyan. He was a southerner from the district of Wu. His grandfather was Lu Yu, commandant of the City Gates; his father Lü Jun, military commander of Jiujiang. Lu Xun stood eight spans tall; his face was like exquisite jade. The office he held was General Who Quells the West. On receiving Sun Quan's summons, Lu Xun came at once.

Lu Xun's obeisance completed, Sun Quan said to him, "The western army is bearing down on our border. I am giving you overall command of our forces to destroy Liu Bei." Lu Xun replied, "Among the Southland's civil and military officers, Your Majesty has vassals long in service. How can someone as young and lacking in talent as I keep control of them?" To this Sun Quan responded, "Kan Ze has pledged his family in recommending you; I too have long known of your talents. Please do not decline my offer to make you chief commander." "What if the officers and officials refuse to accept my authority?" he asked. Sun Quan handed Lu Xun his sword, saying, "Whoever disobeys, execute; and report to me afterward." "I am obliged by your heavy charge and can only honor your command, but I beg Your Majesty not to bestow the sword and formally empower me until you assemble the officials."

Kan Ze said, "In ancient times they always built an altar and assembled the court when empowering a general. The white command banner and golden battle-axe, the seal, the seal-cord, and the military tally were publicly transferred in order to make the general's authority effective and his orders strictly executed. Your Majesty should observe this ceremony. Select a day for building the

altar, honor Lu Xun as chief commander, bestow the battle-axe of authority, and no one will deny his allegiance." Following this suggestion, Sun Quan had the altar built without delay, assembled his court, and invited Lu Xun to ascend. Before the officials he installed Lu Xun as chief commander, honored him as guardian of the Right and General Who Quells the West, and raised his status to lord of Lou. He bestowed his own sword on the general and granted him the seal placing him in charge of the eighty-one areas of the six districts of the Southland as well as the districts of Jingzhou and giving him command of all armed forces. The king of Wu's final injunction to Lu Xun was, "I will take care of the home front; in the field you are in charge." Lu Xun accepted his command and descended from the altar. He ordered Xu Sheng and Ding Feng to serve as his guard; and that day he led forth the ground and naval forces.

Near Xiaoting, the news of the new Southland appointment alarmed Han Dang and Zhou Tai. "How could our lord put a pedant in charge of our forces?" they wondered aloud. By the time Lu Xun actually arrived at the front, no one was prepared to accept his authority. When Lu Xun held his first meeting in the command tent, the commanders participated grudgingly. Lu Xun began by saying, "The king has given me chief command to lead our forces in the destruction of the enemy. In the army there are unvarying regulations, which it would behoove you gentlemen to adhere to. For violators, the royal law shows no partiality. Do not do anything you will regret." The assembled commanders kept silent until Zhou Tai said, "At this time the king's nephew, Sun Huan, General Who Secures the East, is under siege at Yiling. They have neither food nor provender, and no hope of rescue from outside. Would the chief commander kindly work out a plan as soon as possible to save him and relieve the king's anxiety?"

To this challenge Lu Xun responded, "I have no doubt that General Sun Huan has the complete confidence of his men. He will be able to defend his position without our assistance and will get out on his own after we have defeated the west." The commanders retired with mockery in their hearts. Han Dang said to Zhou Tai, "With this child for its leader, the Southland is doomed. You saw the way he conducted himself?" And Zhou Tai replied, "I was merely testing him. He had no plan at all! How could he defeat the west?"

The next day Lu Xun ordered the commanders to defend the several passes and avoid engaging the enemy. Mocking Lu Xun's caution, the commanders disdained to keep a strict guard. The following day Lu Xun called a meeting in his tent and said to them, "As royally appointed chief commander, I have repeatedly enjoined you to maintain the strictest defense at the various strongpoints. Why have you disregarded my orders?" Han Dang replied, "Since joining General Sun in the conquest of the Southland, I have been in hundreds of battles. Some commanders have served his elder brother Sun Ce; others have served His Majesty. Every one has seen long years of combat. Now the king commands your service as our chief in order to drive back the western army. A plan needs to be made at once for coordinating our forces in several lines of march so that our purposes can be accomplished. But all you have done is call for a strict defense and no fighting. Do you mean for us to wait until Heaven itself puts the enemy to death? We are not men who covet life and fear death. What is gained by depressing our spirits like this?"

The commanders in the tent responded in unison, "General Han Dang is right! A battle to the death is what we want!" Facing their demand, Lu Xun took Sun Quan's sword and cried harshly, "I may be no more than a pedant. But his lordship has appointed me because I have something to offer him; and I will suffer any humiliation, bear any burden required of me. You have only to defend the access

points and take no rash action. Whoever disobeys, dies." The crowd withdrew indignantly.

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Meanwhile, the Emperor (Liu Bei) had moved out from Xiaoting and reached the eastern border of the Riverlands. His forces stretched over a distance of seven hundred *li*, occupying forty base camps. By day their banners darkened the sun. By night their fires lit up the sky. Suddenly a spy sent in a report: "The Southland has given Lu Xun general command of their forces, and he has ordered his commanders to hold their strongpoints and not come out." The Emperor replied, "What kind of man is Lu Xun?" Ma Liang said, "Though he is a scholar, he has great talent for his youth and lays deep plans. It was he who planned their successful attack on Jingzhou." "By a boy's tricks I lost my second brother! I want him captured!" the Emperor said angrily and ordered a general advance. But Ma Liang remonstrated, "He is no less capable than Zhou Yu was! Do not risk a rash engagement." "I am seasoned in the ways of war," the Emperor replied. "Do you think a milksop of a child too much for me?" So saying, he took personal command of the forward contingent and attacked the various fords and passes.

Han Dang informed Lu Xun of the advance of the western forces; Lu Xun sped to the front to survey the situation and forestall any rash move on Han Dang's part. Lu Xun arrived when Han Dang, sitting astride his horse on a hilltop, was viewing the enemy swarming over the hills and covering the flatlands; dimly visible in the distance was a yellow silk umbrella. Han Dang received Lu Xun, and they reined in their horses side by side to observe. Pointing toward the umbrella, Han Dang said, "Liu Bei must be there. I want to attack." Lu Xun replied, "After more than ten victories on this eastern expedition, Liu Bei's fighting spirits are at their peak. All we can do now is occupy the highground and defend our strongpoints. If we go forth against them, we will suffer defeat. We need to whet the mettle of our officers and men, to broaden our defensive strategy until the situation changes. At the moment they enjoy control of the flat-lands before us. But by maintaining a strict defense, we deny them the engagement they seek, causing them to move into the wooded hills—that is when we shall take them by surprise."

Han Dang, though he gave verbal assent to this plan, remained unconvinced. The Emperor sent his vanguard to provoke the southerners, reviling them in a hundred ways. Lu Xun ordered everyone to stuff up his ears, however, and would not permit any engagement of forces. He personally went to each control point to cheer the men and reaffirm his orders for maintaining the defense. No southern soldiers appeared, and the Emperor seethed with impatience. Ma Liang said to him, "Lu Xun is a deep planner; and Your Majesty has come a long distance to wage war. Spring has turned to summer. They are keeping behind their defenses, hoping that something will happen to our troops. Let Your Majesty look into this." The Emperor answered, "What can their plan be? They fear us, that's all. After their string of defeats, they don't dare show themselves." Vanguard Commander Feng Xi addressed the Emperor. "The weather is scorching hot," he said. "Camped in this burning plain, the army is having trouble getting water." Consequently, the Emperor commanded him to move into the lush hills, near the mountain streams, and deferred the attack until autumn. Feng Xi, as ordered, had the commanders shift all camps into the shade of the woods.

Ma Liang addressed the Emperor, saying, "If we make this move and the southerners come suddenly, what will you do?" "I have had Wu Ban take ten thousand inferior troops and position them

on the plain near the southern defenses. I myself will take eight thousand elite troops and place them in ambush in the ravines. When Lu Xun learns of our move, he will not fail to strike. When he does, I have told Wu Ban to feign defeat. If Lu Xun pursues those inferior troops, I will charge in and seal off his retreat. The little devil will be ours!" All civil and military officials praised his plan, saying, "Your Majesty's ingenious designs and exquisite calculations are beyond us all!"

Ma Liang said, "I heard recently that Prime Minister Zhuge is in the east Riverlands inspecting our defenses in anticipation of incursion by northern troops of Wei. Your Majesty, why not make a map of the positions you intend moving into for the prime minister to look over?" The Emperor replied, "I am versed in warfare well enough to do without his opinion." "There is an old saying, 'Broad consultation makes one wise; one-sided consideration makes one blind.' I hope Your Majesty will not ignore this," was Ma Liang's answer. The Emperor said, "Then chart the area yourself and go to the east Riverlands to show the prime minister your maps. Report to me at once anything unfavorable in them." Ma Liang departed with his orders.

And so the Emperor moved his army into the woods where the shade afforded some relief from summer's heat. Spies quickly informed Han Dang and Zhou Tai of these changes in the western position. And the two commanders were delighted to report to Lu Xun: "They have moved their camps, more than forty in all, into the wooded hills, where their proximity to mountain streams affords them drinking water and cooling relief. Chief Commander, now is the time to strike." Indeed:

Planning to spring an ambush was the ruler of Shu,
Sure of catching the bold and hardy troops of Wu.

Would Lu Xun accept the proposal?

READ ON.



Lu Xun Burns a Seven-Hundred-Li Line of Camps; Kongming Deploys the Eightfold Ramparts Maze

SOUTHERN COMMANDERS HAN DANG AND ZHOU TAI hurried to inform Lu Xun that the Emperor had shifted to cooler ground. Delighted, the chief commander came to the front to scan the field. There on the flats before him he found a single campsite with a mere ten thousand men, most of them unfit for service; their banner read, "Vanguard Wu Ban." Zhou Tai said to Lu Xun, "This looks like child's play. Allow General Han Dang and myself to attack with two companies. If we fail, we will welcome whatever punishment martial law imposes." After examining the enemy's position for some time, Lu Xun pointed with his whip and said, "In the distance ahead I detect lethal signs marking ambush points. They have purposely placed these troops on flat ground to lure us out. I absolutely forbid you to show yourselves." All took his caution for cowardice.

The next day Wu Ban led some troops to the pass and challenged the southerners, swaggering and casting scorn on them. Most of Wu Ban's men had slipped out of their battle gear and were lolling about half-naked. Xu Sheng and Ding Feng entered the command tent and petitioned Lu Xun. "The westerners' insults are unbearable," they cried. "Let us go out and attack them." Lu Xun smiled as he replied, "You are trusting to sheer physical courage and ignoring the fine points of warfare as taught by the masters. This is a trick to entice the enemy. In three days the deception will be apparent." Xu Sheng answered, "In three days their position will be too consolidated to attack." "I am waiting for them to complete the transfer," Lu Xun said. The commanders smirked as they withdrew.

After the three days had passed, Lu Xun gathered the commanders on the pass to survey the ground below. Wu Ban had already pulled back. Pointing ahead, Lu Xun said, "Those lethal signs are in the air. Liu Bei will be coming out from the gorges." As Lu Xun was speaking, lo and behold, the western army fully uniformed crossed before them, the Emperor in their midst. The sight struck panic in the southern troops. "This is why I could not listen to your advice," Lu Xun said to his commanders. "But now that the ambush is in the open, we will destroy the western army in ten days." "We should have done that to begin with," the commanders said. "Now their network of mutually defended camps stretches over five hundred *li*, and after these seven or eight months all strategic points are well fortified. How can we defeat them?" Lu Xun replied, "Gentlemen, you are unfamiliar with the art of war. Liu Bei is the craftiest owl of our day, the most cunning and ruthless of men. When he first deployed his forces, their order was precise, their discipline tight. Now after their long but fruitless wait, his men are worn down and frustrated in their aims. This is the moment for us to take them." Finally, Lu Xun convinced the commanders. A poet of later times left these lines of admiration for Lu Xun's qualities:

He'd mastered war's six arts when he spoke before the chiefs;

Angling for one mighty fish, he set a tasty bait.
For this divided Kingdom now has paragons enough!
And shining high above them all—Lu Xun of the south.

Having made his plans, Lu Xun dispatched a letter informing Sun Quan of the expected victory. Sun Quan read it with excitement. "The Southland has another genius like Zhou Yu!" he exclaimed. "My worries are over. The commanders' complaints of his cowardice never persuaded me. And now my confidence is confirmed." So saying, he mustered the southern army to support Lu Xun.

From Xiaoting the Emperor directed his entire naval force to proceed downstream. Pitching camp along the river, the mariners cut deeply into southern territory. Huang Quan raised an objection: "The marine forces are moving downriver easily enough, but retreat will prove difficult. Allow me to advance while you stay back—just in case." "The bastards of Wu have lost their nerve. Nothing can stop our massive onslaught," the Emperor replied, firmly rejecting all further appeals. He divided his forces into two field armies: one north of the river under Huang Quan, defending against Wei; one to the south, which he himself took charge of. Thus, they established separate camps on either shore to deliver the attack.

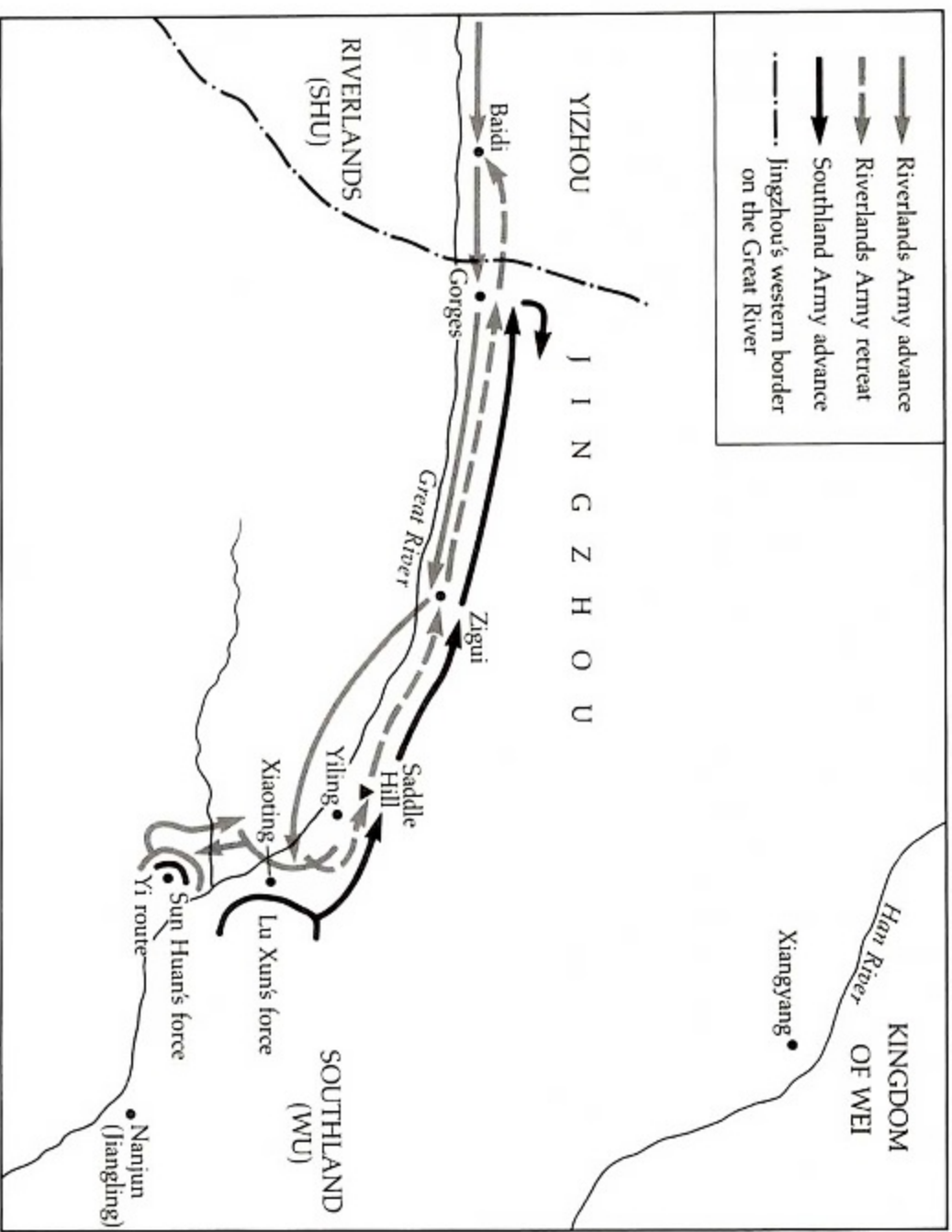
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Spies soon told Cao Pi, ruler of Wei, "The army of Shu has gone to war against Wu. Their fortifications stretch in a line over seven hundred *li* long; they have built more than forty bases beside hills and woods. At present Huang Quan commands the forces on the northern shore, and their daily patrols range over one hundred *li*. We do not know what he is up to."

Cao Pi threw back his head and laughed at this report. "Liu Bei is done for!" he said. When his vassals pressed for an explanation, the Wei ruler continued, "Liu Xuande knows nothing of warfare. Camps strung out like that won't deter his enemy. And to pitch on such irregular, densely wooded ground is a classic blunder. Within ten days look for news of his defeat at Lu Xun's hands." The vassals, unconvinced, requested troops for preventive action. The Wei Emperor said, "If Lu Xun prevails, he will move ahead in force to take the Riverlands itself. With troops so far afield, the Southland will be left undefended. And we shall send down three armies, ostensibly as aid, which will make short work of them." The assembly voiced its admiration. The Wei Emperor ordered Cao Ren, Cao Xiu, and Cao Zhen to take command and move out from Ruxu, Dongkou, and Nanjun. The order read: "On the appointed day, coordinate a covert strike on the Southland. I will reinforce from the rear." Thus, Wei completed preparations for another southern campaign.

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Ma Liang reached the Riverlands and presented Kongming with maps of the Emperor's positions. "At present we have more than forty bases on both sides of the river, covering a stretch of seven hundred *li*. Each is pitched close to a stream or creek near thick woods. His Majesty has sent me to show these sketches to Your Excellency." Kongming finished examining the documents and slammed his hand on the table. "Whoever," he cried in anguish, "whoever advised our lord to pitch camp in this way should be executed." Ma Liang responded, "It was entirely our lord's own doing. No one advised him." Kongming said with a sigh, "Then the vital cycle of the Han draws to a close."



MAP 8. Liu Bei's defeat in the battle of Xiaoting. Source: Liu Chunfan, *Sanguo shihua* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), p. 154.

Ma Liang asked the meaning of these words, and Kongming replied, "To pitch the camps like that violates every rule. If they attack by fire, he cannot be saved; nor can such a string of forts hold off the enemy. The end is not far off. Now I see why Lu Xun holds back so strictly and does not show himself. You must rush to the Son of Heaven and have him change the positions. They cannot be left like this." "And if the southerners have already overwhelmed them?" Ma Liang asked. "Lu Xun will not dare pursue. The capital is safe." "Why so?" Ma Liang asked. "Because they have the northern army behind them to worry about," Kongming explained. "If our lord finds himself in trouble, he should find safety in the city of Baidi.¹ When I came into the Riverlands, I left ten legions there at Fishbelly Meadow." Ma Liang was amazed. "I have been through Fishbelly Meadow any number of times and have never seen a single soldier. Why is Your Excellency trying to deceive me?" "You will find out later," Kongming replied. "Don't trouble yourself any further." Ma Liang took Kongming's written petition and sped back to the imperial camp. Kongming returned to Chengdu and prepared to rescue the Emperor.

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Lu Xun observed that the troops of the Riverlands were beginning to flag and were growing negligent about their defenses. He gathered his commanders before his tent and told them, "Since assuming command, I have refrained from giving battle; but we now know enough about the enemy's movements. I want to capture a single camp on the southern side of the river. Who dares to do the job?" The sound of the chief commander's voice still hung in the air as Han Dang, Zhou Tai, and Ling Tong stepped forward to volunteer. But Lu Xun rejected their offer and instead summoned a subordinate commander from the lower ranks, Chunyu Dan. "I am giving you five thousand men," Lu Xun said to him. "Take the fourth camp on the southern side, the one Fu Tong is guarding. I want a victory this very evening. I will reinforce you." Chunyu Dan left to carry out his mission. Next, Lu Xun called Xu Sheng and Ding Feng and said to them, "Take three thousand men each and station them five *li* from our camp. If Chunyu Dan returns in defeat, go to his rescue. But whatever you do, do not pursue the enemy." The two commanders departed on their mission.

As dusk fell, Chunyu Dan advanced, reaching the western camp after the third watch. As he penetrated the ambit, his men raised a wild din at his order. Fu Tong came forth, and the battle was joined. Fu Tong went straight for Chunyu Dan, who wheeled his mount round to retire, unable to withstand the charge. Suddenly the air rang with loud cries: a band of soldiers was blocking his retreat, General Zhao Rong at their head. Chunyu Dan now broke away and fled. Half his men were lost. A company of Man warriors blocked his way: their leader, Shamoke, the Qiang chieftain. Fighting for his life, Chunyu Dan struggled free again, the three enemy companies hot on his heels.

Five *li* from the camp, the Southland ambush was sprung. Xu Sheng and Ding Feng forced back the western army and then escorted Chunyu Dan back to the Southland side. Chunyu Dan, with an arrow lodged in him, went before Lu Xun to accept his punishment. "It was not your fault," Lu Xun reassured him. "I had to test the enemy's strength in order to form my plan for destroying Shu." "They are too strong for us to defeat," Xu Sheng and Ding Feng said, "we will lose men and leaders in vain." Lu Xun smiled as he replied, "My plan would never fool Kongming. But by Heavens's favor the man is not here, and this will help me to victory."

Again Lu Xun gathered his officers and men and issued his orders: "Zhu Ran is to advance on the

river. Tomorrow after noon the southeast wind will blow strong. Load your boats with straw and proceed according to plan. Han Dang is to attack the north shore, Zhou Tai the south. In addition to spear and sword, each soldier is to carry a bundle of grass with sulphur and saltpeter inside and something to ignite it. Everyone is to advance together; as soon as you reach the enemy camps, use your torches according to the winds. They have forty encampments: fire every other one. Carry dry provisions and pursue them relentlessly day and night until you have taken Liu Bei." The commanders went severally to their ordered tasks.

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In the main camp the Emperor was pondering his strategy, when the banner in front of his tent overturned even though there was no wind. He turned to Cheng Ji and asked, "What does this signify?" "The southerners will raid tonight," Cheng Ji answered. "We put them to rout last night," the Emperor said. "They would not dare return." "And if it was a probe?" Cheng Ji replied. As they spoke, someone reported that hilltop sentinels had spotted southern troops in the distance moving eastward along the range of hills. "Decoys," the Emperor said and ordered his troops to take no action. Instead, he sent Guan Xing and Zhang Bao with five hundred riders each to reconnoitre. At dusk Guan Xing returned to report that fires had sprung up in the north shore encampments. The Emperor sent Guan Xing to the north shore and Zhang Bao to the south to investigate. "Tell me as soon as the southern troops arrive," the Emperor concluded.

The two commanders set off. At the first watch a southeast wind sprang up sharply. The camp to the left of the Emperor's burst into flame. Before anyone could go to its aid, the camp to the right of the Emperor's also began burning. The wind quickened and the fire sped in its wake. Trees and bushes caught fire; screams rent the air. Soldiers and horses dashed from the burning camps and away from the Emperor's campground, causing countless soldiers to trample one another to death. From behind, a mass of southern soldiers bore down for the kill.

The Emperor sprang into his saddle and raced to Feng Xi, but his camp was already an inferno. North and south of the river the glare was bright as day. Feng Xi dashed to his horse and led away a few score of cavalry, only to meet the murderous advance of Xu Sheng. The Emperor turned west and fled. Xu Sheng passed Feng Xi by and led his troops after the Emperor, around whom everything was in confusion. Ahead of him another troop—led by Ding Feng—blocked his advance. Trapped on either side, the Emperor panicked. Suddenly, amid thunderous shouts a band of soldiers led by Zhang Bao broke through and pulled him to safety; together with the Royal Guard they bolted away. Moments later General Fu Tong joined forces with the Emperor, and they proceeded together.

Pursued by southern troops, the Emperor came to Saddle Hill. Zhang Bao and Fu Tong urged him to the top. A tumult welled up from below as Lu Xun's massive contingents surrounded the base. Zhang Bao and Fu Tong fought to control the pathway up as the Emperor looked out upon the fires raging across the plain and the bodies of the dead choking the river.

The following day the Southlanders set fires around the hill. The Emperor's troops scurried away in disorder, leaving him in extremity. But through the glare of the blaze, a few riders cut their way up the hill; their leader was Guan Xing. Kneeling before the Emperor, he said, "The flames press closer. We must move on. Make haste to Baidi, Your Majesty, where we can regroup." The Emperor said, "Who will hold the rear?" Fu Tong volunteered, and as darkness fell they battled their way down the

slopes, Guan Xing in front, Zhang Bao in the middle, Fu Tong in the rear guarding the Emperor. The southern commanders, spotting the fleeing Emperor, vied eagerly for the glory of capturing him, and the hosts they led west across the battle ground darkened the sky and covered the earth.

The Emperor had his men discard their surcoats and armor, and burn them to clog the road and prevent pursuit. They were continuing west, when a hue and cry went up: the southern general Zhu Ran had led a company from the riverbank to block their way. The Emperor cried out, "Here I die!" Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, thrusting and surging, fell back before the flurries of arrows. Seriously wounded, they could not fight their way out. More shouts from behind told them that Lu Xun was bringing up the main army.

Dawn broke on a desperate Emperor. Suddenly, he heard a great roar and watched as Zhu Ran's ranks started to disintegrate. Every which way they began dropping into the rushing creeks or tumbling wavelike down from the heights. A band of men cut through to rescue the Emperor, who, to his delight, recognized their leader, Zhao Zilong of Changshan. Zhao Zilong had been in Jiangzhou but came to the scene when he heard fighting had broken out. Seeing a field of flames licking the sky to the southeast, he anxiously investigated and to his astonishment found that the Emperor was trapped. Determined to save his lord, Zilong raced to the battleground. Lu Xun, hearing of Zhao Zilong's arrival, swiftly ordered a retreat. But in the thick of the struggle Zhao Zilong met up with Zhu Ran and killed him in a brief clash. He scattered the southern soldiers, took charge of the Emperor, and headed for Baidi. "I may be safely out of it," the Emperor said, "but what about my commanders and men?" "The enemy is too close," Zilong said. "We cannot delay. If Your Majesty will enter Baidi and rest, I will go back to relieve the commanders." At this time the Emperor entered Baidi with a retinue of little more than one hundred. A poet of later times has left these lines expressing admiration for Lu Xun:²

Spears in hand they torched the western camps:
A desperate Liu Bei dashed into Baidi.
By this one stroke Xun frightened Wei and Shu.
Could the king of Wu not honor scholar Lu?

Fu Tong, guarding the rear, was surrounded by the southern forces. Ding Feng shouted to him, "Countless Riverlands troops have fallen. Thousands have surrendered. Your lord, Liu Bei, has been captured. Your force is spent; your situation, extreme. A quick submission is advisable." But Fu Tong shouted back an angry rebuke: "No Han general would ever submit to the dogs of Wu!" Raising his spear, he rode forward, leading his men in a strenuous last effort. He fought more than a hundred bouts, driving and thrusting back and forth, but he could not break free. With a deep sigh, Fu Tong said, "Then it is over." Blood welled up in his mouth; he died in the heat of battle. A later poet left these lines in his praise:

By Yiling, Shu met Wu in heavy strife;
Then Lu Xun burned the western legions out.
"Dogs of the south" was Fu Tong's final curse:
This general of Han did his title proud.

Riverlands Libationer Cheng Ji mounted, dashed to the edge of the river, and called for marine forces to assist. But the southern troops kept coming on, and the mariners scattered and fled. Cheng Ji's lieutenant called out to him, "Their men are here! Save yourself!" "Since campaigning with my lord, I have never fled the field," Cheng Ji retorted. As he spoke, the enemy bore swiftly down. Escape was impossible. He drew his sword and cut his own throat. Later these lines were written to praise him:

The spirit-stirring elder lord of Shu
By his sword to his liege stayed true!
Till death his lifelong zeal did not abate;
The name he passes on will never fade.

Riverlands generals Wu Ban and Zhang Nan had had Yiling under siege for many days when Feng Xi arrived with news of the recent defeats. Wu Ban and Zhang Nan left Yiling at once to aid the Emperor; thus Sun Huan was finally relieved.³ On the march Zhang Nan and Feng Xi were confronted by a southern force as Sun Huan came up behind them. Trapped between two attackers, Zhang Nan and Feng Xi fought mightily, only to fall in the melee. Later this verse was made in their honor:

Than Feng Xi, who more loyal?
Than Zhang Nan, few more true!
On fighting fields full willingly they died.
The histories will cast their virtue wide.

As he fought through the southern lines, Wu Ban was overtaken by another southern force when, luckily, Zhao Zilong arrived on the scene and escorted him safely to Baidi.

At this time the Man king Shamoke, fleeing alone, was accosted by Zhou Tai. He killed Shamoke in a battle of twenty bouts, and the western commanders Du Lu and Liu Ning gave themselves up. All the grain, provender, and equipment in the western camps thus fell into southern hands, and untold numbers of Shu commanders and soldiers surrendered.

In the Southland Lady Sun heard of the western defeat at Xiaoting. On receiving an erroneous report that the Emperor had perished in the fighting, she had herself transported to the riverbank, where she stood gazing into the west in sorrow for the husband she believed dead. Then she threw herself into the waters and was no more. Her memory was later honored by the Shrine to an Ill-starred Consort built along the river.⁴ A commentator wrote a poem lamenting Lady Sun's death:

"To Baidi the army of Han's repaired" —
She lay down her life when the tidings came.
Today by the river there stands a stone
To honor forever the martyr's name.⁵

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Lu Xun, triumphant, rode west in swift pursuit. Approaching Kui Pass, he saw a lethal miasma

arising from among the looming mountains and the river alongside. Turning, he said to his followers, "There must be an ambush ahead. The army must not advance." Lu Xun retreated ten *li* and set up defensive formations on open ground. The scouts he sent to investigate came back with nothing to report. Lu Xun did not believe them. He climbed a hill on foot and scanned the terrain: the same sensation of danger made itself felt. He ordered a minute investigation, which turned up neither man nor horse. As the sun began to set, the mysterious signs seemed stronger. Still undecided, he sent one of his trusted followers to examine the area. He reported finding only eighty or ninety chaotic rock piles alongside the river, but no military forces.

But Lu Xun's doubts remained. He had some local people brought to him for questioning. "Who made these piles," he asked them, "and why does an aura of death seem to come from them?" One man replied, "This is Fishbelly Meadow. When Zhuge Liang came to the Riverlands he sent troops here to arrange these rock formations on the sand-flats. Since then, a kind of cloudlike effluvium seems to emanate from their interiors."

Lu Xun led a few score of cavalry to examine the rocks. From a hillslope he could see openings on all sides. "A device to perplex whoever comes," Lu Xun said with a smile. "What use is it?" He guided his men down from the slope directly into the formation to inspect it. A lieutenant said, "The sun is setting; we should return, Chief Commander." But when Lu Xun tried to get out, violent winds came up from nowhere. Instantly, streams of sand and stone covered the sky and the ground until all Xun could see were monstrous rocks sawing the air, jagged like sword blades, and the relentless sand heaping up and rising into mountains. The voice of the river rumbled and rolled like the beating of war drums.⁶

In terror Lu Xun cried, "Trapped by Zhuge Liang!" He was searching frantically for a way out, when an old man appeared in front of Lu Xun's horse and said with a smile, "You desire to leave, General?" "Would you lead us out, your reverence?" Lu Xun answered. The old man, supporting himself with a staff, slowly traversed the formations, escorting them back without the slightest difficulty to the hillslope they had come from. "Who are you, your reverence?" Lu Xun asked. "Huang Chengyan," he replied, "father-in-law of Zhuge Kongming. My son-in-law passed here on his way west and deployed these rocky ramparts, which he called the Eightfold Maze. There are eight endlessly shifting openings arranged according to the 'Taboo Days' formula: Desist, Survive, Injure, Confound, Exhibit, Perish, Surprise, and Liberate. During every time period of every day the openings move unpredictably, like ten crack legions in constant motion. As Kongming was leaving, he cautioned me, 'The time will come when a commanding general of the Southland will lose his way in this maze. Do not show him how to get out.' Just now from the cliffs I saw you go in by the gate called Perish and judged that you would be entrapped out of ignorance of the system. But I've always been disposed to do a good turn, and rather than see you get swallowed up in here, I came over to show you out by the gate Survive."

"Good sir," Lu Xun asked, "have you mastered this system of formations?" Huang Chengyan answered, "The transformations never end. They cannot be mastered." Lu Xun hurriedly dismounted, paid his respects to the old man, and returned to his camp.⁷ The poet Du Fu has described Kongming's stone ramparts:

Deeds to vault a thrice-torn realm,
Fame at peak with the Eightfold Maze,

Now steadfast stones in the river's run—
Monument to his rue
That his king had choked on Wu!

"Kongming's a 'Sleeping Dragon,' indeed—more than a match for me," Lu Xun conceded, and he gave the order to retreat. His advisers protested: "Liu Bei's army is ruined; his power is exhausted. We have him backed into a single walled town. This is our opportunity to attack. Why retire because of some rock formations?" Lu Xun responded, "I am not retreating for fear of the rocks. My guess is that Cao Pi, lord of Wei, is no less cunning than his father was. He knows we are pursuing the army of the Riverlands and will attack our undefended homeland. If we push too far west, it will be very difficult for us to pull back in time to defend it." And so Lu Xun assigned one general to block the rear while he led the main army back to the Southland. Less than two days after the retreat began, scouts urgently reported to Lu Xun the movements of the three northern armies: "Cao Ren has come down from Ruxu, Cao Xiu from Dongkou, and Cao Zhen from Nanjun. These three armies numbering in the hundreds of thousands have reached our borders by swift night marches, but their intentions are as yet uncertain." Lu Xun smiled and said, "Exactly what I anticipated! I have already sent troops to check them." Indeed:

Ambition to devour the west yielded to a wiser course:
Contain the north.

How did Lu Xun retreat?

READ ON.



First Ruler Liu Finds a Guardian for His Heir; Zhuge Liang Calmly Holds Off Five Armies

IT WAS THE SIXTH MONTH of the second year of Zhang Wu.¹ Lu Xun of the Southland had decisively beaten the Riverlands troops at Xiaoting and Yiling, and the Emperor was in sanctuary in Baidi, guarded by Zhao Zilong. Ma Liang arrived and, finding the army defeated, was overcome by a sense of futility and regret. He delivered Kongming's communication to the Emperor, who sighed and responded, "Had I heeded my prime minister in good time, today's defeat could have been avoided. How am I to return to Chengdu and face the assembly of the court?" He transmitted his wish to remain in Baidi and renamed his quarters the Palace of Enduring Peace. He grieved inconsolably when informed of the commanders who had perished in his service: Feng Xi, Zhang Nan, Fu Tong, Cheng Ji, and Shamoke.

A trusted vassal then reported: "Huang Quan has taken his troops from the north shore and defected to Wei. Your Majesty should deliver his entire clan to the authorities to answer for his conduct." But the Emperor replied, "Huang Quan was cut off by the southern army. He had no way to get back and surrendered to Wei against his will. It is I who have betrayed Huang Quan, not Huang Quan me. Why punish his family?" And he continued to provide for Huang Quan's family.

Meanwhile, Huang Quan had been taken before Cao Pi, who said, "In surrender, will you emulate Chen Ping and Han Xin and make war on Liu Bei while in my service?"² Huang Quan wept openly as he replied, "The Riverlands Emperor was generous to me beyond all measure. He gave me command of the forces north of the river, and there Lu Xun cut me off. I could not return to Shu; I would not submit to Wu—so I chose to take refuge with Your Majesty. For a defeated general to be spared is blessing enough. I have no desire to emulate the ancients." This answer pleased Cao Pi. He would have appointed Huang Quan General Who Quells the South, but Quan firmly declined the honor. At that moment an attendant announced, "A spy from the west says that the lord of the Riverlands has put Huang Quan's clan to the sword." Huang Quan said, "The lord of the Riverlands and this vassal are perfectly honest with each other. He knows me too well to do such a thing." Cao Pi agreed. A poet of later times, however, criticized Huang Quan:

Surrender not to Wu, then why to Cao?
Loyalty is to serve a single throne!
For Huang Quan thus to cherish his own life
Is something Zhu Xi's *Gangmu* can't condone.

Cao Pi asked Jia Xu, "To fulfill my desire to unify the empire, should I take the Riverlands first or the Southland?" Jia Xu replied, "Liu Bei has prodigious ability and the added advantage of Zhuge

Liang's great administrative skill. Sun Quan of the Southland has a keen eye for appraising his enemies. Lu Xun now controls the strategic points; the river and lakes give him protection and mobility. With no promising objectives and, in my view, no commanders to match those of the south or the west, not even Your aweinspiring Majesty can ensure success. Better to maintain a defensive position and wait for new developments in the two kingdoms." Cao Pi said, "The three powerful armies we have sent south should prevail." However, Imperial Secretary Liu Ye said, "Recently Lu Xun has defeated seven hundred thousand Riverlanders. The southern army is unified in spirit and enjoys the protective advantage of various bodies of water. It will be quite difficult to overpower them. And Lu Xun is full of schemes and will be well prepared for us."

Cao Pi said, "Initially you urged me to attack. Now you raise objections. Why?" "A difference in the timing," Liu Ye continued. "Earlier, the southerners had suffered a string of defeats and were vulnerable because their force was blunted. Now after complete victory, with their morale heightened a hundredfold, they are proof against attack." "I have decided to attack. You need say no more," Cao Pi responded and went forth at the head of the Royal Guard to reinforce the three armies. Before long, the Wei ruler received intelligence that the southern commanders had drawn up their defense: Lü Fan to check Cao Xiu, Zhuge Jin to block Cao Zhen at Nanjun, and Zhu Huan to oppose Cao Ren at Ruxu. Liu Ye said to Cao Pi, "Since they are prepared, what's the good of our going?" But Cao Pi remained determined to proceed.

The southern general Zhu Huan, a mere twenty-seven years of age, was bold and resourceful; Sun Quan treasured him. While on duty at Ruxu, Zhu Huan heard that Cao Ren had moved to take Xianxi, so Zhu Huan sent the bulk of his force to defend Xianxi, keeping back only five thousand cavalry at Ruxu. Zhu Huan next learned that Cao Ren was sending a high commander, Chang Diao, to Xianxi, together with Zhuge Qian, Wang Shuang, and fifty thousand crack troops. The defenders began to give way to fear. But Zhu Huan rested his hand on his sword and said, "Leadership, not numbers, determines victory. The rules of war teach that a defender can prevail with only half an attacker's numbers. Cao Ren has come a hard thousand *li*. His men and horses are worn out. We command our high walls; we have the Great River directly south of us and formidable mountains to our north. When our well-rested troops give their fatigued forces the 'welcome' they deserve, victory will be certain. Cao Pi himself would pose no problem, let alone Cao Ren!" So saying, Zhu Huan ordered all banners downed and all drums stilled, thereby creating the impression that the town was undefended.

From the distance, the general of the approaching Wei vanguard, Chang Diao, and his crack force saw neither horse nor soldier on the walls of Ruxu. Diao hurried his troops along. As they drew near, a bombard sounded and banners sprang up. Broadsword leveled, Zhu Huan charged Chang Diao and swiftly cut him down from his horse. The southern soldiers made the most of their leader's victory, routing the northern mass and inflicting heavy losses. A triumphant Zhu Huan captured quantities of banners, military equipment, and war-horses. Cao Ren's army arrived late. The southern forces from Xianxi cut them to pieces and drove them from the field.

Cao Ren presented himself before the Wei ruler, Cao Pi, and recounted the details of the debacle. Cao Pi was astonished. During their discussion, a fresh report arrived: "Cao Zhen and Xiahou Shang have gone down to defeat. They had Nanjun surrounded when ambushers inside, led by Lu Xun, and outside, led by Zhuge Jin, closed in and decimated them." While the envoy was speaking, another scout announced, "Cao Xiu has lost the field to Lü Fan." His three armies defeated, Cao Pi sighed

deeply and said, "Had I only listened to Jia Xu and Liu Ye!"

It was midsummer. An epidemic was raging. Some seven-tenths of the soldiers, foot and mounted, had perished. At long last Cao Pi brought the armies back to Luoyang. Thereafter there was bad blood between Wei and Wu.

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In the Palace of Enduring Peace the Emperor was confined to his bed by a worsening illness. In the fourth month of the third year of Zhang Wu (A. D. 223) the Emperor knew the disease had spread into his limbs. Weeping for his brothers had aggravated his symptoms. His vision grew dim. Disgusted with his attendants, he discharged them and lay back on his couch in solitude. A chill, gloomy wind sprang up. His lantern darkened, then flared. Two men stood in the circle of the shadow it cast. The Emperor spoke irritably: "I thought I had dismissed you to give my mind a moment's calm. What brings you again?" They ignored his dismissal. The Emperor arose to examine them: one was Lord Guan, the other Zhang Fei. "Then you are still alive!" the Emperor exclaimed. "We are ghosts, not men," responded Guan. "The supernal sovereign recognized that in our lifetimes we two never forsook our good faith or our allegiance, and so he has made gods of us. Elder brother, the time of our reunion is not far off."

The Emperor reached for them, emitting a cry, then awoke with a spasm. The two were gone. He summoned his attendants to ask the hour. It was the third watch. The Emperor sighed, saying, "My time will be short in the world of men." He sent to Chengdu for Prime Minister Zhuge Liang, Imperial Secretary Li Yan, and other high officials, and they rushed to the Palace of Enduring Peace to receive his final instructions. Kongming and the Emperor's younger sons Liu Yong, king of Lu, and Liu Li, king of Liang, came before the Emperor. The heir apparent, Liu Shan, remained in Chengdu.

Kongming, seeing that the Emperor's condition was critical, prostrated himself at the royal couch with reverent haste. But the Emperor expressed his wish that the prime minister sit at the edge of the couch. Placing his hand gently on Kongming's back, he said, "Through you alone the imperial quest was achieved. How could I have foolishly rejected your advice and thus brought on this defeat? Wracked by remorse, I stand at death's door. My heir is an inconsequential weakling, and so I must entrust you with my cause." Tears covered his face.³

Kongming, also in tears, replied, "Your Majesty must preserve his dragon form to fulfill the hopes of the empire." The Emperor glanced around the room and, spotting Ma Liang's younger brother, Ma Su, told him to retire. The Emperor asked Kongming, "What is my prime minister's estimate of Ma Su's talents?" "Among the most splendid of the age," was the reply. "You are wrong," the Emperor said. "In my view he's a braggart. Give him no important assignment. Take careful note of this, Prime Minister." Having issued this warning, the Emperor summoned his officials into his chamber and transcribed his testament before them. Handing it to Kongming, he said with a sigh, "I am no scholar; and my knowledge is crude and superficial. The Sage said, 'Doleful, the notes of a dying bird; precious, the words of a dying man.' Together we have tried to annihilate the traitor Cao and uphold the house of Han. Alas, midway in our undertaking we must part. I would trouble the prime minister to impart my edict to the heir and teach him its importance. I rely on you to guide him in all matters, Prime Minister."

Weeping, Kongming and the others bowed to the ground and said, "We beg Your Majesty to enjoy

a measure of repose. Each of us will spare no pains in gratitude for your generous treatment." The Emperor ordered his attendants to raise Kongming up. Brushing his tearful eyes with one hand and taking Kongming's hand in the other, he said, "I am going to die, and I have something more to say." "What sacred instruction?" Kongming asked. The Emperor wept as he responded, "Your ability exceeds Cao Pi's by ten to one, and I know you will be able to secure and preserve the empire and in the end attain our goal. If my heir proves worthy of support, support him. If he proves unfit, take the kingship of the Riverlands yourself." Kongming broke into a sweat; in extreme agitation, he prostrated himself again. "Could I do otherwise," he said tearfully, "than serve him as aide and vassal, persevering in loyalty unto death?" He knocked his forehead to the ground until blood showed.

Again the Emperor called Kongming to sit on his couch. He summoned Liu Yong and Liu Li to approach and charged them: "Mark well my words. After I am gone, I want you and Liu Shan to serve the prime minister with all diligence and respect, as if he were your father." So saying, he ordered the two princes to prostrate themselves before Kongming. "Were I to lay my innards on the ground, I could never requite the kindness Your Grace has shown me," Kongming concluded.

To the larger assembly the Emperor said, "I am entrusting my heir to the prime minister. I have instructed my heir to serve him as his father. Let none of you neglect this charge and betray my hopes." The Emperor turned to Zhao Zilong and said, "We have been through many a trial and ordeal together. Who could have anticipated such a parting? For the sake of our old friendship, will you keep a constant watch over my sons and honor my wishes?" Tearfully, Zhao Zilong prostrated himself and said, "I am bound to exert every fibre of my being in this service." Next, the Emperor said to the assembly, "I cannot give an individual charge to each one of you. But I hope you will all care well for yourselves and keep your self-respect." The Emperor finished speaking; then he was no more. He had reached the age of sixty-three. It was the twenty-fourth day of the fourth month of Zhang Wu 3.⁴ Du Fu has left this poem lamenting the fate of Liu Bei:

His view trained south, Shu's ruler graced Three Gorges
And two years thence was dead, in Yong'an Palace still.
Picture regal plumes upon those vacant hills;
How blank and bare his hall of state in a country shrine!
Fir and pine by the old fane keep cormorants⁵
Till solstice feast days stir the old folks out:
With Kongming's sanctum always right next door,
In sacred union liege and man share the rites of worship.⁶

Grieving officials, led by Kongming, bore the royal coffin back to Chengdu, where Heir Apparent Liu Shan received them outside the city walls. He had his father's body placed in state in the main hall of the palace. After the rites and mourning the testament was read:

It began with no more than severe stomach cramps, but complications developed, and recovery became less and less likely. They say, "After fifty, one no longer dies young," so to die after sixty is hardly cause for regret, though you and your brothers still occupy my thoughts. Be vigilant! Be vigilant! If an evil is minor, resist it nonetheless. If a good deed is trifling, perform it all the same. Only wisdom and virtue can truly win men's devotion. My

meagre virtue was unworthy of your emulation. Serve the prime minister as if he were your father; be neither negligent nor remiss. Seek to make a name for yourself. Such is my final charge.

After the reading of the will, Kongming said, "A dynasty cannot go a single day without a sovereign. Let us enthrone the heir in order to continue the line of Han unbroken." The assembly thus inaugurated Liu Shan emperor and changed the reign title to Jian Xing, "Commence the Revival." Zhuge Liang was made lord of Wuxiang and protector of Yizhou. The late Emperor was interred at Huiling and posthumously titled August Emperor Zhao Lie, or Reflected Glory.⁷ The Empress, Lady Wu, was honored as queen mother. Lady Gan, the mother of Liu Shan, was posthumously honored as August Empress Zhao Lie. Lady Mi was posthumously remembered as Empress. The body of officials was promoted and rewarded; amnesty was proclaimed throughout the empire.⁸

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News of Liu Bei's death soon made its way north, and imperial attendants informed the king. Cao Pi said delightedly, "With Liu Bei gone, my worries are over. Let us attack while they have no king." But Jia Xu remonstrated with him: "Liu Bei must have charged Zhuge Liang with the care of his son. Mindful of Liu Bei's kindness, Zhuge Liang will render to the heir the fullest measure of devotion. Your Majesty cannot invade precipitately." As Jia Xu spoke, someone stepped out from the rows of officials and cried with fervor, "Such an opportunity to attack will never come again!" The assembly turned to Sima Yi. The delighted Cao Pi asked his plan, and Sima Yi replied, "Troops from north China alone cannot succeed. To attain our objectives will require a vast force composed of five field armies concerted in an all-round attack to prevent Zhuge Liang from coordinating his van and his rear."

Questioned further by Cao Pi, Sima Yi explained, "Prepare a letter to the Xianbi nation in Liaodong. An envoy will take it to their king, Kebineng, together with gifts of gold and silk to get him to raise a force of one hundred thousand Qiang soldiers from Liaoxi as our first field army; let them take Xiping Pass by land. Write a second letter for an envoy to take to the land of the Southern Man along with new titles and rewards. Have their king, Meng Huo, muster another hundred thousand—the second field army—for an attack on the four southern districts of the Riverlands: Yizhou, Yongchang, Zangge, and Yuesui.⁹ Next, send someone to the Southland to mend relations, promising them some territory to get Sun Quan to raise another hundred thousand soldiers—the third field army—for an attack on Three Gorges and the city of Fu. Then send an envoy to the general who has surrendered to us, Meng Da, so that one hundred thousand can be raised in Shangyong for an attack to the west on Hanzhong. That will be the fourth field army. Finally, give Cao Zhen chief command of one hundred thousand—the fifth army—to proceed from Jingzhao to Yangping Pass for the capture of the Riverlands itself. Even if he had the talents of a Lü Wang, Zhuge Liang could not contend with a concerted invasion by five hundred thousand."

Delighted, Cao Pi dispatched four persuasive envoys on their secret missions, and he made Cao Zhen chief commander of an army of one hundred thousand to take Yangping Pass. Zhang Liao and other members of Cao Cao's old guard who had been made honorary lords and posted to various strategic points in Jizhou, Xuzhou, Qingzhou, and Hefei were not assigned to join in this campaign.



Since the accession of the Second Ruler of Shu-Han, Liu Shan, many vassals of the old days had fallen ill and died; their particular fates may be passed over. All matters of state, appointment of officials, revenue and taxation, and judicial administration were left entirely in the hands of Prime Minister Zhuge Liang. The matter of an empress was still pending. Kongming and the courtiers petitioned the Emperor, "The daughter of Zhang Fei, late general of Chariots and Cavalry, is a worthy and virtuous woman. She is seventeen years and an acceptable consort for the new Emperor."¹⁰ Liu Shan accepted the prime minister's choice.

In the eighth month of the first year of the new reign period, Jian Xing, a report from the border came in: "The kingdom of Wei has fielded five armies in order to conquer the Riverlands. The first, one hundred thousand men under Chief Commander Cao Zhen, is marching to Yangping Pass. The second, under the rebel Meng Da, is attacking Hanzhong with one hundred thousand Shangyong soldiers. The third consists of Sun Quan's crack troops, numbering one hundred thousand; they are coming into the Riverlands through Three Gorges. The fourth army is led by the Southern Man king Meng Huo; its goal is Yizhou and the other three southern districts. The fifth is the army of the Qiang king Ke-bineng; it will go against Xiping Pass. These five armies pose a mortal threat. We have reported their movements to the prime minister, but for reasons unknown he has not conducted business for several days."

Alarmed by this report, the Second Emperor summoned Kongming to court. After a long while the messenger reported back, "According to his household staff, he is too ill to go out." The Second Emperor became more anxious. The next day he sent Inner Bureau Officer Dong Yun and Senior Court Counselor Du Qiong to announce the emergency to the prime minister in his sickroom. But the two men were not admitted to Kongming's residence. Du Qiong said to the gateman, "The late Emperor made the prime minister responsible for the heir. His Majesty has hardly assumed the throne, and Cao Pi's five armies have breached our borders. This is a military emergency. Why does the prime minister allege illness and not appear?" After a while the gateman conveyed the prime minister's answer: "As his indisposition had eased somewhat, he will be at the ministry tomorrow morning in his official capacity." The two dispirited envoys returned to the Emperor.

The next day the officials came before the prime minister's residence and waited. The day passed, and he did not appear. The officials departed apprehensively. Du Qiong addressed the Second Emperor: "I beg Your Majesty to go personally to the prime minister's residence and ask his plan." The Second Emperor immediately led his officials into the palace to explain the situation to the queen mother. The queen mother, startled by what she was told, said, "Why, the prime minister could never betray the late Emperor's trust. I will go to him myself." But Dong Yun said to her, "Royal Mother, do not be hasty. Surely, the prime minister has a higher end in view. Let His Majesty go to him first. If the prime minister is unresponsive, there will be time enough for you to summon him into the ancestral shrine." The queen mother abided by this counsel.

The next day the Second Emperor visited the ministerial residence. As His Majesty came into view, the gateman hurriedly prostrated himself. "Where is the prime minister?" the Emperor asked. "I do not know," the gateman replied. "But we were instructed to admit no officials." The Second

Emperor came down from his carriage and walked through the third archway. He found Kongming leaning on a bamboo staff and peering into a small fishpond. The Second Emperor stood behind him a good while before saying deliberately, "Are things well with Your Excellency?" Kongming looked back. Seeing the Emperor, he threw down his staff and prostrated himself. "I deserve to die ten thousand times!" he exclaimed.¹¹ The Emperor helped him to his feet and asked, "Cao Pi's armies have crossed our borders. The situation is serious. Prime Minister—Father—why will you not come out of seclusion and take care of this?"¹²

Kongming smiled broadly as he helped the Emperor to a seat in the rear chamber. The prime minister then addressed the sovereign: "I knew all about the arrival of the five armies. I was not really viewing the fish, but thinking my own thoughts." "What can we do?" the Emperor said. "I have already driven back four of the armies: that of the Qiang king, Kebineng; that of the Man king, Meng Huo; that of the rebel general, Meng Da; and that of the Wei general, Cao Zhen. But as for the last army, that of Sun Quan— though I have worked out a plan, I will need a capable spokesmen to send to him. I was pondering whom to send when you saw me at the fishpond. It is unnecessary for Your Majesty to worry."

Amazed and delighted, the Emperor said, "Prime Minister and Second Father, your designs are indeed marvelous and unfathomable. I would know your plan." Kongming replied, "How could I treat Your Majesty, whom the late Emperor entrusted to my care, with the slightest negligence? None of the Chengdu officials knows much of the art of war. What mattered most was keeping anyone from guessing my plan. The details had to be secret. Early on I knew that the Qiang king Kebineng meant to attack Xiping Pass, so I took the following steps: Ma Chao and his forebears, Riverlands people for generations, have always enjoyed the friendship of the Qiang. The Qiang regard Ma Chao himself as a heavenly general with supernatural powers. So I sent a swift envoy with orders for Ma Chao to guard Xiping Pass as tightly as possible and to place four units in ambush— to be rotated daily. That should take care of Kebineng, the first army.

"Now for the Man king, Meng Huo, whose troops threaten our four southern districts: I have dispatched orders to Wei Yan to keep moving his army left and right of Meng Huo as decoys; the Man troops, who rely only on courage, are so mistrustful that decoys will surely deter their advance. So that army should cause no anxiety.

"I also knew about Meng Da's advance on Hanzhong. Meng Da and Li Yan are friends to the death. When I got back to Chengdu, I left Li Yan guarding the Palace of Enduring Peace. I have written to Meng Da, copying Li Yan's hand. Meng Da will claim he is ill and will not join the action, thus weakening his troops' morale. That army, too, need occasion no further anxiety.

"Finally, Cao Zhen's coming assault on Yangping Pass. This is formidable terrain, easy to defend well. I have already dispatched Zhao Zilong to maintain defensive positions there. When Cao Zhen realizes our soldiers will not show themselves, he will retreat before long. Thus, none of the four enemy armies is worth worrying about. But for an extra measure of security I have secretly sent Guan Xing and Zhang Bao with thirty thousand troops each to reinforce our other units at crucial points. All these arrangements were made without going through Chengdu, so no one here has heard a thing.

"That leaves the Southland army—but it should not make any major move. It would be likely to attack if the other four armies were winning and if the Riverlands encountered a crisis. But what will they do if the four armies are making no progress? My guess is that Sun Quan has not forgotten Cao Pi's invasion and will be reluctant to do his bidding. Nonetheless, I still need an able talker to go

there and persuade them where their true interests lie: when the Southland backs out, the other four armies will pose no threat. But I have yet to find the man who can convince the south, and so I have been in a quandary. Forgive me for having troubled Your Majesty to make this visit." The Emperor replied, "The queen mother also meant to come and see you, prime minister and second father. Now your explanation has wakened me from a dream and relieved my anxieties."

Kongming shared several cups with the Second Emperor and then escorted him from his residence. The waiting officials surrounding the gate watched doubtfully as the Emperor, looking pleased, bade Kongming good-bye and returned to court in his carriage. Kongming noticed one of the courtiers, Deng Zhi, looking upward and laughing. Deng Zhi (Bomiao), from Xinye in Yiyang, was secretary of the Agricultural Tax Department, a descendant of Marshal Deng Yu of the Han. Kongming had him quietly detained and invited him to his library after the other officials had departed.

Kongming asked Deng Zhi, "Now three kingdoms—Shu, Wei, and Wu—have formed. I want to wage war against the other two to unify the realm and restore the Han. Which kingdom should I attack first?" Deng Zhi responded, "In my humble opinion, Wei, though a traitor, is a formidable power, virtually unshakable. We should bide our time. The people's confidence in the new sovereign remains unsteady, so it seems sensible to unite again with the Southland for mutual defense, wiping clear the late Emperor's longstanding grievance against them. This is a plan for the long run. But what is Your Excellency's esteemed view?"

Kongming laughed as he said, "These have been my thoughts, too, for some time. I've been looking for the right man. Today I have found him!" "What do you wish him to do?" Deng Zhi inquired. Kongming responded, "I want to send him to the Southland to repair the alliance. Good sir, since you understand our thinking, you are sure to do justice to the royal command. You are the perfect man for the mission. There is no one else." "The task may be too much for my meagre talent and shallow knowledge," Deng Zhi protested. "Tomorrow," Kongming answered, "I will advise the Son of Heaven to request that you make the trip. I urge you to accept." Deng Zhi assented and withdrew.

The next day, as Kongming had advised, the Emperor delegated Deng Zhi as his representative to the Southland. Deng Zhi took leave and headed south. Indeed:

No sooner had the Southland seen the end of war
Than the Riverlands sent the gifts of peace.

What would be the outcome of Deng Zhi's mission?¹³

READ ON.



***To Thwart Zhang Wen, Qin Mi Shows Genius in Debate;
To Defeat Cao Pi, Xu Sheng Employs Fire in Attack***

TO MARK LU XUN'S SUCCESS in driving back the armies of Wei, the king of Wu honored him as General Who Upholds the Kingdom, lord of Jiangling, and protector of Jingzhou. Thereafter military authority was concentrated in Lu Xun's hands.

On the recommendation of Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong, the king of Wu established his own reign title, Huang Wu.¹ In the first year of the reign an envoy from the Wei ruler arrived unexpectedly and stated his purpose to Sun Quan: "Dearly we regret the mistake we made in giving military assistance to the Riverlands, but now we are mobilizing four armies to capture that territory, and half of it will be your prize if you back us up."² Sun Quan, uncertain how to respond to this proposal, put the question to his advisers Zhang Zhao and Gu Yong. Zhang Zhao said, "Lu Xun has greater insight. We can ask him."

Sun Quan summoned his chief commander, who said, "Cao Pi's hold on the heartland is firm enough to rule out a quick strike north. And should we refuse his proposal, we would become his enemy. I don't think Wei or Wu has a strategist to match Zhuge Liang, so I would say yes—reluctant as you may be—all the while enhancing our preparedness and gathering intelligence on the progress of their four armies. If their effort looks promising and the Riverlands is thrown into a crisis, and if Zhuge Liang's forces are disorganized, Your Majesty should send troops to aid Wei and try to take Chengdu. Such a plan is in our best interest. But if Wei's four armies are defeated, we shall have to reconsider."

Sun Quan accepted this advice and said to the envoy, "The army is still being provisioned. We will fix a day now to begin our expedition." The envoy left with his answer. Before long Sun Quan learned that the Qiang force attacking Xiping Pass had retreated before Ma Chao without fighting; that Wei Yan, using decoy soldiers, had driven Southern Man leader Meng Huo and his troops back to their hollows, thus defeating his attack on the Riverlands' southern districts; that Meng Da had fallen ill en route and was unable to proceed; and that Cao Zhen had been checked by Zhao Zilong at Yanging Pass (giving fresh proof to the adage "A single commander at the pass can stop ten thousand men") and had turned back in frustration after posting his forces at Ye Gorge Road. Sun Quan then said to his counselors, "Lu Xun calculated perfectly. An ill-conceived action on my part would again have given the Riverlands good reason to hate us."

At this moment the Riverlands envoy, Deng Zhi, arrived.³ Zhang Zhao said, "Another of Zhuge Liang's maneuvers to deflect enemy forces—sending Deng Zhi to win our cooperation." "How shall I answer him?" Sun Quan asked. Zhang Zhao replied, "Place a cauldron filled with several hundred *jin* of oil in front of the main hall and heat it with a charcoal fire. When the oil is bubbling, have a thousand tall, hard-faced soldiers, arms in hand, form a line from the main hall out to the palace gate.

Summon Deng Zhi and before he can open his mouth, tell him you are going to boil him alive as the king of Qi boiled Li Yiji. See how he responds."⁴

Sun Quan set up the cauldron and detailed the soldiers as Zhang Zhao had advised. He then called for the envoy. Properly costumed, Deng Zhi came to the gate and saw the two lines of guards—with steel swords, battle-axes, halberds, and daggers—stretching up to the main hall. It was a chilling display. But Deng Zhi understood its purpose and, betraying no fear, strode up to the hall, where he found the giant cauldron of boiling oil. As the warriors to right and left eyed him, Deng Zhi smiled casually. The king's attendants led him to the curtain behind which the king sat. Deng Zhi bowed low from the waist but did not prostrate himself. Sun Quan had the curtain rolled up and shouted, "Why no obeisance?" With a confident air Deng Zhi responded, "The envoy of a great kingdom does not prostrate himself before the lord of a lesser one." Angrily Sun Quan responded, "You're asking for it! Try wagging that wordy little tongue of yours as well as Li Yiji and then throw yourself into the cauldron!"

Deng Zhi laughed loudly and said, "The Southland is supposed to be rich in worthy men. Who would have expected you to fear a mere scholar!"⁵ "I, fear a reckless fool like you?" Sun Quan exclaimed. "If you don't fear the messenger, why worry about his message?" was the reply. "Tell me the truth," Sun Quan said. "Has Zhuge Liang sent you to persuade me to break off with Wei and turn toward Shu?" "I am but a scholar from the Riverlands," Deng Zhi went on, "who has come to speak of what is in the interest of the Southland."⁶ And you have set up a cauldron and soldiers to hold off a single envoy. It goes to show how petty you really are!"

Sun Quan, now regretting his ploy, dismissed the guards and ordered Deng Zhi to ascend to the hall, offered him a seat, and said, "Then I would learn from you, master, where our interest and Wei's interest lie." Deng Zhi replied, "Is it your wish to make peace with Wei or with Shu?"⁷ Sun Quan said, "Our purpose is to negotiate a peace with Shu, but with a new ruler so young and inexperienced, I wonder if agreements can be carried through to the end."

To this Deng Zhi answered, "Your Highness is a splendid champion recognized by all, and Zhuge Liang an outstanding figure in his own right. Mountains and waterways afford the Riverlands ample protection; rivers keep the Southland secure. If our two kingdoms make peace for mutual defense, we can either devour the empire together or else enjoy the advantages of a three-way balance of power. If Your Highness sends presents of homage and declares subservience to Wei, they will demand your attendance at court and require the heir apparent to serve in their emperor's ranks. If you refuse, they will field an army and attack—in which case, the Riverlands army will come downstream and seize your territory."⁸ The Southland will no longer be yours! If you think my humble views wrong, I will gladly die before you lest I become known as a glib troublemaker." So saying, he raised the lower part of his garment and descended from the hall toward the cauldron as if to jump in.

Sun Quan ordered Deng Zhi stopped and invited him to the rear chamber, where he received him as an honored guest. "Master," Sun Quan said, "your views and mine agree. I desire to conclude a peace with the ruler of Shu. Will you serve as my intermediary?"⁹ "A moment ago," Deng Zhi responded, "you wanted to cook me. Now you want to recruit me. If Your Highness is so indecisive, how can he win the confidence of others?"¹⁰ "I am resolved," Sun Quan said. "Have no doubts, master."

The king of the Southland detained Deng Zhi and summoned his court into session. "My eighty-one Southland counties," he said, "coupled with Jingzhou, amount to less than the remote Riverlands, if

only for the fact that they have a Deng Zhi, a man worthy of his king, while we lack a man of equal merit to represent our cause to Shu." At that moment a man stepped forth from the ranks and addressed the king: "I volunteer to be your envoy." The speaker was a southerner from Wujun district, Zhang Wen (Huishu), an Imperial Corps commander. Sun Quan said, "I am afraid that when Zhuge Liang receives you, you will not effectively convey my true sentiments." "Kongming is a man, after all," Zhang Wen replied. "Why should I fear him so?" And so Sun Quan gave Zhang Wen generous gifts with great pleasure and sent him with Deng Zhi to the Riverlands to negotiate the friendship between their two kingdoms.

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After Deng Zhi had left for the Southland, Kongming addressed the Second Emperor: "Deng Zhi will succeed, and one of the many capable men in the south should soon be visiting us in reciprocal courtesy. Your Majesty, treat him with all due respect so that he will conclude the alliance when he goes back. If this peace is made, Wei will not dare military action against us. With quiet on the eastern and northern fronts, I will be able to march south and pacify the region of the Man peoples. After that, we can again make Wei our objective. And after Wei is whittled down, the Southland cannot long survive. In that way the unity of the empire can be reestablished."¹¹ The Emperor approved.

When the return mission of Deng Zhi and Zhang Wen was announced, the Emperor gathered his military and civil officials around him. He then permitted Deng Zhi and Zhang Wen to enter the throne chamber. With an air of pride and self-importance Zhang Wen strode into the hall and extended ritual greetings to the Emperor, who invited him to sit on a gorgeous damask hassock on the left side of the hall. A royal banquet was presented at which the Emperor played a merely formal role.¹² After the ceremonies officials escorted Zhang Wen to the guesthouse.

The next day Kongming invited Zhang Wen to dine and said to him, "When the late Emperor was alive, relations with the south were poor. But he is no more. Out of his deep admiration for the king of Wu, the present sovereign seeks to bury old grudges and form a long-term alliance in order to defeat Wei. I hope that you, my lord, will deliver our response with fair words."¹³ Zhang Wen agreed to. As the wine eased their spirits, the envoy smiled and grew more expansive; he even became somewhat arrogant.

The next day the Emperor gave Zhang Wen gifts of gold and silk and told all courtiers to attend a banquet in his honor at the post station south of the capital. Kongming solicitously served wine to Zhang Wen. Suddenly, during the festivities a drunken man burst in and after a haughty gesture of salutation took a seat among the guests. Amazed, Zhang Wen asked Kongming who the man was. Kongming replied, "Qin Mi (styled Zilai), now an official scholar in Yizhou." "He may be called 'official scholar,'" Zhang Wen responded, "but I wonder if there is any 'scholarship' in him." Assuming a severe air, Qin Mi said, "Even the young lads of the Riverlands attend to their studies, not to speak of myself."

Zhang Wen continued, "Tell us what you have learned." "Astronomy and geography," Qin Mi replied, "the three teachings and the nine sects, the philosophers of every school—I have mastered them all. And I have read through the histories chronicling the rise and fall of many dynasties as well as the classics transmitted by sagely worthies." Zhang Wen laughed. "Since you take pride in your

learning, good sir, allow me this question: does the sky have a head?" "It does," Qin Mi answered. "Where?" asked Zhang Wen. "In the west," Qin Mi answered again. "Inferring from the line in the *Book of Odes*, 'The High Ancestor looked to the west for a new king, ' the head should be there."¹⁴ "And does the sky have ears?" Zhang Wen asked next. "Heaven is located high above, but it hears those far below. As the *Book of Odes* says, 'The crane cries in the remote swamps, but its voice reaches Heaven above. ' How could Heaven hear without ears?"¹⁵ "And does Heaven have feet as well?" Zhang Wen pressed him. "Of course," Qin Mi answered. "The *Odes* says, 'Heaven advances step by step. '¹⁶ That would be impossible without feet." Next, Zhang Wen asked, "And does Heaven have a surname?" "But of course," Qin Mi responded. "What name?" Zhang Wen asked. "Liu," said Qin Mi. "How do you know?" Zhang Wen asked. "Because the Son of Heaven is surnamed Liu," was Qin Mi's reply. "And is the sun born in the east?" Zhang Wen queried. "Yes," Qin Mi answered. "But it 'dies' in the west."

In this exchange Qin Mi's articulate and fluent responses astonished the entire assembly and left Zhang Wen speechless. Qin Mi then asked him, "Master, you are a noted scholar of the Southland. Since you have condescended to ask me about Heaven, surely you have a profound grasp of its principles. In ancient times after the division of the primal substance, *yin* and *yang* were formed. The lighter, finer essence rose skyward to become Heaven. The grosser, darker essence congealed as earth. After Gong Gong lost the war, he butted Buzhou Mountain with his head, breaking the pillar of Heaven and one of the mainstays of the earth. This caused Heaven to tilt down in the northwest and earth to list to the southeast. Now, if Heaven was formed from a lighter, rising essence, how could it tilt down in the northwest? And secondly, what lies beyond the lighter essence? I am eager to learn from you."¹⁷

Unable to make any reply, Zhang Wen moved off his mat and said deferentially, "I am amazed that the Riverlands has such a paragon of erudition. Your arguments have been positively illuminating." Kongming intervened to save Zhang Wen from further embarrassment by saying, "The riddles posed during the banquet were in jest. Your knowledge of the means to keep a kingdom safe and sound has nothing to do with verbal jesting." Zhang Wen acknowledged the compliment, and Kongming ordered Deng Zhi to reciprocate the Southland's courtesy and accompany Zhang Wen home again. The two men took leave of the prime minister and headed back to the Southland.

Sun Quan was in council when a personal attendant announced, "The Riverlands has sent Deng Zhi back with Zhang Wen as a gesture of reciprocity." Summoned before his lord, Zhang Wen praised in detail the virtue of the Second Emperor and Kongming; he conveyed their appeal for a lasting alliance, and told the king of the dispatch of Secretary Deng Zhi on a return visit. Delighted by these developments, Sun Quan held a banquet for Deng Zhi, during which he asked him, "Would it not be wonderful if our two kingdoms resolved to destroy Wei? It would bring peace to the empire, and the two sovereigns could share its governance." Deng Zhi responded, "'The people have one king, as Heaven has one sun. ' After the destruction of Wei, to whom the mandate will revert is a matter of conjecture. Whoever rules must cultivate his virtue. Whoever serves must exhaust his loyalty. That will end the wars." "Your sincerity is beyond question," Sun Quan said and sent Deng Zhi back to the Riverlands laden with gifts. Thereafter Wu and Shu were on friendly terms.

Spies swiftly brought word of these developments to the attention of the Wei Emperor, Cao Pi. "An alliance between Wu and Shu will have the north as its next objective. We should attack them first," he declared angrily, and he called a general meeting of his officials and advisers to discuss invading the Southland.

By this time Chief Commanding Officer Cao Ren and Grand Commandant Jia Xu had both passed away. Privy Counselor Xin Pi came forward and addressed the sovereign: "War would ravage our northern heartland, a broad territory on which the population is rather thinly settled. A better plan would be to develop the armed forces and establish military-agricultural colonies to ensure supplies of food and men. In ten years' time Wu and Shu can be defeated." Angered by these words, Cao Pi said, "That's how a pedant thinks! Wu and Shu are now allied, and their armies will invade our land long before ten years have passed. I don't have the luxury of waiting!" With that, the Wei Emperor ordered the invasion to begin.

Sima Yi addressed Cao Pi: "We'll need boats to cross the Great River, the Southland's strategic defense. The best plan is for Your Majesty to lead the expedition. Select a fleet of large and small craft, then enter the Huai region from Cai and Ying and capture Shouchun. When you reach Guangling, cross the river and capture Nanxu." Cao Pi adopted the plan. He ordered nonstop preparation. Ten dragon boats were built, each over two hundred spans long and able to hold over two thousand men. In addition, he commissioned some three thousand war-boats.¹⁸

In the autumn of the eighth month of the fifth year of Huang Chu,¹⁹ the entire northern command gathered. Cao Pi ordered Cao Zhen to lead the vanguard; Zhang Liao, Zhang He, Wen Ping, and Xu Huang to serve as lead generals; Xu Chu and Lü Qian to be Imperial Army superintendents,²⁰ Cao Xiu to coordinate the rear; and Liu Ye and Jiang Ji to serve as consulting officials. The land and naval forces, all told, came to more than three hundred thousand. A day was set to launch the invasion. Sima Yi, appointed supervisor of the Secretariat,²¹ remained in Xuchang and assumed overall administrative responsibility.

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Southland spies soon returned from the north to tell of the impending invasion, and a personal attendant communicated the news to the king of Wu: "The ruler of Wei, Cao Pi, is personally leading the imperial fleet and a combined land and naval force of more than three hundred thousand. They are coming into the Huai region from Cai and Ying, bent on seizing Guangling, crossing the river there, and descending upon the Southland— a serious threat." Sun Quan, deeply concerned, gathered his counselors. Gu Yong said, "Your Lordship has re-allied with the Riverlands. You might write to Kongming urging him to march into Hanzhong. That would force the northerners to fight on two fronts. At the same time post a top general to block the invaders at Nanxu." "No one but Lu Xun could undertake the task," Sun Quan said. Gu Yong replied, "He is defending Jingzhou and should stay there." "Well I know it," Sun Quan responded. "But whom do I have to take his place?"

At that moment someone stepped out to answer the call. "I may have little talent," he said, "but I volunteer to lead one detachment in the fight against Wei. If Cao Pi comes across the Great River, I will deliver him alive to the base of your throne hall. If he does not cross, I will destroy half the troops of Wei; the north will never defy us again." The volunteer was Xu Sheng. "With you to defend the regions south of the river, my worries are over," Sun Quan said with delight and appointed him

General Who Makes the East Secure and chief commander of all forces in Jianye and Nanxun. Xu Sheng thanked Sun Quan, accepted his commission, and withdrew. He then issued orders for all armies to provide him with the weapons, flags, and banners necessary for defending the shores of the river.

Suddenly a man stood up and said, "General, today His Majesty has laid a heavy charge upon you, to defeat the northern army and capture Cao Pi—why not send your men across the river first and meet the enemy in the Huai region? It may be too late to press your advantage if you wait for them to arrive." Xu Sheng turned to Sun Shao (Gongli), nephew of the king, recipient of the post of General Who Exhibits Power. He had once served in the defense at Guangling, and he was a headstrong youth, filled with sheer courage. Xu Sheng said to him, "Cao Pi has a vast fighting force and famous commanders in the vanguard. We cannot meet the enemy on the other side of the river. But after their fleet gathers on the north shore, I have a way to destroy them."

Sun Shao replied, "I have three thousand in my command, and I know the terrain around Guangling. I want to take the fight to the north side and finish Cao Pi there. If I fail, let military law be satisfied!" Xu Sheng would not agree; but Sun Shao would not relent. Xu Sheng refused permission; Sun Shao insisted. Finally, Xu Sheng angrily ordered Sun Shao removed and executed, saying, "If you ignore my command, how am I to control the other commanders?"

Armed guards forced Sun Shao outside the main gate of the camp and raised a black flag. One of Shao's lieutenants rushed the news to Sun Quan, who mounted at once and came to save him. As the executioners readied the knife, Sun Quan arrived, dispersed them with a shout, and rescued his nephew. Tearfully Sun Shao addressed the king: "Some years ago I became familiar with the terrain in Guangling. If instead of taking the battle to Cao Pi, we wait for him to cross the river, the Southland's days are numbered." Sun Quan went to the camp and was met by Xu Sheng, who showed him into his tent. "Your Highness," he said, "has appointed me chief commander with orders to stop Cao Pi's advance. Now Sun Shao, General Who Exhibits Power, shows no respect for military law. For disobeying orders he deserves to die. Why did Your Majesty pardon him?" "Sun Shao violated the law inadvertently; it was his rashness. I ask you to excuse his fault," Sun Quan replied. "I did not make the law," Xu Sheng went on, "nor did Your Majesty. It is law established by precedent in our kingdom. If he is exonerated as a member of the Sun family, what authority will we have to command others?" Sun Quan answered, "By all rights his offense should be punished, General. But there is a special circumstance here. Sun Shao was originally surnamed Yu; my brother granted him our surname because he was fond of the lad. He has done me important service. If you kill him, our fraternal bond will be violated."²²

To this appeal Xu Sheng replied, "In deference to Your Highness, then, I will hold off on the penalty." Next, Sun Quan bade Sun Shao prostrate himself and admit his fault. Sun Shao would not perform the ritual bow, and instead cried out stridently, "The way I see it, there is no choice but to take the army to destroy Cao Pi. Death itself could not get me to accept your view." Xu Sheng turned pale. Sun Quan dismissed Sun Shao harshly and said to Xu Sheng, "Can't the army do without him? Don't use him from now on." With those words Sun Quan went back.

That night someone reported to Xu Sheng that Sun Shao had secretly taken his three thousand crack troops over the river. To guard against mishap and to avoid his king's displeasure, Xu Sheng went to Ding Feng, gave him a secret plan, and sent him across with three thousand men to back up Sun Shao.

During the night the dragon boat carrying the ruler of Wei reached Guangling, where the vanguard under Cao Zhen was already arrayed on the shore. "How many men on the opposite bank?" Cao Pi asked him. "I see none on the far shore," Cao Zhen replied, "no flags or campsites, either." "It's a trick," Cao Pi said. "I will go myself to explore the site." Cao Pi had the way cleared for his royal barge to come to the river. Moored on the northern shore, it flew multicolored banners bearing the dragon and the phoenix, the sun and the moon; its imperial regalia and its honor guard gleamed brilliantly. Seated amid this display, Cao Pi gazed at the southern shore. Seeing no one, he turned to Liu Ye and Jiang Ji and asked, "Can't we cross?" "Military science warns," Liu Ye replied, "that 'appearances often belie reality.' When they see us coming, they will prepare. Do not be hasty, Your Majesty. Take a few days to watch their movements before sending the vanguard across to probe their positions." "My thinking exactly," Cao Pi responded.

Cao Pi spent the night on the river. There was no moon, but the soldiers' lanterns turned night to day; over on the southern shore all was dark. Cao Pi asked why, and a personal attendant answered, "It would seem that, hearing of the arrival of your Heaven-ordained armies, they simply took flight." Cao Pi smiled to himself. By dawn a great fog had overspread the water, blotting out even the closest objects. Soon morning winds cleared the air and they saw a line of walled forts before them. On the towers spears and swords caught the sunlight; the walls bristled with signal flags and banners. Several scouts informed Cao Pi that from Nanxu to the City of Stones—a distance of hundreds of *li* along the river—an unbroken line of barrier walls, boats, and chariots had been put in place overnight. Cao Pi was astounded.

The defensive display had all been Xu Sheng's doing. He had fabricated straw men dressed in black and holding flags, and had stood them on false walls and decoy towers. But the deceived northerners panicked at the sight of so many soldiers on the wall, and Cao Pi said, "Although we have legions of soldiers, what use can we make of them? If the Southland has such forces, it is pointless for us to attack." As Cao Pi watched in amazement, a sudden gale sprang up and whipped the white waves skyward. The surges of the mighty Great River drenched Cao Pi's royal dragon robes and rocked the royal barge. Cao Zhen urgently ordered Wen Ping to punt a small craft onto the river to rescue the sovereign. On the dragon boat the men could not keep their footing. Wen Ping drew close, vaulted over to the imperial boat, and carried Cao Pi down to his own craft. Then they raced for a safe harbor.

Suddenly, a rider arrived with a message: "Zhao Zilong has come out of Yangping Pass to capture Chang'an." Blanching at the news of this new danger, Cao Pi ordered the army to return. His soldiers fled en masse. Southland troops pursued. Cao Pi ordered his men to abandon all articles for imperial use. As the dragon boat was about to enter the River Huai, drums and horns blasted in unison: a band of men headed by Sun Shao angled in for the kill, overwhelming the Wei troops who offered no defense. More than half perished, untold numbers by drowning. The commanders, by strenuous effort, managed to save the ruler of Wei.

Cao Pi made it to the north side of the Huai; but before he had moved thirty *li*, his boat came to a stretch where reeds soaked in fish oil had been set to burn. The fire raged downstream in the wake of the wind, whose force lifted the flames into the sky. The boat was cut off. Terrified, Cao Pi went

down into a smaller craft and rowed for shore. His dragon boat had already gone up in flames.

Cao Pi hurriedly mounted, but on land another company—this commanded by Ding Feng—intercepted him. Cao Pi's veteran general, Zhang Liao, raced to his lord's defense, but an arrow shot by Ding Feng struck him in the torso. Xu Huang rescued Zhang Liao, and the two saw the ruler of Wei to safety. The northern army suffered untold losses. Behind them Sun Shao and Ding Feng made off with horses, carriages, boats, and weapons—who could know how many? The Wei troops went back badly defeated. Xu Sheng, the triumphant southern commander, was richly rewarded by Sun Quan. Zhang Liao returned to Xuchang, where he passed away from the open arrow wound. Cao Pi buried him with honors. Of this no more need be said.²³

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Zhao Zilong had led his men out of Yangping Pass, when an unexpected letter from the prime minister recalled him to the capital. The letter explained that Yong Kai, a veteran commander of Yizhou, was plundering in the four southern districts of the Riverlands in collusion with the king of the Man nation, Meng Huo, at the head of one hundred thousand soldiers. Kongming added that he was ordering Ma Chao to hold Yangping Pass while he personally conducted the war against the Man. Zhao Zilong at once regathered his soldiers and returned to Chengdu where Kongming was preparing the new campaign. Indeed:

First, we found eastern Wu at war with northern Wei;
Next, western Shu was fighting the Southern Man.

How would the campaign turn out?²⁴

READ ON.



The Prime Minister Musters a Massive Force and Conquers the Southern Rebels; The Man King Leads a Heaven-defying Army and Is Captured for the First Time

FROM THE RIVERLANDS CAPITAL OF CHENGDU, Prime Minister Zhuge Liang administered the government, personally handling affairs of state, whether great or small, in a spirit of fairness. The inhabitants of the region welcomed the reign of peace; a climate of honesty and mutual trust prevailed, and fortune favored the land with generous harvests several years in a row. Both old and young tapped their contented bellies rhythmically as they rejoiced in song. Compulsory labor service was eagerly undertaken, with the result that the army was amply supplied and the granaries and treasury overflowed.

In the third year of Jian Xing¹ a bulletin came to Yizhou announcing, "Meng Huo has led one hundred thousand Man tribesmen across our borders to plunder the villages. Governor of Jianning, Yong Kai, a descendant of Yong Chi, lord of Shifang under the Han, has leagued himself with Meng Huo. The governor of Zangge district, Zhu Bao, and the governor of Yuesui, Gao Ding, have already delivered their cities to the rebels. The governor of Yongchang, Wang Kang, remains loyal, but Meng Huo is attacking Yongchang, guided by the three rebel governors; meanwhile, Wang Kang and his deputy, Lü Kai, have rallied the population in a stout defense of Yongchang. Their situation is critical."

Kongming entered the court and addressed the Second Emperor: "I shall go in force to suppress the Southern Man whose recalcitrance threatens the security of the dynasty." The Emperor replied, "What shall I do, prime minister and second father, if, after you have gone, Sun Quan strikes from the east or Cao Pi from the north?" Kongming answered, "We have recently made peace with the Southland, so they're not likely to break faith. But if they do attack, Li Yan in Baidi will be able to hold off Lu Xun. As for Cao Pi, he has no ambition to move after his latest setback. But again, just in case, Ma Chao controls the key points in Hanzhong. You need not worry. In addition, I will leave Guan Xing and Zhang Bao in command of two support contingents to assure Your Majesty that nothing will go wrong. After I have made the region of the Southern Man safe, I will lead an expedition north to recover the heartland—this, to repay the late Emperor for the love and trust he showed by making three visits to my cottage in Longzhong and by placing you in my care."

The Second Emperor said, "I am too young to be wise. Act on your own judgment, prime minister and second father." As he spoke, a man stepped forward to protest. The assembly turned to Court Counselor Wang Lian (Wenyi) of Nanyang. "The south," he said, "a far-off wilderness of rampant pestilence, is no place for the prime minister, given his paramount position, to campaign. Yong Kai is a superficial problem; the prime minister needs but a single general to suppress him." "The territory of the Southern Man," Kongming replied, "lies too far from our kingdom to be affected by the civilizing influence of the imperial court. To win their allegiance I must first subdue them, and

the required combination of harsh and lenient tactics is not to be lightly entrusted to anyone else."²

That day, notwithstanding Wang Lian's repeated appeals, Kongming took leave of the Emperor. He ordered Jiang Wan to serve as his adjutant, Fei Yi as his senior officer, and Dong Jue and Fan Jian as staff officers. Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan were made his chief generals and had overall command; Wang Ping and Zhang Yi were their lieutenants; and there were several dozen Riverlands commanders as well. In all, five hundred thousand Riverlands soldiers were mobilized for the march to Yizhou.

Unexpectedly, Guan Suo, Lord Guan's third son, came to see Kongming in camp. "Since escaping the Jingzhou catastrophe," he said, "I've been recuperating at Bao Hamlet. Many a time, aiming to avenge my father's murder, I wanted to go to the Riverlands and present myself to the late Emperor, but my wounds did not heal and I was unable to make the journey. After my recent recovery, however, I learned that all our Southland enemies had been put to the sword. I therefore came directly west to be received by the Emperor. By luck, I met up with the southern expedition and have taken the opportunity to present myself to Your Excellency." Deeply touched by Guan Suo's story, Kongming informed the court and then gave Guan Suo command of the vanguard. Thus, Guan Suo joined the southern expedition. The vast army proceeded in well-organized sections with ample food and drink at its disposal; it rested nights and moved on at daybreak, never disturbing the people along the way.

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On the news that Kongming was advancing in force, Yong Kai conferred at once with Gao Ding and Zhu Bao. The rebels formed three armies: Gao Ding took the center, Yong Kai the left, and Zhu Bao the right. With fifty or sixty thousand each, they went forward to meet the prime minister's force. Gao Ding had E Huan take the vanguard. E Huan, a man some nine spans tall with a crude, ugly face, wielded a halberd with double side blades and had the courage to fight against any odds. Commanding his own men, he left the main camp and set out to engage the Riverlands soldiers.

Kongming's host reached the Yizhou boundary. On entering the border zone, Vanguard Commander Wei Yan and his lieutenants, Zhang Yi and Wang Ping, encountered E Huan. The two units maneuvered into opposing positions, and Wei Yan rode forth to condemn the rebels. "Surrender quickly," he shouted. E Huan lashed his mount and closed with Wei Yan. After a short encounter, Wei Yan fled, feigning defeat, and E Huan followed in swift pursuit. A brief chase ensued, cries of war rent the air, and two armies, Zhang Yi's and Wang Ping's, closed in, cutting off E Huan's retreat. Wei Yan reversed direction, and the three commanders put up a stout fight and captured E Huan, whom they delivered in bonds to the main camp.

Kongming ordered the captive untied, offered him food and drink, and asked, "Whose subordinate are you?" "Gao Ding's," E Huan replied. "I know him," Kongming said, "a loyal and honorable man—whom Yong Kai has led astray and into rebellion. I shall release you now so you may get Governor Gao Ding to resubmit to our authority and spare himself the gravest consequences." Prostrating himself in gratitude, E Huan returned to Gao Ding and told him of Kongming's mercy. Gao Ding, too, felt enormous gratitude.

The next day Yong Kai came to Gao Ding's camp. After the formalities Yong Kai asked, "How did E Huan manage to get back?" "Zhuge Liang freed him on his honor." "A trick to turn us against

each other," Yong Kai said. Gao Ding, uncertain what to believe, hesitated to act. Suddenly it was announced that a Riverlands commander was issuing a challenge. Yong Kai, leading thirty thousand, went forth, but he turned and fled after engaging briefly. Wei Yan pursued boldly for a distance of twenty *li*, killing many. The next day Yong Kai returned to the field seeking combat. Kongming stayed behind his lines for three days. On the fourth day Yong Kai and Gao Ding, leading two armies, converged on the Riverlands base camp.

Kongming ordered Wei Yan to form two armies and lie in wait for a two-pronged attack. When Yong Kai and Gao Ding finally appeared, Wei Yan's ambush took a heavy toll in casualties and prisoners. The latter were escorted to Kongming's camp. Kongming had Yong Kai's men held on one side, Gao Ding's on the other. Rumors were spread among them to the effect that Gao Ding's men would be spared, Yong Kai's killed.

A while later Kongming summoned Yong Kai's men to his command tent and asked them whose unit they belonged to. "We are Gao Ding's men," they all responded. Kongming ordered them spared. He supplied food and drink, had them escorted back to the border, and freed them to return to their camp. Next, Kongming summoned Gao Ding's men; all declared themselves unquestionably Gao Ding's men. Again Kongming spared them and granted them food and drink. Then he informed them, "Today I received a man from Yong Kai who wanted to establish his merit by presenting the heads of Gao Ding and Zhu Bao. I did not have the heart to accept. Since you men serve Gao Ding, I shall let you go back. Do not rebel again. If I catch you, you will not be forgiven so lightly." The soldiers prostrated themselves and departed gratefully.

When the returning captives told Gao Ding what Kongming had said, Gao Ding sent a spy to Yong Kai's camp to gather information. The spy found Kongming's kindness widely praised and most of Yong Kai's men inclined to adhere to Gao Ding. Nevertheless, Gao Ding, still not convinced he should submit to the prime minister, sent another man to Kongming's camp to gather information. This spy was apprehended and taken to Kongming, who purposely mistook him for one of Yong Kai's men. Calling the spy inside, Kongming said, "Your chief commander promised me the heads of Gao Ding and Zhu Bao. Why have you missed the date? A good spy can't afford to be so careless!" The man answered evasively. Kongming offered him food and wine and then drafted a secret communication. "Take this to Yong Kai," Kongming said, entrusting the letter to the spy. "Tell him to act before it's too late." The spy prostrated himself in gratitude and departed. He delivered Kongming's letter to Gao Ding and imparted to him all Kongming had said concerning Yong Kai.

Angered by the letter, Gao Ding said, "I dealt with him in all sincerity, and now he tries to murder me. It is too much!" He called E Huan, who said, "To ignore a man of humanity like Kongming would be bad luck. All our conspiracies were instigated by Yong Kai. We are better off killing him and joining with Kongming." "How to proceed?" Gao Ding asked. "Hold a banquet," E Huan replied, "and invite Yong Kai. If he is sincere, he will come without hesitation. If he won't come, he means to betray us. My lord, attack him from the front. I will be waiting in hiding behind the camp. Yong Kai can be taken!"

Gao Ding invited Yong Kai to a banquet. But Yong Kai did not come, his fears stirred by the returnees' tales of the favor Kongming had shown those claiming to be Gao Ding's men. That night, his suspicions confirmed, Gao Ding led the raid on Yong Kai's camp. Most of the men Kongming had spared and released, mindful of their debt to Gao Ding, joined the raiders. Yong Kai's forces went to pieces without a fight, and he fled into the hills.

Yong Kai had traveled less than two *li*, when a band of soldiers burst into the open amid loud volleys of drums. It was E Huan, his halberd held high. He charged forward, catching Yong Kai off guard, speared him, and cut off his head. Yong Kai's force surrendered to Gao Ding, and Gao Ding led Yong Kai's army and his own in surrender to Kongming, to whom he delivered Yong Kai's head.

Seated royally in his command tent, Kongming ordered his guards to remove and behead Gao Ding. Gao Ding protested, "Out of gratitude for Your Excellency's mercy I have surrendered bearing Yong Kai's head. Why execute me?" Kongming laughed loudly and said, "A false submission! Do you dare to fool me?" "What makes Your Excellency think that?" Gao Ding replied. Kongming drew a letter from a container and showed it to Gao Ding, saying, "I have a secret letter from Zhu Bao offering submission and stating that you and Yong Kai are friends to the death. How could you up and kill him? That's how I know you're lying." Defending himself against this unjust accusation, Gao Ding said, "That's Zhu Bao's ruse. Do not believe it, Your Excellency." "I am reluctant to rely on a one-sided report—but catching Zhu Bao for me would prove your sincerity." Gao Ding responded, "Have no doubt, Your Excellency. I will bring him to you." "It would quiet my suspicions," Kongming said.

Gao Ding led E Huan and his troops toward Zhu Bao's base. When they had come to within ten *li* of the perimeter, a band of soldiers emerged from behind a hill. The leader, Zhu Bao, tried desperately to talk to Gao Ding, but the latter denounced him: "How could you write to Prime Minister Zhuge to turn him against me?" Zhu Bao stared dumbly back, unable to answer. Suddenly E Huan swung round behind Zhu Bao and cut him down with a thrust of his halberd as Gao Ding shouted, "Whoever resists dies!" Zhu Bao's men prostrated themselves in a body and surrendered. Gao Ding led the two armies before Kongming and delivered Zhu Bao's head to his tent. Kongming laughed aloud. "You have proved your loyalty by killing those two rebels, which is what I wanted," he said, and he made Gao Ding governor of Yizhou with overall authority in three districts; E Huan was made the governor's garrison commander. Thus, the three rebellions were quelled.

After these events Wang Kang, governor of Yongchang, welcomed Kongming into the city, receiving him outside the walls. On entering, Kongming asked, "Who helped you defend against the rebels?" "Yongchang's safety," Wang Kang replied, "was ensured entirely by a man from Buwei, Lü Kai (styled Jiping). He made it all possible." Kongming summoned Lü Kai. After the formalities of introduction Kongming asked him, "You have long been known to me as a wise scholar of Yongchang. Your help was a boon to the city. My desire now is to pacify the region of the Man tribes. Have you any advice for me?" Lü Kai showed Kongming a map and said, "From my first day in office I have known the Southern Man intended to rebel, so I sent a secret agent into their territory to investigate key sites for posting troops and for combat operations. I have made a chart entitled 'A Handy Guide for Pacifying the Man.' Today I venture to tender it, my lord, for whatever it may contribute to Your Lordship's campaign." Delighted, Kongming appointed Lü Kai military instructor and official guide. And so Kongming next led his army in a broad advance deep into the country of the Man.

During the march a messenger from the Son of Heaven suddenly arrived, and Kongming had him shown into the main tent. The man, Ma Su, entered wearing a white robe. (He was in mourning for Ma Liang, his older brother.) Ma Su said, "I bear His Majesty's command to give wine and silk to the soldiers." Kongming provided for the men in strict compliance with the edict he had received. He then detained Ma Su for an informal chat.

"The Son of Heaven has charged me to subdue the lands of the Man. For many years I have heard

men speak of your wisdom, and I crave your counsel now." Ma Su replied, "I will venture one opinion, which I hope Your Excellency will consider. The Southern Man depend on their remoteness and inaccessibility in defying us. Even if you conquer them today, they will rebel tomorrow. Your Excellency's host will no doubt prevail; but after you have marched home and gone to war against Cao Pi, the Man will rebel the moment they learn the Riverlands is vulnerable. Follow the law of warfare: 'The enemy's mind is more important than his city: psychological struggle is superior to armed struggle.' I should think it sufficient for Your Excellency to subdue the minds of the Man." Kongming sighed as he said, "Ma Su, I am an open book to you." He appointed Ma Su military adviser and resumed the march south.

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Learning of Kongming's ingenious defeat of his ally Yong Kai, the king of the Man, Meng Huo, gathered his chieftains from the three hollows. The chieftain of the first, Jin-huansanjie, of the second, Dongtuna, and of the third, Ahuinan, all came before Meng Huo, who said to them, "Prime Minister Zhuge has come into our territory with a mighty host. We must join forces to resist him. Divide yourselves into three armies and advance. The victor will rule the hollows." Meng Huo assigned the center route to Jin-huansanjie, the left to Dongtuna, and the right to Ahuinan. Each had fifty thousand Man soldiers and proceeded as ordered.

Kongming was deliberating in camp when a scout excitedly informed him that three Man armies under their chieftains were approaching from three directions. Kongming summoned Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan but gave them no orders. Next, he called Wang Ping and Ma Zhong and charged them: "I would prefer sending Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan against the Man, but neither knows the terrain well enough. I want Wang Ping to stand against their left army, and Ma Zhong against their right. Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan will reinforce you. Prepare for battle now and set out at dawn." The two men left to perform their mission.

Next, Kongming gave orders to Zhang Ni and Zhang Yi: "I want both of you to command a single army in the center. Organize the force today and start out tomorrow after you have worked out the timing with Wang Ping and Ma Zhong. I have decided not to use Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan because the terrain is unfamiliar to them." Zhang Ni and Zhang Yi went to carry out their orders.

Kongming, noting Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan's annoyance at being passed over, said to them, "I did mean to use you; but I thought you might, facing new hazards and past your prime, fall afoul of the Man and lose your mettle." "And if we knew the geography?" Zhao Zilong asked. "I'd rather you didn't take the risk," Kongming replied. The two men retired sullenly; Zhao Zilong invited Wei Yan to his camp. "We are the vanguard," he said to Wei Yan, "but His Excellency says we don't know the terrain and humiliates us by using our juniors." Wei Yan answered, "We can ride out ourselves and investigate. If we find some locals to show us how to proceed against the Man, we can accomplish our goal." Zhao Zilong agreed, and the two vanguard leaders took the central route.

After several *li*, Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan spied dust rising in the distance. Climbing to a height to survey the field, they saw dozens of Man horsemen racing toward them. From two angles the vanguard leaders fell upon the Man, put them to fearful flight, and returned to camp with several enemy warriors each. The commanders gave their captives food and drink and questioned them closely. The Man soldiers announced, "Ahead you'll find Chieftain Jinhuan-sanjie's main camp—just

by the entrance to the hills. Two roads east and west of the camp run behind the Wuqi Hollows and the camps of Dongtuna and Ahuinan."

Provided with this information, Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan detailed five thousand crack troops for their captives to lead. By the second watch the force had set out under a clear, bright moon. By the fourth watch they had reached the main camp of Jinhuan-sanjie. The Man troops had begun to make the morning meal, intent on striking at dawn. Suddenly, Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan burst upon their ranks, scattering the Man. Zhao Zilong fought his way to the central command and came face-to-face with Chieftain Jinhuan-sanjie. The riders had scarcely engaged when Zhao Zilong speared the Man chieftain and beheaded him. The remaining Man troops bolted. Wei Yan detached half the force and headed for the camps of Dongtuna by the east road. Zhao Zilong led the other half to raid the camp of Ahuinan. By the time the Riverlands warriors reached the main Man camp, day had dawned.

Wei Yan attacked the rear of Dongtuna's camp. The chief met him and defended stoutly. Suddenly, to the front of the camp a shout went up, throwing the Man troops into confusion. It so happened that Wang Ping had arrived to reinforce Wei Yan, and their two-sided attack routed the Man. Dongtuna fled for his life; Wei Yan could not overtake him.

Meanwhile, as Zhao Zilong was attacking the rear of Ahuinan's base, Ma Zhong had already struck from the front. Caught in a squeeze, the Man troops suffered a heavy defeat. Ahuinan fled in the struggle. Wei Yan and Zhao Zilong recalled their forces and returned to Kongming, who said, "Of the three Man armies, the chiefs of two have escaped. But where is the head of Jinhuan-sanjie?" At that, Zhao Zilong held forth the head he had taken as a token of his merit, while his soldiers cried, "Dongtuna and Ahuinan abandoned their mounts and fled across the mountain range. That is why we could not catch them."

Kongming laughed and said, "I had those two long ago!" None of the commanders, including Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan, would believe this until Zhang Ni marched Dongtuna in and Zhang Yi entered with Ahuinan in custody. To the astonished assembly Kongming explained, "After locating the Man campsites on Lü Kai's charts, I provoked Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan, whetted their courage for a deep strike into enemy territory—first to defeat Jinhuan-sanjie, then to follow up with raids to his left and right. Wang Ping and Ma Zhong backed them up. No one but Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan could have succeeded. I anticipated that Dongtuna and Ahuinan would flee toward the mountains, and so I sent Zhang Ni and Zhang Yi to lie in ambush, with Guan Suo for support—and they took them." Hearing the explanation of his strategy, the commanders bowed to the ground and said, "Not even the gods could fathom Your Excellency's calculations!"

Kongming ordered Dongtuna and Ahuinan brought to his tent. He removed their bonds, provided them with food, drink, and clothes, and ordered them to return to their hollows, with his admonition never to abet a conspiracy again. The two men prostrated themselves and wept in gratitude; then they left, taking back trails. Kongming said to his commanders, "Tomorrow Meng Huo will personally lead an attack—giving us an opportunity to capture him." He called for Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan and instructed them to take five thousand troops each. He also called for Wang Ping and Guan Suo to carry out a second plan. After his assignments had been made, Kongming sat in his tent awaiting the outcome.

The Man King, Meng Huo, sat in his tent as his scouts reported the capture of the three chieftains and the disintegration of their forces. Enraged, Meng Huo mustered his men, and they set out, company after company, for the site of the debacle. He soon encountered Wang Ping, and the two armies moved into fighting position. Wang Ping rode out from his line, sword leveled, only to find several hundred Man cavalry spread out before him. From the center came Meng Huo, crowned with a dark gold cap inlaid with gems. He wore a tasseled red damask surcoat, a lion-figured carved jade belt, and falcon-beak green-daubed boots. He rode a curly-maned red-hare horse and carried two swords inlaid with pine-grained jade. Looking proudly ahead, he turned to the commanders beside him and said, "How many times have I heard about the skillful tactician Zhuge Liang! Look at his formation—the disorder of his flags, the confusion among his ranks and files, his weapons no better than our own! Now I see the falsity of all I have been told. Had I only known this before, I would have rebelled ages ago! Who will take the Riverlands commander and show the foe our martial might?"

As he spoke, a commander stepped forth to answer the call: Mangyachang. Wielding a broadsword with a squared tip and riding a yellow charger, he took on Wang Ping. The two commanders crossed blade points. After the first clashes Wang Ping fled. Meng Huo motioned his soldiers to advance en masse, following the escaping Riverlands commander. Guan Suo, too, fought briefly and then retreated some twenty *li*. Meng Huo pursued hotly. Suddenly, amid the uproar of shouts, Zhang Ni and Zhang Yi surprised Meng Huo from two sides and cut off the road behind; Wang Ping and Guan Suo reversed course and joined the fighting. The Man troops, caught front and rear, were badly beaten; and Meng Huo, fighting for his life, fled toward the Brocade Belt Hills, barely ahead of the three Riverlands armies, only to be blocked in front by a shouting band of troops under Zhao Zilong. Astonished at finding the great warrior before him, Meng Huo hurriedly shifted to a side path and continued on toward the hills. Zhao Zilong set upon the Man soldiers, inflicting a serious defeat and taking many prisoners. Meng Huo entered the hills, a few score of riders still with him; his pursuers drew closer. The way narrowed, forcing him to abandon his horse, and he clambered over the hilltop. At that moment a volley of drums filled the ravine, announcing Wei Yan, who, following Kongming's plan, had placed five hundred foot soldiers there in ambush. Unable to resist further, Meng Huo was taken alive, and his companions surrendered.

Wei Yan delivered the prisoner to Kongming's camp, where the prime minister had already prepared a feast of slaughtered oxen and horses. The tent was lined by seven rings of yeomen; their swords and spears, sabers and halberds shone white. Beside Kongming, attendants held the imperially conferred golden broadaxe and the curve-handled canopy; extending left and right of him in strict order were feather screens, drums and flutes, and the Royal Guard.

Kongming sat poised, watching the Man soldiers being herded in. He called for the captives' bonds to be removed and then said gently, "I know you are not hardened soldiers but well-intentioned folk who, unfortunately coerced by Meng Huo, now find yourselves in this present distress. I can imagine your parents, your brothers, your wives and children anxiously awaiting your return, suffering wrenching anguish and weeping in heartbreak as they learn of your defeat. But it is my purpose to set you free, so that you may return to your loved ones and rejoice with them." So saying, Kongming provided them with food and drink and sent them home with provisions. The Man troops, overwhelmed with gratitude, prostrated themselves and wept.

Next, Kongming called for Meng Huo; within moments guards had marched him in. Bound, Meng

Huo knelt before Kongming. "The late Emperor was more than generous to you," Kongming said. "Why have you broken faith and rebelled?" Meng Huo answered, "The whole of the Riverlands once belonged to another. Your lord seized it by force and proclaimed himself emperor. My ancestors held these lands, which you have encroached upon so barbarically. What 'rebellion' are you talking about?"

Kongming said, "You are now my prisoner. Will you submit sincerely and willingly?" "No," Meng Huo replied. "I fell afoul of your tricks on a narrow mountain trail. Why should I submit?" "All the same," Kongming said, "I shall release you. What do you think of that?" "If you set me free," Meng Huo responded, "I shall reorder my forces for another trial at arms; but if you capture me again, I shall submit." At this point Kongming had Meng Huo's bonds removed and provided him with clothes, food, and drink. Meng Huo was given a saddle horse and escorted from the camp. Indeed:

Kongming released the predator in hand;
The man beyond the pale was not ready to surrender.

How would their next encounter turn out?

READ ON.



***Riverlands Forces Cross the Lu and Capture Once Again the Foreign King;
Zhuge Liang Sees Through a False Submission and Makes the Third Capture***

AFTER KONGMING HAD RELEASED MENG HUO, his commanders came to his tent and inquired of him, "We had the good fortune to catch the leading chieftain of the Southern Man; this could have brought the south under control. Why did Your Excellency set him free?" Kongming smiled as he replied, "I can catch him again with ease whenever I choose to. But pacification of the south requires that we subdue the hearts of the Man people." This explanation did not satisfy Kongming's commanders.

Reaching the River Lu that same day, Meng Huo met up with survivors of his shattered force still searching for him. Catching sight of their leader, the soldiers, astonished yet rejoicing, prostrated themselves. "How did Your Highness manage to get back?" they asked. "The Riverlanders," he replied, "confined me in a tent. But I killed some ten or more and got away in the dead of night. When their sentinel accosted me, I killed him too and seized his horse. That's how I escaped." The delighted soldiers followed Meng Huo across the river. They pitched camp and began gathering the chiefs of the various tribal areas, who, one after another, summoned back the men Kongming had released—over one hundred thousand riders in all.

At this time Dongtuna and Ahuinan had already joined their own tribes. Meng Huo sent for the two chiefs, who, fearful of Huo's might, came with their men. Meng Huo issued an order: "I have seen through Zhuge Liang's tricks! We must not do battle with him and fall for another. The Riverlands troops, exhausted by long marches and plagued by fierce heat, will not abide here long. Protected by the River Lu, we can keep all boats and rafts on the south shore, raise a wall of earth there and other strong outworks. Let Zhuge Liang do what he likes!" The chiefs agreed, tied up all craft on the southern shore, and put up a wall. Preparing for a long stand, they built watchtowers on hills and high points, and placed crossbowmen and bombards inside; grain and fodder were brought in from the various tribes. Convinced that his plan was invincible, Meng Huo felt fully confident.

Meanwhile, Kongming had advanced in force to the Lu. His scouts reported back: "There's not a boat to be seen. The river is swift and rough, and they have built a wall on the far shore; troops are guarding it." It was the fifth month, the weather fiery hot. The punishing southern heat made it impossible to wear armor. After observing the enemy position from the riverbank, Kongming returned to camp, gathered his commanders, and told them: "Meng Huo occupies the south shore and is well dug in against us. But since we've come this far, how can we go home empty-handed? I want each of you to move to the hillsides and woods. Pick lush spots to rest your troops."

Next, Kongming sent Lü Kai to pitch four camps in a shady stretch one hundred *li* from the river; he then dispatched Wang Ping, Zhang Ni, Zhang Yi, and Guan Suo to defend them. In and around the camps thatched sheds were made for the horses and also for the commanders and their men. Inside the sheds the men found relief from the heat.

The military adviser Jiang Wan, after observing the sites, said to Kongming, "I don't think much of Lü Kai's position. He has his camps laid out exactly like the late Emperor did—exactly what enabled the Southland to defeat him. If the Man steal across the river and burn them, no one can save him." Kongming smiled and said, "You need not worry. I have an excellent plan." But neither Jiang Wan nor the others knew what Kongming was up to.¹

At this moment Ma Dai arrived from the Riverlands with food grain and medication for heatstroke. Ma Dai was received and then presented himself to Kongming; the supply of food and medicine was shared among the four camps. Kongming asked him, "How many troops have you brought?" "Three thousand," Ma Dai replied. "Our men are worn out from battle," Kongming said. "I would like you to send your troops to the front if you are willing." "The Emperor's troops," Ma Dai said, "are neither yours nor mine. If Your Excellency needs them, I shall shirk no hardship, nor even death." Kongming said, "Meng Huo holds the river; there is no way we can cross. I want to cut off the grain supply and rout him." "How?" Ma Dai asked. "One hundred and fifty *li* away, in the lower reaches of the river, by Sandymouth where the current ebbs, it is possible to tie rafts together and get across. Take your own three thousand, get directly into the Man redoubts, and interdict their supply line. Then meet with Dongtuna and Ahuinan and make them our collaborators. Don't let anything go wrong."

Ma Dai set off eagerly. Reaching Sandymouth, he directed his men to cross the Lu. The water was shallow, and few took rafts; most went over naked. But in midstream they suddenly began falling over. Those who managed to get back to shore died all the same, blood flowing from their mouths and noses. Ma Dai was terrified and sent a report back to Kongming.

Kongming questioned native guides, who explained, "Now on the hottest days poisons concentrate in the river water: during the day malignant vapors attack anyone trying to cross; to drink the water is fatal. But you can cross unharmed in the dead of night when the water is cooler and the vapors clear. The men must eat well first." Kongming had the guides lead the way for Ma Dai and five or six hundred picked troops. At Sandymouth they put together a number of rafts, and at midnight the whole force crossed safely over as predicted. Next, Ma Dai had the natives lead two thousand of his men to Jiashan Defile on the main grain route for the Man tribal areas, where man and horse had to pass through singly on a path squeezed between two hills. Ma Dai occupied the defile, deploying his men and setting up barricades. Unaware of Ma Dai's movements, the Man tried to deliver the grain; but Ma Dai cut them off front and rear and seized more than a hundred cartloads. A report of the loss was dispatched to Meng Huo.

Meng Huo spent his day in camp drinking and enjoying himself, paying little attention to military matters. To his chiefs he said, "If I go against Zhuge Liang, I will fall into a trap. Secure now behind the river, I will wait for the heat to force them to withdraw. An attack from the rear then will be sure to capture Zhuge Liang!" With that he laughed huskily. Suddenly one of the chiefs said, "If the Riverlanders slip across at the Sandymouth shallows, we will be in serious trouble. We should send a guard over there." But Meng Huo smiled as he answered, "A native like you should know that I want them to cross so they will die in the water." "And if someone tells them to cross at night?" the chief asked. "It is unlikely that any local person would help the enemy. Do not worry," Meng Huo answered. But at that moment Meng Huo was told that an unknown number of Riverlanders had secretly crossed the Lu and closed Jiashan Defile under a banner reading "Ma Dai, General Who Pacifies the North." Meng Huo smiled again. "I hardly think this young fellow a problem," he said,

and he sent a lieutenant, Mangyachang, to the defile with three thousand men.

Sighting the Man troops, Ma Dai deployed his two thousand in front of the mountain. The two forces moved into opposing positions. Mangyachang rode forth and closed with Ma Dai. In a single exchange Ma Dai cut him down. The Man troops ran from the field in defeat. They reported to Meng Huo, who summoned his commanders and asked, "Who will fight Ma Dai?" Dongtuna stepped forward to volunteer. Meng Huo, delighted, gave him command of three thousand. He also sent Ahuinan to Sandymouth to prevent further enemy crossings.

After Dongtuna had camped near Jiashan Defile, Ma Dai came to engage him. Someone in his command had recognized Dongtuna and told Ma Dai something about the foe. Ma Dai subsequently raced forward and denounced Dongtuna: "Faithless ingrate! Villain! His Excellency spared your life, yet now you turn on us again! Where is your honor?" Dongtuna's face flushed with shame and he made no answer, but withdrew without fighting. Ma Dai delivered a single swift attack and then returned.

Dongtuna went back to Meng Huo and said, "I can't resist a hero like Ma Dai!" In a fury Meng Huo said, "I know Zhuge Liang once spared you. Now you refuse to fight. It is a sellout!" He ordered Dongtuna removed and executed. But when the chiefs all pleaded for his life, Meng Huo relented. He reduced the punishment to one hundred strokes and sent Dongtuna back to his camp.

The chiefs went to Dongtuna and said, "We live in the Man region, but we have never wanted to go against the middle kingdoms.² Nor have the middle kingdoms ever infringed on our territory. We rebelled only because Meng Huo forced us to do so. We don't think we can fathom Kongming's inspired tactics—why, Cao Cao himself feared him, and Sun Quan fears him still! What can we Man expect to do? Not to mention that we owe Kongming our lives! Whatever the risk, we want to kill Meng Huo and join Kongming. That will spare the people of our region untold misery." To this appeal Dongtuna replied, "What are your real thoughts?" Among the men were some whom Kongming had originally released, and in unison they cried, "Let's go to kill Meng Huo!"

At that, Dongtuna raised his steel sword and, at the head of a hundred men, rushed toward the main camp. Meng Huo lay drunk in his tent. Dongtuna approached, sword drawn. He found two commanders standing guard. Dongtuna pointed to them and said, "You two should show Prime Minister Zhuge gratitude for having spared your lives." "You need not take action, General," they replied. "We shall deliver Meng Huo to His Excellency." Then they burst into the tent. They tied Meng Huo up, brought him to the river, and ferried him to the northern shore, sending someone ahead to inform Kongming.

Apprised of Meng Huo's capture, Kongming issued secret orders to each camp to prepare their weapons for display before Dongtuna arrived with Meng Huo; Kongming then sent everyone back to his station. Dongtuna presented himself to Kongming and recounted the details of Meng Huo's capture. Kongming rewarded him well for his efforts, gave him kind and encouraging words, and sent him away at the head of the chiefs.

Next, he had armed guards march Meng Huo in. With a smile Kongming said, "Remember your promise: 'If you catch me again, I will agree to submit.' What do you say now?" "You did not catch me by your own ability. My underlings turned on me. Why should I submit?" "And if I let you go again?" Kongming replied. "Even a Man knows something about the art of war. If Your Excellency actually sends me home, I will be back with my army to decide the day. And if you catch me again, I will offer my allegiance with heartfelt unwavering sincerity." "Next time you're captured alive and refuse to submit," Kongming warned, "it will go hard with you." He had Meng Huo's bonds removed,

provided food and drink as before, and invited the captive to sit with him in his tent. After they were seated, Kongming said, "Since leaving my little thatched hut, I have won every battle I have engaged in; every attack has yielded victory. You of the Man nation—why not submit?" Meng Huo remained silent.

Afterward Kongming invited Meng Huo to ride out with him. Together they surveyed the storehouses stockpiled with grain and weapons. Kongming said, "How foolish of you to resist these picked troops and fierce commanders so well provided for. Submit now and I will bring it to the attention of the Son of Heaven, who will reserve kingship over the Man nation for yourself and the generations after you in perpetuity. What do you think?" "Even if I did submit," the chief replied, "what of the other tribes whose hearts you have yet to win? Set me free, Your Excellency, and I will urge my men to offer unanimous allegiance." Kongming responded with enthusiasm. He returned to his camp with Meng Huo, and they drank late into the night. Then the chief took his leave. Kongming escorted him to the shore of the River Lu, and a boat provided by Kongming took Meng Huo across.³

On reaching his camp, Meng Huo posted armed guards in ambush and sent a trusted subordinate to the camps of Dongtuna and Ahuinan. The envoy, by pretending that Kongming had sent a messenger along, deceived the two chiefs into coming to the main camp. There Meng Huo had them executed and their bodies thrown into a stream. Next, Meng Huo dispatched reliable warriors to defend his strongpoints while he led his own men out of Jiashan Defile to do battle with Ma Dai; but he found no one at the defile. Local people told him that Ma Dai had gone back to the main camp after moving all provisions across the river the previous night. Meng Huo returned to his quarters and told his younger brother, Meng You, "By now I have a clear idea of Zhuge Liang's strong and weak points, so here is what you do..."

Meng You put his brother's plan into action: leading one hundred Man troops bearing gold and pearls, precious cowry shells, elephant tusks and gaur horn, he crossed the Lu. Meng You meant to go directly to Kongming's main camp; but the moment he landed on the northern shore, he was met by the sound of drums and horns as a band of soldiers—under Ma Dai—fanned out before him.

Meng You panicked. Ma Dai, after questioning him, had him wait in an outer area while he sent word to Kongming, who was in his tent deliberating the pacification of the Man with Ma Su, Lü Kai, Jiang Wan, Fei Yi, and others. Suddenly Meng You was announced. Kongming asked Ma Su, "Do you know his purpose?" "Rather than speak openly," Ma Su answered, "let me write it down and see if it accords with your own esteemed judgment." Kongming agreed. Ma Su handed his note to Kongming, who rubbed his palms together and laughed out loud. "Your plan has already been put in motion! Our views are one!" he said and called for Zhao Zilong, to whom he whispered certain instructions. He also called for Wei Yan and to him confided another charge. Wang Ping, Ma Zhong, and Guan Suo also received secret orders.

When each commander had left to perform his duty, Kongming called Meng You into his tent. Meng You prostrated himself and said, "My elder brother, Meng Huo, grateful to you for sparing his life and having until now presented no tribute to you, has ventured to prepare a number of treasures that may provisionally serve to reward your army. In the future there will be further presentations of ritual tribute to the Son of Heaven." "Where is your elder brother now?" Kongming asked him. "Thankful for Your Excellency's boundless kindness," Meng You replied, "my brother has gone to collect more valuables in the Silver Pit Hills. He should be back shortly." "How many came with you?" Kongming asked. "Not many. A retinue of no more than a hundred or so to transport our

gifts," Meng You answered. Kongming had them all enter his tent. They were tall, strong men, disheveled and barefoot, with blue-green eyes and swarthy complexions, yellowish hair and purplish beards. Gold rings hung in each man's ear. Kongming had the bearers seat themselves and told his commanders to serve them wine and treat them all with full courtesy.

Meng Huo was waiting in his tent for news of the mission when two of Meng You's men came back and informed the chief, "Zhuge Liang, most pleased with the gifts, has slaughtered oxen and horses and feasted the whole retinue in his tent. The lesser king asked us to inform you that the action is set for the second watch tonight. Our men are inside their camp now, ready to support an attack from outside to achieve our goal."

Delighted by the news, Meng Huo called up thirty thousand Man soldiers, whom he divided into three armies. He charged the tribal chiefs: "Each soldier is to carry inflammable materials. When we reach the Riverlands camp tonight, fire will be the signal. I myself will take on their central army and capture Zhuge Liang!" The Man commanders were then given their orders. Toward the day's end they crossed the River Lu. Meng Huo, proceeding unopposed with a hundred mounted followers, reached the entrance to Kongming's main camp. But on bursting in, he and his commanders found the site deserted. In the main tent, lamps and candles surrounded the sprawled, drunken forms of Meng You and his Man troops.

This is what led up to the scene that Meng Huo found. Kongming had told Ma Su and Lü Kai to entertain Meng You. Accordingly, Ma Su and Lü Kai had plied Meng You and his men with wine while performances were put on for them. The wine being drugged, Meng You and his men were soon unconscious. And so when Meng Huo entered the tent to demand an explanation, those still awake simply pointed to their mouths. Meng Huo knew he had been fooled and tried to get Meng You and his men back to his camp, but ahead of them harsh war cries sounded and torchlights appeared.

The Man soldiers were scuttling off as Wang Ping led a band of men in for the kill. Meng Huo dashed frantically to his left force, but Wei Yan, leading Riverlands troops, accosted him as torches lit the sky. Meng Huo then raced desperately toward his right force, but again he met torchlights and hostile forces, this time under Zhao Zilong. Faced by three armies, with no avenue of escape, Meng Huo abandoned his men and fled alone on horseback to the River Lu. There he found a few score of Man soldiers steering a small ship. Meng Huo motioned them closer to land. But the moment man and mount boarded, a horn sounded and Meng Huo was seized and bound. This was Ma Dai's part in the plan. He had disguised his troops as Man soldiers and poled his craft into position to lure Meng Huo into being captured.

Kongming offered amnesty, and countless Man soldiers surrendered. Kongming cheered and encouraged one and all and, imposing no punishment, simply had them extinguish whatever fires they had started. Soon Ma Dai brought in Meng Huo, and Zhao Zilong brought in Meng You. Wei Yan, Ma Zhong, Wang Ping, and Guan Suo followed with the tribal chiefs in custody. Kongming smiled as he said to Meng Huo, "Did you expect to fool me by sending your brother with gifts, pretending to surrender? Now that I have caught you once again, are you willing to submit?" "You won because my brother overindulged a bit and fell victim to your poisoned wine. That's what ruined us. Had I come myself and left my brother to back me up, we would have succeeded. Heaven, not my failure, has defeated me—so why should I submit?"

"Why not?" Kongming asked. "It's the third time!" Meng Huo lowered his head and kept quiet. "I'll have to let you go again, then," Kongming said with a smile. "Your Excellency," Meng Huo

responded, "release me and my brother and let us regather our own clansmen for a grand battle with you. If you succeed in capturing me again, I will submit to you and banish forever all thought of resistance." "It will not go easy with you the next time," Kongming warned. "Exercise extreme caution, study diligently the texts on the art of war, put your most reliable troops in fighting condition, and use sound tactics without delay to avoid further failures." With that, Kongming freed Meng Huo, Meng You, and the other chiefs. They bade a grateful good-bye and left.

By this time, Riverlands troops had already reached the Lu's southern bank. After Meng Huo had crossed over, he found Kongming's troops and commanders arrayed along the shore, their banners flying thickly overhead. When Meng Huo reached his base area camp, he found Ma Dai sitting in state. Pointing at the chief with his sword, Ma Dai declared, "This time you will not get off!" Coming to his own camp, Meng Huo found Zhao Zilong's troops in position and Zilong himself in control, sitting under a large banner, resting his hand on his sword. "Do not forget the great mercy His Excellency has shown you!" Zhao Zilong declared. Meng Huo murmured in agreement and left. He was about to enter the hills when Wei Yan, at the head of a line of a thousand picked troops deployed on a slope, reined in and shouted, "I have already penetrated your nests and dens. Your strategic places are in our hands but, stubborn and stupid, you resist the imperial legions. When we catch you again, your corpse will be sundered a thousand ways! There will be no mercy!" Meng Huo and his leaders scurried off and headed home. A poet of later times left these lines in tribute to Kongming:

A fifth-month march into the southern heath,
On a moon-bright night as river vapors rose—
His bold design requites Liu Bei's three calls.
Unto seven times he dares to free his foes!⁴

Meanwhile, Kongming had crossed the River Lu, pitched camp, and rewarded the armies. Gathering the commanders in his tent, he said, "The second time we caught Meng Huo, I let him see our entire base area in the hopes that he would attack. Since Meng Huo has some military knowledge, I gave him a good view of our weapons and provisions. My real purpose was to get him to notice our weak points, against which he was sure to use fire. His brother surrendered only so he could collaborate from within. After three captures I finally spared Meng Huo because what I really wanted was to subdue him mentally and not to have to exterminate his tribes. Today I can explain all this to you. Do not shirk future hardships. Apply yourselves in serving your kingdom."

The commanders bowed low and said, "Your Excellency is a man of humanity no less than wisdom, of courage no less than humanity. You excel even the famed advisers of antiquity, Jiang Ziya and Zhang Liang." "I am unworthy of the ancients," Kongming replied. "It is your collective strength that sustains me in our effort to accomplish our mission." The commanders were gratified by Kongming's words.

Meng Huo, frustrated by the three captures he had suffered, returned to the Silver Pit Hollow in an ugly mood. He sent trusted men bearing gifts of gold, pearls, and treasure to the ninety-three districts of the eight outer nations of the southwest as well as to the smaller tribes in the Man region. In response they sent several hundred thousand hardy warriors armed with shields and swords. On the appointed day the various details massed together like clouds to receive their instructions from Meng Huo. Sentinels on the roads reported the enemy's preparations to Kongming, who said, smiling, "I was

hoping to draw the Man forces here to show them what we can do!" Kongming then mounted a small carriage and set out. Indeed:

But for the fierce and awesome southwest tribal chiefs,
Could the director general have shown the world his skills?

Which side would prevail?

READ ON.



***The Lord of Wuxiang Puts His Fourth Plan to Work;
The King of the Man Meets His Fifth Arrest***

GUARDED BY A FEW HUNDRED RIDERS, Kongming guided his carriage along the road. Before them a river called the West Er ran sluggishly. Not a boat was on it. They made a raft, but it sank on launching. Kongming turned to Lü Kai, who said, "I'm told there's a hill upstream thick with bamboo, some of great thickness. Fell enough to make a bridge so our forces can cross."

Kongming sent thirty thousand men into the hills, where they cut down hundreds of thousands of bamboos and floated them downriver to a narrow point where Kongming's men built a bridge one hundred spans long. Next, he had a row of camps pitched on the northern shore. Now with the river as their moat and the bridge their gateway and a wall formed of heaped earth, they crossed to the southern shore and set up three large bases, there to await the Man army.

Leading hundreds of thousands of warriors, Meng Huo came on in a towering fury. Approaching the West Er, he led a vanguard force of ten thousand blade-and-shield barbarians up to the Riverlands camp to issue a challenge to battle. Kongming was sitting in his four-mount carriage; he had a band wound round his head, crane plumes for a cloak, and a feather fan in his hand. His commanders clustered about him.

Kongming kept his eye on Meng Huo, who was armored in rhino hide and wore a red headpiece. In his left hand a shield and in his right a sword, he rode a red ox. Curses spewed from his mouth. The ten thousand brave men in his command came charging, whirling their weapons.

Kongming ordered an immediate retreat. He sealed the camp tight and forbade combat. The Man troops, stark naked, came up to the camp and let loose their cries and curses. The Riverlands commanders appealed heatedly to Kongming: "We volunteer to go out and fight them to the death." But Kongming would not allow it. On their insistent protests he explained, "The Man disdain the sovereign's grace; in this mad rage they should be left alone. Better to hold back a few days longer and let them cool off. I have an excellent way to defeat them then."

For several more days the Riverlands troops continued defending their positions while from the vantage of a hilltop Kongming studied the enemy. At the first sign of slackness among the Man, he gathered his commanders and asked, "Are you ready?" The commanders were eager. Kongming first summoned Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan and whispered instructions to them; the two went boldly forth. Next, Wang Ping and Ma Zhong took their orders and left. Then Kongming said to Ma Dai, "I am going to abandon these three camps and withdraw to the north shore. As soon as I do, you are to take down the floating bridge and move it downstream so Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan can get across and stand ready to assist us." Ma Dai left, and Kongming called Zhang Yi. "When I withdraw," he told him, "light lamps all over the camp. Meng Huo will pursue once he finds out we've gone—and you will cut off his retreat." Zhang Yi retired with his instructions. Kongming had Guan Suo protect his

carriage. As the army withdrew, the lights were lit.

The Man soldiers surveyed the western troops but dared not strike. The following dawn Meng Huo found the Riverlands' three camps deserted. Inside, several hundred grain and fodder wagons lay abandoned. Meng You said to him, "Zhuge has fled. This must be a trap—no?" Meng Huo replied, "I suppose Zhuge Liang left his supply train behind because of a crisis in Shu. The Southland may have invaded, or perhaps Wei has attacked. He lit these decoy lights to fool us and ran. He must not escape!"

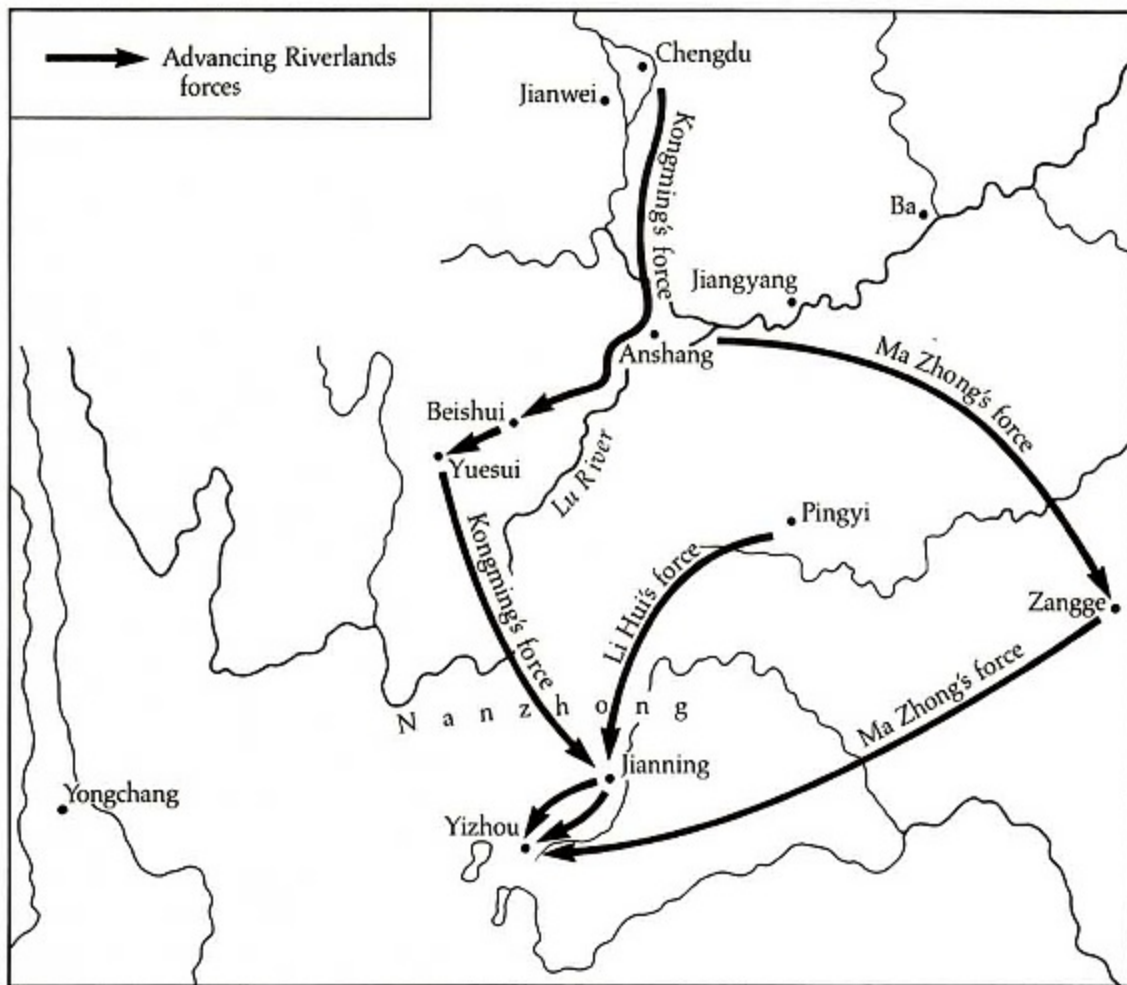
Meng Huo himself marched the forward army to the bank of the West Er. On the far shore they saw flags and banners still in strict array, glorious as a brocade, a gorgeous, moving, multicolor wall extending along the river. The Man scouts would not advance. Meng Huo said to Meng You, "Zhuge Liang may linger on the northern shore, fearing pursuit. But in a day or so he'll be gone." Meng Huo stationed his army on the riverbank and sent troops into the hills to cut bamboo for rafts. Next, he moved his most daring soldiers to the front of his camp. Meng Huo had no inkling that Riverlands forces had already entered his own territory.

That day strong winds blew. On four sides fires blazed and drums rolled. The Riverlands troops closed in, routing the Man braves, who overran each other in the confusion. Meng Huo panicked. Leading the warriors of his own hollow, he fought his way back to his original base camp—only to be met by Zhao Zilong and a band of troops coming out of it! In despair Meng Huo returned to the West Er and headed for a secluded point in the hills. But another band of troops stood before him, Ma Dai at their head. To Meng Huo there now remained only a few dozen battered soldiers. Seeing dust and fire to the south, north, and west, he fled eastward toward the ravines.

No sooner had Meng Huo turned into a valley than he saw a sizable wood ahead and several score of soldiers guiding a small carriage bearing Kongming, seated. Laughing aloud, Kongming said, "King of the Man! Heaven has sent you to your defeat! But how long you have kept me waiting!" Meng Huo turned furiously to those around him and cried, "Such vicious tricks have humiliated me thrice. Now I have the good fortune to meet up with him here. Charge! And hack man and carriage into a thousand pieces!" Several Man horsemen bolted forward. Meng Huo took the lead, shouting mightily to hearten them. But as they reached the ground before the woods, they found themselves flying head over heels into a pit. Wei Yan then emerged at the head of several hundred men, fished them out one at a time, and tied them up. By the time he was done, Kongming was already back in camp.

Kongming offered amnesty to the Man soldiers as well as to the tribal chieftains and braves (though the majority had gone back to their home areas), and all who survived tendered their submission. Kongming provided meat and drink, cheered them with friendly words, and sent them home. The Man soldiers roared in appreciation and departed.

Shortly after, Zhang Yi brought in Meng You. Kongming admonished him: "You must show your misguided elder brother the right thing to do. After his fourth capture what self-respect can he have?" Meng You, flushing with shame, flung himself to the ground and pleaded for mercy. "This is not the day for me to kill you," Kongming continued. "I shall spare your life. But I insist that you reason with your brother." He had Meng You untied and released. Tearfully prostrating himself, Meng You departed.



MAP 9. Kongming's southern campaign. The black arrows indicate the advancing Riverlands forces. Source: Liu Chunfan, *Sanguo shihua* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), p. 173.

When Wei Yan presently led in Meng Huo, Kongming was furious. "Once again I have caught you," he cried. "Have you anything to say for yourself?" "Your tricky scheme took me in," Meng Huo replied. "I will haunt you from my grave!" Kongming commanded his guards to remove Meng Huo and behead him. Meng Huo's expression held no hint of fear. Boldly he flung back the words: "Dare to free me again and I will avenge all four disgraces at once." Kongming laughed and had his attendants untie him. He offered wine to calm the prisoner and gave him a seat in the tent. Kongming said, "This is the fourth time I have shown you civility. What makes you hold out?" Meng Huo answered, "I may be a man beyond the pale, but I would never resort to the knavish tricks that you use. Why should I consent?" "Will you war with us again if I free you now?" Kongming asked. "Your Excellency," he responded, "the next time you take me, I shall surrender in full sincerity and render as military tribute all the treasures of my hollows to confirm my vow to foreswear all sedition."

Kongming smiled and sent Meng Huo, gladly bowing and giving thanks, on his way. The Man leader then gathered the warriors of the hollows, several thousand of them, and led the throng south in a long procession. Soon after, a contingent of soldiers rode up out of the dust, at their head Meng You, who had reorganized his battle-worn men to avenge Meng Huo. The reunited brothers muffled their heads and cried as they described their experiences. Meng You said, "We have suffered one defeat after another, and they have had many victories. How can we resist? What else can we do but take to the hills and avoid combat until the heat proves too much for them and they withdraw on their own?" "Where can we hide?" Meng Huo asked. "Bald Dragon Hollow, southwest of here," Meng You replied. "The leader, King Duosi, is my close friend and should take us in."

Meng Huo sent his brother ahead to Duosi. The chief then came out with an entourage of soldiers to welcome Meng Huo. Meng Huo entered the hollow and after the formalities described what had happened. "Set your mind at ease," Duosi said. "If the Riverlanders come, not one will go back—not a man, not a horse! They will die here, together with Zhuge Liang!" Delighted, Meng Huo listened to Duosi's plan.

"This hollow has only two roads," Duosi said. "To the northeast, the one Your Highness came by: the land lies flat; the soil is solid, and the water sweet. It is a road easily traveled by man or horse. But if we bar the way with timber and rocks, not even a million troops will be able to work their way through. To the northwest is another route, a narrow passage through arduous hills and nasty ridges. Poisonous snakes and scorpions abound on the paths; as evening draws on, a miasma rises and doesn't clear until late morning or past noon. Indeed, the only times suitable for travel on that route are the six afternoon hours. The water is not potable and the going is rough. Moreover, there are four poisoned springs along the route. The first, the Spring of the Mute, causes loss of speech; whoever drinks from it (though the water be sweet) will perish in ten days' time. The second, the Spring of Death, is hot, and bathing in it leads to putrefaction of the flesh; death follows after the bones show through. The third, the Black Spring, has somewhat clear water, but a few drops can turn your hands and feet black, and death will follow. The fourth is the Spring of Languor, whose icy water takes away the drinker's warm breath while his body turns limp as cloth and he perishes. Neither birds nor insects live there. During the Han, the General Who Tames the Deeps passed through; after him, no one.¹ Now we are going to blockade the northeastern route to ensure Your Majesty's safe sojourn in our humble hollow. Finding the east blocked, the Riverlands troops will come around to the western route. There's no water on the way, so they will be sure to drink at the four springs. Not one in a million will survive. Why waste military force?"

Meng Huo was delighted and, putting his hand to his brow, said, "At last I have found refuge!" Pointing to the north, he continued, "Zhuge Liang's ingenious tricks are not going to work here! The waters of the four springs will avenge the losses I have suffered!" Day after day Meng Huo, Meng You, and King Duosi feasted and celebrated together.

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Kongming watched for several days, but Meng Huo's troops did not emerge. He therefore ordered the main army to advance south of the West Er River. It was midsummer, the sixth month, and the weather hot as fire. A later poet sang of the cruel clime:

A scorching heat to turn the marshes dry,
A flaming sun that rules the empty sky—
Who could find in any other land
A zone of summer heat than this more damned?²

Another poem says:

The fire god unleashes his torrid power;
Upon the sky no shade of cloud dares show.
In scalding mists the lonely heron pants;
In steamy seas the giant tortoise frets.

Who would for this forsake companionship by cooling streams
Or idle walks through bamboo woods?
What has brought me to this far frontier,
On the march again, encased in gear?

Kongming's host was on the move when a scout reported: "Meng Huo has retreated inside Bald Dragon Hollow. He has sealed the approaches; soldiers within guard it. The hills are too arduous, the ridges too steep for us to advance." Kongming questioned Lu Kai, who said, "I've heard of a way into the area, but I don't know the exact route." Jiang Wan added, "After being captured four times, Meng Huo will not have the courage to show himself. And what of the heat? Our men and horses are fainting. We can gain nothing by attacking—better to withdraw and go home." To this Kongming replied, "That's what Meng Huo expects of us: we retreat, they pursue. No. We have come too far to turn back!" He commanded Wang Ping to take a few hundred soldiers of the van, with surrendered Man soldiers as guides, and go in search of the northwestern route into Meng Huo's lair.

At the first spring the men and horses, plagued by thirst, fought to get at the water. Wang Ping discovered the route and informed Kongming. But by the time they reached the main camp, the men had fallen mute and could communicate only by pointing to their mouths.

The astonished Kongming, realizing his men had been poisoned, went by carriage to examine the site: several score of followers attended him. He found a clear pool so deep, the bottom was not visible. The water was piercing cold, and no one dared taste it. Kongming left his carriage, climbed

to a high point, and scanned the surrounding peaks. Not a bird chirped. He was perplexed. On a distant ridge he saw an ancient shrine. Using vines and creepers, Kongming clambered up and found a stone chamber containing a statue of a general and a stone tablet. The shrine was dedicated to Ma Yuan, General Who Tames the Deeps. Local people had erected it in his memory after he pacified the Man of the region. Kongming prostrated himself twice in front of the image and said, "I am the guardian of the late Emperor's heir, by whose mandate I have come to pacify these Man. After that I shall invade Wei and devour Wu in order to make the house of Han secure again. My soldiers, ignorant of this land, were struck dumb after drinking at a poisoned spring. I pray you, revered spirit, remember the benign justice our court has always shown and by your divine presence keep our armies safe."³

His prayer finished, Kongming went out to find a native of the place. He spied a strange-looking old man coming toward him from the opposite hill, walking with the aid of a cane. Kongming invited the visitor into the shrine and after the formalities, when they had seated themselves on a stone ledge, asked him, "Your esteemed surname, master?" The old man replied, "Fortunate am I today to pay my respects to the prime minister of the great kingdom of Shu, a man of lasting fame. The people of the southern regions feel deep gratitude for your mercy in sparing their lives." Kongming asked about the spring. The old man answered, "Your soldiers drank from the Spring of the Mute, which causes loss of speech and, a few days later, death. There are three more springs besides this. To the southeast, one with icy water that drives the warm breath from your throat and causes death after enfeebling the body; it's called the Spring of Languor. Due south is another, the Black Spring. One touch of the water and you die after your hands and feet turn black. The spring to the southwest is like boiling water. If you bathe in it, your skin and flesh peel off; death follows swiftly. It's the Spring of Death. There is no cure for the lethal essences of the four springs in our humble regions. You must, moreover, pass only in the afternoon hours to avoid the fetid atmosphere of the springs. At all other times the miasma is thick, and contact with it is fatal."

Kongming said, "The Man can never be conquered, then. Nor will we ever incorporate Wu and Wei in a restored Han dynasty, and my responsibility to my late emperor will never be fulfilled. Let me die rather than fail my cause!" "Do not despair, Your Excellency," the old man replied. "I can show you a place that will solve the problem." "I beg to receive your wisdom," Kongming said. "Several *li* due west of here," the old man began, "there is a valley. Twenty *li* inside the valley you will find the Stream of Eternal Peace. On the hilltop a man lives in seclusion, the Hermit of Eternal Peace. He has stayed by the stream for decades. Behind his thatched dwelling is the Spring of Peace and joy, which counteracts the poisons of the other springs. A bath in its waters cures skin eruptions and miasma sickness. In addition, in the front of his hermitage you will find an herb called 'leek-leaved rue.' Holding it in the mouth protects against the miasma. Your Excellency should go to seek it." Bowing in appreciation, Kongming said, "I remain forever grateful for receiving this life-saving kindness. May I know your honored surname?" The old man entered the temple and said, "I am the mountain spirit here, commanded by the General Who Tames the Deeps to give you guidance." Then at the old man's shout, the wall at the rear of the temple opened and he disappeared. The astonished Kongming bowed again to the temple god, made his way back to his carriage, and returned to camp.

The next day Kongming prepared incense and other ritual items and brought Wang Ping and his afflicted soldiers to the place the mountain spirit had indicated. Entering the valley by a small road,

they had advanced about twenty *li* when they saw giant pines and cypresses, luxuriant bamboo, and rare blossoms enclosing a farm. A fine fragrance filled the air in the vicinity of a thatched cottage. Delighted, Kongming knocked on the front door, and a lad appeared. Before Kongming could introduce himself, a man followed promptly after the boy. He had a bamboo comb and straw slippers, a white robe girt with black, dark green eyes and yellowing hair. "Could my guest be the prime minister of the Han?" he asked. "How did you know, honored master?" Kongming replied, smiling. "Some time ago we heard that Your Excellency's grand army, imperial plumes flying, had marched south. It was widely known," the hermit said as he invited Kongming into his dwelling.

After the formalities they took seats as host and guest. Kongming declared: "The late August Emperor Zhao Lie placed his heir apparent in my hands. Now, on the Second Emperor's authority I have marched my host here to subdue the land of the Man and win their adherence to the imperial way. Alas, Meng Huo has vanished into the depths of the coves and hollows and my troops have been poisoned at the Spring of the Mute. But last night I was honored by a visit from the living spirit of the General Who Tames the Deeps, and he told me that you, honored sir, possessed a medicinal spring. I humbly appeal for permission to use the holy water to save the lives of my men." "I am a useless old man of the mountain wilds, embarrassed to have troubled Your Excellency to visit. The stream you mention is right behind my hut," the recluse responded, and he invited Kongming to bring his soldiers to drink.

The young lad attending the hermit conducted Wang Ping and the troops who had lost their power of speech to the side of the stream. After drinking, they vomited some foul phlegm and recovered their voices. Next, the lad took the troops to bathe in the Stream of Eternal Peace, while in his dwelling the hermit served Kongming cedar tea and cypress fruits. The hermit said to him, "The hollows of the Man around here abound with scorpions and venomous snakes. And when the willow flowers drift into the streams and springs, they become unfit to drink from. You have to dig a well to find potable water." Kongming then requested the leek-leaved rue. The hermit told the soldiers to pick all they wanted, saying, "Keep a leaf in your mouth and the miasma will not affect you."

Kongming respectfully asked again who the hermit was. Smiling, he said, "Meng Huo's elder brother, Meng Jie." Kongming gasped in amazement. The hermit continued, "Your Excellency, contain your astonishment while I explain. We are three brothers of the same parents. I am the eldest; Meng Huo is next; the youngest is Meng You. Our parents are dead. My two brothers are wedded to their evil ways and despite my earnest appeals will not render homage to the imperial civilization. That is why I have changed my name and retired into seclusion. My shameless brothers have rebelled and burdened Your Excellency with the necessity of campaigning in these wilds, for which I consider myself deserving of ten thousand deaths. I come before Your Excellency now to answer for the offense."

Kongming sighed and said, "After this I can believe the ancient legend by which the robber Zhi and the worthy Liu Xiahui were brothers; I have seen it myself today! If I petitioned the Son of Heaven to make you a king, would you accept?" Meng Jie answered, "Disdain for fame drove me here; what are wealth or position to me?" Kongming offered him gold and silk, but Meng Jie steadfastly declined the gifts. Kongming, profoundly moved, bowed low, said good-bye, and went back to his camp. In the words of a poet of later times,

In that remotest vale the recluse dwelt,

When Kongming worked the downfall of the Man.⁴
Still unclaimed, those stately trees of yore,
Where ancient hills by thawless mists stand barred.

Kongming returned to his main camp and had his men dig wells. At more than twenty feet, they found nothing. Ten other digs had the same result. The troops grew restive. At midnight Kongming burned incense and addressed Heaven: "Your servant Liang, though wanting in talent, has received the blessing of the mighty Han and its mandate to pacify the Man. Now midway in our course, man and horse are parched with thirst. If Heaven above means to sustain the cause of Han, then grant us one sweet spring! But if the time of Han has indeed expired, your servant begs for death here and now." His night incantation was done. At dawn they found the wells brimming. A poet of later times left these lines about the incident:

In the name of Han he marched against the Man;
The mind that dwells on truth may touch the gods.
Geng Gong bowed to a well, and forth it flowed;⁵
For Zhuge's constant heart these waters rose.

The Riverlands troops refreshed themselves and proceeded safely along the trails leading directly into Bald Dragon Hollow; they camped before it.

Man scouts informed Meng Huo: "The Riverlands troops resist the miasma and suffer no thirst. The springs have lost their power!" King Duosi, incredulous, went with Meng Huo to observe the invaders from a high point. Lo, unharmed, they were providing for their horses and their cooking with fresh water from vats and pole baskets. Duosi's hair stood on end as he watched. Turning to Meng Huo, he said, "Those troops are supernatural!" Meng Huo responded, "My brother Meng You and I shall fight to the end. Better to die nobly on the field than surrender to the foe!" Duosi said, "If Your Highness is defeated, my family and I are done for. We must slaughter oxen and horses and feast the braves of our tribes for a victorious drive on their camp. No danger must deter us!"

And so the Man army feasted grandly and then prepared to march. Fresh support came from Yang Feng, chief of twenty-one tribes from Silver Smelting Hollow, who arrived from the west at the head of a line of thirty thousand. Meng Huo was delighted and said, "With our neighbor's help, victory is assured." Meng Huo and King Duosi left the hollow to meet Yang Feng.

Yang Feng led in his troops and said, "I have thirty thousand excellent soldiers, all iron-armored and capable of traversing hill and ridge or holding back a million Riverlands men! My five sons, each a master of the martial arts, desire to help Your Highness." Yang Feng summoned them to pay their respects to the two kings. Their brawny, tigerlike physiques radiated confidence and power. Delighted, Meng Huo set forth a banquet for Yang Feng and his sons.

The wine had already gone round many times when Yang Feng said, "Let us not lack for music! And let the Man women following the army who are expert at the sword-and-shield dance offer us some entertainment." Meng Huo eagerly agreed. Moments later dozens of women skipped into the tent, their hair hanging loose and their feet bare. The Man host clapped and sang in accompaniment. Yang Feng had two of his sons present cups of wine to Meng Huo and Meng You. As the brothers raised the cups to their lips, Yang Feng gave a terrifying shout and his sons pulled Meng Huo and

Meng You down from their seats. King Duosi tried to flee, but Yang Feng seized him. The Man women formed a barrier inside the tent, preventing all approach.

Meng Huo said to Yang Feng, "The fox mourns the hare," they say. Things commiserate with their kind. You and I are leaders of our tribes. Between us no wrong has been done. Why would you injure me?" "My brothers, sons, and nephews," Yang Feng replied, "are grateful to His Excellency Zhuge for having spared their lives; they had to find a way to repay him. You have rebelled—why shouldn't we capture and deliver you?"

After this the Man soldiers all returned to their native regions. Yang Feng brought Meng Huo, Meng You, and Duosi in custody to Kongming's camp. Kongming invited them into his tent, where Yang Feng and his sons prostrated themselves and said, "Thankful for your merciful favor, we have delivered Meng Huo and Meng You." Kongming rewarded them handsomely and then had Meng Huo led in.

Smiling, Kongming said, "Ready to surrender now?" "This was not because of your ability," Meng Huo protested. "My fellow tribesmen betrayed me. Kill me if you wish— but I won't submit!" Kongming responded, "You fooled me into entering a land without water, and yet the poisons of the four springs have not affected my troops; they remain healthy. What could this be if not the will of Heaven? How long can you fool yourself?" But Meng Huo continued, "My forefathers dwelled in the Silver Pit Hills, secure behind three great rivers and multiple passes. If you can catch me there, I'll surrender with all my heart and for all generations to come." Kongming replied, "If I release you this time to reorganize your forces for the decision between us, and if I catch you and you still resist, I will exterminate your entire clan to the ninth degree."

Kongming ordered Meng Huo freed, and the Man chieftain left after repeated prostrations. Kongming also released Meng You and King Duosi, giving them wine and food to quiet their anxieties. The two men were too frightened to look at the prime minister squarely. Kongming sent them home on saddled horses. Indeed:

Campaigns deep in treacherous lands are never easy;
Brilliant exploits are rarer still!

Would Meng Huo ever be subdued?

READ ON.



Giant Beasts Are Deployed in Kongming's Sixth Victory; Rattan Shields Are Burned in Meng Huo's Seventh Capture

AFTER RELEASING THE MAN LEADERS, Kongming honored Yang Feng and his sons with office and rank and richly rewarded the tribal warriors. Yang Feng and his people prostrated themselves, expressed their gratitude, and departed.

Meng Huo and his companions hurried back to Silver Pit Hollow. On its outskirts ran three rivers—the Lu, the Gannan, and the Xicheng—which converged at a place called Three Rivers. North of the hollow stretched a plain of some three hundred *li* that yielded a wide variety of crops. Two hundred *li* due west were salt wells. Two hundred *li* to the southwest ran the Lu and the Gannan; three hundred *li* south, Liangdu Hollow with its knolls was encircled by hills that contained silver ore; this explains the name Silver Pit Hills.

On the hill stood a series of fine buildings, the sanctuary of the Man king. One building housed an ancestral shrine called the Family Spirits. Each season the people there slaughtered an ox and a horse, which they offered in sacrifice in a ceremony known as "divining the spirits." (It was also the custom to sacrifice Riverlanders or strangers from other places.) A native suffering from an affliction rarely took medicine, praying instead to a shaman master known as the "medicine spirit." Criminal laws did not exist; those who committed offenses were executed immediately. When women grew to maturity, they bathed in a stream where male and female mixed freely and coupled without parental prohibition, a practice called "learning the art." When the rains were evenly distributed, they planted rice. When the harvest did not ripen, they killed snakes for soup and boiled elephant meat for their meals. In each and every corner of the region the principal household was called "chief of the hollow" and the second, "tribal elder." Market day was held on the first of each moon and again on the fifteenth in the town at Three Rivers, where commodities circulated through barter. Such were the customs of the Man.

Back in his hollow, Meng Huo gathered more than a thousand of his clansmen and adherents and said to them, "For the many times the Riverlanders have put me to shame, I now swear vengeance! Are you with me?" One man responded, "Here is the man to defeat Zhuge Liang!" The assembly turned to the younger brother of Meng Huo's wife, the present leader of the Eight Outer Tribes and chief of Dailai Hollow. Meng Huo was delighted and asked whom he meant to recommend. The chief replied, "His Highness Mulu, chief of Bana Hollow southwest of here, a man thoroughly versed in the occult arts: he can use the elephant as his mount, summon wind and rain, and command the obedience of tiger, leopard, and wolf, scorpion and venomous snake. Thirty thousand superb troops of peerless courage follow him. Your Highness should compose a letter and prepare gifts; I will go myself to seek his help. If he consents, Riverlands soldiers need cause no fear." Meng Huo, delighted, had his brother-in-law carry the letter to King Mulu; he also had King Duosi fortify Three Rivers as a

defensive barrier.

Approaching Three Rivers, Kongming saw that the citadel there fronted water on three sides. He immediately gave Wei Yan and Zhao Zilong joint command of an army for an attack from the land side. As they reached the city wall, waves of arrows greeted them. (The men of the hollow were skilled in the use of longbow and crossbow. A single crossbow launched ten arrows, each tipped with a poison that caused decomposition of the flesh and, ultimately, exposure of the inner organs and death.) Wei Yan and Zhao Zilong, unable to overcome the enemy, returned to Kongming and described the methods used against them.

Kongming rode to the front in a small carriage. After surveying the enemy's positions, he returned to camp and ordered the army to retire several *li* and recamp. The Man soldiers, seeing the Riverlanders pull so far back, began laughing and congratulating one another; thinking that the enemy had lost heart, they slept soundly that night and posted no sentinels.

Kongming had arranged for the soldiers to remain in their camps after the retreat and not show themselves. For five days he issued no commands. On the fifth, as dusk neared, a slight wind picked up. Kongming issued an order for every soldier, within the space of one watch, to report for roll call after tearing off a piece of his garment; those not complying would face execution. His commanders could not fathom his purpose but complied all the same. At the first watch he ordered every soldier to wrap a ball of earth with the torn cloth or face execution. The troops could not fathom his purpose, but followed the order. Kongming then issued another order for them to report with the wrapped earth to the wall around Three Rivers, offering a reward for the first to arrive. The soldiers wrapped up the soil and raced for the wall. Kongming had them pile it into a graded path and promised top honors to whoever climbed the wall first. The host of one hundred thousand Riverlands soldiers and more than ten thousand surrendered Man piled their clods of earth below the Three Rivers wall.

Soon the pile became a hill adjoining the wall. At a secret signal the Riverlands troops climbed up. The Man scrambled to loose their shafts, but the Riverlanders yanked them down in great numbers. The other defenders abandoned the wall and fled. King Duosi was killed in the confusion. In separate units the Riverlands commanders hunted down and killed their foe in all directions; Kongming occupied Three Rivers, rewarding the army with the spoils. The defeated Man troops returned to Meng Huo and said, "King Duosi is dead and Three Rivers is lost." Meng Huo could not believe it. The Man king was still bewildered when he learned that Riverlands troops had crossed the river and camped in front of his hollow.

Meng Huo was too agitated to act. Suddenly from behind the screen someone stepped forward and, laughing loudly, said, "A man, and such a fool! I, a woman, will fight them for you!" Meng Huo set his eyes on Lady Zhurong, his wife, who was a descendant of Zhurong¹ and had always lived among the nations of the Man. She was skilled in knife throwing and never missed her mark. Meng Huo rose to express his thanks. Well pleased, Lady Zhurong mounted her horse and led several hundred commanders from her clan and its allies, combined with a fresh force of fifty thousand raised from the hollows, out of the gateway of Silver Pit Palace to do battle with the soldiers of the Riverlands.

That moment a cohort rounded a hill and barred her path: the leader, Zhang Ni. Man troops fanned out in two divisions. Lady Zhurong had five throwing knives stuck into the gear on her back and an eighteen-span spear in her hand; she rode a curly-maned red-hare horse. Zhang Ni marveled quietly. The two dashed at one another and engaged. After several passes Lady Zhurong turned her mount and

fled; Zhang Ni pursued hotly. A knife came flying through the air. Zhang Ni tried to deflect it, but it struck his left arm. He rolled off his horse, and screaming Man troops took him captive. Ma Zhong dashed out to rescue him, but Zhang Ni had already been taken and bound hand and foot.

Lady Zhurong, lance held high, reined in and stood before him. Ma Zhong made one furious charge, but his horse was tripped, and he too was taken. The two captives were delivered to Meng Huo.

Meng Huo held a celebration feast at which Lady Zhurong ordered Zhang Ni and Ma Zhong executed. Meng Huo stopped the guards, however, saying, "Zhuge Liang spared me five times. It would not be honorable to kill his commanders. Hold them in our tribe for now; we can deal with them after Zhuge Liang is taken." His wife agreed, and they laughed and drank and made merry.

The Riverlanders reported their defeat to Kongming, who summoned Ma Dai, Zhao Zilong, and Wei Yan and gave them new assignments to fulfill. The next day Man soldiers reported to their leaders that Zhao Zilong had come to challenge them. Lady Zhurong mounted her horse and met him. After a brief clash Zhao Zilong turned and fled. Lady Zhurong, suspicious of ambush, halted and retired. Next, Wei Yan offered the challenge, and Lady Zhurong galloped forth to meet him. During an intense clash Wei Yan feigned defeat and ran off, but she refused to pursue.

The following day Zhao Zilong returned to the challenge, which she met again. After only a few exchanges Zhao Zilong halted combat and fled, but the lady, lance in hand, refused again to give chase. Lady Zhurong had already started to recall her troops when Wei Yan came forward. His troops vilified her raucously, and this time Lady Zhurong, spear raised high, raced for her opponent. Wei Yan fled as before. He raced onto a side path in the hills, the lady in hot pursuit. Suddenly he heard a high, clear cry behind him and saw Lady Zhurong on the ground, prone across her saddle. Earlier, Ma Dai had set an ambush here, and the ropes he had strung had now tripped her horse. Ma Dai seized Lady Zhurong and took her as his prisoner back to the main camp. Man troops rode to her rescue, but Zhao Zilong dispersed them with fierce fighting.

Sitting solemnly in his tent where Ma Dai had brought Lady Zhurong before him, Kongming swiftly ordered the lady's bonds removed and sent her to another tent to drink some wine and compose herself. He also sent a man to Meng Huo, offering to exchange Lady Zhurong for the two commanders Zhang Ni and Ma Zhong. Meng Huo agreed to this proposal and sent the two commanders back to Kongming, who in turn sent Lady Zhurong back to her people. Meng Huo received her with both joy and anger in his heart.

Suddenly the leader of Bana Hollow was announced. Meng Huo received him outside his cove. The visitor rode a white elephant, and his garb was fringed with gold and pearls; large swords hung at his side. His retinue included a team of men who cared for his menagerie of tigers and panthers, jackals and wolves. The crowd entered Meng Huo's hollow.

Meng Huo prostrated himself and voiced his grief; then he recounted the previous events. King Mulu promised to assist him in exacting revenge, and Meng Huo showed his satisfaction by holding a banquet in Mulu's honor. The next day King Mulu led his own warriors and wild animals out to battle. Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan deployed their forces into fighting position. Riding side by side, they came before their line to view the enemy's strange banners and weapons. Few of the warriors wore armor; most were naked. Their faces were crude and ugly. Each carried four daggers. They sounded neither drum nor horn, signaling their troops by striking gongs. King Mulu had two swords hanging at his waist and a corolla-shaped bell in his hand. Surrounded by giant banners, he rode a white elephant.

"In all our days in the field," Zhao Zilong said to Wei Yan, "have we ever seen such a sight?" While the two watched in amazement, King Mulu uttered strange incantations and shook the bell. Suddenly fierce winds began to blow, driving sand and pebbles like hard rain, and a braying sound was heard: tigers and panthers, jackals and wolves, venomous reptiles and ferocious beasts came riding on the winds, charging, with fangs bared and claws flexed. The Riverlands troops fell back; the Man pursued them all the way to the boundary of Three Rivers, killing many before withdrawing. Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan regathered their men and returned to Kongming's tent to confess their failure and recount the circumstances.

Kongming laughed and said, "It's not your fault. Even before I left my secluded thatched cottage, I knew about Man techniques for using wild animals in combat. Back in the Riverlands I devised some ways for foiling them. With the army I brought twenty wagons, which I had sealed and put away. Now is the time to put half of them to use; the other half we will save for another time." Kongming ordered his attendants to wheel out the ten wagons with red-painted containers and leave the ten black ones behind. Everyone was puzzled. Kongming broke open the containers, which held enormous carved animals of colored wood with fur of multicolored yarn and teeth and claws of steel. Each animal was big enough to carry ten men. Kongming picked one thousand strong warriors and assigned them one hundred animals; these he had packed with incendiary materials and then concealed among the troops.

The next day Kongming advanced in force and deployed at the entrance to the hollow. Man scouts reported the enemy's movements to the kings. King Mulu, declaring himself invincible, went forth with Meng Huo to fight. Kongming, wearing his headband and Taoist robes, sat erect in his carriage, holding a feathered fan. Pointing at him, Meng Huo said to Mulu, "There's Zhuge Liang. If we catch him, our success is assured." King Mulu pronounced a curse and shook his bell. Shortly fierce winds sprang up and the wild beasts burst into view. But Kongming waved his fan, causing the wind to blow back toward the Man; from the Riverlands side the imitation monsters came forth.

The genuine animals of the Man region watched the opposing weird beasts belching fire and breathing black smoke, shaking their bronze clangers as they snarled and clawed. Daunted, the savage creatures of the Man turned and charged back to the hollow, trampling numerous men in their path. At this point Kongming signaled a general advance. Drum and horn sounded in unison as the Riverlanders pursued and killed countless Man. King Mulu fell in the confusion of battle. Inside their cove Meng Huo's clan and adherents abandoned their mansions and fled over the hills. Kongming's army occupied Silver Pit Hollow.

The next day as Kongming was preparing to divide his forces to find and capture Meng Huo, a messenger reported, "The younger brother of Meng Huo's wife, the chief of Dai-lai Hollow, urged Meng Huo to submit to you. Meng Huo refused, so the Dailai chief has seized Meng Huo, Lady Zhurong, and their families and will deliver them to Your Excellency." Kongming immediately summoned Zhang Ni and Ma Zhong and gave them instructions. After the two commanders had put two thousand able-bodied troops behind the passageways to Kongming's quarters, Kongming told the gate guards to admit Meng Huo's brother-in-law and his party. The chief of the Dailai, attended by guards with hidden weapons, delivered Meng Huo and several hundred others and prostrated himself before Kongming. "Seize them!" Kongming shouted.

From both sides husky soldiers rushed out—two on one—and tied up the prisoners. Laughing, Kongming said, "Did you expect to fool me with that little trick? Twice before, the people of your own hollow brought you in, but I did you no harm. You don't really think I would believe this false

surrender, do you, and let you kill me right here in your own hollow?" Kongming ordered a search and found a sharp knife on each. Kongming asked Meng Huo, "You once promised that if I caught you in your own home, you would render sincere submission—what about now?" But Meng Huo replied, "This is a case of delivering ourselves to our own fate. Your skill played no part. My heart remains unsubdued." "Still, after six times?" Kongming said. "When will you submit?" "The seventh time," Meng Huo answered, "I will render wholehearted allegiance and swear never to rebel!" "With your sanctuary destroyed, there is no need to worry!" Kongming said and ordered the captives freed. "Next time," he added, "if you try to wriggle out of it, no further grace will be shown." Humiliated, Meng Huo and his followers scurried off.

King Meng Huo happened upon a mass of more than one thousand Man troops fleeing the Riverlanders; most of them were injured. When he had restored order among them, his spirits revived somewhat. He said to his brother-in-law, "The Riverlanders hold my cove. Where can we find refuge?" The chief of the Dailai answered, "There is a kingdom that can defeat the Riverlands." "Where?" asked Meng Huo. "To the southeast, seven hundred *li* from here," the chief responded. "The Black Lance kingdom. Their chief, Wu-tugu, is some twelve spans tall, eats no grain, and survives on live snakes and vicious animals. His body is covered with scales no arrow or blade can pierce. The men in his command have rattan armor made from vines that grow in the ravines and wind around their rocky walls. Natives pick the vines, soak them in oil for half a year, then dry them in the sun. After being thoroughly dried, they are returned to the oil. The vines are dried and soaked this way ten times before being made into armor. The cured rattan keeps the body afloat and dry, as well as safe from arrow and blade; that's why they're called 'rattan-armored soldiers.' Your Highness should plead with their chief, for his help will make the capture of Zhuge Liang as sure as a 'sharp knife splits bamboo.'"

Delighted, Meng Huo headed for the Black Lance kingdom to meet Wutugu. He found the tribe had no roofed dwellings, as the members lived in caves in the earth. Meng Huo entered the hollow, prostrated himself, and related his bitter experiences. The chief said, "I will muster the men of my tribe and avenge you." Meng Huo eagerly prostrated himself again in gratitude. Thereupon Wutugu summoned Tu An and Xi Ni, two militia captains, and they mustered thirty thousand warriors in rattan armor for the campaign. Marching northeast, they reached the Peach Blossom, a river with peach trees lining its banks. Whenever the leaves dropped into the water, it became lethal to people of other kingdoms but a wondrous tonic to the people of the Black Lance. Wutugu's force camped at a crossing point of the Peach Blossom River to await the Riverlands army.

Certain Man natives whom Kongming had sent to gather information reported back: "In answer to Meng Huo's plea, the chief of the Black Lance kingdom has led thirty thousand rattan-armored troops into position at the crossing of the Peach Blossom. At the same time Meng Huo is recruiting troops from all the Man regions to join their war of resistance." At this news Kongming moved in force to the river. From the opposite shore he surveyed the Man warriors, who looked so repulsive that they hardly seemed human. A native informed him that peach leaves had fallen and made the water unsafe that day. Kongming retired five *li* and camped, leaving Wei Yan in command.

The next day the king of the Black Lances led a band of rattan-armored men across the river, gongs and drums resounding. Wei Yan went forth to meet them. The Man warriors swarmed, covering the terrain. The Riverlanders shot their crossbow bolts; but the rattan was impenetrable, and the arrows dropped harmlessly. Neither the strokes of their blades nor the thrusts of their spears could

break through it. The Man wielded their sharp knives and steel forks against the Riverlanders, who, unable to defend themselves, eventually withdrew. The Man returned to camp without giving chase. Wei Yan turned back and rushed to the riverside, where he watched in amazement as the enemy crossed over in full armor: those taken by fatigue simply removed their armor and used it to float across.

Wei Yan raced back to the main camp and gave Kongming a detailed report. Kongming invited Lü Kai and some natives to his tent and asked them about the Black Lances and the Peach Blossom. "Long ago," Lü Kai explained, "I heard of a Black Lance kingdom among the southern Man, one bereft of human morality. Their rattan armor is almost impossible to pierce. Then there is the water poisoned by peach leaves: the natives are inured to it, but outsiders will die drinking it. That's what the southern region is like; the most complete victory would be of little use. It would be best to bring the army home." Kongming smiled and said, "After the trouble it took to get here, we can't simply leave. I have another plan to pacify the Man. Tomorrow." He ordered Zhao Zilong to guard the main camp with Wei Yan and to avoid going out.

The next day, with a native guide, Kongming took his carriage to a secluded spot on a hill north of the Peach Blossom River to survey the lay of the land. Where the road was too arduous for the carriage to pass, Kongming descended and proceeded on foot. He came to a hill where he saw a serpentine ravine with a wide road down its center and sheer, steep walls on which no tree or bush grew. "What is this valley called?" Kongming asked. "Winding Serpent Valley," the guide answered. "From the far side the road leads to Three Rivers. Before it is the region known as Talang Barrens." "Then Heaven grants us success here!" Kongming said with satisfaction and went back to the road he had taken.

Back at camp, Kongming summoned Ma Dai, whom he charged as follows: "I am going to give you the ten carriages with the black containers; you will need a thousand bamboo poles. Inside the containers you will find certain essential items. Have your own troops hold either end of Winding Serpent Valley and act according to our plan. You have half a month to prepare everything. At the prearranged time you are to proceed as instructed. Should anyone learn of this plan, the full weight of martial law will be imposed." Ma Dai received his instructions and left.

Next, Kongming summoned Zhao Zilong and charged him: "Go to the rear of Winding Serpent Valley; hold the main road into Three Rivers as instructed. Have everything you need ready by the appointed day." Zhao Zilong received his orders and left. Next, Wei Yan was called and charged: "Take your own troops and camp by the Peach Blossom River crossing. If Man troops come over to oppose you, abandon camp and race toward the white flag. Within half a month expect to lose fifteen battles and abandon as many as seven sites—but do not come to me until after the fifteenth defeat." With grave reservations, Wei Yan accepted his assignment and left in low spirits. Next, Kongming summoned Zhang Yi to take another contingent to a designated place and build a camp with barricades. He also ordered Zhang Ni and Ma Zhong to take charge of some one thousand surrendered Man for a special purpose. Everyone went to carry out his part of the plan.

Meng Huo said to the chief of the Black Lances, "Of Zhuge Liang's many tricks, ambush is his favorite. For future battles have all forces divide themselves into three units. And be most cautious about entering densely wooded valleys." Wutugu replied, "Your Highness speaks wisely. I know well the cunning of those from the middle kingdoms. From now on we will do what you say: I will move ahead and hunt them down; you will direct from behind." Thus the two agreed.

When the Man kings learned that the Riverlanders had fortified the north bank, Wutugu sent two captains with rattan-armored troops to cross the river and engage the enemy. After a brief battle Wei Yan fled. Fearing ambush, the Man soldiers returned south. The next day Wei Yan set up another camp. The Man scouts discovered it, and more of them swarmed across to attack. Wei Yan met them in the field but again fled after a short engagement. The Man pursued more than ten *li*. Finding no enemy activity in the area, they occupied the Riverlands camp.

The next day the two Man captains led Wutugu to the captured camp and told him how the battle had gone. Wutugu pursued the Riverlanders with a large force until Wei Yan's retreating troops threw down their armor and spears and fled. Lo, a white flag flew ahead of them. Wei Yan led his men toward it; there they found a camp already pitched and settled into it. But as Wutugu's pursuing horde closed in, Wei Yan was forced to flee again, thus yielding the camp to the Man. The next day the Man resumed pursuit. The Riverlanders turned and fought, but defeated again in a brief clash, they fled in the direction of another white flag. On reaching it, they found a prepared site and camped down. The next day the Man arrived, and Wei Yan again fled after a halfhearted battle. The Man occupied the abandoned camp.

Wei Yan alternately fought and fled until he had quit fifteen engagements and abandoned seven bases. Ruthlessly the Man advanced to hunt him down, Wutugu out in front, striking at the enemy. Coming to a thick wood, he halted and sent scouts to reconnoitre. The scouts found insignia-bearing flags hanging slack in the depth of the shade. Wutugu said to Meng Huo, "just as Your Highness predicted." Meng Huo smiled and replied, "So this is Zhuge Liang's game. Now that Your Highness has beat him in fifteen battles and seized seven of his camps, the Riverlanders flee on hearing of your approach. Zhuge Liang has no more tricks to play! With this next advance our cause carries!" Elated, Wutugu put all thought of danger out of his mind.

On the sixteenth day Wei Yan led his battle-worn men forth to oppose the rattan-armored Man. Riding an elephant, Wutugu took the lead. He wore a wolf-beard cap decorated with the sun and the moon. Gold and pearls laced his garment, through which his torso's hard-scaled skin showed. A subtle fire darted from his eyes. Pointing to Wei Yan, he pronounced his malediction. Wei Yan wheeled round and fled again. The Man gave chase in full force. Wei Yan maneuvered around into Winding Serpent Valley as he made for the white flag. Wutugu closed in for the kill; seeing the hills bare, he had assumed he was safe from ambush.

When he reached the middle of the valley, Wutugu saw several dozen wagons with black-painted containers blocking the road. A soldier reported, "This is the Riverlands grain transport route. Your Highness's arrival has caused them to flee and leave their carts." Wutugu triumphantly urged his warriors to press the chase to the other end of the valley. There they found no Riverlands troops; but great logs and volleys of rock crashed down, sealing the exit. Wutugu ordered his men to open the road. He had resumed his advance, when carts of all sizes loaded with burning wood loomed out of nowhere! Wutugu ordered immediate retreat. But from his rear ranks shouts went up: "The exit is blocked by dry tinder, and the carts, filled with powder, are in flames!" Wutugu remained calm because the site was too bare to conceal an ambush. He ordered his men to escape however they could. Then, lo, from both sides of the valley torches were hurled down, hitting fuses on the ground that ignited iron missiles. The whole valley began dancing wildly with fiery light, and the rattan armor caught fire when touched by the flames. Wutugu and his thirty thousand men perished in Winding Serpent Valley, huddled together in the inferno.

From a hilltop Kongming looked down upon the incinerated men strewn over the valley. Most of them had had their heads and faces pulverized by the falling missiles. An unbearable stench rose from their corpses. Kongming wept and sighed at the carnage. "Whatever service to the shrines of Han this represents, my life-span will be shortened for it," he said. His words deeply touched every officer and man.

In camp Meng Huo waited for his troops. Suddenly a thousand or more arrived and prostrated themselves before him. Smiling broadly, they said, "The army of the Black Lances has trapped the Riverlanders in Winding Serpent Valley. A major battle is under way. They need reinforcement, Your Highness. All of us are members of your hollow who surrendered against our will to the Riverlands, and we have come to help now that Your Highness is here." Meng Huo was delighted. With his clan, his adherents, and other outlanders he set out at once, using the returned Man as guides.

In Winding Serpent Valley a scene of fiery destruction and the stench of slaughter greeted Meng Huo, and he knew he had been trapped. He tried to pull back, but Zhang Ni and Ma Zhong fell upon him to the left and right. As he began to defend himself, a war cry went up from his own ranks, and the bulk of his men now disclosed themselves to be Riverlands troops! They seized Meng Huo's clansmen and adherents as well as their regional allies and made them prisoners. Meng Huo himself managed to break out of the trap and raced toward the mountain paths.

While fleeing, he noticed a cluster of men with a small wagon emerging from a depression in the hills. Inside sat a man with bound hair, holding a feathered fan and garbed like a priest of the Tao. Kongming shouted, "Meng Huo, you rebel! How about it now?" Meng Huo turned swiftly to flee, but a commander darted out from the side and blocked his way. It was Ma Dai. Meng Huo, caught unprepared, was swiftly taken. By this time Wang Ping and Zhang Yi had already rushed the Man camp and captured Lady Zhurong and all the members of Meng Huo's family.

On reaching camp, Kongming took his place in the main tent. "This trick," Kongming told his commanders, "I used only because I had to; I shall lose much merit in the life to come for it. I guessed the enemy would be looking for an ambush in the woods, so I set up decoy banners there to confuse them. There were never any troops. Next, I had Wei Yan lose a series of battles to strengthen their confidence. I observed that Winding Serpent Valley had only one road between two sheer cliffs bare of vegetation, all sandy soil below. Accordingly, I ordered Ma Dai to deploy the black wagons in the valley—they had been loaded earlier with fire launchers called 'earth thunder' each containing nine missiles. The mines were buried thirty paces apart and connected by fuses—bamboo tubes packed with powder. On firing, the hills crumbled and the rocks split.

"Next, I had Zhao Zilong prepare hay wagons and deploy them at the valley exit. On the slopes we had huge logs and rocks. After Wei Yan had lured Wutugu and his rattan-armored troops into the valley and got free, we cut off the road and burned out the enemy. They say, 'What works with water doesn't work with fire': the rattan armor may be impervious to blade or arrow, but any article processed with oil is bound to be flammable. The Man warriors were so stubborn, how else could they have been defeated? But to have exterminated the Black Lances so completely is a crime that weighs heavily on me." The commanders bowed low before him and said, "Your Excellency's marvelous ingenuity is more than even the gods and spirits could fathom!"

Kongming ordered Meng Huo brought before him. Meng Huo knelt down, and Kongming had his bonds removed. To ease his fears, he had food and drink provided to the Man king in a separate tent. Finally, Kongming gave certain instructions to the commissary officer.

Meng Huo and Lady Zhurong, Meng You and the chief of Dailai Hollow, together with their clansmen and adherents, refreshed themselves. Suddenly an officer entered the tent and said to Meng Huo, "His Excellency was too embarrassed to see you, my lord, and has ordered me to release you. Go home and rally your forces for another trial of strength. Quickly, my lord." But Meng Huo, tears falling, replied, "Seven times captured, seven times freed! Such a thing has never happened!² Though I stand beyond the range of the imperial grace, I am not utterly ignorant of ritual, of what propriety and honor require. No, I am not so shameless!"

Having thus spoken, Meng Huo, his brother, his wife, and his other clansmen crawled to Kongming's tent. The king kneeled and exposed the upper half of his body, betokening his readiness to receive punishment. "Your Excellency's divine prestige ensures that the south will not rebel again," Meng Huo declared. "Then you submit?" Kongming responded. Weeping with gratitude, Meng Huo said, "For generations to come, our children and theirs after them will gratefully acknowledge your all-protecting, all-sustaining love, deep as Heaven, vast as earth. How can I not submit!" Kongming invited Meng Huo into his tent, where he held a feast confirming the king as chief of the hollows in perpetuity, and he relinquished to him all territories seized by the Riverlands troops. Meng Huo and his people, as well as the warriors of other Man nations, acclaimed his generosity, leaping and vaulting in unbounded excitement. A poet of later times left these lines in praise of Kongming:

The feather fan, Taoist cap, and dark green canopy—
Captured seven times, the Man king did his will—
Those streams and hollows honor Kongming still,
Raising to his virtue's force a hall upon a hill.

Senior Counselor Fei Yi entered and protested: "Your Excellency's campaign deep into the wilds has subjugated the Man region, and their king has tendered his allegiance. Is it not now appropriate to establish districts and officials so that we can rule together with Meng Huo?" "That poses three problems," Kongming replied. "First, if outsiders stay behind, troops must stay with them. But how are we to feed those troops? Second, the defeated Man have suffered grievously, losing fathers and brothers. To leave outsiders here without troops is bound to lead to trouble. And third, the Man nations have always been so politically unstable—the result of jealousies and suspicion—that they will never trust outsiders. If we leave no one, however, and ship no grain, we will find ourselves at peace with them for want of any cause of trouble." These arguments persuaded the commanders. In gratitude for Kongming's benevolence, the Man people set up a shrine at which offerings were made every season; the prime minister became known among them as "the kindly father." Each of the nations rendered tribute of pearls and precious metals, cinnabar, lacquer, medicinal herbs, water buffalo, and war-horses for military use. And the Man vowed not to rebel. Thus, the south was finally pacified.

After Kongming had feasted his army, the homeward march began. Wei Yan, in the vanguard, had reached the River Lu when sudden storm clouds bore down on him. Violent gusts sprang up on the water; and dust and stones swept through the army, preventing its advance. Wei Yan retreated and reported to Kongming, who turned to Meng Huo for advice. Indeed:

The moment the Man were tamed,

Angry spirits roiled the river.

What would Meng Huo say to Kongming?

READ ON.



***The Prime Minister Sacrifices to River Ghosts Before Leading the Army Home;
The Lord of Wu Petitions for a Just War Against the Northern Heartland***

THE RIVERLANDS ARMY STARTED HOMEWARD; Meng Huo led the chiefs of the hollows and coves as well as other tribal leaders and tribesmen as they gathered around Kongming in obeisance to see him off. It was autumn, the ninth month of the year, when the vanguard reached the River Lu. Suddenly thick clouds darkened the sky and fierce winds blew. Told that the troops could not cross, Kongming turned to Meng Huo for advice. Meng Huo said, "An evil spirit has cursed this water; those who would pass must appease him by sacrifice." "What would please the spirit?" Kongming asked. "In olden times," Meng Huo explained, "when the god worked his wrath, they sacrificed forty-nine human heads—seven times seven—a black ox and a white sheep; then the winds would ease, the waters would subside, and years of plenty would follow."

"The campaign is over," Kongming said. "It would be wrong to kill." He went to the riverbank and found the army panicking as the storm raged and waves and breakers surged and swelled. Perplexed, Kongming sought out some natives to advise him. They said, "After Your Excellency first passed through, all we heard by the shore night after night was the moaning of ghosts and the howling of spirits. From day's end to dawn the cries went on. Shades beyond numbering, shrouded in the miasma, have haunted the waters after your passage, and now no man dares to cross."

"The cause is my grave crime," Kongming said. "Previously more than a thousand of Ma Dai's men perished in the River Lu, joined by the fallen southern warriors abandoned here. Those wronged souls, unable to find their final peace, now raise this disturbance. Tonight I must go and make offerings to them." The natives said, "Precedent must be followed. You must sacrifice forty-nine human heads before the wronged ghosts will disperse." "Once they were living men," Kongming objected, "what good will more killing do? I have a better idea."

Kongming ordered his army cooks to slaughter oxen and horses and to compound a doughy preparation in the shape of a human head with a stuffing of beef and lamb; it was called "dough-head."¹ That night on the bank of the Lu, Kongming set up an incense stand, laid out the offerings, and lined up forty-nine lamps. He then raised streamers high to summon the lost souls and placed the dough-heads on the ground. At the third watch Kongming, wearing a gilded headdress and a cloak of crane feathers, personally officiated at the sacrifice as Dong Jue read out the text. It said:

On this first day of the ninth month of the third year of Jian Xing of the great Han,² lord of Wuxiang and protector of Yizhou, His Excellency Zhuge Liang, reverently conducts this sacrificial ceremony to sustain the shade-bound souls of the Riverlands commanders and lieutenants who have fallen in the imperial service, as well as the southern warriors who have perished.

Hear Ye:

When the domains of the August Emperor of the great Han, whose martial might excels the five hegemon's and whose wisdom makes him heir to the three sage kings of antiquity, recently suffered incursion from the barbarous hordes of remote regions—promoting subversion like scorpions flexing their tails, reveling in sedition like wolves—I, his vassal, bearing the royal mandate, visited these wilds to punish their crimes. We raised an army of heroes to sweep away the wretched vermin. Our brave warriors rallied, and these ungoverned predators, terrified by our swift victories, melted away like apes fleeing a wood on hearing a sword split bamboo.

Our soldiers and yeomen, the bold spirits of the realm, our officials and commanders, heroes from around the empire, all were seasoned in the trials of war and committed to an enlightened lord. United, they carried out our commands and worked together in executing the seven captures. Firm in the sincerity with which they served the dynasty, they loyally strived in their sovereign's cause.

Little did we expect, soldiers, that you would lose the military initiative and fall prey to the enemy's treacheries: some of you slain in volleys of arrows, your souls snatched off to the underworld; others killed by the sword, your spirits sent home to everlasting night—brave in life, more splendid in death. Now we are about to return triumphant and deliver our prisoners to the Emperor.

As spiritual beings you still exist—therefore hear our prayer: follow our banners and flags, come after our army units, return with us to the great kingdom of Shu so that each may find his own native place and there receive the winter offerings from his flesh and blood and the ritual sacrifices of his family. Do not remain ghosts in a strange realm, lost souls in a foreign clime.

I shall address a petition to the Emperor so that each of your families may share fully in the benevolent generosity of the sovereign, annual allowances of clothing and staples and monthly stipends of grain. By these means of redress we intend to pacify your discontent.

For the native spirits of this region, the homeless ghosts of the south, fresh animal sacrifices will be regularly maintained from the resources close at hand. If alive you felt the chilling awe of the divine majesty, in death you remain subject to the imperial aura. Be peaceful, then, and submissive, without indulging in these frightful shrieks, for I have come to demonstrate my sincerest reverence by conducting this sacrificial service. Heed this grieving voice of mine and partake of the feast we humbly lay before you.

A sharp cry burst from Kongming after he had read the funerary address, and the whole army, joined by Meng Huo and his people, wept at his acute distress. And lo, amid the clouds of despair and the dark mists of discontent, thousands of ghostly souls, dimly visible, began to clear away in the wake of the winds as Kongming had his assistants cast sacrificial articles upon the waters of the Lu.

The next day Kongming led the army to the south shore. They found the clouds cleared, the mists scattered, the winds stilled, the waters calmed. The Riverlands soldiers crossed peacefully; as it is

said, "To the crack of whip and the jingle of stirrup the men returned, celebrating their victories." When the march reached Yongchang, Kongming detailed Wang Kang and Lü Kai to defend the four districts; he directed Meng Huo to lead his people home, enjoining him to be conscientious in administration, to give guidance to his subordinates, and to deal gently with the local peoples so that they might never neglect their farms. Meng Huo tearfully prostrated himself; then he took leave and departed. Kongming led the army home to Chengdu.

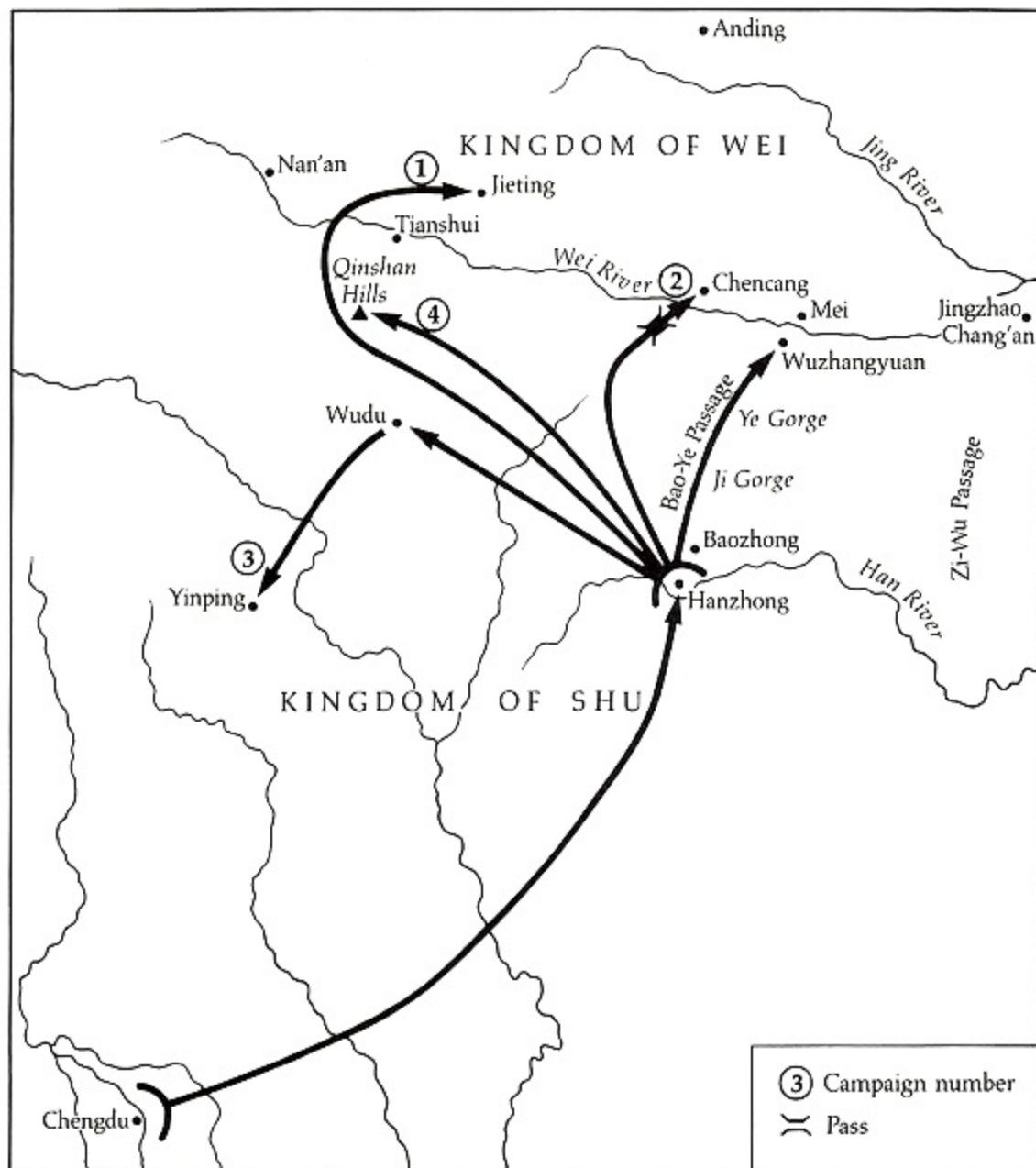
The Second Emperor rode out thirty *li* in the royal carriage to welcome Kongming home. There he descended and stood by the side of the road to wait for the prime minister.³ Kongming hurriedly stepped down from his own carriage, pressed his body to the ground, and said, "My failure to pacify the south swiftly has given Your Majesty concern, for which I take responsibility." The Emperor helped Kongming to his feet, and they returned to Chengdu, their carriages side by side. At a grand celebration for the end of the war the army was feasted and lavishly rewarded. Thereafter, more than two hundred minor kingdoms sent tribute and paid homage at court. Kongming petitioned the Emperor to show special consideration to each family that had lost a member in the recent service. The people rejoiced, and the court and the people basked in an aura of peace.

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It was the fourth year of Jian Xing by the Shu-Han calendar.⁴ The ruler of Wei, Cao Pi, had been on the throne for seven years. He had first married Lady Zhen (a fifth-rank concubine of Yuan Shao's second son, Xi) after Cao Cao conquered the city of Ye. Lady Zhen bore him a son named Rui (Yuanzhong), who showed great intellectual promise at an early age; Cao Pi doted on him. Later, Cao Pi took for ranking concubine a woman of great beauty, whose father was Guo Yong from Guangzong in Anping. Because her father had once said, "My daughter is a king among women," she was known as the "female king."

Lady Zhen having lost Cao Pi's favor, Ranking Concubine Guo had begun plotting to become empress from the time of her elevation. The favored vassal Zhang Tao became her confidant in this matter. At one time Cao Pi fell ill, and Zhang Tao falsely declared that in Lady Zhen's palace he had dug up a human figure carved of paulownia wood and marked with the exact date and time of the Son of Heaven's birth to put him under a spell. In a fury Cao Pi had Lady Zhen condemned to death and Lady Guo installed as empress. Lady Guo, having no issue, raised Lady Zhen's son, Rui, as her own but did not make him heir despite her affection for the lad.

By the age of fifteen Cao Rui was entirely at ease with the bow and the horse. In the second month of spring Cao Pi took Cao Rui with him to hunt. Riding through a dale, they flushed out two deer, fawn and doe. Cao Pi felled the mother with a single shot. Turning around, he saw the fawn racing before Cao Rui's horse. "Shoot, my son!" Cao Pi shouted. But Cao Rui, still on horseback, wept and said, "Your Majesty has slain the mother; can I bear to slay the child?" Cao Pi threw down his bow and said, "My son, you are indeed a magnanimous and virtuous prince." Cao Pi enfeoffed Cao Rui as prince of Pingyuan.



MAP 10. Kongming's northern campaigns. Source: Liu Chunfan, *Zhuge Liang zhuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1986), p. 129.

During summer, in the fifth month of the year, Cao Pi was afflicted with severe chills that the doctors could not control. He summoned three men to his resting chamber: Cao Zhen, supreme commander of the central army, Supreme Commander Chen Qun, controller of the army, and Supreme Commander Sima Yi, rallier of the army. Cao Pi then called for Cao Rui and, pointing at him, said to Cao Zhen and the two others, "Our illness is grave; recovery impossible. You three will have to guide this child and keep faith with my wishes." The three responded, "Do not speak this way, Your Majesty. Even without admonition we will always do our utmost in Your Majesty's service." Cao Pi said, "This year the main gate of Xuchang collapsed without cause, an omen which foretells my end." As he was speaking, an imperial attendant announced Supreme Commander Cao Xiu, Conqueror of the East, who had come to inquire about the Emperor's health. Cao Pi summoned him in and said, "If you four, the pillars of our dynastic house, will support our son with undivided devotion, I shall die in peace." A last tear fell, and he passed from this world at the age of forty; he had reigned for seven years.

Cao Zhen, Chen Qun, Sima Yi, and Cao Xiu along with other high officials initiated the mourning ceremonies. At the same time they established Cao Rui as august emperor of the great Wei dynasty. Cao Pi was given the posthumous title August Emperor Wen and Lady Zhen the posthumous title August Empress Wen Zhao.⁵ Zhong Yao was made imperial guardian, Cao Zhen regent-marshal,⁶ Cao Xiu grand marshal, Hua Xin grand commandant, Wang Lang minister of the interior, Chen Qun minister of works, and Sima Yi chief general of the Flying Cavalry. Other civil and military officials and officers received fiefs and awards. An empire-wide amnesty was proclaimed.

At this time the two provinces Yong and Liang needed someone to govern and defend them. Sima Yi petitioned to become defender of Xiliang and other points west. Cao Rui approved, and Sima Yi was appointed superintendent of Yong's and Liang's armed forces. Sima Yi accepted his edict of appointment and departed.

Riverlands spies swiftly reported these changes at the Wei court. Startled, Kongming said, "Cao Pi is dead, the boy Rui enthroned. There is little to concern us there. But Sima Yi, a man of deep strategy, has taken charge of the Liang and Yong armies; and once he has trained them, the Riverlands will have a serious problem. It would be best to act first and attack them!" The military adviser Ma Su said, "Your Excellency has hardly returned from conquering the south; the army is exhausted. Surely this is a time to consider our soldiers' welfare, not to make another expedition far afield. I have a plan that will cause Sima Yi to die at Cao Rui's hands, but I am not sure whether Your Excellency, in your profound judgment, will give me permission to try it."

Kongming asked the details, and Ma Su continued, "Although Sima Yi is a leading minister of the Wei court, Cao Rui has always regarded him with suspicion and fear. I recommend spreading rumors in Luoyang, Ye, and other key cities of Wei that Sima Yi is plotting to rebel. In addition, throughout the enemy's districts we can post forged proclamations by Sima Yi to the empire at large. That should unnerve Cao Rui enough to have him killed." Kongming approved the plan and sent secret agents to carry it out.

. . . .

Suddenly one day a proclamation was found attached to the main gate of Ye. The gatekeepers tore it down and brought it to Cao Rui. Cao Rui studied the text, which read:

Chief Commander Sima Yi of the Flying Cavalry, with overall command of the armed forces of Yong, Liang, and other regions, reverently and in good faith proclaims to the empire: originally our great ancestor, August Emperor Wu, founder of this house, wanted Cao Zhi to succeed as the lord of his shrine. Unfortunately, caught in the crosscurrents of treachery and calumny, Cao Zhi remained a submerged dragon for many years.⁷ The imperial grandson, Cao Rui, with no record of virtuous conduct, unconscionably placed himself upon the throne in violation of our founder Cao Cao's last wishes. But now, in response to Heaven's will and men's judgment, we have appointed the day for raising an army to satisfy the expectations of the millions. When this proclamation reaches you, let each man commit his allegiance to the new sovereign. Whosoever disobeys will be punished by clan-wide execution. Let this advance notice be made known far and wide.

After reading the text, Cao Rui, pale with distress, hastily consulted his ministers. Grand Commandant Hua Xin addressed his sovereign: "Now we see Sima Yi's true purpose in seeking military authority in the western provinces of Yong and Liang. I remember the great ancestor Cao Cao, August Emperor Wu, once telling me, 'Sima Yi has hungry eyes, like an eagle's or wolf's. Given military power, he will ruin the dynasty.' His revolt must be put down before it starts." Wang Lang addressed the Wei sovereign: "Sima Yi, with his deep comprehension of strategy and thorough understanding of military action, has long harbored grandiose ambitions. Remove him or suffer the consequences."

Cao Rui announced his intention to lead an armed force against Sima Yi. But suddenly Regent-Marshal Cao Zhen stepped forward and said, "I oppose it. The late sovereign, Cao Pi, entrusted the successor to my colleagues and me, and I am certain that Sima Yi has no subversive intent. The facts of the situation remain unclear, and precipitate military action will only force him into rebellion. It is possible that agents of the Riverlands or the Southland are attempting to sow discord between our sovereign and his subjects in order to create disorder before an attack. Your Majesty should inquire most carefully into this matter." Cao Rui said, "But what if Sima Yi is plotting to revolt?" "If Your Majesty is in doubt," Cao Zhen replied, "you might do what Han Gao Zu did when he traveled to Yunmeng.⁸ If you proceed to Anyi, Sima Yi will have to receive you. Observe his movements carefully and you will be able to seize him when he comes before your carriage. It should work." Cao Rui approved the plan and commanded Cao Zhen to assume authority over the government. Taking personal command of the Royal Guard, one hundred thousand strong, Cao Rui went directly to Anyi.

Sima Yi, unaware of the real reason for the Son of Heaven's visit and wishing to impress him with the extent of his power, put his armed forces in excellent order and led tens of thousands forth to welcome Cao Rui. A trusted attendant said to the Emperor, "Sima Yi is bringing more than one hundred thousand men to meet us. His real intent is to rebel." Cao Rui hurriedly ordered Cao Xiu to advance with troops and meet Yi in the field. When Sima Yi saw the army coming toward him, he assumed the Emperor was with it; he bowed low at the roadside to greet him. Cao Xiu came forward and said, "Sima Yi, you are one of those whom the late Emperor charged with the care of his heir apparent, now our sovereign. Why are you in rebellion?"

Sima Yi turned pale and sweat poured from him as he asked for an explanation. Cao Xiu recounted the preceding events, and Sima Yi said, "This is the work of Riverlands and Southland agents trying to turn an emperor and a loyal subject into mortal enemies so that they can exploit the

chaos and attack us. I shall have to see the Son of Heaven and clarify this." Sima Yi ordered his army to withdraw. Then he went to Cao Rui's carriage and, bowing abjectly, tearfully addressed his sovereign: "Your late father entrusted you to me, and my thoughts could never be but wholly loyal. These slanders against me are the treachery of the Southland and the Riverlands. Grant me command of an expeditionary force, and I will defeat first Shu and then Wu to requite the late Emperor's and Your Majesty's grace and to manifest my loyalty."

Cao Rui, unsure what to do, made no decision. Hua Xin addressed the Emperor: "He should not have military authority. Relieve him of office and send him home at once." Accordingly, Cao Rui stripped Sima Yi of his office and ordered him back to his village. He gave Cao Xin command of the armed forces of Yong and Liang and returned to Luoyang.

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Spies soon reported these events in the Riverlands, and Kongming received the news with delight. "I have long wanted to wage war against Wei," he said, "but could do nothing with Sima Yi leading the army in Yong and Liang. Now that he has fallen victim to this trap, my worries are over."

The next day the Second Emperor held court early in the day. Kongming stepped forth and in front of the grand assembly submitted a memorial to the sovereign entitled "Petition on Taking the Field." It read:

Permit your servant, Liang, to observe: the late sovereign was taken from us when his life's work, the restoration of the Han, remained unfinished. Today, in a divided empire, our third, the province of Yizhou, war-worn and under duress, faces a season of crisis that threatens our very survival. Despite this, the officials at court persevere in their tasks, and loyal-minded officers throughout the realm dedicate themselves to you because one and all they cherish the memory of the exceptional treatment they enjoyed from the late sovereign and wish to repay it in service to Your Majesty.

Truly this is a time to widen your sagely audience in order to enhance the late Emperor's glorious virtue and foster the morale of your dedicated officers. It would be unworthy of Your Majesty to demean yourself by resorting to ill-chosen justifications that would block the avenues of loyal remonstrance.

The royal court and the ministerial administration constitute a single government.⁹ Both must be judged by one standard. Those who do evil and violate the codes, as well as those who are loyal and good, must receive their due from the proper authorities. This will make manifest Your Majesty's fair and enlightened governance. Let no unseemly bias lead to different rules for the court and the administration.

Privy counselors and imperial attendants like Guo Youzhi, Fei Yi, and Dong Yun are all solid, reliable men, loyal of purpose, pure in motive. The late Emperor selected them for office so that they would serve Your Majesty after his demise. In my own humble opinion, consulting these men on palace affairs great or small before action is taken will prevent errors and shortcomings and maximize advantages. Xiang Chong, a general of fine character and fair-minded conduct, profoundly versed in military matters, proved himself in battle during the previous reign, and the late Emperor pronounced him capable. That is why the assembly

has recommended him for overall command. In my humble opinion, General Xiang Chong should be consulted on all military matters large or small to ensure harmony in the ranks and the judicious use of personnel.¹⁰

The Former Han thrived because its emperors stayed close to worthy vassals and far from conniving courtiers. The opposite policy led the Later Han to ruin. Whenever the late Emperor discussed this problem with me, he decried the failings of Emperors Huan and Ling. Privy Counselors Guo Youzhi and Fei Yi, Secretary Chen Zhen, Senior Adviser Zhang Yi, and Military Counselor Jiang Wan are all men of shining integrity and unshakable devotion. I beg Your Majesty to keep close to them and to trust them, for that will strengthen our hopes for the resurgence of the house of Han.

I began as a common man, toiling in my fields in Nanyang, doing what I could to keep body and soul together in an age of disorder and taking no interest in making a name for myself among the lords of the realm. Though it was beneath the dignity of the late Emperor to do so, he honored my thatched cottage to solicit my counsel on the events of the day. Grateful for his regard, I responded to his appeal and threw myself heart and soul into his service.

Hard times followed for the cause of the late Emperor. I assumed my duties at a critical moment for our defeated army, accepting assignment in a period of direst danger. Now twenty-one years have passed. The late Emperor always appreciated my meticulous caution and, as the end neared, placed his great cause in my hands. Since that moment, I have tormented myself night and day lest I prove unworthy of his trust and thus discredit his judgment.

That is why I crossed the River Lu in the summer heat and penetrated the barren lands of the Man. Now, the south subdued, our arms sufficing, it behooves me to marshal our soldiers to conquer the northern heartland and do my humble best to remove the hateful traitors, restore the house of Han, and return it to the former capital. This is the way I mean to honor my debt to the late Emperor and fulfill my duty to Your Majesty.

As for weighing the advantages of internal policy and making loyal recommendations to Your Majesty, that is the responsibility of Guo Youzhi, Fei Yi, and Dong Yun. My only desire is to obtain and execute your commission to chasten the traitors and restore the Han. Should I prove unfit, punish my offense and report it to the spirit of the late Emperor. If those three vassals fail to sustain Your Majesty's virtue, then their negligence should be publicized and censured.¹¹

Your Majesty, take counsel with yourself and consult widely on the right course. Examine and adopt sound opinions, and never forget the last edict of the late Emperor. Overwhelmed with gratitude for the favor I have received from you, I now depart on a distant campaign. Blinded by my tears falling on this petition, I write I know not what.¹²

After reading the memorial, the Second Emperor said, "Prime minister and second father, your southern campaign was marked by ordeal and hardship, and you have still to settle down after your recent return. A northern campaign will strain you physically and mentally." Kongming replied, "My devotion to the late Emperor's charge to assist his heir remains undiminished. With the south pacified, we are free of internal troubles and must chasten the traitors and win back the north; this opportunity may never come again." Suddenly from the ranks Grand Historian Qiao Zhou stepped forth and

addressed the Emperor, "Last night I was watching the heavenly correspondences: signs to the north suggest the height of vigor; the northern stars are doubly bright. This is no time to plan action there." Turning to Kongming, he went on, "Your Excellency has a deep knowledge of the constellations. Why do you persist?" Kongming answered, "The way of Heaven changes constantly. No one can cling to its patterns. I am going to post our forces in Hanzhong and observe the enemy's movements before advancing." Qiao Zhou's earnest objections were ignored.¹³

Kongming left Guo Youzhi, Dong Yun, and Fei Yi behind as privy counselors with authority over palace affairs. Xiang Chong remained as chief general with command of the Royal Guard. Jiang Wan was made military adviser. Zhang Yi, senior adviser, was put in charge of the affairs of the prime minister's office. Du Qiong became court counselor. Du Wei and Yang Hong were appointed to the Secretariat. Meng Guang and Lai Min were made libationers, Yin Mo and Li Zhuan scholars, Xi Zheng and Fei Shi secretaries, and Qiao Zhou became grand historian and archivist. Counting palace and administrative, civil and military personnel, there were over one hundred officials in charge of the affairs of the kingdom of Shu.¹⁴

Kongming received the edict from the Emperor and returned to his quarters; he summoned his commanders and assigned them their commands.

Forward command: General Wei Yan, controller of the North, commander of the Ministerial Forces, imperial inspector of Liangzhou, and lord of a Capital Precinct
Chief inspector of the forward command: Zhang Ni, governor of Fufeng
Garrison command: Subordinate General Wang Ping
Rear command: General Li Hui, protector of the Han and governor of Jianning; and Li Hui's lieutenant, General Lü Yi, stabilizer of Remote Regions and governor of Hanzhong
Grain transport and command of the left army: General Who Calms the North Ma Dai, lord of Chencang; and Ma Dai's lieutenant, Flying Guard General Liao Hua
Command of the right army: General Who Exerts Might Ma Zhong, lord of Bo-yang precinct; and General Who Soothes the Barbarians Zhang Ni, honorary lord of the capital
Acting director of the central army: Chief General of Chariots and Cavalry Liu Yan, lord of Duxiang
Central military inspector: General Who Flourishes Armed Might Deng Zhi
Adviser of the central army: General Ma Su, protector of Distant Regions
Forward general: Yuan Lin, lord of a Capital Precinct
Left general: Wu Yi, lord of Gaoyang
Right general: Gao Xiang, lord of Xuandu
Rear general: Wu Ban, lord of Anle
Office of senior adviser: General Who Guides the Army Yang Yi Forward general: General Liu Ba, conqueror of the South
Forward army personnel officer: Subordinate Commander Xu Yun, lord of Hancheng precinct
Left army personnel officer: Dedicated Imperial Corps Commander Ding Xian Right army personnel officer: Subordinate General Liu Min Rear army personnel officer: Imperial Corps Commander Directing the Army Guan Yong
Acting military counselor: Imperial Corps Commander Who Manifests Armed Might Hu Ji
Acting military counselor: General Who Remonstrates Yan Yan

Acting military counselor: Subordinate General Cuan Xi

Acting military counselors: Lieutenant General Du Yi, Imperial Corps Commander for Strategy

Du Qi, and Provincial Commander Who Guides Foreign Peoples Sheng Bo

Army aides: Imperial Corps Commander for Strategy Fan Qi

Secretary for the army director: Fan Jian

Prime minister's chief clerk: Dong Jue

Left guard of the command tent: Prancing Charger General Guan Xing

Right guard of the command tent: Winged Tiger General Zhang Bao

All of the above-mentioned officials were under the authority of Prime Minister Zhuge Liang, first field marshal for the pacification of the north, lord of Wuxiang, and protector of the Riverlands with responsibility for domestic and foreign affairs.

When Kongming had completed his dispositions, he sent instructions to Li Yan and other commanders defending the gateways to the Riverlands to bar any Southland forces. Then he selected the third cyclical day of the third month of Jian Xing 5 to commence the expedition against the north.¹⁵ Suddenly, a veteran commander came forward in the command tent and said sternly, "Though advanced in years, I still have the valor of a Lian Po and the heroism of Ma Yuan, two men of antiquity who did not accept the limitations of age. Why have you passed me by?" The assembly turned to Zhao Zilong. Kongming said, "Since our return from the southern campaign, Ma Chao has died of illness. I miss him as I would miss a lost brother. Now you, General, are advanced in years. If anything should go amiss and affect your heroic name, morale throughout the Riverlands would suffer." Zhao Zilong responded impatiently, "Since becoming the late Emperor's follower I have never shied from battle. I have always been the first to meet the enemy. For a self-respecting warrior to die on the field is an honor, not a cause for regret. I volunteer for the vanguard of the forward army."

Kongming was unable to dissuade him. "If you refuse me," Zhao Zilong went on, "I will dash out my brains before your eyes." "To serve in the vanguard," Kongming said, "you will need a backup." Before Kongming could finish, a man said, "Though of little ability, I volunteer to help the veteran general defeat the enemy." Delighted by the offer, Kongming turned to the speaker: it was Deng Zhi. Next, Kongming selected five thousand crack troops and ten lieutenant commanders to back up Zhao Zilong and Deng Zhi.

When Kongming went forth with the main army, the Second Emperor and his entire court escorted him ten *li* beyond the north gate. Kongming took leave of his sovereign and led the army toward Hanzhong. His flags and banners covered the plain; his spears and halberds stood thick as a forest.¹⁶

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Wei border stations, informed of these developments, sent reports to Luoyang. They arrived as Cao Rui was holding court; his attendants addressed him: "Border officers report that Zhuge Liang has set out with his host—more than three hundred thousand strong now camped in Hanzhong—and that Zhao Zilong and Deng Zhi have already entered our territory." Cao Rui was astonished and asked his officials, "Who will take the lead in driving off the Riverlands forces?" One man rose in response and said, "Since my father's death in the fighting in Hanzhong, my own undying hatred has remained

unsatisfied. If Riverlands troops have crossed our borders, I volunteer to lead the valiant commanders of my own unit—to which I pray Your Majesty will add troops from west of the pass—in destroying the enemy. To die serving the dynasty and striving to avenge my father will be to die with no regret."

The assembly turned to Xiahou Mao (Zixiu), son of Xiahou Yuan.¹⁷ Xiahou Mao had a fiery temper. He was also extremely stingy. As a young boy he was adopted by Xiahou Dun. Later, when Xiahou Yuan was killed by Huang Zhong, Cao Cao was moved to invite him to become an imperial son-in-law through marriage to his daughter, Princess Qinghe. Thus, he enjoyed the court's respect and had a military command though he had never seen battle.

In response to Xiahou Mao's offer to lead the expedition, Cao Rui appointed him first field marshal. Cao Rui also ordered several armies in the region west of the pass to proceed against the Riverlanders. Minister of the Interior Wang Lang objected, however. "This will not do," he said. "Imperial Son-in-Law Xiahou has no experience in the field and should not be given so important a command. Moreover, Your Majesty should be cautious about engaging Zhuge Liang; he's a shrewd strategist thoroughly versed in the ways of war." Xiahou Mao denounced his critic, saying, "I'd hate to think that the minister of the interior is in league with Zhuge Liang, or perhaps serving as a collaborator. As a child I studied warfare by my father's side. It is an art I know perfectly well. Will you make fun of my age? If I do not take Zhuge Liang alive, I vow never to return to the Son of Heaven!" Wang Lang and the others dared say no more.

Xiahou Mao took leave of the ruler of Wei and went immediately to Chang'an to see to the transfer of two hundred thousand men for the war with Kongming. Indeed:

Given the white banner that directs the army,
Could this callow youth command his forces on the field?

Could he conquer the warriors of the west?

READ ON.



*Zhao Zilong Slaughters Five Generals;
Zhuge Liang Snares Three Cities*

KONGMING ADVANCED TO MIANYANG. On the way he had come to the tomb of Ma Chao and offered sacrifice to his memory; attired in mourning, Ma Dai, Ma Chao's younger cousin, had assisted. After the ceremony Kongming had returned to camp to plan the next phase of the invasion.

Mounted scouts brought Kongming fresh news: "The ruler of Wei, Cao Rui, has sent Imperial Son-in-Law Xiahou Mao² against us; several field armies, mobilized in the land within the passes, support him." Wei Yan went directly to the command tent and proposed a plan: "Xiahou Mao, the pampered child of a wealthy family, is an incapable coward. I request five thousand crack troops to follow the route out of Baozhong and eastward along the Qinling Mountains. Once I turn north at Zi-Wu Pass, I'll be ten days from Chang'an. When Xiahou Mao learns of this swift approach, he will vacate the city, head for the military depots at Broad Gate to the northwest, and flee. I will move in from the east, and Your Excellency can advance in force from Ye Gorge. This way we can take everything west of Xianyang³ in a single action."

Kongming smiled and said, "This method leaves too much to chance. You do the northerners an injustice to say they have no capable men. If someone there were to propose intercepting you in a remote part of the mountains, your five thousand troops could be lost and the morale of the whole army gravely impaired. We cannot adopt your plan." Wei Yan responded: "If Your Excellency's troops advance on the main road, the enemy will be able to mobilize all its forces within the passes to slow us down. With time working against us, we will never take the northern heartland." Kongming answered, "I am going to take the flat road from Longyou and move on from there, as accepted military tactics dictate, for that will assure victory." And so—to Wei Yan's dismay—Kongming set aside his plan and issued Zhao Zilong the order to advance.⁴

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In Chang'an, Xiahou Mao had gathered several armies; one of their leaders, a ranking general from Xiliang, was Han De, an expert at wielding a "mountain-splitting battle-axe" and a man of supreme courage. He had arrived with eighty thousand Qiang troops and presented himself to Xiahou Mao, who rewarded him richly and sent him to the vanguard. Han De had four sons, all masters of the martial arts and superior in horsemanship and archery. The eldest was Han Ying, the second Han Yao, the third Han Qiong, and the fourth Han Qi. Han De and his four sons together with their eighty thousand Qiang troops took the road to Phoenix Call Mountain, where they encountered the Riverlands army.

The two armies consolidated their formations. Han De rode forth flanked by his four sons.

"Traitor to the dynasty!" Han De shouted, "how dare you violate our border?" A wrathful Zhao Zilong raised his spear and raced forth, challenging Han De to single combat. The eldest son, Han Ying, charged out to meet him. The clash was brief. Zhao Zilong thrust his man through, and he dropped from his horse. Next Han Yao, the second son, took the field, flourishing his sword.

Zhao Zilong displayed the ferocity and power for which he was famed, and Han Yao fell back, shaken by Zilong's spirit and energy. The third son, Han Qiong, charged out with double-bladed halberd to assist his brother. Zhao Zilong was utterly unfazed, and his spear handling never missed a stroke. The fourth son, Han Qi, seeing that his two brothers could not subdue Zhao Zilong, charged onto the field wheeling a pair of sun-and-moon swords. The three surrounded Zhao Zilong, who fought unaided from the center. When Han Qi dropped wounded from his horse and a lieutenant commander rode out from Han De's line to save the fallen general, Zhao Zilong withdrew, his spear raised behind him.

Han Qiong put his halberd by and shot three arrows in swift succession, but Zhao Zilong deflected them neatly with his spear. Furious, Han Qiong picked up his halberd again and gave chase. But a single arrow from Zhao Zilong caught him in the forehead, and he fell dead. Han Yao now came forth, his sword carried high to cut down Zhao Zilong. Zhao Zilong threw down his spear and drew his own sword; he captured Han Yao alive and took him back to his line. Then he galloped out again and took a heavy toll of the enemy with his spear.

Han De, seeing his four sons lost at Zhao Zilong's hands, fled in panic back to his line. The Qiang troops had long known Zhao Zilong's name and had now seen that his splendid valor was undiminished. Who had the courage to face him? Wherever Zhao Zilong struck, the enemy gave way. A single mounted warrior, Zhao Zilong plunged here and thrust there as if moving through undefended land. Later a poet left these lines in his praise:

Who could forget Changshan's Zhao Zilong,
Winning his laurels even at three-score-ten?
He breaks the enemy line—four generals down! —
Unchanged since he saved his lord at Dangyang town.

Seeing Zhao Zilong's triumph, Deng Zhi led the Riverlands troops in a sudden attack on the Qiang, who fled in defeat. Barely escaping Zhao Zilong, Han De threw down his armor and ran off. Zhao Zilong and Deng Zhi rallied their men and returned to camp. Deng congratulated Zhao Zilong: "General, at three-score-ten, you still have the brilliance and the courage of the old days. Your exploits before the lines are something rare in this age." Zhao Zilong replied, "His Excellency wouldn't use me because of my years; I wanted to show him what I could do." He detailed a man to take custody of Han Yao, and he reported the victory to Kongming.⁵

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Han De led his troops back to Xiahou Mao and reported the painful defeat. Xiahou Mao took command himself and went to oppose Zhao Zilong; Riverlands scouts reported his arrival. Zhao Zilong, spear held high, brought a thousand men to Phoenix Call Mountain and deployed them in front. That day Xiahou Mao wore a gilded helmet and rode a white horse. Carrying a large saber, he stood

beneath the banners at the entrance to his line. The sight of Zhao Zilong, spear raised, charging back and forth on his prancing horse, stirred the fight in him. But Han De said, "I shall avenge my four sons!" And he rode straight for Zhao Zilong, flourishing his mountain-splitting battle-axe. With furious energy Zhao Zilong raised his spear and met his foe. The fight was brief. The spear went up and then sank into Han De. He fell dead from his horse. Zhao Zilong next made swiftly for Xiahou Mao, who ducked back into his line.

Under fresh attacks directed by Deng Zhi, the Wei troops suffered further losses. They fell back ten *li* and camped. Xiahou Mao hastily took counsel with his commanders. "Though Zhao Zilong's name had long been known to me," he said, "I had never seen him face-to-face. Now he is old; but seeing the hero in action, I can well believe the legend of his triumph at Steepslope in Dangyang. It seems that no one is his match. What shall we do?" The military adviser Cheng Wu (the son of Cheng Yu) put forth a proposal: "Zhao Zilong has courage, but no strategy; he poses no real threat. Tomorrow, Chief Commander, lead the troops out again after two flank contingents have been placed in ambush, then retreat to entice Zhao Zilong into the trap. You, Chief Commander, can climb a hill and direct the forces surrounding the enemy. As the multiple rings close around them, Zhao Zilong will be taken." Xiahou Mao adopted this plan and sent Dong Xi with thirty thousand to the left, and Xue Ze with another thirty thousand to the right; the two established their ambush positions.

The next day Xiahou Mao, gongs, drums, flags, and streamers all in order, led forth his army. Zhao Zilong and Deng Zhi met him in the field. Deng Zhi on horseback turned to Zhao Zilong and said, "Yesterday the northern troops fled after a major defeat. Their return today must be a trick. Take care, old veteran!" "The babe had the stink of mother's milk about him," Zhao Zilong replied. "It is nothing. I will take him today." With that he raced ahead.

The Wei general Pan Sui met him in combat but fled after a brief clash. Zhao Zilong gave chase. Eight commanders from the northern side rode forth to engage him. They let Xiahou Mao run by first, then one after another the eight followed in his tracks. Zhao Zilong, riding on the momentum, closed in for the kill, Deng Zhi following close behind.

When Zhao Zilong entered the ambush site, he heard thunderous shouts on every side. Deng Zhi urgently gathered his men and retreated as Dong Xi and Xue Ze fell upon Zhao Zilong's men from two sides. Deng Zhi had too few troops to rescue Zhao Zilong. Caught in the middle, he fought fiercely on all sides; but the Wei lines only grew more dense. At the same time Zhao Zilong had only a thousand men in his command. He fought his way to the slope of a hill, on top of which he saw Xiahou Mao directing the northern army, pointing east when he headed east, west when he headed west. Zhao Zilong could not break through the enemy lines, and so he headed uphill.

Zhao Zilong was midway up the slope when timber and other missiles came hurtling down, checking his advance. Held down from early morning until dusk, he dismounted, intending to rest and wait for the moon to rise before resuming the struggle. Zhao Zilong was sitting without his armor as the moon came up. Suddenly from four sides flames shot skyward; drums roared in the air, and arrows and stones came raining down on him again. The Wei soldiers closed in, shouting, "Surrender now, Zhao!" Zhao Zilong swiftly mounted and took on the foe. But on all sides the northmen pressed closer, and crossbow bolts flew toward him with increasing frequency from every corner. His forces pinned, Zhao Zilong looked up and sighed, "I chose not to retire, and now it is over for me!"

Suddenly from the northeast voices rang out in the air; the northern soldiers began to break and scatter as a band of warriors attacked. Leading them was a commander with an eighteen-span spear in

his grasp and a human head hanging from his horse's neck. It was Zhang Bao! Seeing Zhao Zilong, he said, "His Excellency sensed something might go wrong, General, and sent me with five thousand men to support you. When I heard you were in trouble, I cut through the encirclement and slew the Wei general, Xue Ze, who was blocking the road." Zhao Zilong was overjoyed. He and Zhang Bao cut their way out of the northwest corner.

The two watched amazed as the Wei troops flung down their spears and fled before another band of soldiers that was outside the enemy line and cutting their way in, shouting fiercely. The general at their head wielded a crescent-moon blade, Green Dragon; a human head swung from his free hand: it was Guan Xing. "The prime minister charged me to bring five thousand here in case the veteran general ran into trouble and needed support," Guan Xing said. "Just now," he went on, "I met up with the Wei general Dong Xi and cut him down. This is his head. His Excellency is close behind and should be arriving momentarily." "The extraordinary service you two generals have rendered," Zhao Zilong said, "now gives us the opportunity to capture Xiahou Mao and achieve our goal. What do you say?" At these words Zhang Bao started off with his band, and Guan Xing followed, saying, "I intend to distinguish myself as well."

Turning to his attendants, Zhao Zilong said, "If those two nephews of mine thirst for fame, how can a senior general of the royal house like me, a venerable vassal of the court, show any less zeal? What do I care for the days left to me, if I can requite the love of the former Emperor!" So saying, Zhao Zilong joined the effort to catch Xiahou Mao.

That night the three armies attacked and defeated the northern troops in battle. Deng Zhi joined the fighting, which went on until the field was strewn with corpses and drenched with blood. Xiahou Mao was not a resourceful man. Young and inexperienced in war, he responded to the rout of his forces by fleeing to Nan'an district with a hundred or more of the valiant cavaliers under him, whereupon the mass of Wei soldiers, left leaderless, scurried from the field themselves.

Zhang Bao and Guan Xing followed Xiahou Mao to Nan'an. Entering the city, Xiahou Mao sealed the gates and posted guards. When Guan Xing and Zhang Bao arrived, they surrounded the city. Zhao Zilong arrived shortly after, and the three generals besieged Nan'an on three sides. In a short while Deng Zhi too reached Nan'an. The siege went on for ten days, but the defenders continued to hold out. Suddenly it was reported that the prime minister had come with the central army after leaving the rear army in Mianyang, the left army in Yangping, and the right army in Shicheng. Zhao Zilong, Deng Zhi, Guan Xing, and Zhang Bao came to receive Kongming and discuss their failure to take the city.

Kongming went in a small carriage to the city wall and examined the situation closely. Then he returned to his tent and seated himself. The commanders stood in a circle around him, awaiting orders. Kongming said, "Its deep moat and steep walls make this city difficult to attack. In any event, Nan'an is not my main concern. If you remain here too long, I am afraid the Wei will take Hanzhong by other routes and endanger our forces." Deng Zhi protested, "But Xiahou Mao is an imperial son-in-law. His capture would be worth more to us than beheading a hundred of their commanders. How can we let him go when we have him?" "I have an idea," Kongming answered. "West of here is Tian-shui. To the north, Anding. Who are the governors of these two districts?" A spy replied, "Ma Zun is governor of Tianshui, Cui Liang of Anding." Delighted, Kongming summoned Wei Yan and gave him certain instructions. Next, he called Guan Xing and Zhang Bao to give them their instructions. Last, he called two trusted officers and instructed them. Every commander led his men off to carry out his assignment. Meanwhile, Kongming remained outside the walls of Nan'an, ordering the soldiers to

heap up twigs and dry grass at the base of the wall and to proclaim that they were going to burn the city. Inside, the Wei troops laughed bravely at the threat.

Cui Liang, governor of Anding, however, was apprehensive about the Riverlands siege of Nan'an and Xiahou Mao's plight. Accordingly, he detailed four thousand men to defend his own city. Suddenly a man arrived from a southerly direction, claiming to have secret information. Questioned by the governor, the man said, "I am Pei Xu, a confidential agent for Chief Commander Xiahou Mao. My orders are to seek the assistance of Tianshui and your city of Anding for the emergency in Nan'an. Every day from the wall we have signaled with fire and have anticipated relief from the two district towns, but nothing has come. I have been sent through the lines to report our condition to you. Raise an army at once to assist us. If the chief commander sees troops from the two towns, he will open the gates and join the battle too." "Do you have a document from the chief commander?" Cui Liang asked. Pei Xu produced a letter, now soaked in sweat after being held against his skin. He let the governor read it quickly and then headed for Tianshui on a fresh horse.

The second day another rider came to announce that the governor of Tianshui had sent troops to relieve Nan'an, and he called for swift assistance from Anding. Cui Liang conferred with his ministers, who argued, "If we send no relief, we will lose Nan'an, and the imperial son-in-law will be doomed. Our two towns will have to answer for it. We have no choice." Cui Liang consequently mustered a force and, leaving Anding guarded by civilian officials, set out on the main road for Nan'an. He saw flames rising into the sky in the distance and urged his force to make haste.

When Cui Liang came within fifty *li* of Nan'an, he suddenly heard a great tumult both before and behind him. Mounted scouts reported, "Guan Xing has cut off the road ahead. Zhang Bao is coming from behind." The Anding troops fled in fear. Cui Liang panicked; he led a hundred of his own men in retreat, and by desperate fighting they managed to flee to Anding by back roads. But when they reached the city wall, they were greeted by barrages of arrows. Wei Yan, the Riverlands general, shouted down, "Your city is in my hands! Surrender at once." Wei Yan had disguised his troops as Anding men and in the dead of the night had fooled the guards into opening the gate to them. The Riverlanders had then entered and taken the town.

In desperation Cui Liang fled toward Tianshui. But before he had made one stage of the march, he found the road ahead barred by a band of soldiers holding a broad banner aloft. Beneath it was a carriage carrying a man, sitting poised, with bound hair and a feather fan, a Taoist robe and a crane-feather cloak. Recognizing Kongming, Cui Liang turned and fled. Guan Xing and Zhang Bao pursued with their men, calling out, "Surrender now!" Cui Liang, encircled now by Riverlands troops, could only comply, and he returned with Guan Xing and Zhang Bao to the main camp.

Kongming treated Cui Liang as an honored guest and said to him, "The governor of Nan'an and you are close friends, I believe?" "Governor Yang Ling is a cousin of Yang Fu. The governor is from the neighboring district. Our relations are extremely close," Cui Liang responded. Kongming continued, "I would trouble Your Honor to go into Nan'an and convince Yang Ling to seize Xiahou Mao. Is it possible?" "If Your Excellency orders me to go," Cui Liang answered, "pull back your troops for the time being, and I will go into the city to persuade him." Kongming approved and immediately ordered all contingents to withdraw twenty *li* and camp.

Cui Liang rode to the wall of Nan'an and was admitted into the city. He presented himself before the governor and explained the situation fully. Yang Ling said, "We cannot turn against the ruler of Wei whose favor we have enjoyed. Let's fight fire with fire." Yang Ling had Cui Liang inform Xiahou

Mao of the circumstances. Xiahou Mao responded, "What plan should we use?" Yang Ling said, "Tell them I will surrender the city. We will trick them into entering and will slaughter them once they are inside."

Accordingly, Cui Liang left the city, met with Kongming, and said, "Yang Ling will surrender and allow your army to enter Nan'an and capture Xiahou Mao—a step Yang Ling has not taken only because his force is too small." "That should be easy enough to remedy," Kongming answered. "You already have the more than one hundred who have surrendered. Conceal among them Riverlands commanders disguised as Anding soldiers; and after entering the town, hide them in Xiahou Mao's quarters. Then secretly arrange with Yang Ling to deliver the city in the middle of the night so that our soldiers outside can coordinate with yours inside."

Cui Liang reflected, "If I don't take their commanders, Kongming will get suspicious. Anyway, we can kill them once inside, raise the fire signal, and trick Kongming into coming in." And so Cui Liang accepted Kongming's suggestion. Next, Kongming told Cui Liang, "I will first send my most trusted commanders Guan Xing and Zhang Bao to follow you in. To allay Xiahou Mao's suspicions, simply pose as a rescue force entering the city. The moment you signal with fire, I will come in myself and capture Xiahou Mao."

It was nearly dark. Guan Xing and Zhang Bao had Kongming's secret instructions. Armed and mounted, they mingled with the Anding soldiers and followed Cui Liang to Nan'an. Inside, Yang Ling had suspended a platform over the city wall. Now he leaned against its protective railing. "Where is your army from?" he asked. Cui Liang responded, "We are a rescue force from Anding." Cui Liang shot an arrow onto the wall bearing a secret message: "Zhuge Liang has sent two commanders to wait in ambush in our city and collaborate with the outside force. Remain calm so our plan is not divulged. When they are inside, we can deal with them."

Yang Ling showed the letter to Xiahou Mao and explained the situation. Xiahou Mao said, "Since he has fallen for the trap, have a hundred men armed with swords and axes hide in the government buildings. If the two commanders following Governor Cui Liang dismount there, shut the gates and kill them; light a fire on the wall, lure Kongming in, and spring the ambush. Zhuge Liang can be taken!" These arrangements completed, Yang Ling returned to the wall and said, "If these are Anding troops, then let them in." Guan Xing followed Cui Liang into the town; Zhang Bao followed. When Yang Ling descended to welcome them inside the gate, Guan Xing's arm rose, his blade struck, and Yang Ling fell dead. Stunned, Cui Liang turned his horse and raced to the drawbridge. Zhang Bao shouted to him, "Halt, traitor! How could you ever fool His Excellency?" With a single thrust of his spear, he killed Cui Liang. Guan Xing had already given the fire signal from the wall, and the Riverlands troops were swarming in. Xiahou Mao, caught unprepared, opened the southern gate and tried to fight his way out; but a band of troops led by Wang Ping cut him off. After a brief struggle, Wang Ping captured Xiahou Mao. All his followers had been killed.

Kongming entered Nan'an and informed the people of the change of rule; his highly disciplined troops committed no offense against the city residents. The Riverlands commanders had rendered exceptional service; and Xiahou Mao had been imprisoned in a cage-cart. Deng Zhi asked Kongming, "How did Your Excellency come to know Cui Liang's plan?" "I knew he never meant to surrender," Kongming replied, "so I purposely sent him back into the town, certain that he would tell Xiahou Mao everything he had agreed to with me and devise countermeasures. When he came to me again, his deceit was evident; I sent the two commanders back with him to reassure him."

"If Yang Ling had been sincere, he would have refused the commanders. He took them eagerly only to avoid arousing my suspicions, thinking he would have ample time to get rid of them once inside the city and that we would enter unsuspecting if we had those two on the inside to rely on. But I had already given Guan Xing and Zhang Bao secret orders to take care of them once inside the gate, where there would be no preparations. Then my army followed directly after, something they had not counted on at all." The Riverlands commanders expressed great admiration for Kongming's planning. "To fool Cui Liang," Kongming continued, "I had my trusted agent impersonate the Wei commander Pei Xu. Another agent was sent to deceive the governor at Tianshui, but he has not returned, for reasons still unknown. Now we are in a position to take Tianshui." Leaving Wu Yi to defend Nan'an and Liu Yan to defend Anding, Kongming dispatched Wei Yan with a force to capture the district of Tianshui.

The governor of Tianshui was Ma Zun. Hearing that Xiahou Mao was trapped in Nan'an, he had convened his council. Liang Xu of the Merit Bureau, Yin Shang, his first secretary, and Liang Qian, the official clerk, as well as others argued, "Imperial Son-in-Law Xiahou Mao is a part of the royal family; the slightest negligence will be punished as willful indifference to his fate. Governor, shouldn't you muster all the troops you have to save him?"

Ma Zun was in a quandary when Pei Xu, Xiahou Mao's trusted agent, was announced. The man entered the governor's residence, handed Ma Zun a document, and said, "Chief Commander Xiahou demands immediate relief from both Tianshui and Anding districts." So saying, he hurried away. The next day another rider arrived and announced, "The Anding force has already left. Have the governor hasten on to meet them." Ma Zun was about to call up his troops, when someone rushed in and cried, "Don't fall into Zhuge Liang's trap!" The assembly turned to Jiang Wei (Boyue), a native of Jicheng in Tianshui district.

Jiang Wei's father, Jiong, had once headed the Bureau of Merit in Tianshui but died serving the dynasty during the uprisings of the Qiang people. Since childhood Jiang Wei had read and studied widely and was a master of both military affairs and martial arts. He served his mother with unstinting filial love and had earned wide respect for it throughout the district. Later he was appointed Imperial Corps commander and in that capacity advised the governor's military force.

Jiang Wei said to Ma Zun, "I have just heard that Zhuge Liang has defeated Xiahou Mao and that Nan'an is sealed off. How could anyone have gotten out to come here? Pei Xu is a minor captain, completely unknown. We have never met him. Then there is a rider from Anding, who has no documents. As I analyze it, this man is not a Wei commander, but a Riverlands commander in disguise whose intention is to trick Your Lord-ship into leaving Tianshui. I am sure that if we leave our city undefended, they will place an ambush force close by to await the right moment to capture it." Ma Zun suddenly realized the actual situation. "If not for Jiang Wei," he said, "I would have fallen into the trap!" With a smile Jiang Wei responded, "The governor need not worry. I have a plan to capture Zhuge Liang and relieve Nan'an." Indeed:

In spinning cunning plans, one will meet one's master;
In the battle of the minds, one finds an unexpected man.⁶

Would Jiang Wei's ploy succeed?

READ ON.



***Jiang Wei Submits to Kongming;
Kongming's Invective Kills Wang Lang***

JIANG WEI OFFERED MA ZUN THIS PLAN: "Zhuge Liang's force is waiting nearby to surprise Tianshui—if he can trick us into leaving. Let me have three thousand crack troops to place in ambush on the main road. Then, Your Lordship, come out of the city with the main army, not too far—turn back after thirty *li*. The moment you see fire, we will catch the enemy between us and defeat them. Let Zhuge Liang come himself: we will capture him." Ma Zun adopted the plan, and Jiang Wei left with a crack force. After that, Ma Zun and Liang Qian led their troops out of the city to await the enemy; and Liang Xu and Yin Shang remained to guard Tianshui.

Prior to these events Kongming had sent Zhao Zilong with a company of troops to hide in the hills and wait for the governor to leave Tianshui open to attack. On the day the defending troops marched out, spies reported the move to Zhao Zilong; they also told him that civil officials but no military officers had remained behind to hold the city. Delighted, Zhao Zilong communicated the news to Zhang Yi and Gao Xiang and had them intercept Ma Zun. (Their two contingents had earlier been placed in ambush by Kongming.)

Zhao Zilong led five thousand men straight for Tianshui and, reaching the wall, shouted out, "Zhao Zilong of Changshan is here! You have fallen into a trap! Surrender the city at once and spare a bloodletting." But from the wall Liang Xu laughed aloud and said, "You have fallen into Jiang Wei's trap in case you don't know it!" As Zhao Zilong began the attack, shouts rang out and all around fire shot skyward. A young commander took the lead. His spear poised, his horse straining, he declared, "Jiang Wei of Tianshui! Here before you!"

Zhao Zilong raised his spear and took on his man. They battled several bouts. Jiang Wei's martial spirits rose; Zhao Zilong reflected in surprise, "Imagine finding such a fighter here!" As they fought on, the two Tianshui contingents led by Ma Zun and Liang Qian turned back and closed in. Zhao Zilong and his men, caught in between, forced an opening and fled. Jiang Wei pursued, but Zhang Yi and Gao Xiang came on the scene with two contingents and saw Zilong safely back.

Zhao Zilong came before Kongming and explained how the enemy had trapped him. Anxiously Kongming asked, "Who was it that saw through my scheme?" Someone from Nan'an answered, "Jiang Wei (styled Boyue) from Jicheng in Tianshui. He is a man filial to his mother, full of wisdom and courage, and as expert in civil as in military science. Truly a bold hero of the age." Zhao Zilong also gave high praise to Jiang Wei's excellent technique in spear fighting. Kongming said, "When I decided to take Tianshui, I never expected to find such a man!" He summoned the army and went forward against the city.

Meanwhile, Jiang Wei had returned and told Ma Zun: "Zhao Zilong's defeat will surely bring Kongming, and he will expect our army to be inside the city. So let us divide it into four units. I will take one and place it in ambush to the east. If the enemy comes that way, I will cut them off from behind. You, Governor, as well as Liang Qian and Yin Shang, should hide your forces outside the city; and from the wall Liang Xu can direct the defenders within." Thus, Jiang Wei completed the disposition of forces.

Wary of Jiang Wei, Kongming led the forward army himself. Nearing Tianshui, he issued an order: "We must beat the war drums the day we arrive to spur the army to advance and attack the wall. The slightest delay will hurt morale, and the attack will fail." Accordingly, the army moved directly to the base of the wall. But the Riverlanders, impressed by the strict array of flags above them, hesitated until the middle of the night. Suddenly flames shot up all around, and the cries of a vast host shook the ground. The Riverlands soldiers could not tell from which direction the enemy would strike. The clamor of the drums on the walls and the cheers of the population below heartened the northern soldiers; the westerners slunk away in disorder.

Kongming took to his horse and, protected by Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, fought his way out of the encircling force. Turning back, he saw due east a serpentine band of fiery light hovering over the enemy troops. Kongming had Guan Xing investigate. "Jiang Wei's troops," he reported. Kongming sighed deeply. "Warfare depends not on the number of one's men alone, but on how one directs them. This man's talent as a general is great."

Kongming rallied his men and returned to camp, where he pondered the situation. Then he questioned a man from Anding: "Where is Jiang Wei's mother?" The reply was, "She lives in Jicheng." Kongming summoned Wei Yan and instructed him: "Take one company and bruit it about that you are going to capture Jicheng. If Jiang Wei arrives, let him enter the city." Then Kongming asked the Anding man, "What's the key point to Tianshui?" The man replied, "Their coin and grain are in Shanggui. Conquer Shanggui and their supply line will be cut." Kongming was delighted and had Zhao Zilong attack the town. Kongming himself camped about thirty *li* away.

Word soon reached Tianshui that the Riverlands army had split into three units: one to guard the district capital, Tianshui; one to take Shanggui; and one to attack Jicheng. When Jiang Wei learned of these moves, he appealed in anguish to Ma Zun: "My mother is in Jicheng. Before anything happens to her, give me a company to rescue the town." Ma Zun granted Jiang Wei three thousand soldiers and ordered him to rescue Jicheng. Tianshui Commander Liang Qian went to Shanggui with another three thousand.

Advancing toward Jicheng, Jiang Wei encountered a band of soldiers arrayed before him; their commander was Wei Yan. The two leaders exchanged spear thrusts until Wei Yan, feigning defeat, fled the field. Jiang Wei entered the town, sealed the gates, and deployed his men defensively while he went to pay his respects to his mother. Zhao Zilong permitted Liang Qian to pass and enter Shanggui.¹

At this point Kongming had Xiahou Mao brought from Nan'an and put before him. "Do you fear death?" Kongming asked him. Xiahou Mao fell to the ground and prostrated himself, pleading for his life. "Jiang Wei of Tianshui," Kongming said, "presently guarding Jicheng, has sent a letter saying that if we spare you, the imperial-son-in-law, he will agree to surrender and submit. I am prepared to pardon you. Are you willing to go and ask Jiang Wei to accept our terms?" "More than willing," was

the reply.

Kongming accordingly provided Xiahou Mao with clothes and a saddled horse and set him free. But Xiahou Mao was unattended and uncertain of the way. Riding alone, he met up with some men running pell-mell. Questioned by Xiahou Mao, they said, "We are commoners from Jicheng. Jiang Wei has surrendered the city and gone over to Zhuge Liang. After Riverlands Commander Wei Yan torched the city and stole our goods, we fled our homes, hoping to reach Shanggui." Xiahou Mao asked further, "Who defends Tianshui?" "Governor Ma Zun," a local man responded.

Xiahou Mao turned and rode for Tianshui. He came upon another group of commoners with their children who had evidently been traveling a fair distance. They confirmed what the other refugees had told him. On reaching the wall of Tianshui, Xiahou Mao shouted up, and the men on the wall, recognizing Xiahou Mao, hastened to admit him. Surprised, Ma Zun bowed to Xiahou Mao and asked him what was going on. Mao related the story of Jiang Wei's surrender, as well as all that the refugees had told him. With a sigh Ma Zun responded, "Who would have expected Jiang Wei to betray us and join the Riverlands?" Liang Xu said to Xiahou Mao, "He must have pretended to submit in an attempt to save you, Chief Commander." But Xiahou Mao said, "Jiang Wei has submitted. What is there to 'pretend'?"

As the leaders in Tianshui pondered Jiang Wei's motives, the Riverlands troops for the second time attacked Tianshui during the first watch. Amid flames the defenders saw Jiang Wei near the wall, his spear raised, his horse reined to a halt. He shouted out, "Let Chief Commander Xiahou appear!" Xiahou Mao and Ma Zun climbed to the top of the wall to find Jiang Wei below flaunting his prowess and shouting, "I submitted for the sake of the chief commander. Why has he broken his promise?" "You have received the love of the house of Wei," Xiahou Mao retorted, "how could you surrender to the Riverlands? What promise do you speak of?" Jiang Wei answered, "What are you talking about? You're the one who wrote a letter telling me to surrender. You only want to escape and trap me! After I surrendered, they made me a high commander. It is pointless to return to Wei!" So saying, he sent his men against the town; the battle lasted until dawn.

The truth of the situation was that during the night someone had impersonated Jiang Wei. Following a plan of Kongming's, a soldier resembling Jiang Wei was ordered by Kongming to attack the city posing as the Imperial Corps commander. In the shadow-light of the fires no one detected the deception.

Next Kongming led his troops in an attack on Jicheng. Inside, grain was too scarce to keep the defending soldiers fed. From the wall surrounding Jicheng the real Jiang Wei watched the Riverlands army moving wagons and carts of grain into Wei Yan's camp and subsequently led three thousand men out of the city to try and seize the supplies. The Riverlands soldiers abandoned their burdens and fled for their lives, letting Jiang Wei take the wagons. He was about to reenter the city when a band of soldiers led by Zhang Yi cut him off. The two commanders crossed spears. After a brief clash Wang Ping, leading a company, came to Zhang Yi's aid, and Jiang Wei, too spent to resist, made his way back to Jicheng—only to find the flags of Shu flying on the walls: Wei Yan had surprised the city.

Jiang Wei forced a way through and fled to Tianshui. With hardly a dozen riders left in his command, he met and fought with Zhang Bao. After the battle, Jiang Wei had not a single follower left; he arrived alone at the gates of Tianshui and demanded entry. The defenders recognized him and quickly informed Ma Zun, who said, "He has come to trick me into opening the city," and ordered the

defenders to shower Jiang Wei with arrows. With the Riverlanders closing in from behind, Jiang Wei dashed to Shanggui.

At the wall of Shanggui, Liang Qian denounced Jiang Wei: "Traitor to your house! Do you think you can take the city by trickery? I know you have surrendered to Shu!" Fresh volleys of arrows descended. What more could Jiang Wei say? Looking at the heavens, he sighed deeply, tears standing in his eyes. Then he wheeled about and rode for Chang'an. After several *li* he came to a large, flourishing grove, out of which poured thousands of wildly yelling soldiers. At their lead, barring his way, stood Guan Xing. Jiang Wei was too fatigued, his horse too spent, to offer resistance. Again he wheeled and fled. But suddenly a small carriage came into sight from around a hillside. Binding the passenger's head was a plaited band; cloaked in crane plumes, he held a feather fan. Kongming hailed Jiang Wei: "Must you keep us waiting so long for your surrender, Jiang Wei?" Jiang Wei took stock: ahead, Kongming; behind, Guan Xing. He dismounted and surrendered. Kongming hurried down to welcome him and, taking his hand, said, "Since leaving my poor home, I have looked far and wide for an able and worthy man to whom I could hand down my teachings. Alas, I never found him; but now my wish is granted." Overjoyed, Jiang Wei prostrated himself in gratitude.

Kongming and Jiang Wei returned to camp together and went into the main tent to plan the capture of Tianshui and Shanggui. "Let me write to Yin Shang and Liang Xu," Jiang Wei said, "my good friends in Tianshui. Shot over the wall, the letters should create enough confusion in the city for us to take it." Kongming approved, and Jiang Wei wrote two letters. He attached them to arrows, rode to the base of the wall, and shot them over. A petty officer picked them up and showed them to Ma Zun.

Perplexed, Ma Zun conferred with Xiahou Mao. "Liang Xu and Yin Shang," he said, "are agents collaborating with Jiang Wei. Chief Commander, we must do something at once." "Have them killed," Xiahou Mao answered. Yin Shang learned of Xiahou Mao's decision and said to Liang Xu, "Better for us to deliver the city to the Riverlands and surrender—that at least will earn us promotion." During the night Xiahou Mao called the two to a meeting several times; they knew things had come to a head. Fully armored, weapons in hand, they rode with their men to the city gate and threw it open. The Riverlands soldiers entered.

Panicked, Xiahou Mao and Ma Zun led several hundred men out the west gate and headed toward Qianghu as Liang Xu and Yin Shang welcomed Kongming into the city. Kongming first reassured the population, then asked the commanders how to capture Shanggui. Liang Xu replied, "The defender of Shanggui is my brother Liang Qian. I will invite him to surrender." Kongming was delighted.

That day Liang Xu went to Shanggui and induced Liang Qian to surrender. Kongming rewarded Qian well; he then made Liang Xu governor of Tianshui, Yin Shang prefect of Jicheng, and Liang Qian prefect of Shanggui. After completing the reorganization of the district administrations, Kongming put the troops in order for his next advance. The commanders asked, "Why not capture Xiahou Mao, Your Excellency?" "Letting him go we lose a duck. In Jiang Wei we have gained a phoenix," Kongming replied.

The taking of these three cities heightened Kongming's reputation in the region, and many joined his side. His forces in order, Kongming levied all soldiers in Hanzhong and advanced to the hills of Qishan, putting his troops within striking distance of the west bank of the River Wei. Spies carried word of these movements to Luoyang.

In the first year of the Tai He reign period (A. D. 227), Cao Rui, ruler of Wei, held court in his audience hall. A high vassal submitted a proposal: "Imperial Son-in-Law Xiahou Mao has slipped away to Qiangzhong after losing three districts, and the Riverlands army vanguard now overlooks the west bank of the Wei from Qishan. I beg you, send the army out at once and defeat the foe." Cao Rui turned in alarm to the assembly of vassals and asked, "Who can drive back the enemy for us?"² Minister of the Interior Wang Lang stepped forward and addressed the Emperor: "I remember how successful Cao Zhen was whenever the late Emperor sent him into battle. Why not make him first field marshal now, Your Majesty, to repel the Riverlands army?"

Cao Rui approved this proposal; he called in Cao Zhen and said, "My father, the late Emperor, placed me in your care. Have you the heart to sit back and watch while a Riverlands army pillages our home territory?" Cao Zhen said in response, "Deficient in talent and meagre in knowledge, I am unequal to the task." Wang Lang said, "General, as a vassal of the sacred shrines you may not refuse. Though worn out and unfit for use, I volunteer to join you." Cao Zhen continued: "In view of the great favor I have received, I shall accept. All I request is a deputy commander." "Name him yourself," Cao Rui answered. The man Cao Zhen recommended was Guo Huai (Boji) from Yangqu county in Taiyuan; he had been enfeoffed lord of Sheting and served as imperial inspector of Yongzhou. Cao Rui approved the choice.

Cao Rui appointed Cao Zhen first field marshal and presented him with the battle-axe representing imperial authority. He also appointed Guo Huai deputy commander and Wang Lang—at the age of seventy-five—director general. From the two capitals a force of two hundred thousand assembled under Cao Zhen's command. Cao Zhen named his cousin Cao Zun leader of the vanguard, and Bandit-Clearing General Zhu Zan, deputy vanguard leader. In the eleventh month of that year (early A. D. 228) Cao Rui, ruler of Wei, escorted this army beyond the west gate and out of the capital.

Cao Zhen advanced to Chang'an, crossed the River Wei, and pitched camp on the western side. The three leaders then conferred on dislodging the Riverlands forces from the hills of Qishan. Wang Lang said, "Tomorrow set the ranks in grand array exhibiting all flags. Let this old man go forth first, for a single dialogue with Zhuge Liang should suffice to convince him to submit quietly and the Riverlands army to retreat without a battle." Cao Zhen was delighted and issued orders that night: "Tomorrow, mess at the fourth watch; at daybreak, all ranks to be in place with their units and all insignia, including flags, banners, drums, and horns, in perfect order."

At this time Cao Zhen sent a man with the call to battle. The next day the two armies met and deployed in formation before the Qishan hills. The Riverlands soldiers saw that these troops were quite formidable, utterly unlike those of Xiahou Mao.

Drums and horns resounded as Minister of the Interior Wang Lang rode forth. Behind him, in the place of honor, rode Cao Zhen, the field commander, and beside him Guo Huai, his deputy. The opposing vanguards secured their positions. Advance riders raced ahead of their lines and shouted, "Let the opposing leader come forth and parley!" The bright-bannered entrance to the Riverlands army widened, and Guan Xing and Zhang Bao rode forth, one to each side, and halted; following them, teams of commanders formed a handsome line. In the center, in the shadows of the entrance banners, a four-wheeled carriage held Kongming; he sat poised, a plaited band wound around his head and a feather fan in his hand. He wore plain beige garb belted with black silk cording. Gracefully, he advanced.

Kongming raised his gaze to the three command umbrellas in front of the northern army. Each banner bore a name writ large. In the center, old and white-bearded, was the director general, Minister of the Interior Wang Lang. Kongming sized up the situation. "Wang Lang will try and talk his way around me. I must answer in kind," he mused, and he had his carriage pushed forward. The officer guarding him relayed his message: "The prime minister of the Han will speak with the minister of the interior." Wang Lang galloped out. Without leaving his carriage, Kongming folded his hands in salute, while from horseback Wang Lang bowed, reciprocating the courtesy.

Wang Lang said, "After lifelong admiration of Your Lordship's magnificent reputation, fortune rewards me with this meeting. Your Lordship knows the meaning of Heaven's Mandate and the nature of the times. Why have you put an army in the field with no justification?"

Kongming replied, "I hold an edict to chastise rebels. Is that not justification?" "By the turn of Heaven's ordained periods," Wang Lang said, "the sacred instruments of power have changed hands, reverting to a man of virtue, as must happen in the normal course of things. Since the reigns of Emperors Huan and Ling the sedition incited by the Yellow Scarves has kept the empire in turmoil. During the reign periods Chu Ping and Jian An, Dong Zhuo rebelled, and Li Jue and Guo Si continued his savage practices. Yuan Shu usurped the imperial title in Shouchun, and Yuan Shao declared himself an independent power in Ye. Liu Biao occupied Jingzhou; Lü Bu swallowed Xuzhou. As bandits and rebels arose like hornets and villainous predators hovered above, the sacred shrines stood in imminent peril, and the common people faced grave perils.

"Our great ancestor, Cao Cao, August Emperor Wu, cleared all corners of the realm and took control of its farthest reaches. Millions eagerly gave him their allegiance, and in all quarters men admired his virtue. Nor was this by dint of his power and position; it was rather because the Mandate of Heaven had found in him its proper place. The next sovereign, Cao Pi, the Emperor Wen, divine in the civil and sage in the military arts, undertook the great succession in response to Heaven, in accord with men, and in faithfulness to the model of Yao's yielding to Shun. He positioned himself in the northern heartland and presided over the whole of the realm. Did this not show Heaven's intent and man's wish? Your Lordship has nourished a great talent and possesses great abilities. You have compared yourself to Guan Zhong and to Yue Yi. It is difficult to believe that you would defy divine principle and turn against true human sentiment. You cannot have forgotten the words 'Conform to Heaven and prosper; oppose it and fall.' Today our great Wei dynasty numbers a million shields; our excellent commanders are as many as a thousand. I hardly think the flicker of a firefly in moldering hay can rival the clear moon at the zenith. Your Lordship, lay down your arms and submit as ceremonial courtesy dictates, and your enfeoffment as a lord will follow. What could be more excellent than a dynasty at peace, its people rejoicing?"

From his carriage Kongming laughed. "I would have expected loftier argument from a venerable minister of the Han court, not these debased words. I have one thing to say to all officers and men. Hear me in silence. A long time ago in the age of Emperors Huan and Ling, the succession of the royal house fell into disorder and the evils wrought by the eunuchs resulted in widespread disaster. Misgovernment of the royal house and successive years of famine engulfed the four corners of the realm in turmoil. The Yellow Scarves were followed by Dong Zhuo and his generals, Li Jue and Guo Si. They kidnaped the Emperor and plundered the people. Corrupt officials served in the royal household, wild beasts in the imperial court. Men of wolfish heart and violent conduct controlled the public highways, while craven, servile sorts held every kind of administrative office.

"The sacred shrines stand now in ruin, the common people in extremity. I have long known the record of your conduct: after dwelling by the shore of the eastern sea, you first entered office by election for filial devotion and personal integrity. It is unthinkable that you—you whose proper function was to shield your sovereign and uphold his house, to secure the Han and help the Liu to thrive—should have turned and aided renegades and rebels, plotting with them the usurpation of the dynasty! Heaven will not countenance such sins. Nothing but the taste of your flesh will satisfy the people's claim against you.

"Fortunately, Heaven decided to continue the fire-signed Han dynasty in the person of the August Emperor Zhao Lie of the Riverlands. Today I bear the imperial order of his legitimate heir to field an army and chastise the rebels. There is nothing for groveling vassals like you but to get back out of sight and to see if you can somehow salvage your own miserable means of sustenance. How dare you step before the army lines to rant about 'changes in Heaven's ordained periods'? White-haired old fool! Grey-bearded villain! When you go home to the netherworld—any day now—how will you face the twenty-four sovereigns of the Han? Back, old villain, and have the turncoats settle the score with me."

At Kongming's denunciation Wang Lang's chest heaved with rage. A loud cry broke from him, and he fell dead from his horse. A poet of later times wrote of Kongming thus:

Forth from a land once known as Qin,
With mettle to match a thousand times ten.
He came with his light and limber tongue
And lashed to death the false Wang Lang.

Kongming next pointed his fan at Cao Zhen and said, "I shall not press you. Put your troops in order, and tomorrow we will settle it." With that, he returned to his line, and the two armies retired.³

Cao Zhen had Wang Lang's body encoffined and taken back to Chang'an. Deputy Field Marshal Guo Huai said, "Zhuge Liang will surely strike tonight, expecting the army to hold mourning ceremonies. Let us make four units: two to take the mountain byroads and raid the Riverlands camp, and two to wait outside our camp to attack the enemy from the other side." Delighted, Cao Zhen said, "My thinking, exactly." He summoned Cao Zun and Zhu Zan, the two vanguard leaders, and charged them: "Take ten thousand men each and scour the area behind the Qishan hills. The moment you see Riverlands troops moving toward our camp, advance and raid theirs. If the enemy keeps its positions, withdraw. Do not risk engagement." The two left to carry out their orders.

Cao Zhen then said to Guo Huai, "Let's each take a contingent outside the camp, leaving only piles of kindling and straw and a few men inside to signal with fire should the enemy come." The commanders went their several ways and saw to their preparations.

Back in his command tent, Kongming summoned Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan for further instructions: "Take your own troops and raid the Wei camp." "Cao Zhen is too well schooled in the art of warfare," Wei Yan commented, "not to prepare for our attack during the funeral services." Kongming smiled and replied, "That is exactly what I want him to think—that we will raid his camp. He will put troops in ambush behind the hills of Qishan, waiting for us to pass so that he can attack our camp. That's why I want you two to advance, cross the back road at the foot of the mountains, and pitch camp farther along—so the enemy will feel free to attack. When we signal with fire, divide your

men into two companies. You, Wei Yan, hold the approach to the hills. Zilong, you come back ready for battle. You will meet up with the Wei army; let them run, but attack when you have the advantage. They will mostly kill one another in the confusion, giving us the victory." The two commanders departed to carry out Kongming's plan.

Next, Kongming ordered Ma Dai, Wang Ping, Zhang Yi, and Zhang Ni to take up positions in ambush on all sides of the camp and prepare to counterattack the Wei army. Kongming himself remained at the empty base where he had kindling and straw piled high to give the signal by fire. He then withdrew behind the site with a few commanders to observe.

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The Wei vanguard, Cao Zun and Zhu Zan, left camp at dusk and snaked forward. During the second watch, they spied soldiers on their left, hardly visible, moving in the distance. Cao Zun reflected, "Field Marshal Guo is really a marvel!" and urged his men forward. It was almost the third watch when he reached the Riverlands camp. Cao Zun charged in but found it empty. Assuming a trap, he retreated quickly. Flames shot up inside the camp just as his partner Zhu Zan arrived, and the two companies fell upon each other in a wild melee. Not until Cao Zun and Zhu Zan had found each other did they realize what was happening. As they hurried to regroup, shouts rang out on all sides of them, and Wang Ping, Ma Dai, Zhang Yi, and Zhang Ni closed in for the kill.

Cao Zun and Zhu Zan were leading about one hundred trusted riders toward the main road when suddenly drums and horns sounded in unison: a band of soldiers barred their way. At their head, Zhao Zilong of Changshan. "Where to, rebels?" he shouted. "Submit quickly or die!" Cao Zun and Zhu Zan fled by the nearest route, but they were accosted at once by Wei Yan's company amid shouts and cries. Utterly defeated, Cao Zun and Zhu Zan returned to their base camp. There the defenders mistook them for Riverlands soldiers and signaled with fire, causing Cao Zhen and Guo Huai to attack from either side. As the Wei forces were slaughtering one another, the real Riverlands attack began from the rear: in the center, Wei Yan; on the left, Guan Xing; on the right, Zhang Bao. They struck in force, and the Wei army retreated ten *li*, having lost many commanders.

His triumph complete, Kongming recalled his army. Cao Zhen and Guo Huai gathered up their beaten troops and returned to the camp. The two commanders shared their appraisal: "Now the Wei army is isolated, and the Shu army is stronger than ever. How can we drive them back?" Then Guo Huai said, "Defeat is a commonplace for the military man. Do not be discouraged. I have a plan to disorganize the Riverlands army and force them to flee." Indeed:

Pity the Wei leaders who, having failed in their task,
Must seek their relief from the west!

What was Guo Huai's plan?

READ ON.



Zhuge Liang Defeats the Qiang in a Snowstorm; Sima Yi Captures Meng Da in Good Time

GUO HUAI DISCLOSED HIS PLAN TO CAO ZHEN: "From the time of the Great Ancestor, Emperor Wu (Cao Cao), the Western Qiang have submitted annual tribute; Emperor Wen (Cao Pi) showed them especial kindness and generosity. Let us maintain our defense at this strategic point and send to the Qiang for help. An alliance by marriage should persuade them to strike the Riverlands army from behind as we attack in force. Engaged on two fronts, the enemy will yield!" Cao Zhen approved and sent a messenger to the Qiang.

King Cheliji of the Western Qiang had presented yearly tribute to the Han court since the era of Cao Cao. He was served on the civil side by Prime Minister Yadan, and by Marshal Yueji on the military. On arriving with Cao Zhen's letter together with gifts of gold and pearls, the Wei emissary went first to Prime Minister Yadan to deliver the ritual gifts and explain Cao Zhen's purposes. Yadan conducted the man into the presence of King Cheliji, who accepted the letter and gifts and then conferred with his chiefs. "We have long maintained an unbroken friendship with the kingdom of Wei," Yadan said to them. "Now Field Marshal Cao seeks our help and promises a marriage to strengthen the alliance. There is no reason to refuse his request." Cheliji approved and ordered Yadan and Yueji to muster one hundred and fifty thousand Qiang, warriors skilled in bow and crossbow, spear and sword, studded mace and flying hammer. They also had "iron wagons" — war chariots protected with iron armor—to transport their food and equipment. Some were drawn by camel, some by mule. Yadan and Yueji bade their king good-bye and led their troops to Xiping Pass. The Shu commander guarding the pass, Han Zhen, dispatched a report to Kongming.

Informed of the threat, Kongming asked his commanders, "Who will drive the invaders back?" Zhang Bao and Guan Xing volunteered. "How will you manage, not knowing the roads?" Kongming asked, and he summoned Ma Dai. "You know the ways of the Qiang," he said, "and have lived among them long enough to serve as a guide." Kongming called up fifty thousand well-trained men and placed them under Zhang Bao and Guan Xing; the two set out and within several days had met up with the Qiang troops. Guan Xing led a hundred horsemen up a slope and observed the enemy linking their iron-paneled wagons together and pitching campsites here and there. The wagons, on which weapons were arrayed, functioned like a barrier defending a city. Guan Xing watched for a long time; but having no plan of attack, he returned to his camp to confer with Zhang Bao and Ma Dai. Ma Dai said, "Tomorrow look for weaknesses in their formation. Then we can plan further." The next morning, their forces divided into three—Guan Xing in the center, Zhang Bao on the left, and Ma Dai on the right—they advanced together.

From the Qiang line Marshal Yueji sprang forward brave and smart, a steel hammer in his hand, a figured bow at his waist. Guan Xing motioned the three companies ahead. Suddenly, the Qiang line

parted and the iron wagons came surging through like a tide as their crossbowmen filled the air with bolts. The Riverlands troops suffered a stunning defeat, and Ma Dai and Zhang Bao, the two wings, retreated. Guan Xing's company, however, had been enveloped by the Qiang and forced toward the northwest.

Surrounded, Guan Xing thrust left and right but could not get past the wall of iron wagons. The Riverlands troops were unable to look out for one another, and Guan Xing fled, hoping to find a way out of the valley. Evening was fast approaching. He spied a cluster of black flags swarming toward him. A Qiang commander, armed with a steel hammer, shouted, "I am Marshal Yueji. Go no farther, little general!" Guan Xing dashed ahead, laying on the whip, but a swift stream blocked his way, forcing him to turn and do battle with Yueji.

Guan Xing's courage deserted him. Unable to hold his ground, he plunged into the stream. Yueji overtook him and swung his heavy hammer, striking the horse squarely on the hipbone; the horse toppled, throwing Guan Xing into the water. Suddenly he heard a voice ring out as Yueji and his horse for no apparent reason went flying into the water, too. Guan Xing struggled against the waves to get a look. There on the bank he saw a powerful general driving off the Qiang soldiers. Guan Xing raised his sword to cut down Yueji, but he leaped from the water and fled.

Guan Xing took Yueji's horse, drew it up to the bank, and rearranged the gear on it. Then hefting his sword, he mounted, all the while watching that same unknown general up ahead still pursuing the Qiang. Thinking to meet the man who had saved his life, Guan Xing rode hard after him, but as he drew close—lo! in swirls of mist he discerned the dim figure of a mighty general, his face dark as dates, his eyebrows like sleeping silkworms; in green battle gown and metal armor, he held his sword high, a Green Dragon; the horse he rode was a Red Hare; he fingered his beard gently. All doubt vanished. It was his late father! The astounded Guan Xing watched Lord Guan point southeast and say, "Flee that way, my son. I will protect you until you reach camp." With that, he was gone.

Guan Xing fled in the direction the apparition had indicated. Toward midnight a band of troops approached him, led by Zhang Bao, who asked, "Did you see Second Uncle?" "How did you know?" Guan Xing asked in reply. "A force of iron wagons was chasing me, when I saw him descend from the sky and drive off the Qiang troops. He said, 'Take this road and save my son.' So I led my troops straight here to find you." Guan Xing then recounted his experience to their mutual amazement. As the two returned to camp, Ma Dai welcomed them, saying, "There is no way to repel the enemy. I will defend the campsite while you two petition the prime minister for a plan to defeat them." Accordingly, Guan Xing and Zhang Bao went to Kongming and gave him a full report.

Kongming ordered Zhao Zilong and Wei Yan each to hide one company in ambush outside camp. He then mustered thirty thousand soldiers and marched to Ma Dai's camp, together with Jiang Wei, Zhang Yi, Guan Xing, and Zhang Bao; there he rested his forces. The next day from a hilltop he watched the enemy's iron wagons and infantry and cavalry moving in every direction with dispatch. "This will not be difficult to break up," Kongming said, and he gave Ma Dai and Zhang Yi certain instructions. After they had left, he asked Jiang Wei, "Do you see a way to defeat them?" Jiang Wei replied, "The Qiang rely on raw courage and strength alone. What do they care for clever tactics?" "How well you know my thinking," Kongming said with a smile. "The thick clouds and rising north wind presage snow; and once we have snow, my plan will work." Kongming ordered Guan Xing and Zhang Bao to ambush the enemy, and Jiang Wei to give battle openly but to withdraw if the iron wagon force was deployed. Lastly, by the entrance to the camp Kongming had decoy banners planted

but deployed no troops. He thus completed the preparations.

It was winter, the end of the twelfth month.¹ The snow Kongming had expected began to fall. Jiang Wei advanced, then retreated as Yueji brought on his iron wagons. The Qiang troops pursued him to Kongming's camp, but Jiang Wei escaped through its rear. The Qiang had advanced to the edge of the camp, when they heard the sound of a zither being strummed from inside. On all four walls of the stockade they saw the decoy banners flying, and hurried back to Yueji to report. Puzzled, Yueji chose not to advance.

Prime Minister Yadan said to Marshal Yueji, "Zhuge Liang's decoys. Let the attack continue." Yueji led his force to the front of the Riverlands camp, where he found Kongming climbing onto his chariot, a zither under his arm; sparsely attended, he left by the rear gate. The Qiang soldiers forced their way into the site and pursued Kongming, passing the gateway to the mountain. Ahead in the distance a small chariot seemed to be turning into a wood. "Even if there's an ambush, it will be nothing to be afraid of," Yadan said to Yueji, and continued to pursue Kongming in force. They saw Jiang Wei's troops dashing forward in the snow. Yueji angrily pressed forward. The snow had blanketed the pathways, smoothing out the landscape. Yueji was informed that Riverlands troops were coming from behind a hill. Yadan said, "A few troops in hiding. Nothing to worry about," and raced ahead.

Suddenly a rumbling sound like an avalanche filled the air as the Qiang troops tumbled into a moat. The iron wagons went out of control and slid down after them, one crashing into the next. Troops farther behind tried to turn back but were attacked by Guan Xing and Zhang Bao from both sides as ten thousand crossbowmen let fly their bolts. From the rear the corps under Jiang Wei, Ma Dai, and Zhang Yi moved in for the kill. The iron wagon force had fallen apart. Marshal Yueji ducked into a recess behind but fell to Guan Xing's sword in a brief clash. Prime Minister Yadan was captured alive by Ma Dai and brought to the main camp. The Qiang soldiers scurried off in the four directions.

Kongming took his seat in the command tent, and Ma Dai led the prisoner in. Kongming had Yadan freed, allowed him wine to relieve his fears, and spoke kind and comforting words to him. Yadan's gratitude was boundless. Kongming said, "The lord I serve, August Emperor of the great Han, commands me to chastise rebels and traitors. How dare you abet their sedition contrary to your proper duty? I shall let you return to tell this to your lord: 'My kingdom and yours are neighbors, pledged to eternal amity. Give no heed to the counsel of traitors.'" So saying, Kongming permitted all the captured Qiang as well as their wagons, horses, and equipment to return home with Yadan. The entire Qiang army prostrated itself in gratitude and departed. Directly afterward, Kongming led his three armies to the main camp in the hills of Qishan. He commanded Guan Xing and Zhang Bao to lead the way; and he sent a formal report of the victory to the court in Chengdu.

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Meanwhile, the days had gone by while Cao Zhen waited for news from the Qiang. Suddenly, a soldier from the ambush corps reported: "The Riverlands army has broken camp and begun marching." Most pleased, Guo Huai said, "They are retreating because of the Qiang attack," and he sent two companies in pursuit. Ahead the Riverlands army fled chaotically, and the Wei army gave chase. Cao Zun was in the vanguard, when drumbeats began to shake the ground and a band of troops

flashed into sight; their leader, Wei Yan. "Halt, traitors!" he cried. An astonished Cao Zun laid on the whip and engaged Wei Yan, who swiftly cut him down from his horse. The deputy vanguard leader Zhu Zan then entered the imbroglio, but a group under Zhao Zilong sprang into action, spearing Zhu Zan before he could defend himself.

Cao Zhen and Guo Huai saw the two companies weakening and tried to recall them; but from behind shouts erupted, and drums and horns announced Guan Xing and Zhang Bao: their two corps surrounded Cao Zhen and Guo Huai. The two northern commanders withstood the fierce assault, however, and managed to lead their defeated force away. The triumphant Riverlands army pursued them to the River Wei and plundered the northern army's main camp. Cao Zhen, in despair over the loss of both vanguards, could only appeal in writing to the Wei court for reinforcement.

The ruler of Wei, Cao Rui, was at court session when a personal attendant brought the news: "First Field Marshal Cao Zhen has suffered successive defeats in the Riverlands. His vanguards are lost, and the Qiang have taken heavy losses too. In dire straits, he petitions for aid and requests Your Majesty's decision." In alarm, Cao Rui demanded a plan for driving back the Riverlands force. Hua Xin addressed him: "The only way is for Your Majesty himself to lead the campaign; gather the lords in a general assembly to ensure that your command will be universally obeyed. Otherwise, Chang'an may fall, endangering the land within the passes."

Imperial Guardian Zhong Yao also addressed the sovereign: "To command men means to control them through superior knowledge. Sunzi has said, 'Know the enemy, know yourself; never know defeat!' In my opinion, Cao Zhen, despite his long experience in war, is no match for Zhuge Liang. I will guarantee with the lives of my family members and household servants the one man who can force back the Riverlands army. I wonder if Your Majesty in his sagely wisdom might approve my recommendation." Cao Rui answered, "You are a trusted elder, my lord. If you know a man capable of repelling the foe, summon him at once so that he may share our burden." Zhong Yao said to Cao Rui: "This is the man Zhuge Liang feared most when he planned to march across our borders, the man whose loyalty Zhuge Liang induced Your Majesty to suspect by spreading rumors about his motives. Your Majesty removed him, and Zhuge Liang advanced in force. Summon this man back, and Zhuge Liang will retreat on his own."

Cao Rui asked the man's name. Zhong Yao replied, "Regent-Marshal and General of the Flying Cavalry Sima Yi." Cao Rui sighed. "The incident was regrettable," he said. "Where is Sima Yi now?" "Idle in Wancheng, according to the latest report," was the reply. Cao Rui issued an edict conferring general military authority on Sima Yi, restoring his former office, and adding the title of Field Marshal Who Conquers the West, in which capacity he was immediately to march all troops in Nanyang to Chang'an. Cao Rui took personal command of the expedition; Sima Yi was to meet him in Chang'an at a fixed date. A messenger set out directly for Wancheng.

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Since leading his hosts forth, Kongming had gone from victory to victory, and he rejoiced inwardly. During a meeting in the Qishan camp he was informed of a visit by Li Feng, paid at the behest of his father, Li Yan, chief guardian of the Palace of Enduring Peace.² Kongming was alarmed, thinking that the Southland was invading Shu territory, when he summoned Li Feng into his tent.

Li Feng said, "I bring good news." "What news?" Kongming asked. "Meng Da's defection to Wei

was not of his own volition. At that time Cao Pi so admired his abilities that he presented him with many gifts of fine horses, gold, and pearls. He also shared the royal carriage with Meng Da and, after appointing him detached imperial cavalier and regular attendant,³ made him governor of Xincheng with authority over Shangyong and Jincheng and responsibility for dealing with the Riverlands. However, when Cao Pi died and Cao Rui came to power, the widening jealousies at court caused Meng Da endless anxiety, and he was always saying to his generals, 'I am a Riverlands general. Circumstances compelled me to this. '

"Lately he has more than once sent trusted men bearing letters to my father asking him to intercede with the prime minister at the earliest chance. When the five northern armies descended upon us, Meng Da already had this in mind. Now at Xincheng, hearing of Your Excellency's campaign against Wei, he proposes to mobilize Jincheng, Xincheng, and Shangyong and take action then and there against Luoyang. If Your Excellency seizes Chang'an at the same time, the two capitals will be conquered. I've brought Meng Da's envoy; and I have the letters my father has received to submit to Your Excellency." Delighted, Kongming rewarded Li Feng and the others. At that moment a spy delivered an unexpected report: "The ruler of Wei, Cao Rui, is coming to Chang'an himself after having restored Sima Yi to his former position, making him Field Marshal Who Conquers the West. Cao Rui has raised his own army and will rendezvous with Sima Yi in Chang'an."

The news of the northern ruler's advance alarmed Kongming. His military adviser, Ma Su, said, "Cao Rui is not much of a threat. If he comes to Chang'an, we will capture him directly. You have nothing to fear, Your Excellency." "You think I fear Cao Rui?" Kongming replied. "I worry about Sima Yi! Meng Da wants to make a break, but he's no match for Sima Yi; he will only be captured. After that the central heartland will be all the harder to regain." Ma Su said, "What about forewarning Meng Da?" Kongming adopted this suggestion and that night sent Meng Da's envoy off with a letter to Meng Da, who was in Xincheng eagerly awaiting his envoy's return. Before long Meng Da had Kongming's letter. In essence it read:

Your recent letters amply manifest Your Lordship's loyal and honorable heart. That you still remember former friends gives me joy and comfort. If we succeed, you will be the foremost vassal of the Han restoration. But extreme caution is essential: no one is to be lightly trusted. Be on guard. Be forewarned. I have learned that Cao Rui has called on Sima Yi to mobilize Wancheng and Luoyang. If he hears you have taken action, he will move against you first. The most comprehensive defense preparation is required. Do not look on this as a routine situation.

Reading the text, Meng Da smiled and said, "Kongming is known for being excessively cautious. Having read this letter, I now understand why." He prepared a reply, which his messenger took back to Kongming. In essence is read:

Having received this weighty charge, I dare not relax. In my humble view, Sima Yi is not to be feared. Wancheng is about eight hundred *li* from Luoyang and twelve hundred *li* from Xincheng. If Sima Yi finds out I mean to act, he will have to submit a memorial to the Wei ruler. That would take a month. My fortifications are sound; my leaders and their forces are established in strategic recesses. Let Sima Yi come. What have I to fear? Rest easy, Your Excellency, and prepare for reports of victory!

Kongming threw the letter to the ground and, stamping his foot, cried, "He will die at Sima Yi's hands!" "What does Your Excellency mean?" Ma Su asked. "The art of war tells us to 'attack the enemy where he's unprepared; appear where he does not expect you.' How can he count on a month's delay? Cao Rui has already empowered Sima Yi to clear out rebels wherever he finds them: he won't be waiting for any memorials. Ten days after learning of Meng Da's defection, he will attack, long before Meng Da is ready." The commanders saw the truth of Kongming's comment. Kongming swiftly penned an order to Meng Da: "Until you act, let no one know your mind—or defeat is certain." Meng Da's courier took formal leave and returned to Xincheng with this order.

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Biding his time in Wancheng, Sima Yi heard of the Wei army's defeats and sent a long, despairing sigh Heavenward. Sima Yi's eldest son, Sima Shi (Ziyuan), as well as his second son, Sima Zhao (Zishang), harbored grand ambitions and had acquainted themselves with the works of military science. That day standing beside Sima Yi, they asked, "What makes you sigh so deeply, Father?" "What do you know of our great cause?" he answered them. Sima Shi said, "Could it be because the ruler of Wei has left you to languish?" Sima Zhao smiled and said, "The Emperor will soon send for you." Even as he spoke, the imperial envoy arrived.

In accordance with the new edict, Sima Yi assigned several field armies to Wancheng in the west. Suddenly he had report that a kinsman of Shen Yi, governor of Jincheng, was seeking audience on a secret matter. Sima Yi received the envoy in his chambers and learned from him the details of Meng Da's intended defection back to Shu. As evidence, the envoy had with him the written confessions of Li Fu, Meng Da's trusted companion, and Deng Xian, Meng Da's nephew. Sima Yi clapped his hand to his brow and said, "What marvelous good fortune for my sovereign! Zhuge Liang's army is now in Qishan. Their recent victories have struck terror in the hearts of all and compelled the Son of Heaven to grace Chang'an himself. He must send me into action before Meng Da defects and the two capitals fall in a single stroke. The traitor connives with Zhuge Liang. But timely capture will dampen Zhuge Liang's enthusiasm and induce him to retreat."

Sima Shi, the eldest son, said "Father, write for the Emperor's approval at once." "And wait a month for the edict?" Sima Yi exclaimed. He ordered the army to march double-time and to execute laggards. At the same time, to forestall Meng Da's suspicions, Sima Yi dispatched Military Adviser Liang Ji to Xincheng with orders for Meng Da to prepare to join the expedition. Liang Ji set out first; Sima Yi followed with the army.

When they had been on the march for two days, a company of men appeared from behind a hill: it was General of the Right Xu Huang and his men. Xu Huang dismounted and came before Sima Yi. "The Son of Heaven is now in Chang'an confronting the Riverlands army," he said. "Where is the field marshal headed?" Sima Yi replied in a low voice, "Meng Da is in revolt. I am going to get him." "Then put me in the vanguard," Xu Huang said. Pleased by this offer, Sima Yi combined the two forces. Xu Huang led the forward army, Sima Yi the center, and his two sons the rear.

After another two days, scouts from the forward army captured Meng Da's trusted envoy. They discovered Kongming's reply on his person and brought him before Sima Yi, who said, "Tell all and I'll spare you." The envoy disclosed the entire exchange between Kongming and Meng Da. On reading Kongming's reply, Sima Yi said in astonishment, "Able men think alike. Kongming saw through my

devices. Luckily for the Son of Heaven, we have come by this information. Meng Da will be helpless now." He resumed the advance at a rapid pace.

From Xincheng, Meng Da had fixed the time to strike with the governor of Jincheng, Shen Yi, and the governor of Shangyong, Shen Dan, both of whom feigned agreement. Each day they trained their forces while waiting for the arrival of the Wei army, with whom they meant to collaborate; but to Meng Da they protested that they lacked the equipment and provisions to enable them to move at the appointed time. Meng Da accepted their story.

Liang Ji arrived, and Meng Da welcomed the unexpected visitor into the city. Liang Ji delivered Sima Yi's order, saying, "Field Commander Sima holds the edict of the Son of Heaven directing him to muster several field armies and repel the Riverlands army. Gather your forces, Governor, and await instructions." "When will he set out?" Meng Da asked. "He should have left Wancheng for Chang'an by now," was the reply. Meng Da thought to himself, "My cause will succeed!" He feted Liang Ji and escorted him out of the city. Next, he notified Shen Dan and Shen Yi to be ready the following day to raise the banner of Han and march east on Luoyang.

It was with surprise, therefore, that Meng Da learned that an unidentified army was approaching. He climbed the wall, but all he could make out was a band of soldiers racing toward him under a banner reading "General of the Right Xu Huang." Alarmed, Meng Da had the drawbridge raised as Xu Huang, making no attempt to rein in, rode directly to the moat and shouted: "Traitor Meng Da! Surrender now!" Meng Da shot Xu Huang through the forehead, and the Wei commanders carried him away; volleys of bolts from the wall drove the Wei troops back. Meng Da ordered the gates opened so he could pursue, but all at once banners darkened the sky on every side: the army of Sima Yi had come. Meng Da lifted his face to the sky, sighed in despair, and said, "Just as Kongming anticipated." He then sealed the gates.

Xu Huang was carried to camp and treated by a surgeon, but he died that night at the age of fifty-nine. Sima Yi had the coffin returned to Luoyang for proper burial. The next day Meng Da ascended the wall and saw the Wei troops ringing the city as tightly as iron hoops around a bucket. Fear and doubt tormented him. Suddenly he saw two companies approaching in the distance; their banners read "Shen Dan" and "Shen Yi." Thinking rescue at hand, Meng Da hastily opened the gates and came out fighting. But the two governors shouted, "Traitor! Halt! Prepare to die!" Meng Da realized that a coup had occurred and rode back toward the city; but arrows now rained upon him, and Li Fu and Deng Xian shouted down, "We have delivered the city." Meng Da fled by the nearest road, Shen Dan in pursuit. Exhausted, his mount spent, Meng Da could not defend himself. Shen Dan speared him and severed his head,⁴ and his companions surrendered. Li Fu and Deng Xian flung wide the city gates and welcomed Sima Yi, who reassured the people and rewarded the soldiers; then he notified the Wei ruler of the victory. Overjoyed, Cao Rui had Meng Da's head brought to Luoyang and shown to the populace. The two governors, Shen Dan and Shen Yi, were promoted and told to accompany Sima Yi on the campaign against the Riverlands; Li Fu and Deng Xian were ordered to defend Xincheng and Shangyong.⁵

Sima Yi marched to Chang'an, pitched camp before its walls, and entered the city. On receiving him, the ruler of Wei said, "For a time I was fooled by the enemy's plot to turn me against you. But regrets are pointless now. Meng Da's revolt could have cost us both capitals had you not brought him under control." Sima Yi said to the ruler, "It was Shen Yi who secretly revealed Meng Da's plot. I had intended to petition Your Majesty before acting, but rather than lose time waiting for your sagely

instruction, I decided to set out at once to deal with the traitor. Otherwise, I would have fallen into Zhuge Liang's trap." So saying, he handed up to Cao Rui Kongming's secret letter of reply to Meng Da. Cao Rui read it and said, "You surpass the great strategists of ancient times, Sunzi and Wu Qi." He bestowed on Sima Yi a pair of gold-knobbed maces authorizing him to act on his own judgment in future crises without recourse to imperial petition. He then ordered Sima Yi to march west through the passes to defeat the army of Shu.

Sima Yi said to his master, "May I recommend a commander for the vanguard?" "Whom?" Cao Rui asked. "General of the Right Zhang He is fit for the task," Sima Yi replied. "Exactly the man I was going to employ," Cao Rui said smiling, and he made the assignment. Sima Yi left Chang'an with Zhang He to do battle with the Riverlands army. Indeed:

First the cunning counselor worked his plan;
Next he found a fierce commander to expand his power.

Would the north or the west prevail?

READ ON.



***Rejecting Advice, Ma Su Loses Jieting;
Strumming His Lute, Kongming Drives Off Sima***

CAO RUI, RULER OF WEI, had ordered Zhang He to the vanguard of Sima Yi's expedition. Next, he ordered Xin Pi and Sun Li to take fifty thousand troops and support Cao Zhen; the two commanders received their edicts of authorization and left.

Sima Yi led two hundred thousand through the pass. He pitched camp and summoned Zhang He to his tent. "Zhuge Liang moves with extreme caution," he said, "and never takes chances. In his place, I would head straight for Chang'an from Zi-Wu Gorge—the quickest route. But he won't risk it, despite his remarkable ingenuity; he'll go by Ye Gorge first and seize the city of Mei. Next, if he succeeds, he will detail one contingent to take Winnow Basket Gorge. I have instructed Cao Zhen to guard Mei but to refuse battle; and I have ordered Sun Li and Xin Pi to close Winnow Basket Gorge and launch a surprise attack on the enemy if they come."

Zhang He said, "How far should we advance?" "I recall a road running through a place called Jieting, west of Qinling," Sima Yi answered. "Nearby there's a town called Willow Rows. These are the two choke points of Hanzhong. Zhuge Liang will assume that Cao Zhen is unprepared and will advance that way. You and I should capture Jieting directly to put Yangping Pass in range. Once Kongming finds out we have cut the main road at Jieting stopping their grain supply and threatening the whole of Longxi, he will hurry back to Hanzhong. The moment he turns, we will harass him on the paths and complete the rout. If he does not turn, I will seal those same roads and hold them under guard. Inside of a month the Riverlands army will starve, and Zhuge Liang will fall into my hands."

Zhang He understood Sima Yi's logic and, prostrating himself, said, "A marvelous calculation, Field Marshal." "Nevertheless," Sima Yi went on, "Zhuge Liang is no Meng Da. As vanguard commander, you must exercise caution. Order your commanders to follow the western paths and send advance patrols far ahead. If there is no ambush, move forward. The slightest negligence will deliver you to Zhuge Liang." Zhang He left with his troops to carry out the plan.

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A spy freshly back from Xincheng reported to Kongming in his Qishan camp: "Sima Yi reached Xincheng in eight days marching double-time. Meng Da had no time to defend himself. Shen Dan, Shen Yi, Li Fu, and Deng Xian all collaborated with the enemy, and Meng Da was killed by soldiers in revolt. Sima Yi pulled back to Chang'an, had an audience with the ruler of Wei, and then, joined by Zhang He, came through the passes to oppose our army. "Kongming reacted strongly, saying," Meng Da failed to keep his activities secret and sealed his own fate. Sima Yi will try to take Jieting and cut

off our main route. Who will lead a force to Jieting to defend it? "He had hardly finished speaking, when Military Adviser Ma Su stepped forward to volunteer." However insignificant Jieting may seem, "Kongming continued," it is vital to the survival of our main army. I know you are thoroughly versed in strategy; but with no wall of natural defenses, the place will be most difficult to hold. "

Ma Su replied, "Lifelong study of military science has given me a good understanding of warfare. I hardly think it beyond my abilities to hold a Jieting." "Sima Yi is no ordinary general," Kongming warned. "Furthermore, he has one of Wei's top commanders, Zhang He, in the vanguard. I don't think you are a match for them."

Ma Su replied, "Never mind Sima Yi and Zhang He. Let Cao Rui himself come: it won't daunt me. If anything goes wrong, you can put my whole family to the sword." "The army is no place for extravagant boasts!" Kongming warned. "You'll have my oath!" Ma Su said. Kongming agreed, and a written pledge was submitted. "I shall allow you twenty-five thousand of our finest men and select a leading commander to assist you," Kongming said. He summoned Wang Ping. "You have been chosen for this task," Kongming instructed him, "because you are known to be a man of extreme caution. Guard that place with the greatest care. Pitch camp along the main road to prevent the enemy from slipping past. After the position is secured, send me a map of the surrounding terrain. While there, make no move until it has been discussed and agreed upon. Leave nothing to chance. Defending Jieting is a contribution of the first order to the capture of Chang'an. Take care! Take care!" The two men withdrew respectfully and set off with their forces.

To supplement these measures, Kongming summoned Gao Xiang and said to him, "Northeast of Jieting is the town of Willow Rows on a small road screened by the hills. Place troops there—I'll give you ten thousand—and pitch camp. If there's trouble in Jieting, go to the rescue." Gao Xiang left with his troops. But Kongming, still not satisfied that Gao Xiang could deal with Zhang He, decided to augment Jieting's defense with a force on the east. Accordingly, he instructed another commander, Wei Yan, to position himself behind Jieting. Wei Yan replied, "The vanguard leads the attack. Why give me such a safe assignment?" Kongming said, "The van attack is a lesser service. I want you to reinforce Jieting, to cover the main route to Yangping Pass, and to defend the choke points of Hanzhong. This is a major responsibility, not a 'safe' assignment. Don't take this for some routine affair, or you will undo everything. And keep caution foremost in your thoughts!" Assuaged, Wei Yan left with his force.

Content with his preparations at last, Kongming summoned Zhao Zilong and Deng Zhi. "Sima Yi has taken the field," he told them, "and that changes everything. I want each of you to lead a company of men through Winnow Basket Gorge as decoys. If you encounter any northern troops, give battle only intermittently to unnerve them. I will lead the main army through Ye Gorge and seize Mei. Chang'an will fall." The two men left to carry out their orders. Kongming had Jiang Wei command the van as he moved through the gorge.

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Ma Su and Wang Ping reached Jieting and studied the lay of the land. With a smile Ma Su said, "What could have made His Excellency so uneasy? The Wei army is unlikely to come to this forsaken spot." Wang Ping said, "All the same, we had better camp at the intersection of these five roads and

then have the men fell trees for palings for a strategic defense." But Ma Su replied, "The road is no place for a camp, with an isolated hill so near and all four fronts impossible to link. Also, the broad woods offer a natural strategic advantage. The army should move to the hilltop." "Surely you are mistaken, Military Adviser," Wang Ping replied. "If we station the army along the road and build a wall, not even one hundred thousand rebels will be able to get by us. But if we abandon this key point for the hilltop and the northerners charge in and surround us, nothing will save us." Ma Su laughed out loud and retorted, "That's really a woman's way of seeing things! The laws of warfare state, 'Depend on heights, surveying all below, and the enemy will be like bamboo to a cleaver.' Let them come! I won't let a shield go back!"

Wang Ping persisted, "How many times have I been with His Excellency when he managed formations? At every new site he would give exhaustive directions. If we isolate our men on this hill and the northerners come and sever the water lines, the army will collapse without a battle." "Enough of your stupidity!" Ma Su cried. "Sunzi has said, 'Soldiers always survive when threatened by death.' If they cut the conduits, won't the Riverlanders fight for their very lives, one of ours a match for a hundred of theirs? I know my military texts. Even His Excellency has come to me with questions. Don't make things difficult!"

Wang Ping said, "Would you be willing, Adviser, to form two camps, one on top and one below, giving me a portion of the troops to place at the west foot of the hill so we can create a pincer formation? Then we can deal with the northerners should they come." Ma Su refused.

Suddenly, dwellers from the hills came thronging to report the arrival of the northerners. Wang Ping wanted to take his leave. Ma Su said, "Since you will not obey my orders, take five thousand and pitch camp where you will. But after my victory, you will not get a scrap of credit when we stand before the prime minister." Wang Ping led his men ten *li* from the hill and camped. Then he prepared maps and had them carried to Kongming along with a description of Ma Su's hilltop position.

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From the city, Sima Yi sent his second son, Sima Zhao, to explore the road ahead, instructing him not to proceed if he found soldiers defending Jieting. After making his survey, Sima Zhao said to his father, "There are soldiers protecting Jieting." In a tone of resignation Sima Yi said, "Zhuge Liang is marvelous! Far beyond me!" "Don't despair, Father," Sima Zhao said with a smile. "Jieting looks easy enough to capture." "Is this an empty boast?" asked Sima Yi. "When I scouted the road, I saw no fortifications—all their men had been put on the hill—so I am sure we can defeat them." Delighted, Sima Yi said, "If that's true, then Heaven itself ensures our success." He dressed in war gear and, attended by a hundred cavalry, went to inspect the site himself.

It was a clear night; the moon shone bright. Sima Yi and his son rode straight to the foot of the hill, explored all around it, and went back. From the hill Ma Su watched it all, smiling. "They are doomed if they surround this hill," he said, and he issued orders to his commanders: if the enemy comes, swoop down on all sides when you see a red flag waving on the summit.

Sima Yi got back to camp and sent a man to find out who the Riverlands commander at Jieting was. "Ma Su," was the answer, "younger brother of Ma Liang." Sima Yi smiled and said, "A man with an undeserved reputation. If Kongming is using men of such commonplace abilities, he will defeat only himself." Then he asked another question: "Have they any other forces near Jieting?" The

scout reported: "Wang Ping is camped ten *li* away." Sima Yi accordingly ordered Zhang He to block Wang Ping's position with a corps of men. He also ordered Shen Dan and Shen Yi to take two contingents to surround the mountain and cut off the water conduits. Sima Yi intended to strike after the Riverlands forces had become disorderly; that night he completed his deployment.

The following dawn Zhang He led his men behind the mountain as Sima Yi advanced in force, cordoning the base with his troops. Ma Su looked down on the swarm of northerners spreading over hill and dale, their flags and ranks in perfect order. His Riverlands troops lost heart and refused to go down. Ma Su raised the red flag to signal the attack, but none of the commanders or soldiers would take the initiative. Enraged by this show of resistance, Ma Su personally killed two commanders. The soldiers, afraid for their lives, halfheartedly descended and attacked. But the Wei troops held firm, and soon the Riverlanders retreated uphill. Ma Su, seeing his situation worsening, ordered a tight defense of the camp until outside help had arrived.

Meanwhile, Wang Ping saw the Wei troops approaching and led his men forth. Zhang He opposed him, and they battled until, exhausted and isolated, Wang Ping withdrew. The Wei troops held the ring tight from dawn to dusk. The Riverlanders had no water to cook with, and panic broke out in the camps. The commotion lasted well into the night. On the south slope Riverlands troops opened the gate to their fortifications and went down to surrender; Ma Su could do nothing to stop them. Sima Yi ringed the foot of the hill with fires, increasing the confusion of the hill-bound troops. Realizing his position was untenable, Ma Su drove his men down in a final desperate assault and fled westward where Sima Yi had made way for him to pass. Zhang He pursued hotly for thirty *li* until he encountered a band of soldiers, drums and horns resounding, who stopped him after letting Ma Su through. Their commander was Wei Yan.

Flourishing his sword, Wei Yan raced for Zhang He; Zhang He turned back to his line and fled. Wei Yan continued his drive and retook Jieting. But when Wei Yan had gone more than fifty *li* beyond the town, voices roared as ambushers emerged on either side: to the left Sima Yi, to the right Sima Zhao. They had managed to slip behind Wei Yan and were now encircling him as Zhang He reversed his flight to join the attack. Wei Yan threw himself against the northerners but could not break free; more than half his men perished.

At this critical moment a band of troops lead by Wang Ping joined the battle. Thankfully, Wei Yan cried, "I am saved!" The two western commanders forced the Wei army to retreat after heavy fighting and rushed back to their camps. But they found the colors of Wei already flying there. When Shen Dan and Shen Yi came forth to do battle, Wang Ping and Wei Yan dashed for the town of Willow Rows to take refuge with Gao Xiang.

By this time Gao Xiang had learned of the fall of Jieting and had summoned the townsmen to arms. On his way to rescue Wang Ping and Wei Yan, he came upon them. They told him what had passed, and Gao Xiang said, "Raid their camp tonight, and we will recover Jieting!" The three sat down on the slope of a hill and made their plans. As the sky began to darken, they formed three units. Wei Yan advanced to Jieting but, finding it deserted, cautiously hid his men outside rather than enter. Gao Xiang arrived, but neither he nor Wei Yan could figure out where the troops of Wei had gone. And Wang Ping's troops were nowhere to be seen.

Suddenly a bombard sounded; flames mounted to the heavens and the beating of drums shook the ground as the northerners came forth and surrounded Wei Yan and Gao Xiang. The two leaders charged back and forth but could not break through. Next, thunderous shouts from behind a slope

announced the arrival of Wang Ping's force; these troops opened a fresh battle and succeeded in getting Gao Xiang and Wei Yan safely out. The western forces hurried to Willow Rows only to find an army in position there, waiting for them under a banner that read "Guo Huai, Field Marshal of Wei." This move resulted from a decision by Cao Zhen and Guo Huai to have Guo Huai capture Jieting and thus prevent Sima Yi from taking all the credit for the victories of the day. Hearing of the victories of Sima Yi and Zhang He, however, Guo Huai had surprised and seized Willow Rows instead. Now he confronted the three Riverlands commanders, and in the ensuing battle dealt the Riverlands armies a grave defeat. Wei Yan, fearing the loss of Yangping Pass, hurried there with Wang Ping and Gao Xiang.

As Guo Huai's men regrouped around him, he said, "Though we failed to take Jieting, the capture of Willow Rows will be a great distinction for us!" Marching to the gate, he demanded entrance but was met instead by the roar of bombards from the wall. And standing among the proud pennons on the wall was a flag reading "Sima Yi, Field Marshal Who Conquers the West." Sima Yi himself leaned against a wooden railing on a suspended platform and said with a loud laugh to Guo Huai, "What took you so long to get here?" "Sima Yi, you are a man of amazing genius!" the astonished Guo Huai replied. He then entered the town and presented himself to Sima Yi, who said, "Now that he has lost Jieting, Kongming is sure to flee. You, sir, and Cao Zhen should pursue him at once." Guo Huai left the town of Willow Rows to carry out his assignment.

Next, Sima Yi called Zhang He and said to him, "Guo Huai and Cao Zhen came to take Willow Rows because they thought I wanted the credit for this campaign all for myself. That is not true. I took this place through an accident of war. My thought is that our enemies, Wei Yan, Wang Ping, Ma Su, and Gao Xiang, will try now to hold Yangping Pass. If I take the pass myself, Zhuge Liang will surprise me from the rear and trap me. The rules of warfare say, 'Don't surprise a retreating army; don't chase an exhausted foe.' So you are to take the bypaths and harass the troops of Zhao Zilong and Deng Zhi as they retire from Winnow Basket Gorge. I will cover Ye Gorge myself. If they flee, don't oppose them; simply raid them along the way to seize their supplies."

Zhang He received Sima Yi's orders and departed with half of the troops. Then Sima Yi commanded: "After we have Ye Gorge, advance through Xicheng. Though a small and remote mountain town, it is a grain depot for the westerners, and it connects to the three district capitals of Nan'an, Tianshui, and Anding. The capture of Xicheng will mean the recovery of the three districts." With that, Sima Yi left Shen Dan and Shen Yi guarding Willow Rows and set out in force for Ye Gorge.

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Meanwhile, after ordering Ma Su to hold Jieting, Kongming could not decide on a course of action. Suddenly he was told that Wang Ping's sketch of the Jieting defenses had come. Kongming received the sketch from his attendants and unrolled it on his table. Examining it, he struck the table in consternation. He cried, "The fool, Ma Su, has led my army to its doom!" "Why is Your Excellency so excited?" his attendants asked. "I can see from the map that Ma Su has abandoned the main roads and fortified the hilltop," Kongming replied. "If the northerners of Wei come in strength to surround him and cut off his water, our men will go to pieces in two days. And where can we retreat to if Jieting falls?" Senior Adviser Yang Yi advanced a proposal: "Despite my lack of talent, permit me to

go and replace Ma Su." Kongming subsequently gave the adviser explicit instructions on preparing the ground for the camp at Jieting.

Yang Yi was about to leave, when Kongming was told of the fall of both Jieting and Willow Rows. He stamped his foot in despair and sighed. "Our cause is lost and it is my doing!" he cried, and he summoned Guan Xing and Zhang Bao. "Take three thousand crack troops each," he ordered them, "and head for the bypaths of the Wugong Hills. If you run into Wei troops, don't launch any major action; just beat the drums and howl to the skies so they'll think you are a decoy force. If they go, do not pursue. When they withdraw, head for Yangping Pass." At the same time Kongming had Zhang Yi ready Saber Gateway for the return of the army to Shu; he issued secret instructions for the main army to prepare quietly for the march home; he had Ma Dai and Jiang Wei secure the rear of his retreat route by placing ambushes in the valleys with orders not to pull back until the main forces had withdrawn. He also sent trusted agents to Tianshui, Nan'an, and Anding to inform the officers and men as well as officials and townsmen that they should move into Hanzhong; and finally, he sent a trusted agent to Jicheng to move Jiang Wei's mother into Hanzhong.

After making these arrangements, Kongming took five thousand men back to Xicheng to move grain and provender. Suddenly a dozen mounted couriers arrived and reported: "Sima Yi is leading a multitude of one hundred and fifty thousand toward Xicheng." At this point Kongming had no commanders of importance beside him—only a group of civil officials—and half the five thousand in his command had been detailed to move food supplies, leaving a mere twenty-five hundred troops in the town. The officials turned pale at the news of Sima Yi's approach. When Kongming mounted the city wall to observe, he saw dust clouds in the distance rising skyward as the two northern field armies advanced for battle.

Kongming ordered all flags and banners put out of sight and instructed the wall sentries to execute anyone who tried to pass in or out without authority or who raised his voice. Next, Kongming ordered the town's four gates opened wide; at each a squad of twenty, disguised as commoners, swept the roadway. The soldiers had been told to make no untoward move when the Wei army arrived, as Kongming was following a plan of his own. After this Kongming put on his crane-feather cloak, wrapped a band around his head, and, followed by two lads bearing his zither, sat down on the wall. He propped himself against the railing in front of a turret and began to strum as incense burned.

Meanwhile, Sima Yi's scouts had reached the wall of Xicheng. Finding the scene as described, they advanced no further but reported at once to their commander. Sima Yi laughed and dismissed the report. He then halted his army and rode forward himself to view the town from a distance. There indeed was Kongming sitting by the turret, smiling as ever and burning incense as he played. To his left, a lad held a fine sword; to his right, another held a yak-tail whisk. By the gate two dozen sweepers plied their brooms with lowered heads, as if no one else were about.

Puzzled, Sima Yi turned his army around and retreated toward the hills to the north. His second son, Sima Zhao, asked, "What makes you sure Kongming isn't putting this on because he has no troops? Why simply retreat, Father?" Sima Yi answered, "Kongming has always been a man of extreme caution, never one to tempt the fates. He opened the gates because he had set an ambush. On entering, we would have been trapped. You are too young to know! Hurry the retreat!" Thus the two Wei armies withdrew.¹

After the retreating army was well into the distance, Kongming rubbed his palms together and laughed; but his officials were left amazed. One of them asked, "Why did a famous Wei general like

Sima Yi with one hundred fifty thousand in his command withdraw after one look at Your Excellency?" "The man," Kongming replied, "assumed I was too cautious to tempt fate. He saw my preparations, suspected ambush, and withdrew. It was not recklessness. What choice had I? Sima Yi is sure to head for the northern hills. I have already told Guan Xing and Zhang Bao to be waiting for him there." The astonished officials acknowledged his genius, saying, "The very gods could not outwit Your Excellency. We would have abandoned the town!" "Could I have gotten far enough with twenty-five hundred men," Kongming asked, "to escape Sima Yi?" A poet of later times has left these lines of admiration:

A zither three spans long subdued a puissant host
When Liang dismissed his foe at Xicheng town.
A hundred fifty thousand turned themselves around—
And townsmen at the spot still wonder how!

His explanation made, Kongming clapped his hands and laughed aloud. "But were I Sima Yi, I would not have gone back!" he said. Next, he ordered the people of Xicheng to follow the troops into Hanzhong in view of the expected return of Sima Yi. And so Kongming set out for Hanzhong from Xicheng, followed by the officials, officers, soldiers, and people of the three districts Tianshui, Anding, and Nan'an.

Meanwhile, Sima Yi was heading for the Wugong Hills. Suddenly from behind a slope murderous shouts rent the air and drumbeats shook the ground. "Had I stayed, I would have fallen into Zhuge Liang's trap," Sima Yi was saying, when he saw a company of men advancing upon him; their banner read "Winged Tiger General Zhang Bao of the Right Guard." The Wei soldiers flung down their shields and weapons and fled. But they had hardly gone one stage when fresh cries came thundering out of another valley. Drum and horn rent the air and before them a banner held high on a pole bore the words "Prancing Dragon General Guan Xing of the Left Guard." Their clamor echoed in the valley; no one could tell how many Riverlands troops there were. Too confused to take up positions, the Wei army abandoned their wagons and fled. As instructed, the two warriors did not pursue; they took quantities of grain and weapons and withdrew.

Seeing that the valleys were filled with Riverlands soldiers, Sima Yi did not dare come out on the main road but retreated to Jieting. By this time Cao Zhen had learned of Kongming's retreat and gave eager chase. But behind a nearby hill bombards sounded, and Riverlands troops spread over the terrain: their leaders, Jiang Wei and Ma Dai. Cao Zhen, surprised, quickly withdrew; his vanguard commander, Chen Zao, had already been slain by Ma Dai. Cao Zhen led his army in a race for safety; and the Riverlands troops hurried back that night without halt to Hanzhong.

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When Zhao Zilong and Deng Zhi, waiting in ambush along the roads of Winnow Basket Gorge, received Kongming's orders to retreat, Zilong said to Deng Zhi, "If the Wei army knows of this, they will give chase. I am going to move a company into ambush to the rear; you retreat slowly and show my flag. I will protect you step by step."

Meanwhile, Guo Huai had taken Wei troops back into Winnow Basket Gorge and commanded his

vanguard Su Yong: "There is no general braver than Zhao Zilong. Keep up your guard. If he retreats, it means a trap." Su Yong answered with enthusiasm, "Field Marshal, if you will back me up, I can take him alive." He rushed ahead with a force of three thousand into Winnow Basket Gorge and was soon bidding to overtake the Riverlands troops. But when he saw red banners inscribed in white with the words "Zhao Zilong" appear from behind a slope, Su Yong quickly recalled his men. He had withdrawn only a few *li* before a band of men charged at him, all noise and war cries. The leader, a great figure of a general, hoisted his spear and urged his horse forward, shouting, "Do you know me or not? I am Zhao Zilong!" The astonished Su Yong said, "How could you be here as well?" Before he could defend himself, Zhao Zilong had dropped him from the saddle with a thrust of his spear. Su Yong's men scattered, and Zilong pressed forward.

Behind Zilong another Wei commander appeared, Wan Zheng, a lieutenant of Guo Huai. Seeing the Wei forces draw near, Zilong halted and raised his spear, ready to engage Wan Zheng. (By now, the Riverlands troops were already thirty *li* away.) But Wan Zheng recognized Zhao Zilong and would not go forward. Zilong waited until the sky had darkened; then he turned his horse round again and withdrew with studied slowness.

Guo Huai arrived, and Wan Zheng protested that he could not advance against a Zhao Zilong as formidable now as ever. But on Guo Huai's direct order Wan Zheng pursued with several hundred cavaliers. Reaching a broad wood, the cavaliers heard a hearty shout behind them: "Zhao Zilong stands here!" More than a hundred of them fell in panic from their saddles; the rest fled over a hill. Wan Zheng rashly confronted Zilong, whose arrow grazed the straps of Wan Zheng's helmet, causing him to stumble into a nearby stream. Aiming his spear, Zilong said, "I shall spare you. Go and tell Guo Huai to come after us!" Wan Zheng escaped with his life. Zhao Zilong continued to protect the retreating Riverlands forces, and they headed back toward Hanzhong without incident. Cao Zhen and Guo Huai claimed full credit for recapturing the three districts Nan'an, Tianshui, and Anding.

Meanwhile, Sima Yi was advancing with a fresh detachment; but the Riverlands army had already completed its return to Hanzhong. So Sima Yi led the detachment back to Xicheng, where he learned from the few remaining residents and some mountain recluses that Kongming had had only twenty-five hundred men in the city, no commanders, a few civil officials, and of course no ambush in readiness. And at the Wugong Hills the commoners told him, "Guan Xing and Zhang Bao had only three thousand men each. They came round the hill yelling and drumming to frighten off pursuers, but they had no other forces and no intention of engaging in battle." Sima Yi looked ruefully into the heavens and said with a sigh, "Kongming's the better man!" After attending to the interests of the officials and inhabitants in the various areas where his army had been, he withdrew directly to Chang'an.

Cao Rui received him and said, "Thanks to you alone we have recovered the districts of Longxi." Sima Yi addressed the Wei ruler, saying, "The Riverlands army, now in Hanzhong, must be rooted out. Your vassal appeals for a large force to capture the Riverlands in gratitude for Your Majesty's generosity." Cao Rui was delighted and gave the order for Sima Yi to mobilize. But suddenly someone stepped forward from the ranks and said to the Wei ruler, "This vassal has a different plan for conquering the Riverlands and winning the submission of the Southland." Indeed:

The Riverlands commanders and advisers had barely gone home,
When the ruler and vassals of Wei were proffering fresh schemes.²

Who proposed the plan?

READ ON.



*Shedding Tears, Kongming Executes Ma Su;
Cutting Hair, Zhou Fang Deceives Cao Xiu*

THE CHIEF OF THE SECRETARIAT, SUN ZI, offered a plan. "What good counsel have you got for us?" Cao Rui asked. Sun Zi replied, "Many years ago, your great ancestor Cao Cao, the August Emperor Wu, regained Hanzhong from Zhang Lu—but he paid a heavy price. Describing the experience later, he would say, 'Nanzheng is harder to enter than a prison designed by Heaven itself.' Along the Ye Gorge trail you'll find rock caves for five hundred *li*; it's no place to wage war. If we commit all the imperial armies to the attack on the Riverlands, the Southland will raid our territory. A better course would be to direct your main commanders to hold the crucial passes to the west with troops already in the field while we rebuild our fighting strength at home. In a few years, after the north is flourishing once more, Shu and Wu should be mortal enemies again; that will be the time to aim for Shu. It is for Your Majesty to decide."

Turning to Sima Yi, Cao Rui asked, "And what is your view?" Sima Yi voiced agreement, and the ruler of Wei approved Sun Zi's suggestion. He deployed several commanders to the passes and assigned Guo Huai and Zheng He to defend Chang'an. Then, after providing generously for the army, Cao Rui returned to Luoyang.

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Kongming reached Hanzhong and tallied up his forces. He was distressed to find Zhao Zilong and Deng Zhi still missing and sent Guan Xing and Zhang Bao off to render aid if needed. But as the two were about to leave, Zhao Zilong and Deng Zhi arrived, their forces and supplies intact. A delighted Kongming led the commanders out to greet them. Zhao Zilong hurriedly dismounted and prostrated himself. "What right has a defeated general," he said, "to be received by Your Excellency like this?" Kongming raised him up and took his hand. "My own poor judgment," he admitted, "caused all this. We have had losses all around. Only you have returned whole. What is the reason?" Deng Zhi explained, "I led my men ahead while Zilong guarded the rear. He took such a toll of the enemy commanders that they shrank from combat, and none of our materiel had to be abandoned." "A true commander!" marveled Kongming, and he presented Zhao Zilong with fifty catties of gold; he also allotted ten thousand rolls of silk to his soldiers. But Zhao Zilong declined the gifts. "My army has accomplished nothing deserving the name of merit. With blame enough to go around, for us to accept such bounty would confuse Your Excellency's standards of reward and punishment. I suggest that the gifts be placed in the treasury for distribution this winter. That will be soon enough." With a sigh Kongming said, "The late Emperor always praised Zilong's virtue—with good reason!" The prime minister felt added respect for Zhao Zilong.

Suddenly the arrival of Ma Su, Wang Ping, Wei Yan, and Gao Xiang was announced. Kongming summoned Wang Ping first and said to him, "I ordered you to help Ma Su defend Jieting. Couldn't you have prevented this loss?" Wang Ping replied, "I pleaded with him over and over to construct an earth wall on the road and to fortify it. But Military Adviser Ma Su refused to listen and only grew angrier, so I led five thousand men off and camped ten *li* from the mountain. The Wei army came suddenly and surrounded the hill. I made more than ten attempts to break through their line, but without success. The next day our main position fell apart and great numbers surrendered. Unable to maintain my isolated position, I went to Wei Yan for help, but on the way some northern troops trapped me in a valley. I fought for my life and broke free; but the Wei had already taken my camp by the time I got back to it, so I headed for Willow Rows and met Gao Xiang on the way. We subsequently formed three separate units—Wei Yan, Gao Xiang, and I—and raided the camp; our goal, to retake Jieting. I was surprised to see no enemy troops lying in wait on the road. This puzzled me, so I climbed a hill and looked around. Lo! Wei Yan and Gao Xiang were already trapped by Wei troops. I plunged through their line and plucked the two commanders to safety; then we reunited with Military Adviser Ma Su. I was afraid that Yangping Pass would be lost next and hurried back to defend it. I did all I could to persuade Ma Su. The commanders and lieutenants will bear me out."

Kongming dismissed Wang Ping and summoned Ma Su, who placed ropes around himself and knelt before the prime minister. Kongming, wearing an angry expression, said, "From your youth you have read your fill of military texts and have been thoroughly versed in battle tactics. Time and again I warned you that Jieting was a vital base when you took the responsibility of defending it, pledging the lives of your family. Had you listened to Wang Ping, you could have avoided this disaster. You must bear the blame for our defeated army, our fallen commanders, our abandoned territory, and our lost towns. If military regulations are not clear and correct, how can I discipline the soldiers? Your violation of the rules was no fault of mine. Your family, however, will be provided with a monthly allowance of cash and grain; therefore set your mind at rest." So saying, Kongming ordered Ma Su removed and executed.

Ma Su wept and said, "You have been a father to me, and I a son to you. My punishment is unavoidable. I ask only that Your Excellency remember the legend of Shun, who employed Yu after executing Gun, and I shall bear you no grudge in the netherworld below."¹ With that, Ma Su wept loudly. Kongming brushed away his tears, saying, "Brothers could not be closer than we two. Your son will be my son. Say no more."

The guards took Ma Su outside the main gate of the camp and were about to perform their duty, when Military Adviser Jiang Wan arrived from Chengdu. Seeing the execution being prepared, he cried out in alarm, "Spare him!" He went before Kongming and said, "In ancient times the leader of Chu killed General Cheng Dechen after a great defeat and gave Duke Wen of Jin, Chu's enemy, great satisfaction thereby. With the empire so unstable, it is surely a shame to put a wise counselor to death." Weeping freely, Kongming replied, "In ancient times Sunzi was able to impose his control over the empire because his application of the laws was clear and unmistakable. Now strife afflicts every part of the empire, and warfare is constantly breaking out. If the law is set aside, how can we continue the campaign against the rebels? It is necessary to execute Ma Su."

Soon after, the guards presented Ma Su's head to the prime minister's attendants. Kongming wept long and loud. Jiang Wan said to him, "The law has punished Ma Su for his crime. Why do you lament, Your Excellency?" "It's not for Ma Su that I weep," he answered. "I am thinking of the late

Emperor—at Baidi when the end was near—warning me not to use this man because his deeds would not match his boasts. The late king's words have proved too true, leaving me now to rue my blindness. I weep to recall it." Senior and junior commanders and officers wept with him. Ma Su died at the age of thirty-nine during the summer, in the fifth month of Jian Xing 6 (A. D. 228). A later poet left these lines:

Ma Su, for losing Jieting—no small crime—
Earned only scorn for his claims of skill
And paid before the camp the law's full due
As tearful Kongming thought, how much the late king knew!

After the execution Kongming had Ma Su's head displayed in all the camps and then sewn back on his corpse that it might be interred whole. Kongming personally prepared the memorial text and the sacrificial offering; he showed Ma Su's family especial concern and provided them with cash and grain each month.

Kongming then wrote a petition for Jiang Wan to present to the Second Emperor requesting his own demotion from the position of prime minister. Jiang Wan returned to Chengdu and presented the document to his lord. It read:

Though a man of commonplace ability, I came to hold a position far beyond my scope. I tried my best to inspire the army as bearer of the imperial battle-axe and flag of command; but I failed to enforce the statutes, to clarify the laws, and to act with prudence. The result was the loss of Jieting, when my command was violated, and of Winnow Basket Gorge, when my warnings were ignored. The fault rests with me for delegating authority so wrongly. Clearly, I did not choose well and made grave mistakes in affairs entrusted to me. In the *Spring and Autumn Annals* it is the commander who bears responsibility when things go wrong; it is thus fitting that I be demoted three grades to punish my fault. Overcome with shame, this vassal prostrates himself awaiting your decision.

Having read the petition, the Second Emperor said, "Victory and defeat are commonplace to the master of warfare. Why does His Excellency make this statement to us?" Privy Counselor Fei Yi said to the Emperor, "It is this vassal's understanding that in government nothing outweighs reverence for the law. When the law is not applied, authority is not accepted. For the prime minister to demote himself after a grave defeat is entirely appropriate." The Second Emperor accepted Fei Yi's judgment and issued an edict demoting Kongming to general of the Right and acting prime minister but preserving his overall military authority. The Emperor then sent Fei Yi to Hanzhong to deliver the edict.

After Kongming had received the edict, Fei Yi tried to spare the prime minister's feelings by saying in a complimentary tone, "The people of the Riverlands rejoice in Your Excellency's capture of the four northwest counties." Kongming, visibly angry, replied, "What are you saying! To lose what one wins is not to win. This compliment of yours humiliates!" But Fei Yi persisted, saying, "And the Son of Heaven rejoiced to hear that Jiang Wei has joined us." Frankly angered now, Kongming said, "The army comes home defeated, not a scrap of land won. The blame is mine. How much of a loss to

the enemy is one Jiang Wei? "

Fei Yi went on, "The army Your Excellency commands numbers several hundred thousand; will it be possible to attack the north again?" Kongming answered, "When our forces occupied Qishan and Winnow Basket Gorge, an enemy inferior in numbers defeated us. The problem was not the size of our army but the leadership. My present purpose is to reduce the army's size and relieve some of the commanders, to punish openly those who deserve it while reflecting on our own mistakes, and to revise our tactics for the future. Unless we do this, simply increasing our forces won't help. Henceforth, those of you genuinely concerned for our kingdom's ultimate fate must vigorously attack my errors and hold me responsible for my failures. Then our direction can be set, the rebels destroyed, and an early victory anticipated." Fei Yi and the other commanders accepted this view. Fei Yi returned to Chengdu.

Kongming remained in Hanzhong, where he treated the army and the populace with solicitude and had the troops put through rigorous training. He also arranged for the construction of equipment for laying siege and for crossing rivers; he stockpiled grain and provender; and he readied rafts for battle. Northern spies reported these war preparations to Luoyang.

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Apprised of these developments, Cao Rui summoned Sima Yi to plan the conquest of the Riverlands. "It is not the time for an attack," Sima Yi counseled. "Now, at the very height of summer, the Riverlands troops will hold back. And if we go too deeply into their territory while they sit tight in their strongpoints, we will be a long time defeating them." Cao Rui asked, "And what if the Riverlands troops raid our territory?" "I, your vassal," Sima Yi answered, "have already concluded that Zhuge Liang is bound to follow Han Xin's example and secretly aim for Chencang.² I am recommending someone who can fortify our position there so that there will not be the slightest chance of losing it. He stands nine spans tall and has the powerful arms of a champion marksman as well as a profound understanding of strategy. He will be able to stop Zhuge Liang's invasion."

Delighted, Cao Rui asked the man's name, and Sima Yi responded, "Hao Zhao (styled Bodao) of Taiyuan, presently controlling Hexi as a commander with various titles." In accordance with Sima Yi's recommendation, Cao Rui sent an edict appointing Hao Zhao General Who Controls the West and assigning him to defend the road to Chencang. At that moment the Wei ruler received an unexpected report from First Field Marshal Cao Xiu, military authority in Yangzhou.³ It said that Zhou Fang, the Southland's governor in Poyang, was offering to surrender his district and that he had sent a secret emissary enumerating seven conditions for breaking the power of the Southland along with his appeal for Wei troops to take over Poyang.

Cao Rui unrolled the document on his platform, and he and Sima Yi examined it. Sima Yi said, "This appeal should be answered. The Southland will be destroyed. Give me a company to assist Cao Xiu." Suddenly someone stepped forward from the assembly's ranks and said, "The men of the Southland always go back on what they say; I wouldn't place much faith in this offer. Zhou Fang is too cunning to be surrendering. It must be a trick to lure our soldiers in." All eyes turned to Jia Kui, General Who Establishes Dynastic Authority. Sima Yi said to him, "This appeal must be heeded lest an opportunity be missed." The ruler of Wei said, "Let both of you, Sima Yi and Jia Kui, assist Cao Xiu." The two generals left to execute the order. Following this, Cao Xiu marched in force directly to

the city of Huan; Jia Kui led Forward Commander Man Chong and the governor of Dongwan, Hu Zhi, directly to East Pass to capture Yangcheng; and Sima Yi led his troops to seize Jiangling.⁴

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At this time the ruler of the Southland, Sun Quan, was meeting with his officials at East Pass in Wuchang. He told them, "I have a secret petition from Zhou Fang, governor of Poyang. It states that Wei's governor of Yangzhou, Cao Xiu, plans to invade our district. Zhou Fang has put into action a cunning plan to lure the enemy into a fortified area where we can ambush and capture Cao Xiu. Wei troops—three field armies—are on their way. What are your views?"

Gu Yong offered his opinion: "The only man who can stop them is Lu Xun!" Delighted with this suggestion, Sun Quan summoned the general⁵ and honored him with the titles First Field Marshal Who Sustains the Kingdom and Generalissimo Who Pacifies the North. As commander of the Royal Guard, Lu Xun was empowered to act in the king's behalf. He received the yak-tail standard and the golden mace before the assembled officials, who listened gravely. Sun Quan personally handed Lu Xun the whip for his mount.

Lu Xun received Sun Quan's mandate and thanked his sovereign for his favor. Before dispatching forces to meet the invaders, Lu Xun recommended two men to serve as his lieutenants so that the army could be split into three divisions and advanced along three routes. Sun Quan asked for their names, and Lu Xun replied, "Zhu Huan, General Who Invigorates Our Prestige, and Quan Zong, General Who Calms the South. These two will support my command." Sun Quan approved and appointed Zhu Huan field marshal of the Left and Quan Zong field marshal of the Right. Following this, Lu Xun took command of a vast host of more than seven hundred thousand troops recruited from the eighty-one departments of the Southland and from the Jingzhou region as well. With Zhu Huan leading the left route army and Quan Zong leading the right route army, Lu Xun advanced, leading the central army himself.

Zhu Huan proposed a plan: "Cao Xiu was sent on his mission only because he is an imperial relation. He has neither the brains nor the courage to command. Zhou Fang's scheme has lured him into a key area. Marshal, if you attack, he is bound to fall back and then flee by one of two routes—Gorge of Rock on the left or Hanging Wagon on the right—both treacherous mountain paths. Let Quan Zong and myself each set a detachment in ambush at these points after we have blocked the road with rocks and branches. Cao Xiu will be taken. That done, we will advance directly and seize Shouchun, bringing Xuchang and Luoyang within striking distance, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!" "I'm afraid it's not a good plan," Lu Xun replied. "I have some clever ploys of my own." Thereupon Zhu Huan withdrew, resentful of the way his views had been received. Lu Xun ordered Zhuge Jin and others to hold Jiangling and oppose Sima Yi. All the field armies were positioned exactly as Lu Xun directed.

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Meanwhile, as Cao Xiu approached the city of Huan, Zhou Fang went forth to greet him, proceeding directly to Cao Xiu's tent. Cao Xiu said, "Your recent communication stating seven conditions seemed entirely reasonable, and your appeal was submitted to the Son of Heaven. He has mustered the whole army for an expedition south; and if we take the Southland, your contribution will have played no small part. Some contend you are full of schemes and some doubt the truth of what you

say, but I feel confident you are not deceiving us."

Zhou Fang let out a sharp cry, seized a follower's sword, and attempted to cut his own throat. Cao Xiu swiftly checked him. Bracing himself on the sword, Zhou Fang said, "I made seven points and will now prove my sincerity with my blood. Some southerner is provoking suspicion to turn you against me. Give him credence, and I shall die. Let Heaven vouch for my loyalty." So saying, Zhou Fang again tried to kill himself. In alarm Cao Xiu restrained him, saying, "I spoke in jest. There is no need for such demonstrations." Zhou Fang then cut off his hair with the sword and flung the tangle to the ground. He said, "I come to you with a loyal heart, and you treat me in jest. To show my true heart, I have severed the hair that comes from the parents who gave me life." Thus, Zhou Fang convinced Cao Xiu of his sincerity. Cao Xiu held a grand banquet in his honor; the festivities ended, and Zhou Fang excused himself.

Suddenly Jia Kui, General Who Establishes Dynastic Authority, was announced. Cao Xiu ordered him to appear and asked him, "What have you come for?" Jia Kui replied, "I believe the Southland has massed troops at Huan. Field Marshal, do not risk an advance before I try to defeat the enemy with flank attacks." Cao Xiu replied angrily, "Are you trying to rob me of this achievement?" But Jia Kui went on, "Zhou Fang cut his hair to deceive you—as Yao Li did in ancient times when he cut off his arm to win Qing Ji's trust before murdering him. Give him no credence!"

In rising anger Cao Xiu asked, "Would you sap our morale at the very moment I am preparing to march?" He ordered his guards to remove and execute Jia Kui. The other commanders appealed in his behalf: "To kill a leading commander on the eve of the expedition will do our army no good. Spare him for now." Cao Xiu relented; he held Jia Kui's men in camp pending deployment and took a company ahead to capture East Pass. When Zhou Fang heard that Jia Kui had been stripped of his command, he said to himself with satisfaction, "Had Cao Xiu heeded Jia Kui, the Southland would have been done for. But Heaven brings us victory this day!"

Zhou Fang sent a secret emissary to the city of Huan to report these developments to Lu Xun. Lu Xun summoned his commanders and delivered his orders to them: "Stone-town lies ahead. The roads are hilly, suitable enough for an ambush. Go and occupy the open ground first, then deploy and await the Wei army." Finally, Lu Xun ordered Xu Sheng to move up as vanguard.

Meanwhile, Cao Xiu had ordered Zhou Fang to advance. On the march Cao Xiu asked him, "What place lies ahead?" "Stonetown," Zhou Fang replied. "A good place to occupy." Following this advice, Cao Xiu led his main force, complete with impedimenta and regalia, and stationed it at Stonetown. The next day lookouts reported to him, "Southland troops in undetermined numbers bar our way into the hills." "But Zhou Fang assured me," Cao Xiu said in alarm. "How could there be troops waiting?" Cao Xiu raced to find Zhou Fang but was told he had ridden off with a few dozen men, no one knew where. "I have fallen into a trap, but there's no need to panic," Cao Xiu exclaimed, and he ordered General Zhang Pu to lead the vanguard into battle against the southern army.

The two sides deployed in formation. Zhang Pu rode forth and denounced the enemy commander: "Surrender now, traitor!" Xu Sheng rode forth to engage him. After a brief clash Zhang Pu, unable to withstand the assault, reined in and recalled his men. He returned to Cao Xiu and told him that Xu Sheng was too bold to confront. "I will defeat him with a surprise attack," Cao Xiu boasted, and he ordered Zhang Pu to put twenty thousand men in ambush south of Stonetown. At the same time Cao Xiu ordered Xue Qiao to lay another twenty thousand in ambush north of the town. "Tomorrow," Cao Xiu told them, "I will go forth with one thousand men and provoke battle. Then I will feign defeat

to draw the enemy near the northern hills. At the signal of a bombard we will attack from three sides—and a great victory will be ours." The two commanders went to carry out their orders.

Meanwhile, Lu Xun had summoned his lieutenants Zhu Huan and Quan Zong and instructed them: "Take thirty thousand troops each and harass Cao Xiu's camp from the rear; then signal with fire. I will advance in force on the main road. Cao Xiu can be taken!" At dusk the two commanders moved forward according to plan. During the second watch Zhu Huan led a company behind Cao Xiu's camp, where he fell upon Zhang Pu's ambush. But Zhang Pu did not realize the troops were hostile and rode forward to make inquiry; Zhu Huan cut him down with a stroke of the sword. The Wei force fled, and Zhu Huan ordered the rear company to light a fire. At this signal Quan Zong, leading his company to worry the rear of Cao Xiu's camp, came to grips with the soldiers of Xue Qiao. In the ensuing slaughter Xue Qiao fled in defeat; and the Wei troops ran headlong back to camp, having suffered grave losses.

From the rear Zhu Huan and Quan Zong, leading separate units, moved in for the kill. Cao Xiu's camp became so disorganized that his troops began attacking one another. Cao Xiu leaped to his horse and raced toward the Stonetown road. With a sizable force Xu Sheng moved along the main road killing countless Wei troops; those who escaped abandoned their battle garments and shields. Cao Xiu was in a panic, racing for his life down the Stonetown road, when a band of men burst into his view from a bypath, their commander Jia Kui. Cao Xiu recovered slightly and in a tone of self-reproach said, "I suffered this defeat because I ignored your advice." "Leave this road at once, Field Marshal," Jia Kui urged. "If the southerners block it with rocks and branches, we will be in grave danger." Cao Xiu galloped off. Jia Kui protected the rear and planted decoy banners both in the thick of the woods and along precarious hill paths. Racing up in pursuit, Xu Sheng glimpsed the banners on the slopes and chose to recall his troops and return rather than press the chase and risk ambush. Thus, Cao Xiu was rescued; and Sima Yi, hearing of Cao Xiu's defeat, withdrew.

Lu Xun was awaiting news of victory when Xu Sheng, Zhu Huan, and Quan Zong returned, having captured huge quantities of chariots, carts, draft animals, materiel, and weapons in addition to tens of thousands of enemy soldiers. Delighted with the outcome of the day's action, Field Marshal Lu Xun brought the army back to the Southland, followed by Governor Zhou Fang and the principal lieutenant commanders. The lord of the Southland, Sun Quan, led his officials and officers out of Wuchang to greet Lu Xun, whom he placed beside him under the imperial umbrella for the ride back into the city. All the lieutenant commanders were promoted and rewarded.

Noticing that Zhou Fang was missing some hair, Sun Quan cheered him, saying, "You will go down in history for what you accomplished today." He then made Zhou Fang an honorary lord and held a grand banquet to feast the army and celebrate the victory. Lu Xun addressed his sovereign, saying, "Cao Xiu's defeat has daunted the Wei. Now is the time to send a letter to the Riverlands urging Zhuge Liang to march against them." Sun Quan approved the proposal and sent an emissary off to Shu. Indeed:

A sound plan from the eastern kingdom
Would cause the western kingdom to mobilize again.

How would Kongming's next campaign against Wei turn out?

READ ON.



***Kongming Appeals Again for an Expedition Against Wei;
Jiang Wei Defeats the Cao Army by Offering a False Letter***

IT WAS AUTUMN, THE NINTH MONTH of Jian Xing 6 (A. D. 228) by the Shu-Han calendar, when the Southland general Lu Xun defeated the Wei field marshal Cao Xiu at Stonetown and seized his chariots, livestock, and fighting equipment. Despair over these losses caused Cao Xiu to develop an ulcer on his back; he died on reaching Luoyang. The ruler of Wei, Cao Rui, had him buried with full honors.

When Sima Yi returned with his troops, the assembled commanders asked him, "Field Marshal Cao's defeat was as much your responsibility, Commander, as his—why have you rushed back?" "Zhuge Liang might exploit our defeat to take Chang'an," he replied. "Who else can meet an emergency to our west? That is why I came home." But the commanders thought Sima Yi afraid, and snickered as they withdrew.

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Meanwhile, the Southland emissary had delivered Sun Quan's letter to the Shu capital. Its appeal for the Riverlands to attack Wei and its account of the defeat of Cao Xiu bespoke Sun Quan's intention to demonstrate the Southland's strength and to promote good relations with the Riverlands. The Second Emperor was delighted with the letter and had it carried to Kongming in Hanzhong.

Preparing for another offensive, Kongming had brought his armed forces to full strength, laid in supplies, and readied all equipment and materiel. When the Second Emperor's courier arrived with Sun Quan's letter, Kongming convened a grand banquet for planning the campaign with his commanders. Suddenly, a violent gust of wind from the northeast blew down a pine tree in front of Kongming's quarters. Before a startled assembly Kongming divined by tossing coins and said, "This portends the fall of a great general." The commanders were skeptical of this prediction, and the banquet continued. Suddenly Zhao Tong, eldest son of Zhao Zilong, General Who Controls the South, and Zhao Guang, the second son, came to present themselves before the prime minister. Astonished, Kongming threw his cup to the ground and cried, "We have lost Zhao Zilong!" The two sons entered Kongming's presence, flung themselves to the ground, and wept. "Father died last night at the third watch," they cried, "after his illness had taken a turn for the worse." Kongming stamped his foot on the ground. Tearfully, he said, "In Zilong the dynasty had a pillar; and I, my right arm!" All the assembled commanders wept.

Kongming sent the sons of Zhao Zilong to Chengdu to report their father's demise. On receiving the news, the Second Emperor emitted a sharp cry and shed tears. "Long ago, when I was still an infant," he said, "Zhao Zilong plucked me from certain death during a chaotic retreat of our forces." The Second Emperor issued an edict posthumously honoring Zhao Zilong as regent-marshal and lord

of Shunping and ordered him interred east of the Damask Screen Hills outside Chengdu. An ancestral temple was built on the site for the offering of sacrifice each season. A poet of later times left these lines in Zhao Zilong's memory:

O Tiger General from Changshan
With the wit and courage of Zhang and Guan!
Your triumph at Hanshui stands today;¹
Your name at Dangyang all acclaimed.
Twice you saved the baby prince In service to his sacred sire.
History honors those whom duty claims,
Conferring a glory that never wanes.

Mindful of Zhao Zilong's past achievements, the Second Emperor buried him with rich and splendid ceremony. He assigned Zhao Tong to the Imperial Tiger Escort and appointed Zhao Guang garrison commander, ordering them to stand watch at the graveside in honor of their late father's memory.

The two sons took their leave and departed. Suddenly an imperial attendant informed the Emperor, "Prime Minister Zhuge Liang is ready to resume the campaign against Wei." The Second Emperor turned to the officials at court; they advocated a more cautious policy. The Emperor was struggling to reach a decision, when he was told that the prime minister had sent Yang Yi with a petition. The Second Emperor summoned Yang Yi, who presented the document for his examination. The text read:

Painfully recognizing that either the kingdom of Han or the kingdom of Wei must fall and that our royal rule would never know security if confined to a part of the realm, the late Emperor empowered me to wage righteous war against the northern traitors. Accurately appraising his vassal's abilities, he knew full well what feeble talent I had to pit against so strong an enemy; but not to go forward spelled our doom. To arms, rather than to bow to fate! Thus, the late Emperor charged me, and he never wavered in that commitment.

The day I received his mandate, I neither slept nor ate; the northern expedition occupied my thoughts. But first we had to move into the region south of us. In the fifth month I crossed the River Lu and penetrated deep into aboriginal territory, going without food for days at a time—not because I threw caution to the winds but because, knowing that Your Majesty's rule could never have survived confined to the Shu capital, we would have faced any danger, any difficulty, to carry out the late Emperor's last wishes. Critics have complained of this plan. Now, when the traitors are spent in the west and occupied in the east, military logic tells us to exploit their distress. It is time to move forward. Allow me to present further details of this case.

The founder of the Han, Emperor Gao Zu, had wisdom of a heavenly scale and advisers of great depth and subtlety. Yet he tested treacherous terrain and suffered painful defeats, gaining security only after many trials and ordeals. Your Majesty will never surpass Emperor Gao Zu; your advisers will never surpass Zhang Liang and Chen Ping. How Your Majesty could seek a long-range plan for conquering the empire from a passive position is the first thing I fail to

understand.

Imperial Inspector Liu Yao and Governor Wang Lang each held imperial territory.² They were concerned for their security and worked out plans, freely citing the ancient sages. But a crowd of doubts filled their breasts, innumerable obstacles impeded their thinking, and they put off military action from year to year. That they thus allowed Sun Ce to wax in power unhampered and eventually engross the whole of the Southland is the second thing I fail to understand.

Cao Cao—no shrewder planner than he—waged war in a manner worthy of Sunzi and Wu Qi. Nonetheless, his enemies trapped him at Nanyang, put him in straits in Wuchao, imperiled his life at Qilian, pressed him hard at Liyang, nearly ruined him at Beishan, and almost killed him at Tong Pass. After all that, he enjoyed a brief period of false security. How then this vassal, Liang, with so much less talent than Cao Cao, could ever conquer the north without running risks is the third thing I fail to understand.

Cao Cao attacked Changba five times but could not subdue it. He tried to cross Lake Chao four times and failed. He took Li Fu into his service, but Li Fu conspired against him. He gave authority to Xiahou Yuan, but Xiahou Yuan died. The late Emperor always acknowledged Cao Cao's capabilities, yet he had his failures too. How then one so inferior as this vassal could guarantee a victory is the fourth thing I fail to appreciate.

Alas, since arriving in Hanzhong, in one year we have lost Zhao Zilong,³ Yang Qun, Ma Yu, Yan Zhi, Ding Li, Bo Shou, Liu He, Deng Tong, and others, in addition to unit leaders and positional commanders totaling more than seventy. We also lost more than a thousand of our special forces—shock troops, units of the Cong, Sou, and Black Qiang nations, rangers and armed cavalry. To assemble these elite forces from around the realm took many decades; no single province can make up the loss. And in a few more years, we will lose another two-thirds of them. How to deal with the enemy then is the fifth thing I fail to understand.

At present, though the population is strained to the utmost and the armed forces near exhaustion, events will not stand still; and in their swift course, action is no dearer than restraint. Not to act when the hour beckons, trying instead to sustain a protracted struggle with the resources of but a single province is the sixth thing I fail to understand.

Events are the hardest things to control. Once the late Emperor lost a battle in Jingzhou, and Cao Cao gleefully rubbed his hands together, confident that he had conquered the empire. But then the late Emperor allied himself with Wu and Yue in the east, took Ba and Shu in the west, and marched against the north. Xiahou Yuan fell. This was something Cao Cao failed to reckon on and a promise of success for the cause of Han. But the Southland turned on its Riverlands ally; Lord Guan perished, Zigui fell, and Cao Pi proclaimed a new dynasty. That's how things happen; it is difficult to anticipate things to come. Humbly I shall toil to the last ounce of my strength, until my end; but whether the outcome will favor us or not is beyond my powers of prediction.⁴

The Second Emperor was delighted with Kongming's petition and issued orders for the expedition to begin. Kongming accepted the imperial command. He put three hundred thousand of his finest troops into the field and made Wei Yan commander of the vanguard of the first unit. Then he headed straight for the road to Chencang.



Spies soon reported these movements to Sima Yi in Luoyang, and he informed the ruler of Wei, who called a court conference to discuss the matter. Regent-Marshal Cao Zhen stepped forward and addressed the Emperor: "This vassal's recent defense of Longxi was a humiliating failure. To redeem myself, I request a large force to go and capture Zhuge Liang. I have lately acquired the services of an important commander who wields a sword of sixty *jin* and rides a champion war-horse. He can pull an iron bow more than two hundred pounds strong, and with three concealed 'meteor hammers' he can hit his target every time. Ten thousand fighters could not equal him in courage. This man comes from Didao in Longxi. His name is Wang Shuang (styled Ziquan). I recommend him for the vanguard." Cao Rui was delighted and summoned Wang Shuang to the elevated hall. Cao Rui studied his nine-span frame, his swarthy face and yellowish eyes, his bearlike waist and tigerlike back. With a smile Cao Rui said, "So great a commander eases my cares." He bestowed on him a silk surcoat, golden armor, and the titles Tiger-Fearsome General and vanguard of the first unit. Cao Zhen was the chief commander of the expedition. After thanking the ruler, Cao Zhen left the court and, at the head of one hundred and fifty thousand picked troops, met with Guo Huai and Zhang He; then they went to defend different strongpoints.



The advance reconnaissance unit of the Riverlands army reached Chencang and then reported back to Kongming: "They have walled Chencang. Inside, General Hao Zhao commands a well-fortified complex surrounded by an impenetrable network of branches and staves. It would be easier for us to reach Qishan through the narrow mountain path in the Taibo Range and leave Chencang alone." "Due north of Chencang stands Jieting, the town we must take before we advance," was Kongming's reply, and he ordered Wei Yan to march to the wall and lay siege to Chencang.

After pressing the attack for several days, Wei Yan returned and told Kongming that he could not take Chencang. Kongming would have executed Wei Yan, but someone stepped forward and declared, "I have followed Your Excellency for many years without performing worthy service. Inept as I am, I beg to enter Chencang for the purpose of persuading Hao Zhao to submit. Not an arrow need be wasted." The assembly turned to unit commander Jin Xiang. "And how will you convince him?" Kongming asked. "Both of us come from Longxi," Jin Xiang replied, "and have been close since childhood. If I show him where his advantage lies, he will submit." Kongming ordered Jin Xiang to proceed.

Jin Xiang galloped to Chencang and shouted up to the wall: "An old friend of Hao Zhao's!" Guards reported to Hao Zhao, who ordered the visitor admitted. Jin Xiang mounted the wall and the two met. "What brings my old friend?" Hao Zhao asked. "At present I am under Kongming of the Riverlands," Jin Xiang replied, "engaged in military planning, for which I am treated most cordially. It is he who sends me with a message for you." Hao Zhao's expression turned severe as he said, "Zhuge Liang is my kingdom's foe. I serve Wei; you serve Shu. Each serves his lord. Brothers once, we are mortal enemies now. Say no more, but leave Chencang at once!"⁵ Jin Xiang tried to speak further, but Hao Zhao had already left the watchtower. The Wei army urged the envoy to his mount and chased him off.

Looking back, Jin Xiang watched Hao Zhao leaning against the high protective railing of the wall. Jin Xiang reined in and pointed at Hao Zhao with his whip as he cried out, "Worthy brother, why do you treat me so shabbily?" "You know the law of Wei," Hao Zhao answered. "I will honor my duty as long as I live. Waste no more breath on your persuasions. Hurry back and tell Zhuge Liang I await his attack!"

Jin Xiang returned to Kongming and said, "Hao Zhao turned me away before I could open my mouth." "Try again," Kongming said. Jin Xiang went back to Chencang and requested to see Hao Zhao. When Hao Zhao appeared at the tower, Jin Xiang reined in and shouted, "Worthy brother, heed these loyal words. How will you hold off an army of hundreds of thousands from an isolated town? Surrender now, for future regrets will be futile. Disobedient to Han, you serve the seditious Wei. Do you not know the Mandate of Heaven, nor the difference between black and white? Consider well, good brother." In great anger Hao Zhao fit an arrow to his bow and shouted back, "What I have said still stands. Say no more but withdraw at once, and I shall not shoot."

Jin Xiang returned to Kongming and described Hao Zhao's behavior. In great anger Kongming responded, "That fool's insult goes too far, imagining we don't have the means to take his town!" He asked a resident of the area the size of the force in Chencang, and was told, "It's hard to say precisely: about three thousand." Kongming said with a smile, "I doubt this little town can hold us off! But let's attack before help is able to reach them." Kongming ordered up one hundred assault towers—each holding a dozen men—and had them screened with boards. His soldiers took short ladders and ropes and prepared to storm the wall at the sound of the drum.

From his observation tower Hao Zhao watched the Riverlands soldiers erect their assault towers and approach from four sides, and he ordered his three thousand archers to the four walls to direct burning arrows at the approaching engines.⁶ Assuming the town to be unprepared, Kongming forced the pace of the assault towers and ordered the army to beat the drums and shout as they bore down. To Kongming's surprise, masses of burning arrows set his towers aflame, killing most of the troops inside them. Arrows and stones poured down from the wall, forcing the Riverlands troops to retreat.⁷ Kongming angrily cried, "Burn my assault towers? Then I'll use battering rams!"

Kongming prepared the batteries and sent his troops drumming and screaming against the town the next day. Hao Zhao swiftly ordered his men to smash the rams by using long hemp ropes to sling giant stones. In response Kongming ordered his men to fill the moat with earth and then had Liao Hua direct three thousand sappers in the digging of a hidden tunnel into the city. But Hao Zhao cut them off by making a transverse trench inside the wall. Thus, the battle continued for twenty days, with Kongming unable to find a way to reduce Chencang.

Kongming was brooding in his camp when he was informed, "The enemy's rescue force has arrived on the east with banners reading 'General Wang Shuang, Vanguard of the Wei.'" Kongming asked, "Who will take them on?" and Wei Yan volunteered. "You are the vanguard commander," Kongming said. "We cannot risk sending you out now." He called for another volunteer. Lieutenant Commander Xie Xiong responded promptly, and Kongming gave him three thousand men. Kongming asked again for a volunteer to follow Xie Xiong, and Lieutenant Commander Gong Qi also came forward and received a command of three thousand men. Kongming subsequently pulled back twenty *li* and camped in case of a surprise attack by Hao Zhao.

Xie Xiong advanced, but General Wang Shuang sliced him through in a brief clash. The Riverlands forces fled in defeat, pursued by the Wei general. Gong Qi joined the battle but fell to

Wang Shuang's sword after two or three passes. When returning troops informed Kongming, he was astonished and ordered Liao Hua, Wang Ping, and Zhang Ni forward to the front. The opposing lines—the Riverlands' and Wei's—formed, and Zhang Ni rode forth while Wang Ping and Liao Hua guarded the two wings. Wang Shuang raced out and engaged Zhang Ni, but they fought to a draw. Wang Shuang feigned defeat and fled; Zhang Ni gave chase. Wang Ping saw Zhang Ni being led into a trap, and he cried out, "Stop the chase!" As Zhang Ni turned sharply, Wang Shuang threw a hammer with lightning speed, hitting him square in the back. Zhang Ni slumped forward but galloped on. Wang Ping and Liao Hua interposed and escorted him safely back to camp. Wang Shuang's men swept down on the Riverlands troops, taking a heavy toll.

Zhang Ni spit mouthfuls of blood. He told Kongming: "Wang Shuang is a mighty warrior; none can match him. Wei's defense is formidable: they have twenty thousand camped outside Chencang, palisades on four sides, strong walls, and a deep moat." Kongming had lost two commanders, and Zhang Ni was badly wounded, so he summoned Jiang Wei and told him, "We cannot move down the road to Chencang. Is there any other way to get at them?" "With its fortifications, Hao Zhao's tight defense, and Wang Shuang's help," Jiang Wei said, "Chencang indeed cannot be taken. Another way might be to send a commander to set up a solid base in the hills hard by a stream and to have a second commander hold the main road to guard against another attack from Jieting. You, then, would take the main army quietly to Qishan while I took certain steps—Cao Zhen could be captured."

Kongming approved Jiang Wei's plan, sending Wang Ping and Li Hui to defend the road near Jieting with two contingents, and Wei Yan to post forces on the road to Chencang. Ma Dai had the vanguard; Guan Xing and Zhang Bao coordinated front and rear reinforcement. Kongming's army set out on bypaths through Ye Gorge and headed for the hills of Qishan.

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Cao Zhen had never forgotten how Sima Yi had robbed him of his laurels in the previous campaign. Accordingly, after reaching Luoyang he assigned Guo Huai and Sun Li to establish defensive positions east and west of the capital. Afterward, he sent Wang Shuang to relieve the emergency at Chencang. Delighted now with the reports of Wang Shuang's exploits, he sent General Fei Yao, the central defender of the Army, to serve provisionally as commander of the Forward Army. Cao Zhen had other commanders secure the various strongpoints.

Suddenly the capture of a spy was announced, and Cao Zhen had the man brought in. Kneeling, the man said, "This humble one is no spy. I come on a secret mission to the field marshal. Troops posted on the road took me by mistake. Please dismiss your attendants." Cao Zhen had the man's arms freed and sent his attendants away. The man went on, "I am in the service of Jiang Wei and carry a secret message from him." At Cao Zhen's request the courier drew the message from an inside garment and presented it. Cao Zhen opened it. The text read:

From Jiang Wei, the deserting commander, one hundred prostrations and this letter, submitted to the field marshal of the Cao banners. Because I have long been supported as a servant of the Wei, I was dispatched to defend a border town. Favored by your generosity, I found no way to repay it. Recently I fell into Zhuge Liang's trap and had to find a way to survive a desperate situation. How could I ever forget my former kingdom? Now by good fortune the Riverlands troops have moved west, and Zhuge Liang trusts me implicitly. I am counting on

you, Field Marshal, to come with a large force. If you meet up with the enemy, feign defeat. I will be to their rear and will signal with fire: first we'll burn out their supplies, then you will fall upon them, Field Marshal, in a surprise attack. Zhuge Liang can be captured. I seek no distinction in serving my kingdom, only the redemption of my former crime. If I receive favorable consideration, send your command with all speed.⁸

Delighted by this opportunity, Cao Zhen cried, "Heaven sends me success!" After rewarding the courier, he sent him back to report that he would cooperate at the time indicated. Cao Zhen summoned General Fei Yao to discuss the matter. "Jiang Wei has sent a secret communication," he said, "and would have us take certain steps..." "Zhuge Liang is all tricks!" Fei Yao warned, "and Jiang Wei is shrewder than most. Zhuge Liang could be behind this. It may be a trap!" Cao Zhen replied, "Jiang Wei was a man of Wei to start with and defected only because he had no other choice. Your suspicions are groundless." "Do not risk it, Field Marshal," Fei Yao persisted. "Sit tight here in camp. I will take a detachment and receive Jiang Wei. If I succeed, the credit will go to you. If there is treachery here, I will deal with it myself." Pleased with this plan, Cao Zhen ordered Fei Yao to move toward Ye Gorge with fifty thousand soldiers.

After marching several stages, Fei Yao camped and sent out scouts. That afternoon a report came back: "Riverlands troops are moving through Ye Gorge." Fei Yao advanced at full speed. The Riverlands troops retreated without engaging; Fei Yao pursued. More Riverlands troops came but withdrew again without assuming battle formation. The Riverlanders approached and withdrew—three times all told—until late afternoon of the following day. During this time the northern troops could not rest for fear of being attacked. As the Wei troops finally settled in to prepare their meal, thunderous shouts surrounded them and drums and horns sounded out as the Riverlands troops swarmed over hill and plain.

The bannered front of the Riverlands line parted, revealing a four-wheeled carriage bearing Kongming, sitting erect. He sent a man to call on the Wei commander to meet with him. Fei Yao galloped forth and, spotting Kongming, rejoiced in his heart. Turning to his followers, he said, "If they move against us, withdraw and flee. When you see fire behind the hill, turn back again and slaughter them. Troops are coming to back you up." Having issued these instructions, Fei Yao charged boldly out on his high-stepping mount and shouted: "A defeated general dares to show himself again?" "Have Cao Zhen come and talk to me!" Kongming responded. Fei Yao taunted him: "Field Marshal Cao belongs to the royal family. He would never lower himself to meet a traitor!" In great anger Kongming motioned with his feathered fan, and two forces, led by Ma Dai on the right and Zhang Yi on the left, charged onto the field.

The Wei troops withdrew; but before they had gone thirty *li*, they saw flames behind the Riverlands army. Shouting voices were everywhere. Thinking it was the fire signal, Fei Yao reversed course and began to slaughter the Riverlanders. When the Riverlands troops retreated, Fei Yao raised his sword and led the chase on toward the source of the shouting. But as they approached the site of the flames, the hillside paths echoed with the beat of drums and the blast of horns. The earth shook as two Riverlands companies sprang forth: on the left Guan Xing, on the right Zhang Bao. From above, shafts and stones pelted the northerners, and their ranks disintegrated. Fei Yao, realizing he was caught, ordered a swift retreat into the valleys; but his forces were spent. From behind, Guan Xing swept down with fresh troops. The Wei soldiers trampled one another, and many others

drowned.

Fei Yao fled for his life. But on a hillslope he encountered a band of troops led by Jiang Wei. "Faithless, treacherous villain!" Fei Yao shouted. "By bad luck I fell into your fiendish trap!" Jiang Wei smiled and said, "I was trying to capture Cao Zhen and did not mean to entrap you. Dismount and submit." Without responding, Fei Yao bolted toward a valley but found himself facing a towering wall of flame; behind, the enemy was closing in. Fei Yao cut his own throat, and his followers surrendered.

Kongming urged the Riverlands troops on until they had pushed through the hills of Qishan. After pitching camp on the farther eastern side, he gathered in his forces and rewarded Jiang Wei. "If only we had killed Cao Zhen," Jiang Wei remarked ruefully. "It is too bad that our grand plan came to so little," Kongming replied.

The news of Fei Yao's death caused Cao Zhen deep regret. With Guo Huai he began planning anew how to force the Riverlanders back. Sun Yi and Xin Pi dispatched a memorial to Luoyang to inform the ruler of Wei that the Shu army had come through the Qishan hills and that Cao Zhen had suffered heavy losses of men and commanders, with the result that the northerners' overall position was in danger. In alarm Cao Rui called for Sima Yi and said to him, "Cao Zhen defeated, and the Riverlanders on this side of the mountains! How can we push them back?" "Your servant," Sima Yi responded, "has a plan to force Zhuge Liang back. Without any show of force by the Wei army, the enemy will flee of its own accord." Indeed:

Since Cao Zhen had no means to win,
He had to count on Sima Yi's plan.

What was the plan?

READ ON.



Wang Shuang Is Executed While Pursuing the Han Army; Kongming Is Victorious After Raiding Chencang

SIMA YI ADDRESSED HIS RULER: "In a previous petition I predicted that Kongming would come through Chencang; I therefore sent Hao Zhao to defend it. Now my prediction has been confirmed. The enemy needs Chencang to supply its invasion. Fortunately, Hao Zhao and Wang Shuang hold it, blocking the enemy's grain line, and all other routes are too narrow for easy transport. The Riverlands army should have no more than a month's grain and will be eager for an early encounter. Delay will thus work to our advantage. Your Majesty, issue an edict ordering Cao Zhen to defend the key routes and strongpoints but to avoid battle; within a month the Riverlanders will be gone, and we can strike and capture Zhuge Liang!"

Cao Rui said enthusiastically, "Since you can see so far ahead, why not take your own army to surprise the enemy?" Sima Yi responded, "My own life means little to me, but I want to keep my force intact to check any move from the south by Lu Xun. Before long Sun Quan is bound to declare himself emperor; and when he does, he will strike north to preempt an attack by Your Majesty. I would prefer to be ready for him." Even as Sima Yi was speaking, a privileged attendant announced to the throne, "Field Marshal Cao's report on the military situation." "Your Majesty," Sima Yi said, "warn Cao Zhen at once that all who pursue the Riverlands troops must beware of the enemy's strengths and not enter fortified areas, or they will fall into one of Zhuge Liang's traps."

Cao Rui readily authorized his master of ceremony, Han Ji, to bear this warning to Cao Zhen: "Avoid Riverlands troops under all circumstances; concentrate on vigilant defense; attack only after the enemy retreats." Sima Yi escorted Han Ji outside the capital and left him with this instruction: "I want credit for the victory to go to Cao Zhen. So when you see him, there's no need to mention that I suggested these tactics. Simply say that the Son of Heaven has authorized by edict a policy of strict defense. And remember: whoever he sends to pursue the Riverlanders must exercise great care. Tell him not to use anyone rash or excitable." Han Ji took leave and departed.

Cao Zhen had hardly entered his command tent to meet with his commanders, when the imperially authorized emissary, Master of Ceremony Han Ji, was announced. Cao Zhen welcomed him in front of his camp. After receiving the edict, he withdrew and took counsel with Guo Huai and Sun Li. With a smile Guo Huai said, "Sounds like Sima Yi's idea." "What do you think of it?" Cao Zhen asked. "It shows deep understanding of Zhuge Liang's methods of warfare. In the future Sima Yi will be the man to stop the Shu troops." "But what do we do if the Riverlands troops do not retreat?" Cao Zhen asked. "Then," Guo Huai answered, "we'll have secret orders sent to Wang Shuang to patrol the hill paths and stop the enemy from moving in grain. After their grain is gone, they will retreat, the tactical advantage will pass to us, and we will win a complete victory."

Sun Li said, "I'll go into the Qishan hills with troops pretending to be moving grain—the carts

will actually be carrying twigs and straw soaked with sulphur and saltpeter—and we'll spread word that the grain has arrived from Longxi. If the Riverlanders are out of food, they will come to seize the grain. Once they get among the carts, we'll set them afire and move in with troops already in hiding. Victory will be ours!" "A great plan!" Cao Zhen exclaimed and had Sun Li set the scheme in motion. At the same time Cao Zhen sent Wang Shuang to patrol the roads, posted Guo Huai to Winnow Basket Gorge and Jieting, and ordered the various commanders to reinforce all strongpoints. Finally, Cao Zhen had Zhang Liao's son Zhang Hu serve as the vanguard, with Yue Jin's son Yue Chen as his lieutenant, their task to guard the front position and prevent direct engagement with the western forces.

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Kongming remained in his Qishan camp. He sent men out every day to challenge the Wei troops, but he provoked no response. Kongming summoned Jiang Wei and others and said to them, "The enemy refuses to engage because they think we're out of grain. Nothing can be shipped through Chencang now, and the other roads are practically impassable. I doubt the grain we have with us will last another month. What are we to do?" At this moment of uncertainty there came an unexpected report: "The Wei army in Longxi is moving thousands of grain carts west of Qishan. The officer in charge is Sun Li." "What kind of man is he?" Kongming asked. A man of Wei told him, "He once accompanied the ruler of Wei on a hunt on Great Stone Mountain. Suddenly a tiger confronted them and charged the ruler. Sun Li dismounted and slew it with his sword. The ruler honored him as a senior commander. He is a man Cao Zhen trusts implicitly."

With a smile Kongming said, "That report of grain carts is a trick. The Wei commander thinks we're running out of grain—they must have packed inflammable materials on the carts. Do they expect to fool someone like me, who has specialized in attacks by fire all his life? But if they think our troops have gone to raid the grain carts, then they will come to raid our camp. So we can beat them at their own game!"

Kongming summoned Ma Dai and instructed him: "Take three thousand men to the Wei army grain depot. Do not enter the site; only set fires upwind. If the carts burn, the enemy will come to surround our camp." Next, he had Ma Zhong and Zhang Ni post five thousand men in a ring removed from the camp so that the enemy could be caught between them and the defenders within. The three—Ma Dai, Ma Zhong, and Zhang Ni—left to execute their orders. Kongming then instructed Guan Xing and Zhang Bao: "The enemy's forward position intersects the main roads. Tonight when fire breaks out on the west hill, they will raid our position. I want you two to lie in ambush on either side of the Wei camp. When their troops come out, attack." Next, Kongming instructed Wu Ban and Wu Yi: "Take one company each, hide outside our camp, and cut off their route back if they come." His deployment completed, Kongming rested, secure in the heights of the Qishan hills.

Wei soldiers hurried back to Sun Li with the news that Riverlands troops intended to come for the grain; and Sun Li swiftly informed Cao Zhen. Cao Zhen ordered Zhang Hu and Yue Chen: "When you see fire west of the hills, it will mean Shu is coming to reinforce. Go into the field, and..." On these orders, the two front commanders sent men into the watchtower to look for the fire signal. Sun Li hid his troops west of the hills and waited for the Riverlanders.

During the second watch Ma Dai approached with three thousand men. Both horses and men wore

gags as they moved straight toward their destination. They noticed a large number of bannered carts clustered around the site in multiple rings. As a southwest wind began to blow, Ma Dai had his men set fires on the south side of the camp. The carts were consumed in flames that stretched into the sky.

Sun Li thought that the fire he saw rose from within the Riverlands camp, and he moved in swiftly. Riverlands forces closed in on him from behind. As drumbeat and horn blast charged the air, Ma Zhong and Zhang Ni encircled the Wei troops. Sun Li panicked. He heard fresh shouts from inside the Wei army: a band of men emerged from the flames, led by Ma Dai coming out for the kill. Caught on two sides, the Wei army was badly defeated; men and horses fled the field in confusion, leaving countless casualties as the wind sped the flames. Sun Li, braving fire and smoke, led his mauled soldiers out and they ran from the battle.

Meanwhile, Zhang Hu was ready in his camp. Seeing the flames, he opened wide the camp entrance and with Yue Chen led his forces against the Riverlands base—but it was deserted. As they began pulling back, Wu Ban and Wu Yi moved in and blocked all retreat. The northern commanders succeeded in charging through the enemy line and dashed back to their base, only to encounter swarms of arrows whizzing down at them from the wall: Guan Xing and Zhang Bao had already surprised the camp. The Wei army, totally routed, headed for Cao Zhen's camp. As they started to enter, Sun Li's defeated corps rode up and the two defeated commanders went in together. They came before Cao Zhen, and each told how he had been trapped. Cao Zhen heard them out, then mounted strict guard over his camp, refusing all battle. The victorious Riverlands troops returned to Kongming.

Kongming conveyed secret plans to Wei Yan and subsequently had all positions decamp. Yang Yi objected. "We had a great victory," he said. "The Wei army is shattered. Why are we pulling back?" "We don't have the grain," Kongming explained. "A quick battle was what we wanted, but the enemy will not show themselves again. And that works against us. Their homeland will make good their losses. If their light horsemen raid our grain routes, we won't be able to get back at all. Their latest defeat gives us some room to maneuver, to do what they least expect: withdraw. My one concern is Wei Yan and his men, who are at Chencang holding off Wang Shuang. They may not make it away safely. I have sent Wei Yan secret plans for killing Wang Shuang and preventing pursuit by the Wei. I want our rear squadrons to turn back first." That night Kongming left only the watchmen in camp to mark the watch with gong and drum. All the troops were evacuated.

Cao Zhen was brooding in his camp when the arrival of Zhang He, general of the Left, was announced. The commander dismounted, entered the leader's tent, and said, "I have been instructed by our lord to place myself at your disposal." Cao Zhen asked, "Did you take leave of Sima Yi?" "He said to me," Guo Huai replied, "If we win the field, the Riverlanders will remain; if we lose, they will leave. 'Now that our army has suffered defeat, Field Marshal, have you surveyed the enemy's positions?' "Not yet," Cao Zhen answered. He sent scouts to the Shu camp and learned from them that the troops had left two days ago; only a few dozen banners remained to mark the site. Cao Zhen regretted his inaction acutely.

Meanwhile, Wei Yan, pursuant to his secret orders, quit camp at the second watch and hastened back toward Hanzhong, a move spies soon reported to Wang Shuang. Wang Shuang pursued the retreating Riverlanders in force for about twenty *li*, and soon Wei Yan's banners were before him. "Halt, Wei Yan!" he cried. But the Riverlanders never stopped to look back. Wang Shuang galloped hard after them; behind him Wei troops shouted, "Flames outside the wall and inside the camp! Look out for the enemy's trap!" Wang Shuang quickly turned and rode back, only to meet a wall of living

flame stretching higher and higher. He ordered a swift retreat. As he reached a hillslope, a group of riders erupted from a wood. "Here is Wei Yan!" their leader cried. Wang Shuang panicked and fell to Wei Yan's blade before he could defend himself. Fearing an ambush, the northern troops dispersed and fled; but Wei Yan had had only thirty horsemen. Slowly he resumed his march to Hanzhong. A poet of later times celebrated Kongming's ingenuity in these lines:

He excelled Sun and Pang with subtle schemes;
In his zone of sky, a fixed star gleams.
His moves, which baffled all surmise,
On Chencang road Shuang's doom devised.

Kongming's original plan that Wei Yan carried out was this: Wei Yan was to place thirty cavalry in hiding alongside Wang Shuang's camp; the moment he came out to pursue Wei Yan's men, Yan was to enter the camp and light fires; on Wang Shuang's return, Wei Yan was to surprise him and kill him. After killing Wang Shuang, Wei Yan led his men back to Kongming and officially tendered his forces. Kongming held a grand banquet to celebrate his victorious return.

Having failed to overtake the Riverlands army, Zhang He returned to his camp. Suddenly a man from Hao Zhao in Chencang reported Wang Shuang's death, news that so pained Cao Zhen that he took sick and went back to Luoyang, leaving Guo Huai, Sun Li, and Zhang He to defend the Chang'an roads.

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Sun Quan, king of the Southland, was holding court when a spy reported: "Prime Minister Zhuge of Shu has taken the field twice, inflicting heavy losses of fighters and captains on Cao Zhen's Wei army." After this report the assembly of vassals urged the king to wage war against Wei for the purpose of taking the northern heartland. Sun Quan wavered, unable to come to a decision. Zhang Zhao addressed him: "I have heard recently that in the hills east of Wuchang a phoenix has displayed itself, and that in the Great River a tawny dragon has been sighted several times. Your Lordship's virtue matches that of Yao and Shun, your wisdom matches that of kings Wen and Wu. Ascend the imperial seat first; then send forth the army." Many officials echoed Zhang Zhao's view. Thus they selected the third cyclical¹ day of the fourth month for the enthronement and erected an altar in the southern suburb of Wuchang.

On the appointed day, pursuant to the petition of the assembled officials, Sun Quan ascended the imperial seat. The reign year was changed from Huang Wu 8 to Huang Long 1.² Sun Quan's father, Sun Jian, was posthumously honored as Emperor Wu Lie, or Martial Glory; his mother, Lady Wu, as Empress Wu Lie; his brother, Sun Ce, as King Huan of Changsha. Sun Deng, Quan's son, was designated crown prince, and Zhuge Ke, eldest son of Zhuge Jin, became his principal guide; Zhang Xiu, younger son of Zhang Zhao, became the heir apparent's first assistant.

Zhuce Ke (Yuansun)³ was seven spans tall; he had unusual intelligence and great skill in repartee, and he enjoyed the favor of Sun Quan. At the age of six Zhuce Ke accompanied his father to a royal banquet at which Sun Quan observed that Zhuce Jin had an elongated face. He had a donkey led in and chalked the words "Zhuce Jin" on its nose, whereupon the assembly burst into laughter. Zhuce Ke

dashed up to the animal, took the chalk, and added "'s donkey." The guests were astonished, and Sun Quan was so amused that he gave Ke the donkey as a gift.

Another day at a feast for the officials, Sun Quan asked Zhuge Ke to pass around the wine. When he came to Zhang Zhao, Zhang Zhao refused to drink, saying, "This is not the proper form for the ceremony of nourishing an elder." Sun Quan said to Zhuge Ke, "Get Zhang Zhao to drink for me." On receiving this command, Zhuge Ke said to Zhang Zhao, "Long, long ago the great counselor Jiang Ziya—at the age of ninety—grasped the signal banner, steadied the battle-axe, and never once called himself 'old.' On days of trial by arms, you are always in the rear; on days of banqueting, you are always in the front. What do you mean, I have failed to 'nourish an elder'?"⁴ At a loss for an answer, Zhang Zhao was constrained to drink. After this incident Sun Quan prized Zhuge Ke more than ever and consequently made him the guide to his heir apparent.

Zhang Zhao had served Sun Quan as senior counselor and held a position second only to the king himself. Thus, his son Zhang Xiu was made first assistant to the heir. Further appointments on the occasion were Gu Yong, prime minister; and Lu Xun, senior general, guardian to the heir, and governor of Wuchang. Afterwards, Sun Quan returned to Jianye where the court deliberated on the war policy. Zhang Zhao addressed Sun Quan: "It is wrong to mobilize so soon after Your Majesty has taken the throne. You should develop your civil rule and lay down the weapons of war. Establish schools to settle the people's minds. Renew the alliance with the Riverlands, agreeing to share the empire between you. Take your time planning the conquest of the north."

Sun Quan accepted Zhang Zhao's advice and sent a swift messenger to the Riverlands. After the Second Emperor had formally received the envoy and taken note of his detailed petition, he took counsel with his court. Their consensus was that relations should be severed with Sun Quan because he was a usurper and a rebel. Jiang Wan, however, suggested asking the prime minister's opinion. Accordingly, the Second Emperor sent an envoy to Hanzhong to get Kongming's view. Kongming said: "Send gifts to the Southland to congratulate Sun Quan and urge them to send Lu Xun into the field against Wei: Wei will order Sima Yi to block them; and with Sima Yi occupied to the south, I will be able to strike Chang'an from Qishan." The Second Emperor approved this suggestion and sent Grand Commandant Chen Zhen to the Southland with prize horses, a jade belt, gold, pearls, and other gems as congratulatory gifts.

On reaching the Southland, Chen Zhen was received by Sun Quan, to whom he presented the letter from the Shu court. Delighted, Sun Quan feasted the representative and sent him back to the Riverlands. He then summoned Lu Xun and informed him that he had agreed to march against Wei. "This is a scheme of Kongming's, devised out of fear of Sima Yi," said the veteran general. "But since you have allied with Shu, we must abide by what you have agreed. We will simply appear to invade, however, and try to involve the Riverlands. If Kongming launches an all-out attack on Wei, we will have the opportunity to take the northern heartland for ourselves." Sun Quan issued the order for northern Jingzhou to begin training local forces in preparation for mobilization.

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Chen Zhen went back to Hanzhong and reported to Kongming on his mission south. But Kongming, still hesitant to move against Chencang, simply had scouts survey the town. They reported back, "Hao Zhao is in the town, seriously ill." "Our plan will work!" Kongming responded. He summoned Wei

Yan and Jiang Wei and instructed them: "Take five thousand men to the walls of Chencang as fast as you can. When you see fire, attack in concert." Somewhat surprised, the two commanders asked Kongming, "What day shall we set out?" "You have three days to get ready," Kongming replied. "No need to take formal leave. Just start out." The two left to perform their assignment. Next, Kongming called in Guan Xing and Zhang Bao and whispered certain instructions to them. They too departed to carry out their orders.

Meanwhile, Guo Huai had learned of Hao Zhao's illness. "You had better go and replace Hao Zhao at once," he told Zhang He. "I will petition the court for a final decision." Zhang He took three thousand men to Chencang. Hao Zhao was dying. One night as he lay groaning, he was told of the arrival of the Riverlands force and swiftly ordered men to hold the wall. But the gates had already been torched and the town was in confusion. Hao Zhao expired on hearing the news. The Riverlanders stormed Chencang.

When Wei Yan and Jiang Wei reached the walls of Chencang, they found not a single banner nor anyone to sound the watch. Puzzled, they hesitated to attack. Suddenly they heard the sound of bombards from the town and saw flags and banners standing straight all around the wall. Lo! in silk headgear, holding a feathered fan, wearing a crane-plumed robe, a Taoist appeared. "You are late!" Kongming shouted down to them. The two swiftly dismounted and prostrated themselves before him, saying, "Your Excellency's plan was truly more than human!" Kongming bade them enter Chencang.

"When I found out how sick Hao Zhao really was," Kongming told Wei Yan and Jiang Wei, "I gave you three days to take the town. But that was simply to firm up morale. At the same time I had Guan Xing and Zhang Bao call up some troops—among whom I concealed myself—and slip out of Hanzhong. We marched to Chencang double-time, before the enemy could reinforce. Spies planted earlier in the town aided us by lighting fires and shouting war cries to unsettle the Wei army. Without leadership, their troops lost all discipline. This enabled me to take Chencang handily. The rules of warfare tell us to appear where they least expect you, strike where they are least prepared. And that's just what I did!" Wei Yan and Jiang Wei prostrated themselves before him. Kongming, in consideration of the death of Hao Zhao, allowed Zhao's wife and children to bear his coffin home to Wei, thereby signifying the dead man's loyalty to his sovereign.

Kongming told Wei Yan and Jiang Wei, "Keep your armor on. I want you to surprise San Pass. Those holding it will flee the moment our troops arrive; but the slightest delay will give the Wei troops time to get there, making capture difficult." Wei Yan and Jiang Wei carried out Kongming's orders, and the pass guards fled. The two commanders climbed up and were about to shed their armor, when they spotted the dust clouds of approaching troops in the distance. It was the Wei army. The two acknowledged to one another: "The prime minister's marvelous calculations surpass all reckoning!" Swiftly climbing the watchtower, they looked down on General Zhang He and deployed their forces to the key approaches in order to hold off his army.

Zhang He retreated once he realized that Shu troops now held the pass. Wei Yan pursued and took a heavy toll of the northerners. The Wei general quit the field; and Wei Yan, after returning to the pass, informed Kongming of the latest developments. The prime minister, for his part, had already led his own troops out of Chencang and Ye Gorge and had seized Jianwei; behind him in swift succession followed the forces of Shu as well as General Chen Shi, whom the Second Emperor had sent to aid him. Kongming emerged from the Qishan hills in full force, pitched camp, and then spoke to the assembled army: "My first two sorties from these mountains ended badly. Now we find ourselves on

this ground again. I feel certain that the northerners will oppose us here as they have before. They mean to deceive us into trying to take Yong and Mei, which they will have well fortified. But Yinping and Wudu offer access to Hanzhong; by taking those towns, we can split the Wei force. Who dares to try?" Jiang Wei volunteered, followed by Wang Ping. Well pleased, Kongming assigned ten thousand troops to Jiang Wei to capture Wudu, and ten thousand to Wang Ping to capture Yinping. The two departed with their forces.

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Zhang He returned to Chang'an and presented himself to Guo Huai and Sun Li. "Chencang is lost," he informed them, "and Hao Zhao is dead. The westerners have seized San Pass. Kongming has sallied forth again from Qishan along several routes." Guo Huai was astonished. "In that case, he will try to take Yong and Mei," he said. Guo Huai left Zhang He in charge of Chang'an's defenses, ordered Sun Li to the town of Yong, and hurried to the town of Mei with his own forces. At the same time he sent a petition to the capital announcing the emergency to Cao Rui.

Cao Rui was holding court when a personal vassal told him, "Chencang is lost, Hao Zhao dead. Zhuge Liang has again taken the field, and his army has seized San Pass." The Wei ruler expressed alarm. A fresh petition then arrived from Man Chong: "Sun Quan has usurped the title of emperor and formed an alliance with Shu. He has sent Lu Xun to Wuchang to train the army and await orders. We expect them to invade at any moment." Thus beset on either side, Cao Rui felt himself sliding into despair, unable to decide what course to take. Since at the time Cao Zhen had not yet recovered his health, Cao Rui consulted Sima Yi.

Sima Yi addressed the sovereign: "In my own humble estimation, the Southland will make no move." "How do you know?" Cao Rui responded.⁵ "Kongming," he replied, "has never abandoned his desire to avenge the defeat at Jieting and has every intention of devouring the Southland. But he also has us to worry about. That's why he has made an alliance of opportunity with the Riverlands. But of course Lu Xun knows the score and is simply making 'invasion' gestures to satisfy Kongming. In fact, the south means to wait and watch the outcome. So, Your Majesty, no defense is needed against Wu—only against Shu!" "A suggestion of great insight!" Cao Rui exclaimed and made Sima Yi first field marshal of the forces, including the Longxi armies. He ordered a personal vassal to obtain the seal of command from Cao Zhen for Sima Yi. But Sima Yi said, "I'll go for it myself."⁶

Sima Yi took leave of the Emperor and went directly from the court to Cao Zhen's headquarters. After having himself announced, Sima Yi entered, inquired about Cao Zhen's illness, and then said, "The Southland and the Riverlands are joining forces for an invasion of our territory. Kongming has already camped on the eastern side of the Qishan hills. Is Your Lordship aware of this?" Cao Zhen gulped in amazement. "Those around me," he answered, "have kept this from me, knowing I was ill. It seems that the dynasty is in dire peril. Zhongda, you should be made field marshal for the purpose of driving back the western army." Sima Yi replied, "My meagre talent and shallow knowledge are hardly adequate to such an office." Cao Zhen went on, "Have the seal handed to Zhongda." "Spare yourself the anxiety, Field Marshal," Sima Yi answered. "I shall lend what strength I have—only I can't bring myself to accept the seal." Cao Zhen leaped from his bed and cried, "Unless you undertake the task, Zhongda, the northland is doomed. Sick as I am, I shall betake myself to the Emperor to recommend you for this post." Sima Yi then told him: "The Son of Heaven's gracious command has

already been given, but I could not bear to accept it." Well pleased, Cao Zhen said, "Under your command, we can push back the western army." Cao Zhen offered the seal twice, then a third time; finally Sima Yi accepted it. After taking leave of the ruler of Wei, Sima Yi marched to Chang'an for the showdown with Kongming. Indeed:

As a new commander received the old seal,
Two great armies became unified.⁷

Would the north prevail, or the west?

READ ON.



Zhuge Liang Defeats the Wei Army; Sima Yi Pillages the Riverlands

IN SUMMER, IN THE FOURTH MONTH of the seventh year of Jian Xing by the Shu-Han calendar (A. D. 229), Kongming moved his troops into the hills of Qishan and deployed them in three fortified sites to await the army of Wei.

Sima Yi marched to Chang'an, where Zhang He welcomed him and recounted the recent developments. Sima Yi commanded Zhang He to lead the vanguard, keeping Dai Ling to serve as his own lieutenant commander. Then his force advanced to Qishan, one hundred thousand strong, and camped on the south side of the River Wei.¹

Guo Huai and Sun Li presented themselves. Sima Yi asked, "Have you met the enemy in full battle?" "Not yet," they replied. "They have come a long way," Sima Yi continued, "and will need to fight soon. But if, having come, they refrain from battle, then they're up to something! Have we news from our Longxi armies?" Guo Huai answered, "Reports say that the various districts have conscientiously aided our forces—that is all. We have heard nothing from Wudu and Yinping." Sima Yi said, "I will dispatch someone to engage Kongming. You two, go by the Longxi side roads, relieve Wudu and Yinping, and surprise the Shu soldiers from the rear. That should rout them." The two commanders led five thousand men to carry out their orders.

En route Guo Huai said to Sun Li, "How would you rate Sima Yi against Kongming?" Sun Li replied, "Kongming is far above him." "Agreed," Guo Huai said. "Yet in this plan Sima Yi excels. If the Riverlands troops attack those two district towns and we strike them from behind, will they be able to escape destruction?" At that moment a mounted scout reported: "Wang Ping has taken Yinping, and Jiang Wei has taken Wudu. The Riverlands army is not far ahead." Sun Li responded, "If they have already subdued those towns, why would they deploy outside them? It must be a trick. We had better retreat at once." Guo Huai agreed. But no sooner had they issued orders for the retreat than a bombard roared and a contingent flashed into view under a banner reading "Prime Minister of the Han, Zhuge Liang." In the center of the troops, on a single four-wheeled chariot, Kongming sat, poised and erect, flanked by Guan Xing and Zhang Bao.

Sun Li and Guo Huai were astounded. With a loud laugh Kongming said, "Stand in place, Guo Huai, Sun Li! Do you think a scheme of Sima Yi's could take me in? Every day he had his men trying to engage my forward positions, all the while trying to surprise the rear. Well, Wudu and Yinping are mine now, and you two should surrender swiftly unless you're ready for a showdown!" Guo Huai and Sun Li stood confounded. Suddenly war cries filled the sky behind them as Wang Ping and Jiang Wei charged their rear and Guan Xing and Zhang Bao struck from the front. Trapped between the two Riverlands corps, the Wei force suffered a great defeat. Guo Huai and Sun Li abandoned their horses and scampered over the hill to safety. Zhang Bao kept them in view and charged after them, but

he pitched headfirst into a rushing stream; his men rode up and rescued him. Bao's head was injured, so Kongming had him taken back to Chengdu to recover.

Meanwhile, Guo Huai and Sun Li reported the defeat to Sima Yi: "Both districts, Wudu and Yinping, are lost. Kongming hid his men along the main route, then hit us hard front and rear. We left our horses and struggled back on foot." Sima Yi said, "It's not your fault. Kongming outwitted me. Take more troops now and defend the two towns, Yong and Mei, but give no battle. I have another way to defeat the enemy." The two men took leave and departed.

Sima Yi summoned Zhang He and Dai Ling and instructed them: "Kongming is bound to try to win the goodwill and support of the people in Wudu and Yinping, so he won't be in his camp. Tonight, take ten thousand picked men each; make a detour behind the Riverlanders and then storm their positions. I will deploy to the front of their camp and direct my troops to attack as soon as the enemy's ranks start to break. Our combined forces should suffice to take the camp. And once we make this hilly stronghold ours, the enemy will give in." The two commanders left to carry out their orders.

Dai Ling on the left, Zhang He on the right, the northern force advanced along the lesser routes and penetrated the enemy lines. During the third watch the two Wei armies came together on the main route, integrated their troops, and began advancing on the rear of the Riverlands camp. But before they had gone thirty *li*, the forward contingent was stopped by several hundred loaded hay carts blocking the road. Zhang He cried, "They've been warned! Return at once!" Hardly had the order to retreat come down than the hillsides began to burn and the din of drum and horn shook the earth. Troops emerged from ambush and boxed in the two northern commanders.

From his place in the Qishan hills Kongming shouted out, "Hear me, Dai Ling and Zhang He! Sima Yi thought I would leave camp for Wudu and Yinping to reassure the inhabitants. He sent you to raid my camp, but you have played into my hands. Since I will not kill two subordinate generals, I call on you to dismount and submit!" In great anger Zhang He pointed at Kongming and denounced him: "You hill-town hick! You have crossed into the territory of a great dynasty. How dare you make such claims! When I get hold of you, your corpse will end up in ten thousand pieces!" So saying, he hoisted his spear and charged up the slope.

A storm of arrows and stones met Zhang He. Unable to proceed, he whipped his horse and worked his spear as he broke through the enemy encirclement. No one could oppose him. Shu soldiers surrounded Dai Ling. Zhang He escaped the way he had come, but then he turned and with furious courage recrossed the enemy lines to rescue his cocommander. From the hilltop Kongming watched Zhang He charge and thrust to and fro, even more splendid and valiant than before. Turning to his aides, Kongming said, "They say men gaped in awe when Zhang Fei fought Zhang He; now seeing Zhang He for myself, I can appreciate his prowess. But he will prove dangerous to Shu, and so we must do away with him." So saying, he collected his forces and returned to camp.

During this time Sima Yi had deployed his troops into attack formation, awaiting the collapse of the westerners' position. Suddenly he saw Zhang He and Dai Ling coming at him helter-skelter to announce, "He was ready for us! And routed us!" Sima Yi was astounded. "Kongming is more than human. We have no choice. Retreat," he said, and he sent the entire army back to camp with orders to maintain strict defense.

Kongming led the Riverlands army back to camp with a bounty of captured arms and horses. He sent Wei Yan out each day to call the army to arms; but the Wei forces would not come forth. A fortnight passed thus without an engagement. Kongming kept to his tent to weigh the situation. Suddenly the arrival of an imperial edict was announced, and Kongming welcomed the bearer Fei Yi into the camp. After the ceremonial burning of incense, Kongming opened the document, which read:

Though our defeat at Jieting was Ma Su's fault, you accepted the blame and abdicated your office. Unwilling to violate your wishes, I acceded to your demotion to general of the Right and acting prime minister. In last year's glorious campaign Wang Shuang's head was taken. And this year's campaign drove Guo Huai to flight. Moreover, we have subdued and recruited from the two nations, the Di and the Qiang, and we have recovered two districts. Your fierce authority has impressed itself upon cruel and ruthless enemies. This is merit of the highest distinction.

Now the empire knows no peace, and the leader of our foe remains unpunished. You undertook a grave responsibility for the cause of this house. But too long have you suffered the injustice of your self-abasement. This is no way to sustain the glory of my father's cause. Today I restore your position as prime minister and urge you not to decline.²

After reading the edict, Kongming said to Fei Yi, "The cause of this house remains unfulfilled. How can I resume my office?" Kongming steadfastly refused to accept the decree. "If you do not accept, Your Excellency," Fei Yi said, "if you ignore the Emperor's wishes in this matter, it will lessen the ardor of our men. Accept, if only for now." Reluctantly Kongming did so, and Fei Yi departed.

Kongming thought of a fresh plan to deal with Sima Yi's tactic of refusing to engage, and ordered his troops to break camp. Spies soon informed Sima Yi that Kongming was retreating. "He surely has some master plan," Sima Yi said. "We cannot risk another action." But Zhang He said, "They're out of grain, that's all. We ought to pursue them." "It seems to me," Sima Yi replied, "that Kongming had a big harvest last year and that this year's grain is ripening nicely for him. They may have transport problems, but they have more than enough to sustain themselves for half a year. Why would they pick up and go? They know we are holding back and they want to tempt us to battle. Have scouts follow them as far as they go, and report back."

Sima Yi's scouts gained intelligence of the movements of the Shu forces and reported back: "Kongming has pitched camp thirty *li* from here." "Then he's not leaving," Sima Yi exclaimed. "Keep to quarters and do not advance." For the next ten days nothing further was heard, nor did any Shu commander come to present a challenge.

Again, Sima Yi sent scouts; they reported back: "The Riverlanders have quit their position." Unpersuaded, Sima Yi, disguised as a soldier, went and satisfied himself that the western forces had indeed retreated another thirty *li*; then he returned to camp. He told Zhang He, "More of Kongming's tricks. To advance is too risky." Ten days later Sima Yi sent scouts again; they reported: "The Riverlanders have withdrawn another thirty *li*." Zhang He said to him, "Field Marshal, you can be sure Kongming is using the tactic of protracted withdrawal to evacuate Hanzhong. Why not pursue at once? I volunteer to fight to the finish!" "There is no end to Kongming's cunning," Sima Yi answered. "A single failure could blunt our fighting spirits. No advance." "Let me stand trial by martial law if I

fail," Zhang He proclaimed. "In that case," Sima Yi said, "we'll take two contingents. You lead the first on ahead and fight without stint. I'll be behind to reinforce and prevent ambush. Tomorrow bivouac halfway; wait until the day after to engage. That will conserve the soldiers' strength." And so the two divided their command.

The next day Zhang He and Dai Ling led a score of lieutenant commanders and thirty thousand picked troops in a spirited advance. They broke their march midway to the Shu position. Sima Yi followed with five thousand, leaving a large force to guard his base camp.

Now it so happened that Kongming's secret scouts discovered that the Wei troops had stopped to rest after the first day's march. That night Kongming said to his commanders, "The northerners have pursued us. They will give no quarter. You will have to fight against the odds, as one against ten. I will place troops in ambush behind them. Only a commander as shrewd as he is bold can handle this." So saying, he eyed Wei Yan. Wei Yan lowered his head and said nothing.³ Wang Ping stepped forward and volunteered. "And if things go wrong?" Kongming asked him. "I will accept what military law requires," was the reply. Kongming sighed as he said, "Wang Ping would risk his life to brave the arrows and stones of the foe—truly a loyal vassal! Nevertheless, what if the Wei attack in two contingents, front and rear, and our ambush is interdicted? Shrewd and bold as Wang Ping is, he can only deal with one front. He can't be in two places at the same time. To have another commander in addition to him would be ideal. I can't believe that all of you hold life too dear to go out and meet the enemy!"

As Kongming spoke, one commander stepped forth and volunteered. Kongming studied the man. It was Zhang Yi. "Zhang He is a famous Wei general of boundless courage," Kongming warned him. "You're not his match." "If I fail," Zhang Yi responded, "I will offer Your Excellency my head." "Since you are bold enough to try," Kongming said, "let you and Wang Ping take ten thousand crack troops each and place them in the valleys in ambush. As soon as the Wei troops arrive, allow them to pass, then charge their rear and slaughter them. Now, if Sima Yi comes from behind you, divide into two companies: let Zhang Yi take on their second squad; and let Wang Ping cut off their forward squad. But show the foe no mercy! I have my own plan for lending you assistance." The two commanders departed with their instructions.

Kongming next instructed Jiang Wei and Liao Hua: "Take this brocade sack and three thousand of our best men. Down your colors, still your drums, and hide on top of the hill ahead. If the northerners close in on Wang Ping and Zhang Yi, don't try to save them, no matter how bad it looks for them. Just open the sack for a plan to meet the danger." The two commanders departed with their troops to carry out the plan.

In addition, Kongming gave oral commands to four commanders, Wu Ban, Wu Yi, Ma Zhong, and Zhang Ni: "If the northerners come tomorrow, they will be on their mettle. Do not engage directly. Flee, fight, and flee again, alternating until you see Guan Xing take the field. Then turn and face the enemy. I will reinforce you with my own men." The four commanders departed with their troops to execute their orders.

Finally, Kongming instructed Guan Xing: "Hide five thousand crack troops in the valleys. As soon as you see a red flag flying on the hilltop, come out for the kill." Guan Xing, too, departed with his troops to execute Kongming's plan.

The northern armies under commanders Zhang He and Dai Ling came swift and powerful as a storm. The four Riverlands commanders rode forth to engage, and Zhang He set upon them in force.

The western troops fought, then withdrew. The northerners drove them back twenty *li*. It was the sixth month, and the midsummer heat was fierce. Sweat poured off the men and the horses. After chasing the Riverlanders fifty *li*, the Wei troops were spent. On his hilltop Kongming waved a red flag, and Guan Xing plunged into the battle. Ma Zhong and his three co-commanders again emerged from hiding to join the fighting. Zhang He and Dai Ling fought hard and held their ground. Suddenly the air rang with war cries as Wang Ping and Zhang Yi came into the field and in a bold advance cut off the northerners' retreat.

Zhang He shouted to his commanders, "Now is the time to fight to the finish!" The Wei soldiers strove to break the enemy's hold but failed. Suddenly to the rear the noise of drums and horns rent the air: it was Sima Yi at the head of his own crack force! At their field marshal's direction, the Wei commanders surrounded Wang Ping and Zhang Yi. Zhang Yi cried, "His Excellency is a man of true genius! His plans leave nothing to chance. We must fight to the finish!" Zhang Yi divided the force into two companies: the first, under Wang Ping, went to block Zhang He and Dai Ling; the second, Zhang Yi led against Sima Yi. Thus, on two fronts the westerners fought, and their murderous clamor shattered the air.

From a hilltop Jiang Wei and Liao Hua watched closely as the Wei army gained the upper hand over the Shu forces, whose ability to resist was waning. Jiang Wei said to Liao Hua, "Things look bad. We'd better open the brocade sack for Kongming's instructions." They tore it open and found the following: "If Sima Yi surrounds Wang Ping and Zhang Yi and their situation becomes untenable, divide your forces into two contingents and surprise Sima Yi's base camp. He'll have to pull back, and the confusion in his ranks will afford occasion to attack. Whether or not you take the camp itself, you will have a complete victory." Delighted, the two commanders divided their forces and headed for the field marshal's camp.

Sima Yi, however, in anticipation of Kongming's maneuver had arranged for scouts to report in as he advanced. The field marshal was leading his forces in battle, when a mounted courier reached him with the news that two companies of western troops had gone to seize his base camp. Caught by surprise, Sima Yi said to his commanders, "You didn't believe me when I said their retreat was part of Kongming's plan! You insisted on pursuing them, and now we're in trouble!" Sima Yi beat a quick retreat; his desperate troops broke rank and fled. Zhang Yi fell upon the northerners from the rear and inflicted heavy losses. Zhang He and Dai Ling saw their position was hopeless and fled into the hills along the byways. The western triumph was now complete, owing much to Guan Xing, who had provided support from the rear to the various fighting units.

By the time Sima Yi made it back to his own base camp, the Shu troops had already completed their mission and pulled back. After collecting his remnant forces, Sima Yi castigated his commanders: "What do you know of warfare! There's more to it than hot courage and battle lust—that's what ruined us. No more rash moves! Whoever disobeys shall suffer the consequences under martial law." The Wei commanders withdrew shamefaced; they had lost a great number of men and had abandoned countless horses and weapons on the field.

Kongming led his triumphant forces home and at once began to prepare a fresh offensive. Suddenly a courier from Chengdu arrived and announced the death of Zhang Bao. At the news Kongming cried without restraint; he spit up blood and fainted. The commanders rushed to his aid. Kongming subsequently became too ill to leave his bed. The commanders grieved. Later a poet left these lines of admiration for Zhang Fei's son:

Fierce and bold, Bao sought to do high deeds;
But to this hero Heaven lent no hand.
Kongming shed his tears on the western wind—
Who else would match Bao's fealty to the Han?

Ten days later Kongming summoned Dong Jue and Fan Jian to his tent. "I am losing my faculties," he advised them, "and am unfit to manage the campaign. I prefer to return to Hanzhong for now, care for my health, and make new plans. All of you must keep this absolutely secret. If Sima Yi finds out, he will attack." Then he issued the order to decamp in silence that same night.

Sima Yi did not find out about their departure until five days after the western army had started back to Hanzhong. Sighing deeply, Sima Yi said, "Kongming's plans have something truly supernatural about them. I am no match for him!" Sima Yi left several commanders in his base camp, posted others to hold the strongpoints, and withdrew in force to the capital.

Kongming stationed his main army in Hanzhong and returned to Chengdu to recuperate. Civil officials and military officers came forth from the city to welcome him and then escort him to his ministerial quarters. The Second Emperor came personally to express his concern and placed the prime minister under the care of the imperial physician. Slowly Kongming began to recover.

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In autumn, the seventh month of the eighth year of Jian Xing (A. D. 230), the Wei chief commander Cao Zhen's illness passed and he submitted a petition to the Emperor: "The armies of Shu have committed numerous border violations and continue to menace our northern kingdom. Unless we root out this enemy, grave consequences will ensue. Now autumn has come; our men and horses are rested. We should undertake a new campaign. I volunteer to join Sima Yi in leading a major force directly into Hanzhong to annihilate the treasonous faction and free our borders from the foe." Delighted, the ruler of Wei turned to Privy Counselor Liu Ye: "Cao Zhen advises me to attack Shu. What is your view?" Liu Ye addressed the ruler: "The regent-marshal is correct: we will suffer for it if we do not eradicate them. Let his proposal be acted on, Your Majesty." Cao Rui nodded in approval.

As Liu Ye left the palace to go home, he was surrounded by a host of vassals who demanded, "Is it true that you and the Son of Heaven have decided to mobilize and attack the Riverlands?" "Not at all," Liu Ye replied. "The formidable mountains and rivers of Shu make invasion far too difficult. Such a waste of our military resources would be of little use to our dynasty." The assembly of officials withdrew without a word.

Yang Ji entered the imperial presence and proposed: "Yesterday we listened to Liu Ye counsel Your Majesty to attack Shu; today he has informed the officials that Shu cannot be attacked. He is deceiving Your Majesty. Will Your Majesty call him to account?" Cao Rui summoned Liu Ye and in Yang Ji's presence asked him, "You have advised me to attack the west; yet you have told others it cannot be done. Why?" Liu Ye replied, "More careful consideration has led me to conclude that the invasion is not feasible." After Yang Ji had left the palace, Liu Ye said, "My advice yesterday concerned a state matter of the highest importance. How could I have disclosed the information so carelessly? Cunning is the heart of warfare. And secrecy is vital before an action commences." Cao

Rui saw the light and showed Liu Ye more respect than ever.

Less than ten days later the Wei ruler gave Sima Yi a detailed account of Cao Zhen's recommendation. Sima Yi said, "The Southland is unlikely to move against us. It is an opportune time to invade the Riverlands." Cao Rui appointed Cao Zhen chief commanding officer and First Field Marshal Who Conquers the West. Sima Yi was made chief general⁴ and Second Field Marshal Who Conquers the West; and Liu Ye was made director general. The three took leave of the ruler of Wei and led a grand army of four hundred thousand forward to Chang'an for a direct forced march on the Saber Gateway⁵ and the capture of Hanzhong. These moves were reported to Chengdu from Hanzhong.

Fully recovered from his ailment, Kongming was training his forces in the techniques of the eightfold array in preparation for an attempt on the northern heartland. Informed of the recent movements of the Wei army, Kongming summoned Zhang Ni and Wang Ping and told them, "Take a thousand men and hold the old road to Chencang against the enemy. I will back you up with a large force." The two commanders responded, "The reports say that the Wei army numbers four hundred thousand and claims eight hundred thousand—a powerful show of force. How can a mere thousand troops hold that strongpoint or repel them if they arrive in any number?" "I would give you more," answered Kongming, "but it would be too hard on the men."

Zhang Ni and Wang Ping eyed each other skeptically, reluctant to proceed. "If something goes wrong," Kongming said, "no one will blame you. Say no more, but hurry." Again the two pleaded: "You Excellency, do away with us here and now, if you will, but we fear to go." "How ignorant you are!" Kongming answered with a smile. "I am sending you with a specific purpose in mind. Yesterday I inspected the patterns in the sky and saw the star mansion Net circling toward the moon.⁶ During the month there is sure to be a major rainstorm, and that will keep the Wei army from coming through these rough mountains, their four hundred thousand notwithstanding. That's why with only a few troops you're still in no danger. I intend to keep our massive armed force in Hanzhong for a month's rest and then use them to surprise the Wei army in retreat. One hundred thousand of my fresh troops will suffice to defeat their weary legions." Satisfied with this explanation, the two commanders took leave and departed.

Kongming thus brought the main force into Hanzhong. There he issued orders to store one month's kindling, fodder, and grain against the autumn rains at all key strongpoints. Then he granted the army a month's rest, provided them with food and clothing, and waited watchfully until the time to march.

To the north Cao Zhen and Sima Yi, in joint command of the main Wei army, had marched directly into Chencang but found not a single dwelling there. A native told them that Kongming had burned everything when he left. Cao Zhen wanted to set out at once on the Chencang road, but Sima Yi warned him, "Don't be rash. Last night watching the skies, I saw the star mansion Net rounding toward the moon; during the month there is sure to be a major rainstorm. If we move into their defended areas, we'll manage so long as we keep winning; but if our forces run into trouble, it will be almost impossible to withdraw. For now we had better throw up some rain shelters inside Chencang and protect ourselves." Cao Zhen followed his suggestion.

Some ten days later the rains came, an incessant downpour that flooded the ground outside the town to a depth of three spans. The equipment was soaked; the men could not sleep. There was no relief day or night, and after thirty days of it the fodder was used up and many horses had died. The soldiers complained continuously. Accounts of the crisis reached Luoyang, where the ruler of Wei

built an altar on which he prayed for clear weather. When his prayers went unanswered, Wang Su, a court officer in the Inner Bureau, presented this petition to the Emperor:

An ancient text reminds us that "when the supply line is too long, the soldiers look starved; and if they have to gather firewood and kindling to make their meals, they won't sleep on a full stomach."⁷ And this refers to moving the army along flat ground, not advancing into mountainous country by forging the road ahead at a hundredfold cost in toil. Now on top of everything our troops face drenching rains and steep, slippery slopes. They are hard-pressed and have no freedom of movement. Our grain comes from afar and only intermittently. There is grave danger in proceeding under such conditions.

I believe it is more than a month since Cao Zhen set out. But he has barely made it halfway through Zi-Wu Gorge because his soldiers are tied up in building the road. This will only enable the enemy to fight our weary troops with fresh forces—the thing the strategist fears above all else.

Consider former eras: when King Wu of the house of Zhou waged war against the last Shang king,⁸ he went forth from the pass and then returned. Such exemplary caution was shown in our times when first Cao Cao and later Cao Pi went forth to conquer Sun Quan but stopped at the Great River without crossing into the Southland. Is it not evident that these previous exemplars thoroughly understood tactical flexibility, accepting Heaven's guidance because they recognized the limits circumstances imposed? I appeal to Your Majesty to consider the recent crisis caused by the rain and grant the men respite. When a future opportunity presents itself, a new campaign can be mounted in which the soldiers will "forget their mortality in their eagerness to oppose the foe."⁹

The ruler of Wei perused the petition but remained undecided. Then Yang Fu and Hua Xin presented supporting petitions, and the ruler issued an edict recalling the two generals Cao Zhen and Sima Yi.

Meanwhile, Cao Zhen said to Sima Yi, "Thirty days of this weather! The army has no fight left. The men think only of home, and there's no way to stop them." "Let's go back, then," Sima Yi replied. "And how do we drive back Kongming if he pursues?" Cao Zhen asked. "Hide two companies to block the rear—then the army can retreat," Sima Yi said. At that moment a courier brought the imperial command to withdraw. The two generals had the rear units take the lead and the lead units bring up the rear, and thus in reverse the army slowly retreated.

Kongming had calculated that the rains were about to end. Under heavens still overcast he took one company to Chenggu and stationed it there. He also ordered the main army to converge on Red Slope and dig in. Then he summoned his commanders to his tent and said, "I am sure that the Wei army will depart, because the Wei ruler will order Cao Zhen and Sima Yi to bring the men home. They will be prepared against pursuers, though, so we'll have to let them go and wait for another day."

Suddenly Wang Ping's messenger announced that the Wei army had begun withdrawing. Kongming instructed the man to tell Wang Ping, "Do not pursue them. I have a plan to destroy the northern troops." Indeed:

The Wei left an ambush behind,
But the Han prime minister never intended to pursue.^{[10](#)}

How would Kongming defeat Wei?

READ ON.



***Raiding Han Troops Destroy Cao Zhen's Camp;
Kongming's Battle Line Humbles Sima Yi¹***

HEARING THAT KONGMING HAD REFUSED to pursue the Wei army, the Riverlands commanders crowded into his tent demanding an explanation. "The rain is ruining them," the commanders said. "They couldn't pitch camp and pulled back. It's the perfect time to strike! How could Your Excellency not do so?" "Sima Yi is a fine tactician," he replied. "He has left men in ambush, who will trap us if we pursue. Let him get farther away from us; then I'll send some men to cut across by Ye Gorge and hold the Qishan hills so the Wei can't defend from there." "There are better ways to take Chang'an," they answered. "What does Your Excellency want the hills for?" "The main way into Chang'an is through the hills. Troops from the Longxi districts always march down that route. Besides, with the River Wei ahead of us and Ye Gorge behind, we can maneuver left and right and hide troops, too. It's a good place to wage war. The hills control the larger terrain." This explanation convinced the commanders.

Kongming ordered Wei Yan, Zhang Ni, Du Qiong, and Chen Shi to come out from Winnow Basket Gorge; and Ma Dai, Wang Ping, Zhang Yi, and Ma Zhong to come out through Ye Gorge. All were to rally at the Qishan hills. His assignments made, Kongming took command of the main force, put Guan Xing and Liao Hua in the vanguard, and marched forth close behind them.

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During this time Cao Zhen and Sima Yi were surveying their forces from the rear. They ordered one company onto the Chencang road to reconnoitre; it reported finding no Riverlands troops coming. After the two field marshals had marched another ten days, the Wei commanders who had been left in ambush all went back and informed their leaders that there was no sign of western troops. Cao Zhen said, "The rains have knocked out the plank roads.² How would the Riverlanders know we have pulled back?" Sima Yi said, "Shu troops will show themselves soon." "How do you know that?" Cao Zhen asked. Sima Yi replied, "The last few days have been clear; but they let us get this far without following only because they foresaw an ambush. After we have completely withdrawn, they will seize the Qishan hills." Cao Zhen was unpersuaded. "Why do you doubt it?" Sima Yi asked him. "I predict that Kongming will come out from the two gorges. You and I, Zidan, shall each cover one exit for a period of ten days. If the western army does not appear, I'll paint my face and come to your camp dressed as a woman to ask your pardon." "And if they do," Cao Zhen retorted, "I'll give you the jade belt and the horse that the Emperor bestowed on me."

The two generals divided their force and moved into the hills: Cao Zhen west to Ye Gorge, Sima Yi to the east where Winnow Basket Gorge debouched. After the two had established camp, Sima Yi led a contingent into the gorge, and the rest of his force took up positions at key points. Sima Yi then

disguised himself and mingled with the army in order to look over the various positions. At one camp a subordinate commander raised his eyes to the heavens and complained, "These rains have drenched us for so long, yet he will not go back! Now he makes us wait here again, laying wagers with the other commander despite all we and the men have to suffer!" On hearing this, Sima Yi returned to his tent, gathered his commanders, and had the complaining officer brought forward.

Sima Yi berated him. "The court trains its troops for a thousand days though they be used but a single time. How dare you voice complaints and weaken the army's morale?" Since the officer would not confess, Sima Yi called a witness from the same unit. The officer could no longer deny his misconduct. Sima Yi declared, "I'm not 'laying wagers.' I'm trying to defeat Shu's army so that you can all go back to the court and claim your rightful reward for distinguished service. These absurd complaints will earn you the punishment you deserve!" At Sima Yi's order, armed guards removed the officer and executed him. Moments later the severed head was presented before the command tent; the commanders were aghast. Sima Yi said, "You commanders must do all you can to defend against the Shu army. When you hear my bombards from the central force, advance on all fronts." The commanders received the order and withdrew.

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Meanwhile Wei Yan, Zhang Ni, Chen Shi, and Du Qiong led their combined force of twenty thousand toward Winnow Basket Gorge. As they were marching, the arrival of Consulting Adviser Deng Zhi was announced. When the four commanders questioned him, he said, "The prime minister sends an order: if you leave Winnow Basket Gorge, be on the lookout for an ambush. Do not advance recklessly." Chen Shi said, "The prime minister is too cautious in his tactics. These rains have ruined the clothing and armor of the northern troops—they must have hurried home without leaving an ambush behind. If our men advance double-time, we can win a great victory. Why hold us back?" Deng Zhi responded, "His Excellency's schemes always work; his plans always succeed. Dare you disobey him?" Chen Shi replied, "If the prime minister were such a fine planner, he would not have come to grief at Jieting!"

Wei Yan now recalled that Kongming had once ignored his advice, and he smiled as he said, "Had the prime minister listened to me and come straight through Zi-Wu Gorge, Luoyang would have been in our hands by now, not to mention Chang'an. What will we gain by coming out from the Qishan hills? First he tells us to advance, now to stop. His commands make no sense!" Chen Shi said in reply, "I am going to take my five thousand men straight through Winnow Basket Gorge and pitch camp in the hills. We can put the prime minister to shame." Deng Zhi tried his best to prevent Chen Shi, without success. As soon as Chen Shi set out, Deng Zhi reported the move to Kongming.

Chen Shi had advanced no more than a few *li*, when bombards sounded. Set upon from all sides, he tried to withdraw; but the northern troops had blocked the way back into the gorge, thus sealing him in an iron ring. Chen Shi charged left and thrust right but could not break out. Suddenly fresh shouts shook the ground as a body of troops swept in and rescued Chen Shi. When they regained the safety of the gorge, all that remained of his original force of five thousand were four or five hundred wounded men. Wei troops pursued this remnant at first, but they retreated after being checked by Du Qiong and Zhang Ni. This episode served to convince both Chen Shi and Wei Yan of Kongming's extraordinary foresight; they regretted their impetuosity.

When Deng Zhi next saw Kongming he spoke of the disrespect Chen Shi and Wei Yan had shown, but Kongming merely smiled and said, "It is Wei Yan's nature to revolt against authority. I know it comes from his constant resentments. I employ him because I treasure his courage. But the time will come when he will create trouble for us!" At that moment a courier raced up to report that Chen Shi had returned to the gorge camp with four or five hundred wounded after losing more than four thousand of his troops. Kongming sent Deng Zhi to Winnow Basket Gorge to try and hearten Chen Shi and prevent a mutiny. Kongming also instructed Ma Dai and Wang Ping: "If Wei troops are holding Ye Gorge, I want you two to cross the hills with your own units. Move only by night, and get to the eastern side of the Qishan hills as quickly as possible. Then signal with fire."

Next Kongming instructed Ma Zhong and Zhang Yi: "Take the remoter hill paths. Travel only by night until you come out on the western side of Qishan. Signal by fire and then rendezvous with Ma Dai and Wang Ping to raid Cao Zhen's positions. I will attack from a third side, coming out from the gorge. This is how to defeat the Wei army." The four commanders went to perform their assignments. Finally Kongming summoned Guan Xing and Liao Hua and gave them separate instructions; the two went secretly with their troops to carry them out. Kongming set out with his own elite corps, marching double-time. On the way he imparted further secret orders to Wu Ban and Wu Yi, who went on ahead with their troops.

Cao Zhen, confident that the Riverlands troops would not strike, allowed his soldiers to slacken their defense, believing that after ten days without incident he would have won his bet with Sima Yi. But after seven days he was informed that some western troops were coming out of the gorge. Cao Zhen had Lieutenant Commander Qin Liang take five thousand men to investigate; they were to permit no Shu troops to approach the border.

As Qin Liang brought his force to the gorge, he saw the Riverlands army withdraw. He gave chase some fifty or sixty *li* but could not locate any western troops. Puzzled, he allowed his men to dismount and rest. Suddenly a scout reported: "Riverlands troops are hidden up ahead." Qin Liang remounted and saw dust rising between the hills. He had hardly given the order to prepare arms, when an earthshaking clamor welled up on all sides: Wu Ban and Wu Yi attacked from the front, Guan Xing and Liao Hua from behind. The hills to Qin Liang's left and right offered no escape route. From the summits Riverlands troops shouted down: "Dismount and surrender—or die!" Most of the Wei soldiers complied. Qin Liang continued fighting until Liao Hua cut him down. With Qin Liang dead, Kongming had the surrendering troops held in the rear guard and their clothing and armor distributed to his own men for disguises. Next, he ordered Guan Xing, Liao Hua, Wu Ban, and Wu Yi to take the company—dressed as Wei troops—directly to Cao Zhen's base camp; a disguised scout was sent ahead with word that the few western troops found in the gorge had been scattered. Cao Zhen was well pleased by the news.

The arrival of Field Marshal Sima's personal representative was then announced, and Cao Zhen called him in for questioning. The man conveyed a message: "Four thousand Riverlands troops were killed in the field marshal's ambush. He wishes you to forget about the wager, General, and to maintain a most vigilant guard." "Why, there is not a single western soldier here!" Cao Zhen answered, and he sent Sima Yi's man back.

Suddenly, a new report: Qin Liang was returning with his troops. Cao Zhen went forth to welcome him. But when he was greeted by torches before and behind, Cao Zhen dashed back to camp, only to find a Riverlands force directed by Guan Xing, Liao Hua, Wu Ban, and Wu Yi

advancing on his base, while Ma Dai and Wang Ping—joined by Ma Zhong and Zhang Yi—attacked it from the rear. The Wei soldiers, caught utterly unprepared, escaped each man for himself. The commanders mounted a guard around Cao Zhen and fled east, Riverlands troops in hot pursuit.

Cao Zhen was in full flight when he heard terrific shouts: another band of soldiers stood up ahead, confronting him. His heart was faint until he recognized Sima Yi, who had routed the westerners after a major battle. Thus, Cao Zhen escaped; but where could he hide from his shame? Sima Yi said, "Now that Zhuge Liang has the upper hand in Qishan, we must not remain long. Let's shift our camps to the shore of the River Wei and plan our next move." "Zhongda," Cao Zhen replied, "how did you know such a defeat was in store for me?" "When I was told you had said there was not a single western soldier," Sima Yi answered him, "I knew Kongming would come undetected to raid your base, so I came to reinforce you. Now you've been caught in his trap. Let's have no more talk about our wager but serve our kingdom with united devotion." Cao Zhen despaired; a mood that soon became an illness confined him to his bed. Sima Yi, fearing any further lowering of morale among the troops at the River Wei, did not ask Cao Zhen to resume his command.

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Once again Kongming guided the army forth from the Qishan hills in full strength; then he rewarded the troops for their recent efforts. The four commanders, Wei Yan, Chen Shi, Du Qiong, and Zhang Ni, entered Kongming's tent, prostrated themselves, and accepted the blame for the losses to their armies. Kongming asked, "Whose forces were lost?" Wei Yan answered, "Chen Shi ignored orders and went secretly into the gorge; his men were slaughtered." "I was only doing what Wei Yan told me to do," Chen Shi protested. "He saved your skin," Kongming retorted, "yet you would put the blame back on him? An order was disobeyed. There is no need to make arguments!" So saying, Kongming had Chen Shi removed and beheaded. Moments later the head was hung in front of the command tent as a warning to all.³ Rather than kill Wei Yan, however, Kongming spared him so he could use him later.

After the execution Kongming held a formal meeting to discuss the next phase of the campaign.⁴ An unexpected messenger brought word that Cao Zhen was bedridden and recuperating in his camp. Delighted, Kongming told his commanders, "If it were not serious, Cao Zhen would have pulled back to Chang'an. Since he remains, the illness is grave. He will stay among the troops only to maintain morale. Let me write him a letter, which some of Qin Liang's surrendered soldiers can deliver. If Cao Zhen sees it, it should kill him." Kongming summoned some captured soldiers to his tent and said, "You are all men of Wei. Your parents, wives, and families are all in the north; remaining here in Shu does you little good. What if I were to let you go home?" The soldiers wept freely and prostrated themselves. Kongming went on, "Cao Zhen and I once made an agreement. If you take this letter back to him, he should reward you most generously." The Wei soldiers accepted the letter, hastened back to their camp, and presented it to Cao Zhen.

The Wei general propped himself up, slit the envelope, and read the text:

Zhugé Liang, lord of Wuxiang, prime minister of the Han, transmits this letter to Chief Commanding Officer Cao Zhen: I presume to think that whoever holds command over men must be able to engage and disengage, to show flexibility as well as firmness, to advance and

to retreat, to be gentle as well as tough. He must be harder to shake than the very hills, deeper to fathom than the *yin* and *yang* that govern nature, enduring as Heaven and earth, inexhaustible as the capital granary, limitless and vast as the four seas, and brilliant as the seven celestial bodies. He must know the weather augured by the stars; he must recognize when terrain is safe; he must understand the timing of military engagements; he must sense the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy.

What a pity for you unlearned epigones who defy the very heavens by helping a rebel-traitor usurp the throne! Now he proclaims himself emperor in Luoyang! We drove your ruined forces from Ye Gorge, and the rains at Chencang caused you great suffering. Frustrated on land and on the rivers, your troops lost all discipline and strewed their weapons and armor outside the city. The field marshals lost their nerve, and their commanders scuttled off in disarray. How will you hold up your heads before the elders in the land within the passes, or bring yourselves to enter the hall of your chief minister?

What historians will record with the brush, the people, multitongued, will spread afar: Sima Yi was watchful and nervous before battle; Cao Zhen fearful and hesitant at the first sign of war. Our western troops are tough, our horses hardy; and our commanders—with the fierce energy of tigers, the mobile power of dragons—will sweep you clear out of the northwest and then go on to purge the kingdom of Wei and leave it a wilderness!

When Cao Zhen finished reading, bitter anger flooded his chest. That evening, still with his troops, he died. Sima Yi had a military carriage transport Cao Zhen's body to Luoyang for a proper burial.

The Wei ruler, on learning of Cao Zhen's death, issued an edict encouraging Sima Yi to do battle with the Riverlands army. The field marshal led his troops to engage Kongming, sending the call to battle one day beforehand. "Cao Zhen must have died," Kongming said to his commanders. He sent the envoy back to Sima Yi with this answer: "Tomorrow we meet in the field." That night Kongming imparted secret plans to Jiang Wei and special instructions to Guan Xing.

The next day Kongming moved all the troops in the Qishan hills down to the banks of the River Wei. Between the hills on one side and the river on the other lay a flat stretch of barren land, a perfect battlefield. As the two forces faced each other, the archers got ready to pin down the flanks of the opposing side. After three rolls of the drums the Wei line opened at its center, and Sima Yi rode forth, his commanders in train.

Seeing Kongming seated erect in his four-wheeled carriage and moving his feather fan back and forth, Sima Yi cried out: "My emperor's legitimacy rests on the model of Shun's election by Yao. Our house, now in its second reign, rules the northern realm securely, tolerating the kingdoms of Shu and Wu because our sovereign's liberal compassion and ample benevolence make him reluctant to bring suffering to the people. You, a mere plowman from Nanyang who knows nothing of the Heavenly-appointed course of events, will meet with the fate you deserve if you insist on pursuing this aggression against our realm. But you and your commanders can still save yourselves if you will reflect and alter your course, withdraw now and let our three separate kingdoms defend their borders in a settled order, thus sparing the common souls of our lands the miseries of war."

Kongming smiled as he answered Sima Yi: "The late Emperor gravely charged me to bend every effort to suppress the traitors. Soon the house of Han will crush the Cao clan. Your grandsire and your sire were vassals of Han; for generations your people made their living from the Han. But you forget

the debt you owe and aid the usurper. How ashamed you must be now!" Sima Yi, his face flushed with shame, replied, "Let the two of us decide here and now which is the rooster and which the hen! If you win, I swear to resign as general. If you lose, you must return to your village—under my guarantee of safety, of course."

Kongming said in response: "Do you want to fight with commanders? With troops? Or with orders of battle?" "First with orders of battle!" Sima Yi answered. Kongming said, "Then let me see your array." Sima Yi went into his command tent and took in hand a yellow standard that he waved in the wind. Left and right the troops moved, deploying into line. Sima Yi remounted and rode forth from the position. "Can you name this array?" he demanded. Kongming answered, "Our lowliest commander could do that one—the 'Beginning of Form.'" "Now you display your line," Sima Yi said. Kongming went back among his men, waved his fan, and reemerged in front of his order of battle. "Do you recognize it?" he asked Sima Yi. "That has to be the 'Formation of Eight Hexagrams,'" came the reply. "Entirely correct," Kongming said. "Do you want to try and attack it?" "I know what it is," Sima Yi responded, "so why not?" "Do so!" Kongming dared.

Sima Yi returned to his line and summoned three commanders, Dai Ling, Zhang Hu, and Yue Chen, and told them, "Kongming has deployed his forces in a square with eight gates—Desist, Survive, Injure, Confound, Exhibit, Perish, Surprise, and Liberate. I want you three to attack through the eastern gate, Survive, and fight your way through the western gate, Desist, and then back to the northern gate, Liberate. His formation can be broken, but you must use all due caution." On Sima Yi's order the three commanders proceeded to attack through Survive with a force of thirty cavalry each: Zhang Hu had the lead, Dai Ling the center, Yue Chen the rear. The opposing armies cheered their forces on.

When the three Wei commanders entered the Riverlands formation, they found it a continuous wall which they could not penetrate. The three commanders hurriedly led their men around the base of the formation in an attempt to break out from the southwest, but Riverlands archers checked their advance. The formation was like a maze, with multiple and intersecting lanes, each having its own entrance and exit. Who could tell the four directions any more? The three commanders lost contact and could only hurl themselves wildly along the lanes. But all they saw were brooding clouds that struck fear in their hearts and a dense mist closing in on them. As war cries rose around them, the northern troops were seized and bound one by one and then delivered to the main Riverlands camp.

Kongming was seated in the command tent before which the three Wei commanders and their ninety followers stood captive. "Do not be surprised that I was able to capture all of you," Kongming began. "I will send you back to Sima Yi: tell him to brush up on his military manuals and pay greater heed to tactics. There's still time to decide which of us is the rooster and which the hen! But since I have spared your lives, it is only right that you leave us your weapons and horses." Kongming had the northern soldiers stripped, their faces blackened; then he let them leave the formation on foot.

Sima Yi received them in great anger. Turning to his other commanders, he cried, "With our fighting spirit broken, how can we hold up our heads before the high officials of the north?" So saying, Sima Yi ordered his entire army to fight to the death taking the enemy battle line. Sima Yi, his own sword in hand, led one hundred commanders to incite the men to fight. The moment the two armies joined, a sudden clamor of drums and horns and war cries rose up behind the Wei army as a body of troops came at them from the southwest. Guan Xing was in command.

Sima Yi detached a portion of his rear army to meet him, while urging the main force to press the assault. Suddenly the Wei army went to pieces. Earlier Jiang Wei had led a body of men silently into position: Riverlands soldiers were squeezing the northerners from three sides. Sima Yi panicked and hurriedly withdrew. The surrounding Shu troops closed in for the kill. Sima Yi shifted the entire Wei force south, fighting desperately to break out of the enemy ring; six or seven of every ten men perished. Sima Yi retreated to the southern shore of the River Wei and established his position; he did not emerge again.

At about the same time Kongming was rallying his victorious troops to return to Qishan, Li Yan of the city of Yong'an was sending District Commander Gou An off to deliver a shipment of grain to Kongming. But Gou An, addicted to wine, dallied on the journey, arriving ten days past the deadline. Kongming said angrily, "Grain is a vital necessity for an army. Delivery three days late is punishable by death. You are ten. Have you any excuse?" Kongming ordered Gou An removed and executed, but a senior adviser, Yang Yi said, "Gou An is in Li Yan's service. He is responsible for getting money and grain to us from the west. Who will see to delivery after you have killed him?" Kongming ordered the guard to remove Gou An's bonds and after eighty strokes of the staff freed him.

Burning with resentment, Gou An fled to the Wei camp with five or six comrades and surrendered. Called before Sima Yi, he prostrated himself and recounted the incident. "All the same," Sima Yi responded, "knowing Kongming's cunning makes your story difficult to believe. But if you could perform a great service for me, I would recommend you to the Emperor for a high command." "Whatever you require I shall perform without stint," Gou An answered. "Then go back to Chengdu and spread the rumor that Kongming envies his sovereign and seeks the opportunity to declare himself emperor. Getting your ruler to recall Kongming will be a great service."

Gou An consented and returned directly to Chengdu, where he met with a eunuch and started the rumor that Kongming's pride in his achievements would soon lead him to usurp the ruling house. The amazed eunuch went at once to inform the Emperor. The Second Emperor said in astonishment, "If it is so, what shall we do?" The eunuch said, "Have him recalled to Chengdu and reduce his military authority to forestall future revolt." The Second Emperor thereupon issued a decree summoning Kongming back to court.⁵

Jiang Wan stepped forward and said, "Since the prime minister led the army into the field, he has distinguished himself again and again. For what reason is he being recalled?" "We have certain matters to discuss with him in confidence," the Second Emperor said, and he dispatched an envoy to recall the prime minister.

The envoy went directly to the main camp in the Qishan hills, where Kongming received him. After reading the edict, Kongming raised his eyes to the heavens and said with a sigh, "Some wily minister near the young sovereign must be influencing him. Why should he recall me when I am about to accomplish something important? If I do not go back, it will be an act of disrespect toward the sovereign. If I obey, another chance like this will be hard to come by." Jiang Wei said, "If the army withdraws, Sima Yi will seize the opportunity to strike us. What do we do then?" Kongming answered, "I will divide our forces into five groups for the withdrawal. Today we will evacuate this camp: for every thousand men we will have two thousand fire pits dug; tomorrow, three thousand; the day after that, four thousand. With every new day of retreat, we will increase the number of cooking sites as we move on." Yang Yi said, "Long ago Sun Bin captured Pang Juan by the ruse of decreasing the cooking sites as he increased his manpower. What is the purpose of adding sites for this

withdrawal, Your Excellency?" Kongming replied, "An expert strategist like Sima Yi will pursue us once he finds we have left—but wary of any ambush we might leave, he will count the sites in our former camps. The daily increase in the number of fire pits will make him wonder whether or not we have retreated, and whether or not to pursue. A slow and steady withdrawal will save the lives of our men." So saying, Kongming issued the order to retreat.

Sima Yi assumed that Gou An had by now fully carried out his plan and that he had only to wait for the Riverlands troops to withdraw before mounting a general onslaught. While he was waiting, a report came that the Riverlands positions had been evacuated; warily Sima Yi took one hundred riders to the camp to investigate before ordering pursuit. He had the cooking sites counted and then returned to his base camp. The next day he sent troops back into the evacuated camp to tally the number of fire pits; they reported an increase. Sima Yi said to his commanders, "How clever Kongming is, actually adding troops! Pursuit will lead us right into his trap. Let us retreat and plan our next move carefully." Sima Yi and his army turned back, and Kongming headed for Chengdu having suffered no losses. Only later did natives of the Wei River area tell Sima Yi they had seen Kongming add sites but not troops. Sima Yi sighed deeply and said, "Kongming did what Yu Xu once did—and he took me in!⁶ He is the better tactician!" So saying, Sima Yi returned to the Wei capital of Luoyang. Indeed:

Beating an equal at the game is hard;

Meeting a talented rival, a commander needs humility.⁷

How did Kongming finally return to Chengdu?

READ ON.



***Disguised as a God, Kongming Comes Forth from Longshang;
Racing for Saber Gateway, Zhang He Falls into a Trap***

BY THE RUSE OF REMOVING TROOPS and adding fire pits, Kongming retreated safely to Hanzhong; and Sima Yi, suspecting ambush, returned to Chang'an. Not one Riverlands soldier was lost. After rewarding the army, Kongming returned to Chengdu and presented himself before the Second Emperor.

Addressing the ruler, Kongming said, "I, your vassal, had moved out of the Qishan hills and was about to take Chang'an when I received Your Majesty's summons home. For what great event, may I know?" The Second Emperor did not answer for some time; then he said, "Thirst for the sight of my prime minister, who had been away from us too long, nothing more." "That could not have been Your Majesty's real purpose," Kongming said. "Some treacherous minister has sown the calumny that I harbor disloyal thoughts. The Second Emperor listened in silence as Kongming went on, "For your late father's boundless favor, I am sworn to lifelong service. But with treachery in the royal house, how can I chastise the northern rebels?" "We gave careless ear to the eunuchs and, yielding momentarily, had you recalled. Now the confusion has passed; I regret the mistake," said the Emperor.

Kongming interrogated the eunuchs and learned of the rumors spread by Gou An. Kongming sent men to seize him, but Gou An had fled to Wei. Next, Kongming put to death the eunuch who had misled the sovereign with his petitions, and he removed from the palace all others involved in the treachery. He also severely rebuked Jiang Wan and Fei Yi for their failure to bring the conspiracy to light and to urge the Son of Heaven back to the right path, a failure the two humbly acknowledged.

Afterward, Kongming took leave of the ruler and returned to Hanzhong. There he had Li Yan see to the requisitioning of grain and provender to the front. At the same time he reopened discussions on the campaign against Wei. Yang Yi said, "On our previous campaigns our military strength was insufficient and our grain supply inadequate.¹ When we get to Qishan, we should divide our two hundred thousand troops into two sections for rotation: put half in the field for three months, then bring them back to the hills and send the other half up to the front. Alternating in this way will conserve our strength and enable us to move up slowly and steadily as we approach our goal, the northern heartland." "This coincides with my thinking," Kongming said. "An invasion of the north is not something to be accomplished overnight. This long range plan is exactly what is called for." Kongming divided his army into halves for rotation every hundred days, ordering that anyone violating the time limit be punished under martial law.

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Kongming launched his next punitive expedition against Wei in the second month of the ninth year

of Jian Xing by the Shu-Han calendar (the fifth year of Tai He by the Wei calendar).² The ruler of Wei, Cao Rui, summoned Sima Yi for urgent consultations concerning defense. Sima Yi said, "Though Cao Zhen is dead, I will do all I can in your Majesty's behalf to clear these marauding rebels from our land." Well pleased, Cao Rui held a grand banquet in Sima Yi's honor. The next day a military emergency was reported, and Cao Rui ordered Sima Yi into the field to meet the enemy, personally escorting the field marshal beyond the city in his carriage.³

Sima Yi took formal leave and proceeded directly to Chang'an, where he assembled several field armies. At a discussion on how to defeat the Shu army, Zhang He said, "I volunteer to lead one contingent to defend Yong and Mei and check the enemy." But Sima Yi replied, "Our forward army cannot by itself hold back Kongming's host. Further subdivision of our force is not the way to victory. I would rather leave some troops guarding Shanggui and move the rest toward Qishan. Are you willing to lead the van?" Zhang He replied with enthusiasm, "Having ever cherished the principles of loyalty and honor, with all my heart I have desired nothing so much as to requite the royal house, but in the past no one acknowledged me. If the field marshal is willing to devolve this grave duty upon me, ten thousand deaths will not deter me." Thereupon Sima Yi had Zhang He lead the van and assume overall military command. He also assigned Guo Huai to the defense of the Longxi districts. The remaining commanders were to advance along various routes.

Scouts soon reported back: "Kongming is leading a vast host toward the Qishan hills. His van, led by Wang Ping and Zhang Ni, went straight through Chencang, along the plank roads, and is moving toward Ye Gorge via San Pass." Sima Yi said to Zhang He, "Kongming is driving forward in full force. He means to reap the Longxi wheat harvest for his army. Form your camps so as to guard the Qishan hills. Guo Huai and myself will watch over the Tianshui districts to keep the wheat out of their hands." Zhang He agreed. He led forty thousand men to defend Qishan hills, while Sima Yi took the main force in the direction of Longxi.

Meanwhile, Kongming's troops had reached Qishan and had begun pitching their camps. Kongming surveyed the defenses of the Wei army on the shore of the River Wei and said to his commanders, "That must be Sima Yi. At this time we are short of provisions. I have sent several men to urge Li Yan to supply our needs, but no one has come. The Longshang harvest should be ripe now, and ready for a quiet reaping." With that, Kongming left Wang Ping, Zhang Ni, Wu Ban, and Wu Yi guarding his Qishan camps and advanced to Lucheng with Jiang Wei, Wei Yan, and other commanders. The governor of Lucheng, who had known Kongming for many years, made haste to open the gate and tender his city. After calming the leaders of the city, Kongming asked, "Where is the wheat ripening?" The governor answered, "In Longshang." Kongming left Zhang Yi and Ma Zhong guarding Lucheng and took a few commanders and the whole of his force on to Longshang.

Kongming's advance guard reported: "Sima Yi has brought troops to Longshang." Startled, Kongming said, "So he knew what I was coming for!" At once he bathed, changed to fresh clothes, and ordered three identical four-wheeled wagons on each of which he put a model of himself. (Kongming had had these wagons built while he was still in Shu.) Next, he ordered Jiang Wei to place an ambush of one thousand wagon-guards and five hundred drummers behind Shanggui. In addition, Ma Dai had one thousand guards and five hundred drummers on the left; and Wei Yan had the same on the right. Each wagon was carried along by twenty-four men; black-garbed and barefoot, hair unbound and swords ready, they carried black seven-star flags. As planned, Jiang Wei, Ma Dai, and Wei Yan advanced with the three wagons.

Kongming ordered thirty thousand troops armed with sickles and backpacks to prepare for reaping. At the same time he selected another twenty-four men as a special force to carry and guard his own wagon. Like the men in the other details, these guards wore black and had unbound hair and unshod feet. Swords readied, they surrounded and supported the four-wheeled wagon. Kongming ordered Guan Xing to dress up as the Strawheaded Monster of the Field⁴ and to walk before his wagon with the seven-star banner in his hand. Kongming sat upright on the wagon as the procession advanced toward the Wei camps.

The northern scouts watched amazed, wondering if it were man or demon before them; they sped their report to Sima Yi. Sima Yi went forth to view the scene: there was Kongming, wearing a bonnet fastened with a clasp and a robe bestuck with crane feathers; feather fan in hand, he sat upright on the four-wheeled wagon. Around him were twenty-four men, hair free, swords ready. In front of them a single man, black flag in hand, resembling a field god of some kind. Sima Yi said, "Another of Kongming's weird tricks!" He chose two thousand men and instructed them: "Go out as fast as you can and bring me the wagon and the men. Spare no effort." As ordered, the northern soldiers gave chase. Kongming had the procession turn round the moment he spotted them and head slowly off in the direction of his own camp.

As the Wei cavalry raced after the procession, they noticed a chill wind blowing in little gusts and an icy mist spreading round them. They pursued strenuously for another stage but failed to catch up with Kongming. The soldiers reined in and said in amazement, "How strange! There they are still—we've gone thirty *li* without catching them! What do we do?" When Kongming saw that the pursuers had stopped, he ordered the porters to rest facing the enemy. After a long pause, the northerners resumed the chase; and Kongming returned to his wagon and began moving with studied slowness. The northerners pursued another twenty *li* but never reached their objective. Dumbstruck, they watched as Kongming had the wagons turn round again and advance toward them. The Wei troops wanted to pursue. But at that moment Sima Yi arrived with a company and issued an order: "Kongming's marvelous skill with the Eight Gateways and the 'Taboo Days' formula has enabled him to control the Six Ding deities and the Six Jia deities. As he is now using the technique 'Foreshortening the Land'⁵ from the divine text of the Six Jia, the army cannot overtake him." The northern troops reined in and began turning back. From their left, war drums beat loudly as a band of men attacked. Sima Yi ordered an immediate defense, then was left to watch amazed as a team of twenty-four Riverlands troops, hair loosed, swords ready, black-garbed, and barefoot, hustled forward around a four-wheeled wagon upon which Kongming sat upright in his pinned bonnet and crane-feather robe, a feather fan in his hand.

The astonished Sima Yi said, "That wagon bearing Kongming—we chased it fifty *li* but could not catch up with it. How could Kongming be here now? It is most strange!" As he spoke, war drums rumbled on the right and again a band of men attacked the northerners. Again twenty-four men, identical in appearance to the last team, brought forth a wagon carrying Kongming. Sima Yi was utterly confused. "Those troops are supernatural!" he said to his commanders. Many Wei soldiers scattered in panic.

At that instant more drumming and shouting announced yet another group of attackers; ahead of them, a four-wheeled wagon holding Kongming and pushed along by porters precisely like the others. The northern troops were panic-stricken. Sima Yi could not tell if they were men or demons before him, nor the number of Shu troops. Overcome with fright, he led a headlong flight to Shanggui and

slammed the gates shut behind him.

Now Kongming ordered the thirty thousand to reap the entire wheat harvest at Long-shang and move it into Lucheng for drying. Sima Yi remained in Shanggui for the next three days. After the Riverlands forces had begun retreating, he sent forth scouts. They' found a Riverlands soldier on the road and brought him back to the field marshal, who questioned him. "I was one of the reapers," the prisoner said. "My horse got away and I was taken." "What were those supernatural troops we saw earlier?" Sima Yi asked. "None of the three ambushes involved Kongming; it was Jiang Wei, Ma Dai, and Wei Yan. Each unit had only a thousand wagon guards and five hundred drummers. Kongming was on the lead wagon, the one that enticed your army," the prisoner continued. Sima Yi raised his eyes to Heaven and sighed as he said, "Kongming's maneuvers are as subtle as those of gods and demons."

At this moment Guo Huai returned with fresh news; Sima Yi received him. The formalities concluded, Guo Huai said, "I have found out that there are few Riverlands troops and they're all in Lucheng preparing the wheat. It's a good time to attack." Sima Yi then recounted the previous events, and Guo Huai said with a smile, "He has only fooled us for a time. Now that we see through him, there is nothing to fear. I will take one company and attack from the rear; you take another to attack from the front. We can occupy Lucheng and capture Kongming." Sima Yi approved and the two companies marched to Lucheng.

Since Kongming had brought his troops to Lucheng, his men had been engaged in drying the wheat they had reaped. Unexpectedly, Kongming alerted his commanders, "Tonight the enemy will attack. The wheat fields east and west of the city make a good place to hide our soldiers. Who will dare to go out and prepare the ambush?" Four commanders came forward to volunteer: Jiang Wei, Wei Yan, Ma Zhong, and Ma Dai. Well pleased, Kongming ordered Jiang Wei and Wei Yan to take two thousand troops each out to the southeast and northwest; he ordered Ma Dai and Ma Zhong to take two thousand each out to the southwest and northeast. "Listen for the roar of the bombard," Kongming told them, "then attack from all four corners together." The four went to perform their assignments. Kongming himself took one hundred men, each with his firing tube, to hide in the wheat fields and await attack.

Sima Yi came straight to Lucheng. As evening fell, he said to his commanders, "By day, the city will be prepared. Let us use the night to attack, there where the wall is low and the moat shallow." He posted his force outside the city; during the first watch Guo Huai's force also arrived. The two units quickly combined and, as the drums rolled, surrounded Lucheng tighter than an iron loop. But from the walls of Lucheng ten thousand crossbowmen let fly, and the Wei troops, caught in a storm of arrows and stones, could not advance.

Suddenly a series of signal shots sounded. The northerners were terrified, not knowing the direction of attack. Guo Huai had some soldiers search the wheat fields. From the four corners flames shot skyward and war cries resounded as the four Riverlands units came in for the kill. The gates of Lucheng were flung open, and more soldiers poured out to aid the four Shu commanders. After a spell of slaughter and heavy Wei losses, Sima Yi led his defeated troops in a last-ditch struggle. They managed to break through the outer ring and occupied a hilltop. Guo Huai, too, fled to a new position behind the hill. Kongming reentered the city from the wheat field and ordered the four generals to pitch camp at the four corners.

Guo Huai said to Sima Yi, "We have been locked too long in combat with the westerners with no

strategy to force them back. Now we have taken another serious loss. Our dead and wounded must come to more than three thousand. If we don't plan something soon, we will not get out of here alive." "What do you suggest?" Sima Yi asked. Guo Huai responded, "Send a written order to move our forces in Yong and Liang over here to help us destroy the enemy. I will take a company and surprise Saber Gateway, thereby cutting off Kongming's route home and interdicting their supplies. When disorder erupts in his army, we will strike and destroy them." Sima Yi approved and ordered the transfer. Within a day Commanding Officer Sun Li arrived with forces from Yong and Liang. Sima Yi ordered Sun Li to coordinate the attack on Saber Gateway with Guo Huai.

Kongming had maintained the resistance within Lucheng for many days. Seeing the Wei army offer no battle, he summoned Jiang Wei and Ma Dai into the city. "The Wei troops are holding their strongpoints in the hills," he instructed them. "They do not come to fight because they think we will have no food after the wheat is used up, and secondly, because they have sent troops to surprise Saber Gateway and cut our supply line. I want each of you to take ten thousand men and defend our strongpoints. When the enemy sees our readiness, they will withdraw." The two commanders departed with their troops.

Senior Adviser Yang Yi came to the command tent and said, "Your Excellency has ordered the army rotated every hundred days. Today the allotted time elapses. Troops from Hanzhong have already crossed the Riverlands border, and the documents from the forward unit are here. All that remains is for the exchange to take place, for the forty thousand at the rear to replace the forty thousand on the front." "Since the order has been given," Kongming said, "carry it out quickly." On hearing the order, the various units packed up and began moving.

Suddenly it was reported that Sun Li was leading two hundred thousand Yong and Liang troops to attack Saber Gateway to help Wei and that Sima Yi was leading an attack on Lucheng. Panic seized the Riverlands army. Yang Yi went to Kongming and said, "The enemy approaches swiftly. Your Excellency, keep the troops just relieved to help repel them, at least until fresh forces can be brought in." "No," Kongming replied. "My deployments and my commands always rest on the principle of good faith. If the orders have gone out, I cannot retract them and lose the army's confidence. Moreover, troops due to go home have made their plans. Their parents and families will be awaiting them by their doorposts. Even if disaster were imminent, I would not keep them back."

Thus, Kongming issued the orders for departure that day. On receiving them, the troops made a great outcry. "How great is the prime minister's humane concern for the army!" they said. "But we choose to stay and risk our lives in the struggle against Wei to demonstrate our love for His Excellency!" Kongming answered, "I'm afraid you should return to your homes. How can I keep you here any longer?" But the soldiers wanted to fight, not to go home. Finally Kongming said, "If you are determined to fight for me, go outside the city walls and pitch your camps so that you can attack the Wei the moment they arrive, before they catch their breath: 'With rested troops take weary troops.'" The soldiers accepted their assignment, took up their weapons, and cheerfully exited the city to assume battle formation.

Meanwhile, the rapidly approaching Xiliang forces, fatigued from their marches, had begun pitching camp to rest. At that moment a mass of Riverlands soldiers— battle-whetted commanders and high-spirited troops, all fired with courage and energy— set upon them. The Yong and Liang soldiers could not withstand the assault and fled the way they had come. In hot pursuit the Riverlands troops took so heavy a toll of the enemy that the ground ran red and corpses covered the field.

Kongming went forth from the city and recalled the victorious warriors to celebrate the day. Suddenly, urgent news from Li Yan in Yong'an: a startled Kongming tore open the envelope and read, "Recent word is that the Southland had someone in Luoyang negotiate a truce with Wei. Wei urged Wu to conquer Shu, but luckily Wu has not mobilized. Presently making further inquiries. Humbly hope Your Excellency acts quickly."

This note alarmed and puzzled Kongming. He summoned his commanders and said, "If the Southland attacks our kingdom, I shall have to return to Chengdu immediately." So saying, he issued the order for all forces in the Qishan hills to withdraw to the Riverlands: "Sima Yi knows we are stationed here. He would never dare pursue us." And so Wang Ping, Zhang Ni, Wu Ban, and Wu Yi formed two armies and withdrew slowly into the Land of Rivers.

Zhang He watched the Shu army remove, but he did not pursue for fear of a ruse; instead, he marched back to Sima Yi and said, "The enemy has withdrawn. I do not know why." "Kongming is full of shrewd designs," Sima Yi said. "Make no move. Hold your position and wait till his grain is gone. Then they will leave of their own accord." Commander Wei Ping came forward and said, "The enemy has decamped from Qishan. Catch them now in the moment of retreat. If you fail to act, Field Marshal, daunted by the Riverlands as if by a tiger, you will be defenseless against the world's derision." Sima Yi remained unpersuaded.

On ascertaining that his Qishan forces had returned, Kongming called Yang Yi and Ma Zhong into his tent for secret orders. He had them deploy ten thousand bowmen in ambush along either side of the Mumen road above Saber Gateway, there to await the signal of the bombard should northern troops reach the pass. At the signal the bowmen were to heave logs and rocks down upon the enemy and then to attack from both sides after cutting off the escape route. When the two commanders had left, Kongming told Wei Yan and Guan Xing to interdict the road behind the attackers. Next, Kongming had flags and banners mounted all along the wall, and piles of kindling burned throughout the city to suggest the activity of a normal army. Kongming's main force then headed for the Mumen road.

Wei scouts reported to Sima Yi: "The enemy's main force has withdrawn, but we are not sure how many troops remain in the city." Sima Yi went himself to study the situation. Seeing the banners along the wall and the smoke rising from within, he said, smiling, "The city is empty!" And his scouts verified it. Delighted, Sima Yi said, "Kongming has withdrawn. Who will pursue?" Zhang He of the vanguard volunteered. But Sima Yi checked him, saying "No, your temper is too volatile." "Field Marshal," Zhang He replied, "when you came out from the pass, you gave me the vanguard. This is the moment for deeds of merit. Why will you not use me?" Sima Yi answered, "The enemy has retreated, but the strategic points will be protected by hidden forces. Utmost caution is required in giving chase." "I am well aware of the strategic points," Zhang He said. "There is no need to be concerned." "If you are determined to go," Sima Yi said, "do not lament it afterward." "A man of action risks his life for his kingdom. Ten thousand deaths would cause me no regret," Zhang He responded. "In that case," Sima Yi continued, "march ahead with five thousand men. I will have Wei Ping follow with twenty thousand horse and foot to check any ambush. I will follow with three thousand in case of emergency."

Zhang He accepted his assignment. He had pursued the retreating western army some thirty *li*, when a shout came from behind and a band of soldiers sprang from some woods. Their leader, a general, leveled his sword and halted his mount. "Where is the rebel commander headed?" he shouted. Zhang He turned, faced Wei Yan, and, full of fury, closed with him. After less than ten

clashes Wei Yan feigned defeat and fled. Zhang He pursued another thirty *li*, and then halted to look for ambushes. Finding none, he rode on. As he rounded a hill, another body of soldiers burst into view yelling lustily. Their leader was Guan Xing. Sword level, horse checked, he cried, "Stand your ground, Zhang He. I have come!" Zhang He applied the whip and closed with his challenger. After ten bouts Guan Xing swung his horse around and raced away.

Zhang He pursued; reaching a thick wood, he became suspicious and sent men to scout about, but they found nothing. Relieved, Zhang He resumed the chase. To Zhang He's amazement, he found Wei Yan holding the ground before him. They fought ten bouts before Wei Yan again fled in defeat. Zhang He pursued furiously. Then Guan Xing challenged him from the front, blocking his way. Zhang He wrathfully laid on the whip and closed with Guan Xing; they fought ten bouts.

The Riverlands troops flung down clothing, armor, and other objects along the roadway. The northerners dismounted and grabbed all they could. Wei Yan and Guan Xing fought in turn with Zhang He as he pressed the chase with fierce courage; evening fell before they realized the time. As Zhang He reached the Mumen road, Wei Yan wheeled his horse around and shrilly denounced him: "Renegade traitor! If I do not stop you now, you will pursue me forever! Let us fight to the finish!" Swept along by his anger, Zhang He hoisted his lance and charged. Wei Yan met him with an agile sword. The battle barely lasted ten bouts. Wei Yan threw down his clothing, armor, and helmet in defeat and on a lone horse led his troops in flight toward the Mumen road. His combat lust aroused, Zhang He galloped after Wei Yan fleeing for his life.

Darkness had fallen. The noise of a bombard rang out, and flames shot skyward from the hills. Boulders and pieces of timber rained down, blocking the way. Alarmed, Zhang He said, "They have me trapped," and quickly turned his horse about, but rocks and branches had blocked the road behind as well. With little room to maneuver and sheer cliffs to either side, Zhang He could neither advance nor retreat. Suddenly he heard the beating of a club as ten thousand crossbowmen let fly from both sides. Zhang He and the hundred or so lieutenants with him perished in the barrage. A poet of later times wrote of his death:

The bowshots flew, a myriad of fiery stars,
And daring soldiers fell at Treagate Trail.
Still today when passing Saber Way,
Travelers speak of Kongming's ancient fame.

The relief force for Zhang He caught up and found the road blocked. Seeing that he had been trapped, they turned and quickly retreated. Suddenly they heard cries from a hilltop: "Prime Minister Zhuge is here!" The Wei soldiers looked up and saw Kongming standing amidst the flames and directing his troops. He said, "For today's hunt I wanted to shoot a horse; by mistake I shot a river deer.⁶ The rest of you may go in peace. But tell Sima Yi for me, I'm going to catch him yet!"

The northern troops returned and recounted this event to Sima Yi. Driven to despair, he looked into the heavens and said with a sigh, "Zhang He's death is no one's fault but mine." With that he recalled his troops and returned to Luoyang. The ruler of Wei shed tears and breathed heavily at Zhang He's fate. He had the corpse recovered and honorably interred.

Kongming had reentered Hanzhong, intending to return to Chengdu and present himself before the Second Emperor. Guardian General Li Yan consequently submitted a false petition to the Second

Emperor: "I had already seen to the food supplies and was about to deliver them to the prime minister at the front. I cannot imagine why he has suddenly brought the army home." On receiving this petition, the Second Emperor ordered Secretary Fei Yi to go to Hanzhong and ask Kongming the reasons for his return. Fei Yi reached Hanzhong and communicated the Second Emperor's question. In great alarm, Kongming replied, "Li Yan sent an urgent letter saying that the Southland meant to invade our kingdom. That's the reason I brought the army home." Fei Yi said, "Li Yan has announced to the sovereign that the food supply had been assured and that Your Excellency had no reason to come home. The Son of Heaven has commanded me to find out why you did."

In great anger, Kongming ordered the matter investigated. He discovered that Li Yan had failed to arrange for the supplies and, anticipating Kongming's accusation, had submitted a false memorial to cover up his fault. Filled with ire, Kongming said, "That base coward has injured the dynasty's cause for his personal interests." He summoned Li Yan and was about to have him executed, when Fei Yi said, "Keep in mind, Your Excellency, the late Emperor's sacred trust and show the man leniency for now." Kongming accepted this. But when Fei Yi himself presented a memorial on this matter, the Second Emperor flew into a rage and ordered the guards to remove Li Yan and put him to death. Military Adviser Jiang Wan then stepped forth and said, "Li Yan is one of the vassals to whom the late Emperor entrusted his son. I beg for your mercy and tolerance." On this advice the Second Emperor demoted Li Yan to a commoner and had him held in Zitong district.

When Kongming returned to Chengdu, he employed Li Yan's son Li Feng as a senior adviser. Kongming stored up grain and provender; gave lectures on battle formations and military maneuvers; reequipped his troops; and saw to the needs of the officers and men. His intent was to wait three years before campaigning again. The people and soldiers of the entire Riverlands held Kongming in the highest regard for his benevolent virtue.

Time slipped swiftly by. In the twelfth month of Jian Xing 12 (A. D. 234) Kongming went to court and petitioned the Second Emperor: "Your vassal has provided and cared for the army for three years now. Well supplied and reequipped, the forces are battle-minded and robust, ready to wage war against Wei. This time if I do not eradicate the faction of treason and reclaim the northern heartland, I swear never to present myself before Your Majesty again." The Second Emperor said, "A stable tripartite world has come into being. Neither Wu nor Wei has invaded our borders. Second Father, what's wrong with enjoying this era of great peace in security?" Kongming replied, "For the kindness your father accorded this vassal, I have planned the war against Wei each night without respite, my only desire to expend my last drop of loyalty and strength to reconquer the heartland for Your Majesty and revive the glory of the house of Han." As the prime minister spoke, a man stepped forward from the ranks and said, "Oh, do not muster the army, Your Excellency!" The assembly turned to Qiao Zhou.⁷ Indeed:

Kongming, the lord of Wu, toiled for his kingdom unto death;

But Qiao, the official historian, could read the seeds of time and make sense of the stars.

What was Qiao Zhou's protest?

READ ON.



*Sima Yi Holds the Bridge over the Wei;
Zhuge Liang Creates Wooden Bulls and Gliding Horses*

QIAO ZHOU, THE OFFICIAL HISTORIAN and a skilled reader of the constellations, knew full well that Kongming meant to go to war again. Zhou petitioned the Second Emperor: "As official director of the Heavenly Viewing Stand, I, your vassal, am duty-bound to petition Your Majesty on matters auspicious or adverse. Recently tens of thousands of birds flying up from the south plunged into the River Han and died—an adverse omen. I have also examined the star patterns: the Straddler stars¹ are advancing through the zone of Venus and a vital aura is ruling the northern sky—both bode ill for an attack on Wei. Further, the people of Chengdu have heard cries coming from the cypress trees. Such strange signs suggest that His Excellency, the prime minister, keep strictly to defense and take no rash action." Kongming said, "Under the late Emperor's grave charge, I have thrown myself body and soul into the task of suppressing the rebels. Do you expect me to throw aside the dynasty's cause on account of some meaningless portents?" Kongming then ordered ceremonial officials to prepare for the grand sacrifice in the ancestral temple of Emperor Zhao Lie, Liu Bei.

A weeping Kongming prostrated himself in the temple and read his statement: "Your vassal Liang led five campaigns forth from the Qishan hills but failed to gain an inch of land. My offense is most grievous. Now I, your vassal, will lead another campaign out of the hills. I vow to exhaust my strength and loyalty in eradicating the traitors to the Han and restoring the dynasty in the north, where it belongs. I am bound to unremitting toil during my remaining time, until I am no more." After the sacrifice Kongming took formal leave of the Second Emperor and sped to Hanzhong, where he gathered his commanders to discuss the expedition.

Suddenly, Kongming received word that Guan Xing had died of illness. He uttered a cry, wept uncontrollably, and then fainted; after a long while he revived. The commanders strove to console him, but Kongming sighed heavily and said, "Alas, Heaven rarely grants long life to men of loyalty and honor. This expedition will miss a great commander!" A poet of later time left these lines in praise of Guan Xing:

Mortality, the law all flesh obeys—
Man's time's as brief as the mayfly's day.
Duly serving father and his king,
No honored years of age for young Guan Xing.

Under Kongming the Riverlands troops advanced, three hundred and forty thousand men divided into five field armies. He ordered Jiang Wei and Wei Yan to be the vanguard, and they came out of the Qishan hills to join forces. Kongming also ordered Li Hui to move grain and provender for the army

to the mouth of Ye Gorge.

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In the kingdom of Wei the previous year a green serpent had come up from the Mopo well,² and as a result the reign name was changed to Qing Long, "Green Dragon."³ Now it was spring, the second month in the second year of the new reign period. A privileged attendant informed the ruler: "Border officers have sent reports that a Riverlands host of more than three hundred thousand troops in five armies has come out of the Qishan hills." Wei ruler Cao Rui urgently summoned Sima Yi and said, "The Riverlands has committed no aggression for three years. Now Zhuge Liang is on the march again. What shall we do?"

Sima Yi responded, "Your vassal has been watching the heavens these nights. In the portion of the sky corresponding to the north, signs of vigor are in full force. And the Straddler stars, affronting Venus, bode no good for the Riverlands. Kongming thinks too highly of what he knows and what he can do; to defy Heaven will only gain him defeat and ruin. Your vassal, confident in your abundant good fortune, will go and destroy him. I would like to recommend four men to join me." "Whom?" Cao Rui asked. Sima Yi responded, "Xiahou Yuan left four sons: Ba (styled Zhongquan) is the eldest; Wei (styled Jiquan) is the second; Hui (styled Zhiquan), the third; and He (styled Yiquan), the fourth. Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei are masters of the bow and horse. Xiahou Hui and Xiahou He both have a profound knowledge of military strategy. All four have an abiding desire to avenge their father's death. Now, therefore, I recommend Xiahou Ba and Xiahou He to serve as infantry commanders⁴ to assist me in formulating tactics. Thus, we can drive back the Riverlands army."

Cao Rui said, "Some time ago the tactical misjudgments of Imperial Son-in-Law Xiahou Mao cost him most of his forces. So far he has been too ashamed to return. Will these four be like him?" "He cannot compare to them!" Sima Yi responded. Accordingly, Cao Rui approved the recommendations and made Sima Yi first field marshal, ordering all officers and men to serve him in whatever capacity he judged fit and all forces stationed outside the capital to answer to his call. Sima Yi accepted his assignment, took formal leave of the court, and left the city of Luoyang. Cao Rui presented his handwritten edict to Sima Yi. It read:

On reaching the bank of the River Wei, establish solid defense works. Do not engage the enemy. Frustrated, the Shu troops will feign retreat to lure you out. Do not pursue! Let them eat up their grain. When they have to leave, we will attack and win an easy victory without tiring the troops. This is the best plan.

Sima Yi touched his forehead to the ground and accepted the edict.

When he reached Chang'an, Sima Yi recruited a force of four hundred thousand from various stations; it assembled at the River Wei and camped there. Sima Yi also detailed fifty thousand sappers to make nine floating bridges over the Wei so that the vanguards under Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei could establish positions on the farther side. Lastly, the field marshal had a defensive wall constructed behind the main camp at Dongyuan.

Sima Yi was conferring with his commanders, when Guo Huai and Sun Li were unexpectedly announced and invited to enter. The formalities concluded, Guo Huai said, "Riverlands troops are now in the Qishan hills. Should they cross the Wei, ascend the plain, and extend their lines to the

northern hills, closing the Longshan trail, we will be in serious trouble." Sima Yi said, "I quite agree. I want you to assume command of our forces in Longxi, establish a position in Beiyuan, and dig in there. Refrain from military action. When they have eaten up their grain, attack." Guo Huai and Sun Li accepted this assignment and went to perform it.

Meanwhile, Kongming had again come out of the hills and had established five positions: left, right, center, forward, and rear. In addition, he had fourteen camps placed between Ye Gorge and Saber Gateway as a long-term defense measure; all positions were well patrolled. When reports came that Guo Huai and Sun Li had led Longxi troops to Beiyuan and encamped there, Kongming said to his commanders, "The reason Wei has occupied Beiyuan is that they fear we will take the road and close the Longshan trail. Now I intend to stage a decoy raid on Beiyuan to divert them while I attack the bank of the River Wei. Have your men lash together a hundred or more wooden rafts and load them with sheaves of hay; choose five thousand seasoned sailors as pilots. My night attack on Beiyuan will bring Sima Yi to the rescue. If the enemy gives way at all, I will move our rear army to the opposite shore and the forward army onto the rafts. Troops on the rafts will have orders not to go ashore but to float down to the pontoon bridges and burn them, thereby hitting the enemy's escape route. I myself will lead a company to the entrance of their forward camp. If I can get to the south shore of the Wei, it should not be difficult to advance." The commanders went to carry out their orders.

Patrols soon brought Sima Yi word of Kongming's maneuvers. Sima Yi called his commanders together and said, "There's a scheme hiding in all of Kongming's arrangements. His move toward Beiyuan is a cover for an attack downstream, where he will burn our pontoon bridges and disorganize our rear—while he attacks our forward camp." Sima Yi thereupon transmitted orders to Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei: "If you hear an outcry at Beiyuan, take your troops at once to the hills south of the River Wei and wait for the Riverlands army to strike." Next, he ordered Zhang Hu and Yue Chen to lead two thousand bowmen into ambush position on the north shore by the pontoon bridges, saying, "If Riverlands troops come downstream on rafts, shoot en masse; keep them away from the bridges." Sima Yi then instructed Guo Huai and Sun Li: "Kongming is coming to Beiyuan to slip across the river. Your camps are newly established, your forces few. Put all your men in ambush halfway down the road. If the Riverlands troops cross the river in the afternoon, they will attack you by evening. Feign defeat and flee. If they pursue, use your archers. I will be coming by land and by water. If the enemy attacks in force, watch for my signal to tell you when to strike." When the various positions had received their orders, Sima Yi had his two sons, Sima Shi and Sima Zhao, reinforce the forward camp. Then Sima Yi took his relief force to Beiyuan.

Kongming had Wei Yan and Ma Dai lead their men across the Wei and attack Beiyuan; at the same time he had Wu Ban and Wu Yi lead sailors downstream on the rafts to burn the enemy's bridges. Next, Kongming had Wang Ping and Zhang Ni (forward squad), Jiang Wei and Ma Zhong (middle squad), and Liao Hua and Zhang Yi (rear squad) separately attack the enemy's shore camps. At midday Kongming's force decamped and crossed the River Wei; then it re-formed itself and advanced steadily.

Wei Yan and Ma Dai neared Beiyuan at the close of day. As soon as Sun Li detected their approach, he abandoned his position. Wei Yan knew the enemy was prepared and swiftly withdrew, but an earthshaking clamor broke out on all sides of him: from left and right Sima Yi and Guo Huai were moving in for the kill. Wei Yan and Ma Dai strove to fight their way clear; most of the

Riverlands soldiers, having no means of escape, tumbled into the water. Fortunately for the Riverlands, Wu Yi fought his way through to the beaten troops, saw them safely across, and secured the shore.

Wu Ban punted downriver with half his contingent to set fire to the pontoon bridges, but Zhang Hu and Yue Chen checked them with showers of arrows. One struck Wu Ban, who plunged to his death; his men leaped into the river to save themselves, and the Wei troops seized the rafts.

At this point Wang Ping and Zhang Ni, unaware that Riverlands troops had suffered defeat at Beiyuan, rushed on toward the enemy camps on the south shore of the River Wei. It was already the second watch when they heard warlike shouts on all sides; Wang Ping said to Zhang Ni, "We do not know how the attack on Beiyuan went, and there isn't a single enemy soldier in the camps just ahead. Why? Can Sima Yi be waiting for us? We'd better wait until we see the bridges in flames before we advance." The two men reined in. Suddenly a lone rider came up from behind and announced: "The prime minister wants you to withdraw at once. Both the Beiyuan force and the bridge-burning force have suffered defeat."

Astonished, Wang Ping and Zhang Ni swiftly withdrew, but Wei troops surprised them from behind. A bombard rang out, and a well-coordinated attack began as flames rose upward. Wang Ping and Zhang Ni fought strenuously against the northerners, but in the melee most of their men were killed or wounded. Kongming, meanwhile, had returned to his main camp in the Qishan hills and collected his defeated forces: he had lost more than ten thousand. Anxiety and gloom filled his heart.

Kongming received Fei Yi, who had arrived from Chengdu. After the formalities Kongming said, "I would trouble you to carry a letter to the Southland, if you are willing." "I am Your Excellency's to command," Fei Yi replied. Kongming entrusted the message to Fei Yi, who took it straight to Jianye and submitted it to the lord of Wu, Sun Quan. It said:

The house of Han has fallen on evil times; its imperial bonds have weakened; the traitorous Caos continue to hold sway. Charged by the August Emperor Zhao Lie to further his cause, I, Liang, to prove my devotion and loyalty, have marshaled a grand army at the Qishan hills: the northern aggressors will shortly meet their doom at the River Wei. I humbly hope Your Majesty will remain faithful to our covenant and order an expedition against the north so that we may jointly recover the heartland and divide the empire between us. No letter can fully convey all I feel. I earnestly pray for your sage consideration.

Delighted by Kongming's letter, Sun Quan said to Fei Yi, "We have long desired to take the field but have had no opportunity to coordinate forces with Kongming. On the strength of this letter we will personally lead an expedition into Juchao this very day and capture the northern city of Xincheng. Then we will command Lu Xun, Zhuge Jin, and others to position troops in Jiangxia and Miankou for the capture of Xiangyang. Sun Shao, Zhang Cheng, and others will move their forces out from Guangling to take Huai-yang and other points. This three-pronged advance of three hundred thousand troops will be set in motion on a specified day." Fei Yi prostrated himself in gratitude and said, "If this is done, the north will fall."

Sun Quan entertained Fei Yi lavishly. During the banquet Sun Quan asked him, "Who is leading the forward army for His Excellency?" "Wei Yan," was Fei Yi's reply. Sun Quan smiled and said, "The man has courage to spare, but he is not altogether reliable and will cause trouble when

Kongming is gone, though Kongming must know that." Fei Yi responded, "Your Majesty is quite right. When I return, I shall report this to him."

Fei Yi took leave of Sun Quan and returned to Qishan. He presented himself to Kongming and reported that the lord of the Southland was mustering three hundred thousand under his personal command for a three-pronged attack. "Did His Lordship say anything else?" Kongming inquired. Fei Yi relayed Sun Quan's judgment of Wei Yan. Kongming sighed and said, "An intelligent ruler. It's not that I don't know Wei Yan, but I cannot do without such a valiant warrior. That's the only reason I keep him." Fei Yi answered, "It would behoove Your Excellency to provide for the future." "I have my ways," Kongming responded. Fei Yi took his leave and returned to Chengdu.

Kongming was in council with his commanders, when the surrender of a Wei soldier was reported. Kongming summoned him for questioning. He said, "I am Zheng Wen, a lieutenant commander for the kingdom of Wei. Recently, Qin Lang and I have had a joint command under Sima Yi. To my surprise, Sima Yi—out of sheer favoritism—made Qin Lang general of the Forward Army; but he treated me like chaff. Rather than bear this injustice, I have come to surrender and pray to be accepted in your service." That very moment it was announced that Qin Lang had come to challenge Zheng Wen to single combat. Kongming asked Zheng Wen, "How does he compare to you in martial arts?" "I could cut him down in a matter of moments," he replied. "It would relieve me of all doubts if you killed him," Kongming said. Zheng Wen mounted eagerly and went forth to fight. Kongming followed to observe. He saw before him Qin Lang, raising his spear and shouting, "Turncoat traitor! Return my horses that you made off with." So saying, Qin Lang charged. Zheng Wen met him with dancing blade and dropped him at the first pass-at-arms. Qin Lang's followers fled, and Zheng Wen carried the severed head back to camp.

Kongming returned to his command tent and summoned Zheng Wen. As Zheng Wen entered, Kongming exploded in a fury and ordered him removed and beheaded. "What is my crime?" Zheng Wen protested. Kongming answered, "I used to know Qin Lang. That wasn't him you killed! Did you expect to fool me?" Zheng Wen prostrated himself and said, "In fact, it was Qin Ming, Lang's younger brother." Kongming smiled and said, "Sima Yi had you feign surrender to see what might be gained. How could you put that over on me? The truth, or you die!" Forced to admit the deception, Zheng Wen pleaded tearfully for his life. "If you want to live," Kongming responded, "write a letter asking Sima Yi to raid this camp himself. If I capture him, the credit is yours. And you will be well used thereafter."

Compelled to comply, Zheng Wen wrote the letter; after submitting it, he was placed in custody. Fan Jian asked Kongming, "How did Your Excellency know the surrender was false?" Kongming answered, "Sima Yi is careful in selecting men. He would only appoint an exceptional warrior to his vanguard. But Zheng Wen's opponent fell at the first pass—surely he was not Qin Lang. I knew then it had to be a ruse." The assembly humbly voiced its admiration for Kongming's powers.

Kongming next selected a military envoy known for his skill as a spokesman and confided certain instructions to him. The envoy bore a document to Sima Yi's camp and sought audience. Sima Yi summoned the envoy and, after reading his message, asked, "Who are you?" "I come from the north," the man replied, "but my wanderings took me to the west. My village was also home to Zheng Wen, whom Kongming has recently honored with a vanguard command in recognition of his service. It is Zheng Wen who sends me with this letter. He requests that the field marshal raid Kongming's camp tomorrow evening at the signal of fire; he will cooperate from within." Sima Yi interrogated the

bearer carefully and scrutinized the letter. It proved genuine, so he ordered food and wine for the envoy and told him, "No later than the second watch tonight I will go forth and raid the Riverlands camp. If this action succeeds, you will be well used for it." The envoy prostrated himself and then returned to Kongming's camp.

With the aid of his sword, Kongming performed the mystic Dance of Yu, tracing the star pattern of the Northern Dipper.⁵ His incantation complete, Kongming summoned Wang Ping and Zhang Ni, to whom he confided certain instructions. Next, he called for Wei Yan and gave him his instructions. Finally, Kongming took a few dozen followers to a seat atop a high hill from where he could direct the battle.

On the strength of Zheng Wen's letter, Sima Yi wanted to lead his two sons and a large force in an immediate attack on the Riverlands position. But the elder, Sima Shi, objected. "Father," he said, "why go into an enemy strongpoint on the strength of a scrap of paper? What if something unforeseen happens? Better have a subordinate commander go first while you support from the rear." Sima Yi approved and accordingly ordered Qin Lang to take ten thousand men and sack the Riverlands position while he followed, ready to assist when needed.

At the first watch the moon shone on a clear night. As the second watch neared, clouds formed suddenly on every side and darkness enclosed the sky, shrouding from sight even those facing one another. Delighted, Sima Yi said, "Heaven favors my success!" He had the men gagged and the horses bitted for the final advance. Qin Lang led the charge of ten thousand directly into the Riverlands camp, where he found not a single man. Realizing he had been trapped, Qin Lang tried to order a rapid retreat, but torches surrounded him and war cries shook the ground. Two forces closed in for the kill—to the left Wang Ping and Zhang Ni, to the right Ma Dai and Ma Zhong. Qin Lang fought fiercely but could not break free.

To the rear Sima Yi watched flames shooting skyward from the Riverlands camp and heard the ceaseless cries of war. Unable to tell who had the victory, he pressed hotly into the fray, urging his men toward the fire. Suddenly, a shout—drums and horns resounded, fiery missiles rocked the earth: on the left Wei Yan closed in, on the right Jiang Wei. The Wei army lost eight or nine men of every ten; they scattered for safety. Qin Lang's ten thousand had been ringed in by the Riverlands troops, who sent their arrows whizzing in like locusts. Qin Lang perished in the chaos of battle. Sima Yi managed to flee back to his camp with his beaten soldiers.

When the third watch ended, the sky cleared again. From his hilltop Kongming sounded the gong to recall his troops. What had happened was that during the second watch Kongming had used the "Taboo Days" technique to cause the sky to cloud over; and after his troops were safely returned, he had used the Six Ding goddesses and the Six Jia gods to clear away the clouds.⁶

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Kongming returned victorious to camp, where he immediately ordered Zheng Wen executed. He then resumed discussions on the capture of the south shore of the River Wei. He sent troops to provoke battle each day, but the Wei army declined to engage. Kongming rode to the front of the Qishan hills in his little chariot to make a complete study of the terrain east and west of the river. There he happened upon a gourd-shaped gorge capable of holding more than one thousand men; and there was another gorge nearby, formed by converging hills, that was capable of holding four or five

hundred— cavalry or infantry would have had to pass single file behind it where the hills overlapped. Delighted with his discovery, Kongming asked his guide, "What is the name of this place?" "Shangfang Gorge. Others call it Gourd Gorge," was the reply.

Kongming returned to his tent and summoned two lieutenant commanders, Du Rui and Hu Zhong, for secret instructions. Then he called together all carpenters and craftsmen assigned to the army and sent them into Gourd Gorge to make "wooden bulls" and "gliding horses" to transport grain. Kongming also sent Ma Dai to guard the entrance to the gorge with these instructions: "Keep the craftsmen in and the outsiders out. I'll be coming by myself to check on their progress. This is my one hope for defeating Sima Yi. The work must be kept absolutely secret." Ma Dai left to carry out his assignment. Du Rui and Hu Zhong, the lieutenants, remained in the gorge to make sure that work proceeded according to plan. Every day Kongming went to the gorge to supervise.

One day Senior Adviser Yang Yi entered Kongming's tent and said, "At this moment all the grain for the army is at Saber Gateway. The porters and pack animals will have a hard time transporting it. What are we to do?" "I have been working on this problem for a long time," Kongming said with a smile. "I am having workmen manufacture 'wooden bulls' and 'gliding horses,' using wood previously stored up and lumber requisitioned in the Riverlands. These bulls and horses neither eat nor drink, but they can carry supplies day and night." Kongming's council was amazed. "We have never heard of such things," the members exclaimed. "What ingenious design does Your Excellency have for such incredible inventions?" Kongming answered, "They are being built to plan at this moment. Let me show you—I'll write out the specifications." Kongming wrote out the technique of construction, and his followers excitedly gathered round to examine his description:

The wooden bull has a square belly and curved neck, one wheel in the center and four legs. The head fits into a collar, and a braking lever, its tongue, connects to the belly [two bins around the wheel]. The heavier the load, the shorter its range. A single machine can go dozens of *li* per day; but large groups can make only twenty *li*.⁷ The curved part forms the bull's head; the paired parts on either side, its legs; the transverse bar, its neck; the wheel, its feet; the top, its back; the square bins, its belly; the pendulum, its tongue; the bent strips, its ribs; the incisions, its teeth; those erect pieces, its horns; those slender straps, its halter; that leader, its reins. The bull is guided from between two shafts. For every six spans the porters advance, the bull advances four paces. Each bull holds a month's grain for ten men.⁸ The porters will not tire; the bulls will require neither food nor water.⁹

Kongming then showed the council members the dimensions for the gliding horse.¹⁰ "Your Excellency is more than human!" they cried as they prostrated themselves in admiration.

Several days later the transport machines were finished; utterly lifelike, they handled easily, moving uphill or down. The soldiers rejoiced. Kongming ordered General of the Right Gao Xiang to take a thousand men and haul the mechanical beasts, loaded with grain for the Riverlands army, from Saber Gateway to his camp in the Qishan hills. A poet of later times has left this verse in admiration of the invention:

The gliding mules cleared Saber's steepest grades;
The wooden bulls took the gorge's sharp-pitched slopes.

Had later times such engines to employ,
Supply would never armies much annoy.

Sima Yi was despondent when a scout reported to him, "The Riverlands army is moving in supplies on wooden bulls and gliding horses. The porters don't tire out, and the engines don't need any food." Astonished, Sima Yi said, "The sole purpose of my fixed defense was to wait for a food shortage to destroy them. This new development means rethinking our tactics since they have no intention of withdrawing. What to do?" He called for Zhang Hu and Yue Chen and instructed them: "Take five hundred men each and slip over to Ye Gorge by the side paths. Wait there for the enemy to move all the animals past you, then attack and bring back four or five of them; don't bother seizing a great number."

As ordered, Zhang Hu, Yue Chen, and their men slipped into the gorge by night disguised as Riverlands soldiers and watched, hidden, as Gao Xiang's men hauled the mechanical transports toward them. When almost all had passed, the northerners, drumming and screaming, set upon the transport troops from both sides. Caught unprepared, the Riverlands troops abandoned several of the mechanical beasts, which Zhang Hu and Yue Chen eagerly hauled back to their main camp.

Sima Yi examined the vehicles and found that they could move forward and backward as if they were alive. Excitedly he said, "Don't think this technique is for you alone, Kongming, and not for me!" Sima Yi ordered one hundred skilled craftsmen to disassemble the devices before him and construct new machines according to the dimensions of the captured models. Within half a month they had built some two thousand that were identical to Kongming's and able to move as well. Sima Yi then ordered General Cen Wei, controller of Distant Regions, to use a thousand of the vehicles to carry grain and provender from Longxi. The machines moved in a continuous train, to the delight of the soldiers and commanders in the Wei camp.

Meanwhile, Gao Xiang had returned to tell Kongming how the northerners had made off with five or six of the bulls and horses. Kongming smiled and said, "Exactly what I wanted them to do! We've lost only a few machines, but we will soon have more than ample return from them." The commanders asked, "How does Your Excellency know?" And Kongming answered, "Sima Yi will copy them once he has seen them—and for that I have a countermove."

Several days later Kongming was informed that the Wei army had been able to build the wooden bulls and gliding horses and was already using them to ship grain from Longxi. "Exactly as I expected!" Kongming said with great satisfaction. He summoned Wang Ping and instructed him: "Take a thousand troops disguised as northerners and slip past Beiyuan right away. Claim that you are running patrol for the grain. As soon as you reach the shipment, cut down the guard. Bring the engines back here, passing through Beiyuan. From there Wei soldiers are sure to pursue you. Twist the lever-tongues in the mechanical animals—they won't move then. Abandon them; get away. When the Wei troops catch up, they will be unable either to drag the animals or to carry them. After I send more troops there, you can go back and release the brakes and bring the beasts all in smoothly. The northerners will be thinking it is done by magic!" Wang Ping left to carry out his commission.

Next, Kongming summoned Zhang Ni and instructed him: "Take five hundred men and costume them as the Six Jia goddesses and the Six Ding gods and as supernatural troops with demon heads and animal bodies. Daub their faces with the five colors and deck them out as fantastical forms with embroidered flags in one hand and swords in the other. Hide the soldiers beside the hill, each

carrying a gourd stuffed with flammable material. As soon as the bulls and horses arrive, ignite the gourds and rush out, take control of the wooden beasts, and go. The northerners will hesitate to pursue what they imagine to be ghosts and demons."

Kongming next summoned Wei Yan and Jiang Wei and instructed them: "Take ten thousand men and go to our camp at Beiyuan to do whatever is necessary to protect the bulls and horses in case of engagement with the enemy." After that Kongming instructed Liao Hua and Zhang Yi: "Take five thousand men and block Sima Yi's avenue of approach." Lastly, Kongming instructed Ma Zhong and Ma Dai: "Take two thousand men to the south shore of the River Wei and challenge the enemy." The six commanders departed to carry out their assignments.

General Cen Wei was directing the hauling of the north's grain-loaded bulls and horses when he was told that there were troops up ahead scouting for grain. Cen Wei sent men to investigate, but they found only Wei troops, and so the train proceeded without worry. When the real and the false Wei armies came together, the Riverlands troops erupted from their unit shouting, "Here's Marshal Wang Ping of the Riverlands!" The northerners had no chance to defend themselves, and the majority were slaughtered. Cen Wei tried to rally his men and make a stand, but Wang Ping killed him with a single sword stroke; the rest scattered. Under Wang Ping's direction all the bulls and horses were hauled back. The defeated northerners brought the news to the Beiyuan camp.

When Guo Huai learned that the army's grain had been seized, he hurried forth to recover it. Wang Ping had his men lock the bulls and horses and leave them on the road as they alternately fought and fled. Guo Huai called off the chase and told his men to haul the animals back, but they stood immovable. Completely perplexed, Guo Huai could not decide what to do, when a sudden onset of drums and horns filled the air. Shouts went up on all sides, and two armies closed in for the kill, their commanders Wei Yan and Jiang Wei. At this point Wang Ping turned and attacked; and Guo Huai, battered from three sides, fled the field. Wang Ping's men released the locks on the animals and hauled them away.

From a distance Guo Huai watched the Riverlanders and was about to resume pursuit, when from behind a hill clouds of smoke shot skyward and a squad of demonic soldiers burst into view. Flags and swords in hand, the various fantastic shapes guided the animals; and then, sweeping about like the wind, they were gone. Guo Huai stood amazed. "Some kind of supernatural force must be helping them!" he cried. The soldiers looked on terrified; none dared pursue.

Sima Yi had heard of the defeat at Beiyuan and hastened to the rescue. Halfway there he heard the report of a bombard as two armies poured down from the steep hillsides, their yells rocking the earth. On their flags were the words "Han Generals Zhang Yi and Liao Hua." Sima Yi watched, astonished, and the Wei army scuttled away in utter confusion. Indeed:

After meeting superhuman commanders, his grain was stolen;
After meeting a surprise attack, his fate hung in the balance.

Could Sima Yi withstand his foe?

READ ON.



***Sima Yi Is Trapped in Shangfang Gorge;
At Wuzhangyuan Zhuge Prays to Reverse His Star-told Fate***

DEFEATED AT THE HANDS OF ZHANG YI and Liao Hua, Sima Yi escaped alone and rode into a dense wood. Zhang Yi had called back his troops, but Liao Hua tracked the Wei leader and soon caught up with him. Sima Yi scrambled around a tree as Liao Hua swung his sword, catching it in the trunk. Before Liao Hua could yank it free, Sima Yi had fled beyond the woods. Liao Hua tried to continue the chase, but he lost direction. To the east among some trees he spotted a golden helmet on the ground; he tied it to his horse and rode farther east. In fact, Sima Yi had thrown the helmet toward the east before backtracking west. Liao Hua pursued another distance but, finding no trace of his man, dashed out of the valley. He then encountered Jiang Wei, and the two returned to camp and came before Kongming.

Zhang Ni had long since hauled the mechanical animals to the camp and handed them over with their cargo of more than ten thousand piculs of grain. Liao Hua was commended for exceptional merit when he delivered Sima Yi's helmet. The frustrated Wei Yan voiced his complaints, but Kongming pretended to be unaware of the situation.

Sima Yi returned to camp in a state of vexation. Suddenly an envoy brought an imperial edict saying that three Southland armies had invaded and that the court was contemplating recalling all commanders to defend the kingdom; Sima Yi was ordered to maintain strict defense and fight no battles. After receiving the edict, Sima Yi fortified his position and held it steadfastly.

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When Cao Rui heard that Sun Quan had sent three armies to attack his kingdom, he mustered three armies to meet them: he sent Liu Shao to Jiangxia and Tian Yu to Xiangyang; Cao Rui himself and Man Chong led a third army to relieve Hefei. Man Chong went ahead to Lake Chao, where he saw a crowd of warships on the eastern shore, their flags and banners in strict array.

Man Chong returned to the main army and petitioned Cao Rui: "The southerners will not take their defense seriously, thinking we have come too far to attack at once. If we strike their lakeside camps tonight, we will win the day!" "My own thought precisely," said the ruler of Wei. He ordered Zhang Qiu, general of the Valiant Cavalry, to take five thousand men, provide each with the means to set fires, and attack from the edge of the lake. Man Chong took another five thousand to attack from the eastern shore.

That night during the second watch Zhang Qiu and Man Chong advanced quietly toward the lake with their men. They approached the Southland camps, burst in noisily, and did their deadly work. The southern troops fled in panic and disorder without putting up a fight. The northerners set fires

everywhere and destroyed the southern fleet, the food supplies, and the weapons, taking a toll beyond reckoning. Zhuge Jin led the defeated troops to safety in Miankou, and the northerners returned in triumph.

These events were reported to Southland general Lu Xun the following day. Lu Xun summoned his commanders and said, "I shall have to petition the sovereign, requesting him to withdraw from the siege at Xincheng in order to cut off the northern army's escape route. I'll take my men and attack their front. If their head and tail can be severed, one battle will suffice to finish them." The assembly agreed. Lu Xun prepared the petition and sent a petty officer to deliver it secretly to Xincheng. The officer carried the letter to the river crossing but was seized by Wei troops and led before Cao Rui, who took the letter from him. On reading it, he sighed and said, "Lu Xun of the Southland is a subtle strategist." He ordered the officer held, and ordered Liu Shao to mount a cautious watch over Sun Quan's rear army.

Zhuce Jin's defeat came at summer's height, when most of the troops were suffering from disease. He sent a letter to Lu Xun proposing that he withdraw his army to the Southland. Lu Xun read through the letter and said to the bearer, "With all respect to the general, I have my own ideas." The messenger reported back to Zhuge Jin, who asked him, "What is Lu Xun up to?" "All I could see," the messenger replied, "was General Lu urging his troops to plant beans and legumes outside the camp while he and the commanders practiced games of marksmanship at the entrance."

In alarm Zhuge Jin went to Lu Xun and said to him, "Cao Rui is marching against us in person with his military might at its peak. Field Marshal, how will you meet his attack?" Lu Xun responded, "I sent a petition to the sovereign, not anticipating its interception. Now that my tactics are known to the enemy, they will be prepared. So we have nothing to gain from a battle. Retreat is our best course. I have already sent a petition to our lord to suggest that we all slowly withdraw." Zhuge Jin said, "If that is your intention, Field Marshal, you should move swiftly. Why draw it out?" "Our troops want to return," Lu Xun said, "but must do so in stages. Otherwise, we'll give the enemy too good a chance to pursue, and bring defeat on ourselves. You would do well to dispatch some boats to make a show of resistance before evacuating; I will move all our land forces toward Xiangyang. The enemy will thus be thrown off our trail, and we can withdraw to the Southland in our own good time with no fear of northerners approaching."

Zhuce Jin agreed to this plan. He returned to camp, put his fleet in order, and then prepared to march. Lu Xun organized his ranks and made a big show of heading for Xiangyang. Well before, a spy had informed the Wei ruler that the Southland troops were on the move and that defense measures were needed. The northern commanders, hearing the news, were eager to go out and fight. But Cao Rui, who was well acquainted with Lu Xun's ability, enjoined them: "Lu Xun is a deep strategist and may well be trying to draw us out. Do not advance." The commanders desisted.

Several days later northern scouts reported, "All three Southland armies have withdrawn." The Wei ruler did not believe it, and sent another man to investigate. He brought back the same report. The Wei ruler said, "Lu Xun's tactics are the equal of those of Sunzi and Wu Qi! The Southland cannot be conquered." Cao Rui ordered his commanders to defend the strategic points while he led the main army to Hefei, where he awaited further developments.¹

In the Qishan hills Kongming, planning for a long occupation, had the Riverlands soldiers intermingle with the Wei peasants and join in their agricultural work. One part of the crop went to the troops, two parts to the peasants. The soldiers did not encroach on the peasants' land, and the peasants of Wei farmed in security.

Sima Shi went before his father and said, "The enemy has already stolen much of our grain, and their settlements among our people along the River Wei pose a great threat to our rule. Father, why not set a date with Kongming for a major battle to decide the victor?" Sima Yi replied, "The Emperor has commanded me to defend. We cannot act rashly." During this conversation a report arrived: Wei Yan had come before the camp wearing the marshal's helmet lost the day before; mouthing vicious taunts, he was challenging Sima Yi to battle. The northern commanders chafed, impatient to respond, but Sima Yi said with a smile, "As the Sage has put it, 'Intolerance of trifles ruins great plans.' The best policy is to maintain defense." The northern commanders complied with Sima Yi's command. Wei Yan kept up his tirade against Sima Yi for some time before he returned to camp.

Kongming realized that Sima Yi would not come forth, so he secretly sent Ma Dai to build palisades and dig a deep moat in the camp to be filled with dry branches and other flammable material. Then on the nearby hills Kongming had straw sheds and bunkers put up to deceive the enemy; in and around the sheds he had combustible mines set in place. Satisfied with his preparations, Kongming whispered to Ma Dai, "Block the rear route into Gourd Gorge and hide troops inside the gorge. If Sima Yi pursues, let him enter the gorge. Then set the kindling ablaze." Next, Kongming had a seven-star banner raised over the entrance to the gorge by day and seven burning lanterns placed on the hillside by night as a secret signal. Ma Dai left with his men to put the plan in motion.

Kongming next summoned Wei Yan and instructed him: "Take five hundred men to Sima Yi's camp to provoke the rebels to fight. Do whatever you can to draw them out, but do not try to defeat them. Instead, feign defeat yourself. Sima Yi will pursue, and you will reenter the gorge under the seven-star banner; if it is night, the seven hillside lanterns will guide you. The main thing is to get Sima Yi into the gorge. I will have a way then to do him in." Wei Yan went to perform his assignment.

Lastly, Kongming instructed Gao Xiang: "Take the wooden bulls and gliding horses, some in groups of twenty or thirty, others in groups of forty or fifty. Load them with grain and move them back and forth on the hill paths. If the enemy seizes them, it will add to your merit." Gao Xiang accepted his assignment and moved the mechanical animals into the hills. Kongming next shifted the Qishan troops away, ostensibly to work the fields, and instructed them: "Whatever soldiers come to fight, feign defeat. Only if Sima Yi himself comes should you subsequently regroup and direct your attack to the southern shore of the River Wei, cutting off his escape." His dispositions completed, Kongming led a company to pitch camp near Shangfang Gorge.

During this time Xiahou Hui and Xiahou He entered the northern camp and said to Sima Yi, "The Riverlands troops are pitching campsites all over and starting to till the land—measures for a long-term stay. If we miss this moment to get rid of them, if we let them settle in securely and sink deep roots in the area, how will we ever dislodge them?" Sima Yi replied, "This has to be another of Kongming's schemes!" The two commanders answered, "If you are so easily unnerved, Field Marshal, when will the enemy invader be destroyed? Let the two of us decide the matter with a last ditch battle to repay our kingdom's kindness." "If you insist," Sima Yi replied, "go out separately and

give battle." Sima Yi gave the order for the two brothers to take five thousand men each and then waited for news of the outcome.

As Xiahou Hui and Xiahou He led their two armies forward, they saw Riverlands troops hauling wooden bulls and gliding horses toward them. The two men attacked in concert, and the Riverlands force fled, leaving the machines in the hands of the enemy. The northern commanders delivered the prizes to Sima Yi's camp.

The next day the northern army captured one hundred or so Riverlands troops and brought them to Sima Yi, who interrogated them carefully. The Riverlands soldiers told him, "Kongming did not expect you to do anything but hold tight, Field Marshal, so he commanded us to disperse and establish farms—planning for the long term. We never expected to be taken like this!" Sima Yi released all the Riverlands soldiers and sent them home. "Why didn't you kill them?" Xiahou He asked him. "What good would that have done?" he responded. "Letting them go home to tell of the kind generosity of the Wei commanders, however, will weaken the enemy's will to fight. That's how Lü Meng captured Jingzhou!" And so Sima Yi ordered that all future captives be sent home as a friendly gesture—though he would continue to reward his officers and men for their achievements. So directed, the commanders departed.

Following Kongming's instructions, Gao Xiang hauled the mechanical animals around Gourd Gorge, pretending to be moving grain. Xiahou Hui and his commanders attacked frequently and scored several victories within half a month's time, victories which greatly heartened Sima Yi. One day after the capture of another group of Riverlands soldiers, Sima Yi summoned them to his tent and asked, "Where is Kongming now?" The soldiers replied, "Prime Minister Zhuge is no longer in the Qishan hills; he has pitched a new camp ten *li* west of Gourd Gorge. At the moment food supplies are being moved into the gorge every day." After further close questioning, Sima Yi released the prisoners and called his commanders for instructions. "Kongming has left Qishan," he told them, "and camped in Gourd Gorge. Tomorrow I want you to join forces and seize his main camp in the Qishan hills. I will follow with reinforcements." The commanders accepted the assignment and prepared for battle. Sima Shi said to his father, "Why do you want to attack from the rear?" "The hills of Qishan," Sima Yi responded, "are the enemy's bastion. If they see us attacking their main camp there, all their other camps will send men to its defense; and I can take the gorge, burn their grain, and thus cut their force in two. That will be the end of them!" Sima Shi expressed respectful admiration for his father's tactics. Sima Yi ordered his troops to move out, with Zhang Hu and Yue Chen close behind leading two units of five thousand each.

From a distant hilltop Kongming watched the Wei troops approach; in columns of three to five thousand and in columns of one to two thousand, their well-coordinated lines crisscrossed the terrain. Judging their objective to be his main camp in the Qishan hills, Kongming secretly ordered his commanders, "If Sima Yi himself should come, go and raid the Wei camp and take control of the River Wei's southern shore." One after another the commanders received their assignments.

Meanwhile, as the northern troops rushed toward Qishan, from all directions shouting Riverlands soldiers rushed there too to create the impression of a general rescue. Sima Yi watched the Riverlands forces converging on the main camp; he raced for Gourd Gorge, leading his two sons and the central army's guards. At the entrance Wei Yan had been watching for Sima Yi's approach. Suddenly he saw a small Wei contingent advancing and rode out to inspect it. The leader was Sima Yi! "Ride no further, Sima Yi!" Wei Yan shouted, and he went forth with dancing blade to meet him.

Sima Yi raised his spear and closed with Wei Yan. But after a brief clash Wei Yan wheeled round and fled, Sima Yi in hot pursuit. Wei Yan headed for the seven-star banner; Sima Yi saw that Wei Yan was lightly attended and raced after him. Anticipating no danger, he told Sima Shi to his left and Sima Zhao to his right to charge while he held the center. Wei Yan trailed behind his five hundred men as they retreated into the gorge.

When Sima Yi reached the mouth of the gorge, he stopped and sent scouts inside. They reported no ambush, only some straw huts on the hillsides. "They must be for storing grain," Sima Yi said, and he led a grand charge into the gorge. Suddenly Sima Yi observed kindling atop the straw houses. Wei Yan had dropped from sight. Suspicious, Sima Yi asked his sons, "What should we do if the road back gets cut off?" No sooner had he spoken than the ground began shaking from the clamor of massed shouts. Torches flung down from the hillsides started bonfires that blocked the entrance to the gorge, trapping the northern troops where they stood as fiery arrows raked them from above and mines erupted from below. Catching fire, the kindling in the straw houses crackled and sizzled; flames shot into the air.

Sima Yi dismounted helplessly and embraced his sons. "We three are doomed to die here," he cried. But at that moment a stormy wind raced down the valley, driving black clouds that covered the sky. A peal of thunder announced a sudden storm; torrents of rain gushed down and extinguished the fires throughout the gorge. The mines lay silent; the incendiary devices ceased functioning. Overjoyed, Sima Yi said, "This is our moment to escape!" He led a breakthrough charge as Zhang Lu and Yue Chen arrived to support him. Ma Dai had too few troops to pursue, and so Sima Yi, his two sons, and Zhang Lu and Yue Chen rallied their forces and returned to the main camp on the southern shore of the River Wei—only to find Riverlands troops already holding their sheds and bunkers, and Guo Huai and Sun Li fighting the Riverlands army on the pontoon bridges. Sima Yi drove the Riverlands soldiers back, burned the bridges, and fortified the northern shore of the river.

During this time the northern troops who had been besieging the Riverlands fortifications in the Qishan hills received the news of Sima Yi's defeat and the loss of the southern riverbank. Dismayed, they began withdrawing when the western troops mounted a new attack. The Wei were sorely defeated: eight or nine of every ten were wounded and an incalculable number slain; survivors fled to the northern bank of the Wei.

With great satisfaction Kongming had observed Wei Yan lure Sima Yi into Gourd Gorge; he had watched the sudden conflagration that followed. He was sure that this time Sima Yi was dead. But then, informed that Sima Yi and his sons had escaped after the untimely downpour, Kongming sighed and said, "Men devise, Heaven decides! Events cannot be forced." A verse of later times expresses his disappointment:²

Wild gusts swung the fires round the gorge,
But then, from azure heights, a sudden rain.
Had Kongming's master plan achieved its end,
Could this land have ever gone to Jin?³

From his camp on the north bank Sima Yi issued an order: "The outworks on the southern shore have been lost to the enemy. The next man who calls for an offensive dies." The commanders accepted this order and settled into their positions.

Guo Huai came before Sima Yi and said, "Recently, Kongming has been leading patrols. He must be looking for a place to pitch camp." Sima Yi responded, "If he comes through Wugong and moves east keeping to the hills, it will endanger us all. If he comes along the southern bank of the River Wei and stays to the west by Wuzhangyuan, we have no worries." When scouts informed him that Kongming had stationed himself at Wuzhangyuan after all, Sima Yi raised his palm to his forehead and cried, "Now, His Imperial Majesty of the royal house of Wei will keep the great blessing of his rule." Then he renewed his orders: "Remain on the defense; the enemy cannot hold out forever."

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After stationing himself at Wuzhangyuan, Kongming sent soldiers to challenge the northerners, but none responded. Kongming then placed a maiden's headdress and a mourning garment of white silk in a large box and sent it to the Wei camp with a letter enclosed.⁴ The northern commanders could not conceal the matter; they brought the envoy before Sima Yi, who opened the box in front of his commanders. He looked at the clothes and opened the letter, which read:

Sima Yi, you are a great general and you command the forces of the heartland; but you have no taste for the real combat that would decide which of us shall prevail, content instead to huddle in the nest, careful to stay beyond the reach of spear or arrow, exactly like a woman! Today I send you this dress and chapeau, therefore, which, unless you choose to come out and face me, you may receive with humble thanks. If a spark of self-respect still burns inside you, however, if your breast still holds a manly heart, reply to me at once and face me on the field at a time of your choosing.

Rage welled up inside Sima Yi as he finished the letter. But feigning a smile, he said, "So he takes me for a woman!" He took the gift and rewarded the bearer well; then he said, "Tell me something about Kongming: how he eats and sleeps, how taxing his duties are." The bearer answered, "The prime minister rises early and works late. He personally sees to any infraction punishable by more than twenty strokes. He eats no more than a few pints of grain each day." Sima Yi turned to his commanders and said, "Eating too little and working too hard. How long can he last?"

The envoy returned to Wuzhangyuan and told Kongming, "Sima Yi expressed no anger when he took the clothing and read the letter. He simply asked how you were eating and sleeping and inquired about your workload. He said nothing at all about military matters. When I answered his questions he said, 'He eats too little and works too hard. How long can he last?' " Kongming sighed and said, "He knows me well!"

First Secretary Yang Yong tried to get Kongming to reduce his workload: "I have seen Your Excellency checking over our books and records personally. It seems to me unnecessary. Every governing system has to have a structure whose higher and lower levels function independently, much as the operation of a household requires menials to farm and maids to prepare food. No chores are neglected and all needs are supplied; thus, the master of the house can eat and drink carefree and at ease. But if the master busies himself with every last detail, it leads to physical and mental exhaustion, and in the end nothing gets done. Does that mean his knowledge is inferior to that of a menial or a maid? No. It means he has not found the right way to run the household. Indeed, as the ancients proclaimed, 'To sit and discuss the true way is for the three elder lords of the kingdom; to act

on policy is for the imperial officeholders. ' In ancient times Bing Ji showed concern only for the panting ox and was indifferent to those who had fallen dead by the roadside.⁵ Similarly, Chen Ping had no knowledge of state receipts of grain and money. 'Others are in charge of that,' he said.⁶ Now Your Excellency wastes energy attending to the most trivial matters—and for what? What Sima Yi said is all too true." Weeping, Kongming replied, "I am not unaware of this. But I carry the heavy responsibility given to me by the late Emperor, and I fear that others may not be so conscientious." The assembly wept with him. Thereafter, Kongming felt his confidence and peace of mind slipping away, and his commanders became reluctant to advance.

It was soon widely known among the Wei commanders that Kongming had sent mourning garb and a woman's headdress to humiliate Sima Yi and that after receiving them Sima Yi still refused to fight. The outraged commanders protested before Sima Yi: "How can the renowned commanders of a great kingdom bear this insult? We request permission to take on the enemy and show them who the rooster is, who the hen." But Sima Yi responded, "Don't think I am afraid to take the field or content to bear this insult: the edict to defend our position and not give battle ties my hands. A rash move would violate the Emperor's order." Sima Yi's commanders were not satisfied with this answer, so he added, "If you wish me to attack, give me time to petition for the Emperor's approval to take the battle to the enemy. Agreed?" The commanders agreed, and Sima Yi subsequently memorialized Cao Rui, who was at army headquarters in Hefei. Cao Rui opened the document, which said in sum:

My responsibilities being greater than my abilities, I labor under your all-seeing guidance. Your Majesty has enjoined me to keep to the defensive until the Riverlands army breaks up of its own accord. What am I to do when Zhuge Liang insults me by sending me a woman's headdress? With all due reverence, I must make known to Your Majesty in all your sagely wisdom that I shall soon have to fight the foe to the death, both to requite the court's kindness and to redeem my army's shame. With anguish greater than this vassal can master, ...

Cao Rui read the appeal and said to his officials, "Sima Yi has been holding firm. Why does he petition again for permission to take the field?" Xin Pi, chief of Palace Security, said, "Sima Yi has no real desire to fight. He seeks reaffirmation of your sagely purpose in order to check his commanders' indignation over Zhuge Liang's insult." Cao Rui agreed, and he authorized Xin Pi to bear his injunction against engaging the enemy back to Sima Yi's camp on the northern bank of the River Wei. Sima Yi received the edict and entered the main tent with Xin Pi, who declared on behalf of the sovereign, "The next man to argue for taking the field shall be considered in violation of the imperial dictate." The commanders had no choice but to accept the edict. Privately, Sima Yi said to Xin Pi, "You know my mind well." Then he informed the army that Xin Pi had come to communicate the ruler's injunction against combat.

The Riverlands commanders learned of the new edict and reported to Kongming, who remarked with a smile, "It's only Sima Yi's way of keeping his army quiet." Jiang Wei said, "How does Your Excellency know?" "He never meant to fight in the first place," he replied. "He sought permission to fight only to show his men his militant spirit. Have you forgotten? 'No general in the field is bound to obey an edict. ' Who ever heard of a general requesting permission to fight from a thousand *li* away! Sima Yi has to use Cao Rui to control his army, because the commanders and officers are seething. And they publicize it to weaken our resolve."

During this conference Fei Yi's return from the Southland was announced. Kongming called for his report. Fei Yi said: "When the Southland invaded with three armies, Cao Rui took the main northern force to Hefei and had Man Chong, Tian Yu, and Liu Shao counter the southern armies. Man Chong burned out the southerners' supplies and weapons; and most of the southern troops contracted disease. Lu Xun therefore petitioned the king of Wu, Sun Quan, to set a time for a combined attack—front and rear—on the north. But the bearer of this petition was seized en route by northern troops. The plan was compromised, and the southern army withdrew without a victory."

As Kongming listened, a long sigh escaped him. He lost consciousness and fell down. His commanders rushed to his assistance, but some time passed before he came to himself. "My mind is confused," he said, sighing again. "That old trouble again. The end may be near."

That night the ailing Kongming managed to get himself out of his tent. He gazed at the constellations overhead in astonishment. Reentering, he said to Jiang Wei, "My days are numbered." "Why does Your Excellency say so?" Jiang Wei asked. "The guest stars in Triple Platform are doubly bright, the host stars darkened; the ranged luminaries supporting them are dimmer, too. These heavenly phenomena disclose my fate."⁷ "Despite these signs," Jiang Wei said, "does Your Excellency not have a way to pray for a reversal?" "I have," Kongming replied, "but everything depends on what Heaven decrees. I want forty-nine men in armor, each holding a black flag and dressed in black, to form a circle outside my tent. Inside I will pray to the Northern Dipper. If the main lamp stays lit seven more days, my life may last another circuit of the zodiac.⁸ If the lamp goes out, I will die. Please keep unauthorized persons out of the area. Anything I need can be brought in by my two young assistants." Jiang Wei left to make the preparations Kongming required.

It was midautumn, halfway through the eighth month (A. D. 234). That night the Milky Way sparkled brilliantly, and a crystalline dew formed in perfect droplets. The flags hung slack in the windless air; the night gong was stilled. Outside Kongming's tent Jiang Wei commanded the guard of forty-nine. Inside, Kongming laid out fragrant flowers and sacrificial articles. On the ground were seven large lamps surrounded by forty-nine smaller ones; at the center of these rings he placed a single lamp for his own life. He bowed low and chanted: "Born into an age of disorder, I would have gladly spent my years in the countryside. But August Emperor Zhao Lie claimed my love when he came three times seeking my service. Later, he put his young son in my care, and I had to continue humbly serving his cause, having vowed to suppress the rebellion against Han.

I did not expect my guiding star would slip and bring my mortal hours to a close. With reverence I address this final text to the blue span above, hoping Heaven will vouchsafe me its sympathetic attention and bend its rule by amending my mortal allotment. That would enable me to fulfill my duties to the Emperor and to rescue the common folk from their peril; to restore the manners, morals, and traditions of the former era and to perpetuate the holy rites of Han. This is no desperate prayer I offer here but one which springs from heartfelt anguish!" The incantation finished, Kongming remained bent to the floor awaiting the dawn. The next day he forced himself to conduct business, but he spat blood all day. By day he discussed military affairs; by night he paced the Northern Dipper.

Sima Yi meanwhile had been keeping fast to his positions. Then one night he saw something in the heavens that delighted him. "A guiding star has lost its position," he said to Xiahou Ba. "Kongming must be ill. He is not long for this world. Take a thousand men to Wuzhangyuan and find out all you can. If the Riverlanders are disorderly and make no attempt to engage, Kongming is mortally ill—and we must seize our chance to attack!" Xiahou Ba left with his troops.

Kongming remained at his devotions. On the sixth night the main lamp still burned bright and his heart was eased. Jiang Wei entered the tent and saw Kongming, hair loosed, leaning on his sword; he was pacing the Dipper in his mind's eye, hoping to stabilize his guiding star. Suddenly he heard an uproar outside his compound. He was about to have someone investigate, when Wei Yan came dashing into the tent crying, "The Wei army has come!" Wei Yan was running so fast that he overturned the main lamp, and it went out. Kongming set his sword aside and said with a sigh, "Death is a fate no one can avert." Wei Yan, overcome with confusion, flung himself down pleading for forgiveness. Jiang Wei wrathfully drew his sword. Indeed:

No man can master the infinity of possibility;
No heart can match wits with destiny.

Would Jiang Wei kill Wei Yan?

READ ON.



***The Guiding Star Falls, and the Han Prime Minister Returns to Heaven;
The Wei Field Marshal Is Terrified by the Sight of a Wooden Statue***

JIANG WEI DREW HIS SWORD, but Kongming checked him, saying, "It was not his fault. My time has come." Jiang Wei put up his weapon. Kongming spat several mouthfuls of blood and lay down on his couch. He said, "Sima Yi guessed I was ill and sent soldiers to probe our position. Engage them at once!" Wei Yan left the tent and rode out of the compound to confront the northern force; Xiahou Ba hastily withdrew. Wei Yan pursued for more than twenty *li* before turning back. Kongming then sent Wei Yan back to his camp.

Jiang Wei came to the side of Kongming's couch to attend him. Kongming said, "I have tried my best to return the heartland to Han rule. But Heaven's wishes rule us all. My end is near, very near. The results of a lifetime of study are written in these twenty-four essays in 104, 112 characters.¹ They contain esoteric information on the Eight Principal Concerns, the Seven Precautions, the Six Dangers, and the Five Alerts. None of my commanders is fit to receive it; to you alone I transmit it. Treat it with all seriousness." Jiang Wei wept and prostrated himself on receiving the text. Kongming continued, "I have invented a bow that releases arrows simultaneously, but I have never had a chance to test it in combat. It shoots ten eight-inch arrows at a time. The sketches have been collected into a volume. Have the weapon built according to design." Jiang Wei received these papers also. Kongming continued, "The regions of the Riverlands are rather secure, except Yinping, which needs careful watching. Even though the terrain is arduous, we may soon have a problem there."

Next he summoned Ma Dai, to whom he whispered certain instructions and gave a secret plan, saying, "Carry it out after my death." Ma Dai agreed and left. Shortly afterward Kongming received Yang Yi by his bedside, handed him a brocade sack, and secretly instructed him: "After I am dead, Wei Yan will turn against us. When he does, accompany him to the front line and then open this. You will find the right man to execute him." After disposing of all items of business, Kongming blacked out. Later that night, he regained consciousness and prepared a petition to the Second Emperor.

On receiving Kongming's memorial, the Second Emperor was agitated. He hastily ordered Chief Secretary Li Fu to the front to inquire about Kongming's health and to seek his advice about the future. After reaching Wuzhangyuan by rapid stages, Li Fu entered Kongming's presence and transmitted the Emperor's command. Li Fu asked about Kongming's illness; shedding tears, Kongming said, "Ill fate takes me now, my task but half done. I have forsaken the Emperor's cause and I have failed the empire. After my death all of you must guide and support the Emperor with unstinting devotion. The dynasty's institutions must not be altered, nor the men I have brought into service dismissed. My military methods and doctrines have been handed on to Jiang Wei, and he will exert himself for the dynasty in continuing my work. My life hangs in the balance. Let me now give you one final petition to submit to His Majesty." Li Fu noted Kongming's words and departed in haste.

Kongming lifted himself with difficulty, and his attendants put him onto his wagon so he could inspect the campsites outside the fortifications. The autumn wind blew against his face, and a sharp chill took his bones. With a long sigh he said, "Never shall I go to the front and fight the rebels again! Oh, you infinite skies, what could be more sad?" After pondering for some time, Kongming returned to his tent. His condition worsened.

Kongming summoned Yang Yi and instructed him: "Wang Ping, Liao Hua, Zhang Ni, Zhang Yi, Wu Yi, and the others are loyal and honorable men. Having survived arduous trials through long years of war, they will prove worthy of whatever you require of them. After my death I want everything to go on in our accustomed manner. Make a slow and deliberate retreat; show no haste. You are well versed in our strategy and need no further instruction. Jiang Wei has the wit and courage to protect the rear." Yang Yi wept as he received his commands. Kongming called for writing materials and in his bed penned his testament for the Second Emperor:

Mortality is man's common lot; his years are numbered. Now death approaches, and I wish here to give full expression to my humble loyalty.

I, Liang, endowed with a nature both ordinary and graceless, encountered a time of troubles. After I was granted military authority, major decisions were placed in my hands. I fielded armies for the northern expedition but failed to reach the goal I sought. Now, stricken by unforeseen and incurable illness, I face imminent death, and I despair that my service to Your Majesty remains unfinished.

I humbly beg that Your Majesty keep an honest mind and limit your desires, disciplining yourself and caring tenderly for the people. Serve the late Emperor in a spirit of filial piety; show humane generosity throughout your kingdom. Promote those not in the public eye to advance the cause of true excellence; deny access to the vicious and depraved to strengthen the moral tone of the realm.

My home in Chengdu, with its eight hundred mulberry trees and a meagre fifteen hundred *mou* of land, should provide for my children. On assignment outside the capital I have acquired nothing of value; beyond the food and clothing that Your Majesty's officers supplied, I have had no other income. Hence, after my death no excess silks, no surplus wealth, nor any other violation of Your Majesty's trust will be discovered.

When Kongming had finished writing, he instructed Yang Yi further: "After my death no funeral is to be held. Make a large case to hold my corpse in a sitting position. Place seven grains of rice inside my mouth. Set a lamp at my feet. Keep everything quiet and normal in the army: no mourning cries at all. That will prevent my guiding star from falling to earth, for the darker of my souls will rise to steady it. Sima Yi will be puzzled when he sees the star holding its place. The rear forces should decamp first; next, the various sites, slowly and singly. Should Sima Yi pursue, re-form your battle line and turn your banners and drums around to face them. Wait for them to arrive, then take the wooden statue I've had carved, set it in my wagon, and push the wagon to the front flanked by the entire leadership high and low. That should frighten Sima Yi away." Yang Yi noted each command.

That night Kongming's attendants helped him out of his tent. Looking up at the Northern Dipper, he pointed to one of its stars and said, "There—my guiding star." Everyone studied the star, which dimmed and wavered as if it would fall from its place. Kongming pointed his sword to it and read a

magical charm. Then he hurried back into the tent and fainted. At this moment of confusion and despair among the commanders, Chief Secretary Li Fu reappeared. Seeing Kongming unconscious, he could hardly speak. Through tears, he said, "I am too late. I have failed my kingdom!"

Moments later Kongming revived, opened his eyes, and looked around. Seeing Li Fu by his bed, Kongming said, "I know why you have come." Excusing himself, Li Fu said, "The Son of Heaven mandated me to inquire of Your Excellency what man, after your mortal term, might be entrusted with this great mission. But in my distress I neglected to consult Your Excellency, and so I have returned." Kongming answered, "Jiang Wan (styled Gongyan) would be the most suitable." "And second to him?" Li Fu then asked. "Fei Yi (styled Wenwei)," Kongming replied. "And then, if not Fei Yi, who should it be?" Li Fu asked again. Kongming gave no answer. The commanders pressed closer to the bed to study him, but he had succumbed. It was the autumn of the twelfth year of Jian Xing, the twenty-third day of the eighth month. Kongming was fifty-four.² Du Fu has left this poem:

The star that dropped last night upon his camp³
Announced to all: "The master fell this day."
No longer from his tent will orders flow;
The Hall of Fame will honor his success.
Three thousand followers left masterless,
The hosts in his mind's eye denied their day.
Nor, in the green woods, clear and sunlit,
Will Kongming's fine-voiced chants be heard again.

Bo Juyi has also left a poem:

Ensnared in hills, the master hid his tracks;⁴
By twist of fate a sage king sued three times.
Only in Nanyang could "fish" and "water" meet:
"The dragon flies to Heavenly Han—a wholesome rain."⁵
To Liu Bei's heir Kongming gave zealous care;⁶
Serving the state, he poured forth his loyal heart.
And still today his calls to war live on;
How many readers can restrain their tears?

At an earlier point Liao Li, Chang River commandant in Shu, had considered himself able and renowned enough to become Kongming's lieutenant. Subsequently, Liao Li had scanted his official duties, worn the air of a man who had been treated shabbily, and complained no end. Kongming had therefore removed him from office, made him a commoner, and transferred his residence to Minshan. When Liao Li learned of Kongming's death, he wept freely and said, "Then I am doomed to live apart from Han for good!"

When Li Yan heard the news of Kongming's death, he took sick with grief and died. Apparently, Li Yan had hoped that Kongming would restore his position and allow him to amend his previous mistakes; Kongming's death ended Li Yan's hopes of returning to service.

In later times Yuan Weizhi left these lines in praise of Kongming:

To set the times aright he backed Liu Bei;
With earnest zeal he took the orphan king.
His splendid gifts surpassed Guan Zhong's, Yue Yi's;
His unique schemes excelled Sunzi's, Wu Qi's.⁷
How awe-inspiring his two-part call to war!
How proud and grand the Eightfold Ramparts plan!
Such a lord as this—all virtues' height—
Had never been, nor ever was again.

That night Heaven despaired and earth grieved. The moon waned as Kongming's fleeting soul went home to Heaven. Jiang Wei and Yang Yi, as Kongming had advised, forbade public mourning. They dressed the corpse and placed it in a case, as arranged; it was guarded by three hundred trusted captains and soldiers. Then they issued secret orders to Wei Yan to protect the rear while the army withdrew from the various encampments and strongpoints in perfect order, one after another.⁸

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Sima Yi, watching the night sky, saw a large, ruddy star with a horn rising on its awn. The star began streaming from the northeast toward the southwest and fell to earth within the Riverlands camps; thrice it had lurched and risen again before landing with a faint rumble. Startled but delighted, Sima Yi cried, "Kongming has died!" and ordered the whole army to strike out after the enemy. But on leaving the base, he reconsidered: "Kongming knows well how the Six Ding deities and the Six Jia deities control celestial phenomena. He sees how long we have refrained from battle and now tempts us forth with false news of his death. Pursuit will play into his hands." Thus, Sima Yi returned and kept to his base, only letting Xiahou Ba quietly take a few score of riders to scout the hills by Wuzhangyuan.

Meanwhile, back in his own camp Wei Yan had dreamed that two horns had suddenly sprung from his head; he awakened deeply troubled. The next day when Infantry Commanding Officer Zhao Zhi arrived, Wei Yan spoke to him about it: "You are known for your deep understanding of the *Book of Changes*. Last night in a dream two horns sprang from my head. Could I trouble you, sir, to interpret the meaning?" After some consideration Zhao Zhi replied, "An omen of great good fortune! The unicorn carries a horn on his head, and so does the green dragon. It is a simulacrum of soaring transformation!" Delighted, Wei Yan said, "If your prediction proves correct, I shall thank you well for it."

Zhao Zhi took his leave. He met up with Fei Yi after he had traveled only a short distance. Fei Yi asked where he had come from. Zhao Zhi replied, "I was just in Wei Yan's camp. He dreamed of horns on his head and asked me to divine the meaning. Actually, it bodes ill; but rather than offend him by speaking frankly, I explained the dream in terms of the unicorn and the green dragon." "How do you know, sir, that it is inauspicious?" Fei Yi asked. Zhao Zhi responded, "Look at the components of the character 'horn': 'sword' above, 'using' below. 'Using a sword' above the head is most ominous." "Keep this to yourself for now, sir," Fei Yi said, and they parted.

When Fei Yi came to Wei Yan's camp, he sent Yan's attendants away and then told him, "Last

night during the third watch His Excellency took leave of this world. At the end, he instructed us repeatedly that you are to hold the front against Sima Yi while we evacuate. Also, no mourning is to be allowed. Here is the tally authorizing you to muster the troops." Wei Yan asked, "Who will assume His Excellency's duties?" Fei Yi answered, "His duties as prime minister have all been entrusted to Yang Yi, and his secret methods of command have been handed on to Jiang Wei. This tally was sent to you by order of Yang Yi." Wei Yan said, "His Excellency may be gone, but I am here. Yang Yi is only a senior adviser. How could he hold so high a position? Let him take the coffin home for proper burial; I'll advance and score a big victory against Sima Yi. Shall we abandon the cause of the kingdom simply because the prime minister has died?"

Fei Yi responded, "His Excellency's final command was to retreat temporarily; it cannot be disobeyed." Wei Yan retorted angrily, "Had His Excellency taken my advice, we would have captured Chang'an long ago! I am the general of the Forward Army, Chief General Who Conquers the West, lord of Nanzheng, and yet you expect me to 'hold the front' for a mere senior adviser!" "Though what you say makes sense," Fei Yi answered, "we cannot risk an action that might make fools of us in the enemy's eyes. Let me see if I can show Yang Yi where our best interest lies and persuade him to relinquish military authority to you, General." Wei Yan agreed.

Fei Yi took his leave, quit Wei Yan's camp, and hurried to the main base. There he recounted to Yang Yi his conversation with Wei Yan. Yang Yi said, "Just before he died, His Excellency told me in confidence that Wei Yan might turn on us. I sent the tally over with these instructions only to find out what he was thinking. His Excellency has been proved right. I will have Jiang Wei protect our retreat." Thus, Yang Yi ordered the bearers to start out with the coffin and Jiang Wei to defend the rear; the retreat proceeded slowly in accordance with Kongming's last command.

Wei Yan grew suspicious when Fei Yi did not return, and he sent Ma Dai with a few score of riders to investigate. Ma Dai reported back: "Yang Yi has put Jiang Wei in command of the rear army; the better part of the forward army has already withdrawn into the gorge." "How dare that useless pedant trifle with me! I'll kill him!" Wei Yan responded. Turning to Ma Dai, he added, "Will you help me?" "I have always despised Yang Yi," Ma Dai replied, "and I am willing to help you against him, General." Well pleased, Wei Yan broke camp and led his forces south.

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Meanwhile, Xiahou Ba had reached Wuzhangyuan; not a soul was there. He reported at once to Sima Yi: "The Riverlands army has evacuated." Losing composure, Sima Yi said, "So Kongming *has* died. Pursue at once!" "Not too hastily, Field Marshal," Xiahou Ba advised him. "Let a subordinate commander go before you." "This time I need to go myself," Sima Yi answered.

Sima Yi and his two sons raced for Wuzhangyuan. Shouting and swinging their banners, they charged into the evacuated base: it was deserted. Turning to his sons, Sima Yi said, "Follow up with your troops. I will start after them." With Sima Shi and Sima Zhao bringing up the rear, Sima Yi tracked the Riverlanders to the foot of some hills and, seeing them still within range, pursued vigorously. Suddenly from behind one hill a bombard sounded, and the noise of war cries shook the ground. Sima Yi watched amazed as the Riverlands army reversed banners and drums to face him. Laced by trees' shadows, the grand banner of the central army billowed out, bearing a single line of large characters: "Zhuge Liang, Prime Minister of Han, Lord of Wuxiang."

Stunned, Sima Yi turned pale. Looking intently, he saw several dozen ranking commanders grouped around a four-wheeled wagon; inside sat Kongming with his Taoist headdress, feather fan, crane plumes, and black tunic. "Kongming, alive?" cried the astounded Sima Yi. "I have blundered into their strongpoint and sprung their trap." He wheeled his mount and fled. Behind him Jiang Wei shouted: "Stand your ground, rebel! You're in my prime minister's hands!" The northern soldiers felt their souls take flight, and flinging down armor and helmets, lances and halberds, they trampled one another in the stampede to escape. Those killed were beyond numbering.

Sima Yi had gone some fifty *li*, when two Wei generals overtook him and took hold of his horse's reins. "Do not panic, Field Marshal," they shouted. Sima Yi rubbed his head with his hand and said, "Have I still got it?" "Have no fear. The Riverlands troops are far away," they replied. Sima Yi caught his breath and calmed himself. He looked steadily at the two generals; recognizing Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Hui, he slowly let go of the reins. The three hurried back to their base along a small path and told their commanders to patrol on all sides.

Two days later some local villagers came to tell Sima Yi, "When the Riverlands army entered the gorge, their mourning cries shook the ground and a white banner went up amongst them. Kongming has in fact died. Only Jiang Wei stayed behind with a thousand men to hold the rear. It was a wooden statue in the wagon." Sima Yi sighed and said, "I could gauge him in life, but not in death." After this, a saying gained currency in Shu, "A dead Zhuge puts a live Sima to flight!" A poet of later times has left these lines:

That night from Heaven's Pole a fireball fell,
But Sima fled for fear his foe lived still.
And western mockers still remember how
He wondered if his head were on or no!

Having verified the news of Kongming's death, Sima Yi resumed pursuit. On reaching Redbank Slope, however, he saw the enemy was beyond overtaking, so he led his force back. He said to his commanders, "With Kongming gone, we can sleep in peace!" Bringing the army home to the capital, he passed the camps and bases that Kongming had set up—each superbly laid out—and he said with a sigh, "A rare genius!" On reaching Chang'an, he sent his commanders to protect the various strongpoints and continued on to Luoyang to see the sovereign.

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Meanwhile, Yang Yi and Jiang Wei, having organized the retreat, slowly approached the cliffside plank road to Saber Gateway. Only then did they don their mourning garb. The Riverlands soldiers held funeral services for Kongming, lifting high their streamers and giving voice to their grief, striking themselves and stamping the ground as they wept—some so fiercely that they died. But as their forward squads began reaching the plank road, they saw fires ahead climbing into the sky. Soon the ground began to shake as a shouting band of soldiers occupied the road. The commanders sped a report back to Yang Yi. Indeed:

Once the northern force withdrew,

An unknown force appeared on western soil.

Whose men were standing before Yang Yi?

READ ON.



***Kongming Leaves a Plan in the Brocade Bag;
Cao Rui Removes the Ambrosia-collecting Bowl***

TOLD OF THE BLOCKADE AHEAD, Yang Yi sent scouts to investigate. They reported back that Wei Yan had burned the wooden plank road and deployed troops to bar the route. Yang Yi said anxiously, "His Excellency foresaw that this man would turn against us— and now the day has come! He controls our route home. What are we to do?" Fei Yi replied, "He could not take this action without first petitioning the Emperor, falsely claiming that we are rebels. We too should petition, and expose Wei Yan's deception. Then we can deal with him." "A small road near here called Chashan is steep and dangerous, but it will take us around the wooden plank road," Jiang Wei said. And so they dispatched their petition to the Son of Heaven, and also sent men out by Chashan Road.

Meanwhile, in Chengdu the Second Emperor, restless and uneasy in everything he did, dreamed one night of an avalanche on the Damask Screen Hills outside the capital. Waking with a start, he sat up until his civil and military advisers came at dawn and offered to explain his dream. Qiao Zhou said, "Watching the heavens last night, I noticed a ruddy falling star, a horn protruding from its awn. The star came from the northeast and landed in the southwest, signifying great disaster for the prime minister. Your Majesty's dream of an avalanche is a corresponding sign." The Emperor grew more uneasy. Suddenly Li Fu was announced. Summoned directly before the sovereign, he knocked his head to the ground and wept as he announced the prime minister's death. Then he repeated Kongming's final words. The Second Emperor burst into loud wails. "Heaven decrees our doom!" he cried and collapsed on his couch. Attendants rushed him to a rear chamber of the palace. Queen Mother Wu, Liu Bei's widow, also wept steadily at the news. The officials were grief-stricken and the common folk cried freely.

The bereaved ruler held no court for many days. It was at this point that Wei Yan's petition arrived announcing the revolt of Yang Yi. The startled officials brought the document before the Emperor at a time when the Empress was also in the palace. The Second Emperor, surprised by Wei Yan's petition, ordered an attendant to read it out. It said in essence:

I, Wei Yan, Chief General Who Conquers the West, lord of Nanzheng, bow before you in a spirit of fear and trembling to offer this statement. Yang Yi, usurping complete military authority, has led the army in rebellion. He has seized the prime minister's sacred coffin and means to bring our enemies into our territory. I have already burned the wooden plank roads and positioned troops to block Yang Yi. With all respect, this petition.

After reading Wei Yan's statement, the Second Emperor said, "Why would Wei Yan, a commander bold enough to fight off Yang Yi's troops, have to burn the plank roads?" Queen Mother

Wu answered, "I often heard the late Emperor say, 'Kongming has recognized the bone of treason at the back of Wei Yan's head and time and again has wanted to put him to death; he spares Wei Yan only out of respect for his courage.' I would not believe Wei Yan's claims. Yang Yi is a man of the pen. We can safely rely on him if the prime minister employed him as a senior adviser. Give no credence to Wei Yan's uncorroborated petition or Yang Yi will go over to Wei. And do nothing in haste. This matter requires careful study." The officials were still in council when the urgent petition from Senior Adviser Yang Yi arrived. The imperial attendants opened it and read it out:

I, Yang Yi, senior adviser and general in charge of the retreat, in fear and trembling bow my head to the ground and earnestly petition. When the prime minister was near death, he placed responsibility for the great cause in my hands. I followed faithfully his established practices, making no changes whatsoever. I assigned Wei Yan to protect our retreat by guarding the front; I assigned Jiang Wei to hold the line behind him. Now Wei Yan refuses to honor the late prime minister's final words and without permission has brought his own units prematurely into Hanzhong after burning the wooden plank roads and attempting to seize the late prime minister's coffin. His intentions are most improper, and he has turned against us so suddenly that I respectfully rush this petition to your notice.

The queen mother, after hearing the contents of the document, asked, "And what do you gentlemen think now?" Jiang Wan said, "In my humble opinion, however intemperate and intolerant Yang Yi may be, he managed supplies and devised strategy under the late prime minister for many years. The prime minister would never have confided his mission to someone he did not trust. Wei Yan is a different sort. Vain over the accomplishments he thinks will put him ahead, he wants everyone else to make way for him. Only Yang Yi refuses to humor him. Wei Yan resents this; he objected strongly when Yang Yi received military authority. That's why he burned the roadway, cut off Yang Yi's retreat, and slandered him in that memorial. I would guarantee with the lives of my whole family that Yang Yi is no rebel. But I would not guarantee Wei Yan!"

Dong Yun followed with another statement: "Wei Yan is proud of his high merits. Resentment seems to live in his heart, complaints in his mouth. Fear of the prime minister was all that kept him from turning against us. Now that His Excellency has passed on, Wei Yan's revolt should come as no surprise. As for Yang Yi—whom His Excellency employed for his strong talent and aptness in learning—he would never turn against us!"

The Second Emperor asked, "If this is true, how do we deal with Wei Yan?" Jiang Wan answered, "The late prime minister long mistrusted the man and must have left Yang Yi with a plan. Otherwise, why did he withdraw into the gorge? Wei Yan will fall into the trap, Your Majesty may rest assured."

It was not long before a new petition from Wei Yan arrived denouncing Yang Yi and, while it was being read, another from Yang Yi denouncing Wei Yan. The two petitions presented their cases. Suddenly, Fei Yi's arrival was announced. The Second Emperor summoned him, and he petitioned, describing Wei Yan's sedition in detail. The Second Emperor said, "In this case let us first see if Dong Yun, acting on my authority, can effect a reconciliation diplomatically." Dong Yun received the edict and left.

Wei Yan, meanwhile, after burning the roadway, stationing troops in Nangu, and securing the

strongpoints, felt sure he had control of the situation.¹ It never occurred to him that Yang Yi and Jiang Wei would manage to outflank him behind Nangu. In fact, Yang Yi, fearing trouble in Hanzhong, had sent his vanguard He Ping there first with three thousand men, while he and Jiang Wei followed behind with Kongming's coffin.

When He Ping got behind Nangu, he beat his drums and raised a clamor. Scouts informed Wei Yan that He Ping had come by way of Chashan Road and was giving the battle challenge. In a fury Wei Yan armed himself and rode forth, weapon bared, to meet the challenge. The two forces assumed battle formation. He Ping raced to the front and shouted wrathfully, "Where is the rebel traitor Wei Yan?" Wei Yan shouted back, "You abet the rebel Yang Yi! How dare you cry me down?" He Ping retorted: "His Excellency is hardly gone from us, his body yet warm. How dare you rebel?" He pointed his whip at the Riverlands soldiers and went on, "All you Riverlands men with parents and families there, brothers and friends—did His Excellency ever do you wrong? How can you aid this rebel? Return home and wait for your just rewards." Hearing this appeal, the soldiers with Wei Yan raised a cheer, and the greater part dispersed.

In great anger Wei Yan flourished his blade and charged; He Ping raised his lance and met him. They fought several passes-at-arms; then He Ping feigned defeat and fled. Wei Yan gave chase, but massed crossbow shots drove him back. Seeing his army disintegrate, Wei Yan's rage flared anew. He raced forward, killing several runaways; he failed, however, to check the flight of his men. Only the three hundred under Ma Dai made no move to flee. Wei Yan said to Ma Dai, "Stay by me now, and I shall never forget it." Joined by Ma Dai, he gave chase; but He Ping had ridden beyond reach. Wei Yan gathered what remained of his forces and said to Ma Dai, "How about seeking our fortune with the Wei?" "That is not a sensible idea," Ma Dai answered. "Shouldn't a man of honor aim to create his own dominion rather than bend his knee in another's service? I see in you a man of sense and courage, excelling any other in the Riverlands. I would take an oath with you: first to seize Hanzhong, then to attack the western Riverlands!"

Delighted by this proposal, Wei Yan followed Ma Dai in an attack on Nanzheng.² Jiang Wei, who had already entered the city, watched Wei Yan and Ma Dai approach swiftly, flaunting their military prowess. Jiang Wei ordered the drawbridge raised at once. Wei Yan and Ma Dai cried out, "Surrender now!" Jiang Wei summoned Yang Yi and said, "Wei Yan is bold and fierce. And with Ma Dai's help, even their small force will be difficult to drive off. Have you a plan?" Yang Yi replied, "On his deathbed the late prime minister left me this brocade bag saying, 'Do not open it until Wei Yan revolts and you face him in the field; it will show you how to kill him.' The time has come to look inside." He unsealed the bag and read the direction: "To be opened the moment you confront Wei Yan." Jiang Wei said with delight, "Hold on to the warning His Excellency has given you, Senior Adviser, while I take the army beyond the wall and draw it up in formation. Then come out and join me."

Jiang Wei armed himself and rode forth. Spear in hand, he led three thousand soldiers through the gate, their war cries and war drums resounding as they assumed fighting formation. Jiang Wei poised his mount at the bannered gateway to his line and railed at the top of his voice: "Rebel traitor Wei Yan! His Excellency never did you ill! How dare you turn against him now?" Wei Yan leveled his sword, reined in, and said bitterly, "Jiang Wei, this does not concern you. Let Yang Yi come forth!"

In the shadow of the bannered gateway Yang Yi tore open the brocade bag and read Kongming's instructions. Well pleased, he rode out unarmed to a point before his line. Pointing to Wei Yan, he

laughed and said, "When His Excellency was alive, he predicted you would revolt and warned me to be ready. His words come true today. If you will shout from horseback three times the words 'Who dares slay me?' then you are a true hero and I will deliver the seat of Hanzhong to you." Wei Yan laughed and answered, "Yang Yi, you miserable coward! Listen! I was only three parts in ten afraid of Kongming when he lived, so who dares oppose me now that he's gone? I'll shout it not three but thirty thousand times—what difference could it make to me?"

Wei Yan raised his sword, held firm his reins, and cried out, "Who dares slay me?" His voice was still echoing in the air when someone directly behind him responded harshly, "I dare slay you!" A hand went up, a sword came down, and Wei Yan fell beneath his horse. The assembly gasped. The man who killed Wei Yan? Ma Dai! Kongming, before he died, had given Ma Dai secret instructions to cut down Wei Yan without warning when he heard Wei Yan shout those words. From the message in the brocade bag Yang Yi knew that Ma Dai had been planted in Wei Yan's ranks to carry out the plan. A poet of later times has left these lines:

Zhuge knew beforehand Wei Yan's mind,
That traitor to Shu-Han he'd later prove.
The artifice no man could have foreknown,
But by Yan's death its potency was shown.

Dong Yun had not yet reached Nanzheng with the Second Emperor's edict at the time Ma Dai put Wei Yan to death and joined forces with Jiang Wei; so Yang Yi sent a petition posthaste to inform the Emperor. The sovereign thereupon issued another edict, which read, "Since Wei Yan's crime has been properly dealt with, let us rather remember him by his former merits and grant him the inner and outer coffins requisite for formal interment."

As Yang Yi and his party approached Chengdu bearing Kongming's bier, the Second Emperor led the entire body of officials, dressed in mourning, twenty *li* outside the city to welcome them. A great cry broke from the Emperor and from the elder lords and dignitaries; even the commoners in their hills and woodlands, men, women, the old, the young—all wept sorely, and the sounds of their grieving caused the ground to vibrate. The Emperor had the bier transported into the capital to rest at the prime minister's official chambers. His son, Zhuge Zhan, led the mourning and observed the obsequies.

When the Emperor returned to court, Yang Yi presented himself, in bonds, to beg forgiveness. The Emperor had an imperial attendant remove the cords; then he said, "Because you followed the prime minister's final orders, his bier has come home and Wei Yan has been eliminated. Your effort has preserved our government intact." He appointed Yang Yi director general of the Center. Ma Dai, who had distinguished himself by bringing the renegade to justice, was granted Wei Yan's rank.

Yang Yi submitted Kongming's final petition. The Emperor read it and wept; he then commanded the diviners to locate a site for the interment. Fei Yi petitioned the throne: "When near death, the prime minister ordered that he be buried on Dingjun Mountain. He wanted no brick wall around the grave and no funerary articles." The Emperor approved the petition, and an auspicious day was selected in the tenth month of the year (A. D. 234) for the Emperor himself to escort the bier to the burial place. At the Emperor's command the sacrificial ceremonies commenced, and Kongming received the posthumous title Loyal and Martial Lord. The Emperor ordered a shrine built at

Mianyang and ceremonies performed there each season. Du Fu has left this poem in memory of the loyal dynastic servant:

"His Excellency's shrine, where would it be found?"
"Past Damask Town, where cypresses grow dense."
Its sunlit court, gem-bright greens—a spring unto themselves.
Leaf-veiled, the orioles—sweet notes to empty air.
Thrice to him Liu Bei sued, keen to rule the realm:
Two reigns Kongming served³—steady old heart—
To die, his host afield, the victory herald yet to come—
Weep, O heroes! Drench your fronts, now and evermore.

Du Fu left another poem to celebrate Kongming:

Zhuge's mighty name hangs proudly on the upper sphere;
Stern and grand, the royal liege man's likeness claims respect.
In the tri-part world below he spun deep schemes.
In the age-old realm of cloud,⁴ one single plume unites our gaze.
Who rank his peers? Yi Yin and Jiang Ziya;
In command he was more sure than Xiao or Cao.⁵
But the stars had turned; he could not save Han's reign,
Toiling to the end, body broken, will unbroken.

• • • •

The Second Emperor meanwhile had returned to Chengdu. Suddenly an imperial attendant addressed him: "Border headquarters reports that the Southland, for purposes yet unclear, has ordered Quan Zong to the Baqiu area with tens of thousands of troops." Shocked, the Second Emperor said, "With the prime minister lately deceased, the Southland breaks its covenant and violates our soil. What are we to do?" Jiang Wan said, "I would advise having Wang Ping and Zhang Ni station thirty to fifty thousand troops at Yong'an as a precautionary measure. Your Majesty might then send an envoy to the Southland to announce the funeral and at the same time find out all he can." The Emperor said, "I'll need a smooth talker for such a mission." In response a man stepped forth and said, "This insignificant vassal wishes to volunteer." All eyes turned to Zong Yu (Deyan), of Anzhong in Nanyang, who held the position of army adviser and right Imperial Corps commandant. Well pleased, the Emperor dispatched Zong Yu to the Southland to announce the funeral and to learn what he could.

Zong Yu went straight to Jianye. The lord of Wu, Sun Quan, received him. Formalities concluded, Zong Yu noted that all attendants were wearing the plain color of mourning. Frowning, Sun Quan said to him, "Our two kingdoms are one family. Why has your lord increased the guard at Baidi?"⁶ "Your servant's view was that increasing the guard at Baqiu to the east and Baidi to the west were both perfectly responsible measures in the given circumstances, neither worthy of query." Sun Quan smiled and said, "I can see you are the equal of Deng Zhi." Sun Quan addressed Zong Yu again, "Learning that Prime Minister Zhuge has gone home to Heaven, we daily grieve and have required our court to

don mourning. Further, fearing some move by Wei at Shu's time of sorrow, we have fortified Baqiu with ten thousand troops, should you need our assistance. We have no other motive." Zong Yu touched his head to the ground in gratitude. "Once we give our word," Sun Quan went on, "we never dishonor it." Zong Yu responded, "The Son of Heaven sends me now, on the occasion of the recent demise of the prime minister, to announce the funeral." Sun Quan took a gold-tipped arrow and broke it in two, speaking an oath: "If we break faith, may our line die out." He then ordered an envoy to the Riverlands with incense, silks, and ceremonial articles to offer in the fallen leader's memory.

Respectfully taking leave, Zong Yu returned to Chengdu with the southern envoy. Coming into the Emperor's presence, Zong Yu said, "The lord of Wu, much moved by the late minister's demise, had had his vassals dress in mourning. His reinforcement of Baqiu was solely to prevent Wei from using the opportunity to enter the Riverlands. Here is the arrow he broke in solemn oath to honor the covenant." The Second Emperor, greatly pleased, rewarded Zong Yu and treated the southern envoy handsomely before sending him back. In keeping with Kongming's last counsels, the Emperor then made Jiang Wan prime minister and regent-marshal, and director of the Secretariat; he made Fei Yi chief of the Secretariat and executive to the prime minister; he made Wu Yi general of Chariots and Cavalry with imperial authority to administer Hanzhong; he made Jiang Wei General Who Upholds the Han and lord of Pingxiang, with general authority over variously stationed forces, and he ordered him to post himself at Hanzhong, there to join Wu Yi in the defense against Wei. The remaining commanders and officers continued in their previous stations.

Yang Yi had assumed that his longer years of service would give him priority over Jiang Wan; holding a lesser position now moved him to presume upon his merits and complain freely that he had yet to receive substantial reward. To Fei Yi he said, "Had I gone over to Wei with the entire army when His Excellency first passed away, I would not have suffered such neglect as this." Fei Yi secretly related Yang Yi's words to the Emperor, who, moved to anger, ordered Yang Yi thrown into prison and interrogated, his intention being to execute him. Jiang Wan, however, said, "Despite his offense, Yang Yi did great service in the days he followed the late prime minister. He deserves to live, though he should be reduced to commoner status." The Second Emperor agreed and stripped Yang Yi of all rank and office and ordered him to Hanjia district. Unable to endure the humiliation, Yang Yi cut his throat and died.

By the calendar of Shu-Han it was the thirteenth year of Jian Xing; by the calendar of Wei, the third year of Qing Long; by the calendar of Wu, the fourth of Jia He (A. D. 235). This year none of the three kingdoms had armies in the field. The ruler of Wei enfeoffed Sima Yi as grand commandant with overall military authority in order to secure and control the various borders of the kingdom.⁷ Afterward, Sima Yi respectfully withdrew to the city of Luoyang.

The ruler of Wei remained in Xuchang, where he started large-scale construction of palaces and grand halls. He also built the Morning Sun Hall, the Hall of First Principle, and the Complete Pattern Viewing Hall in Luoyang. These buildings towered as high as one hundred spans. Cao Rui also raised the Honoring Culture Grand Hall, the Blue Empyrean Gallery, the Phoenix Tower, and he dug the Nine Dragons Pool. He put Appointed Erudite Ma Jun in charge of the construction, which was the acme of elegance and beauty: the structures used carved beams and painted pillars, jasper tiles and gilded bricks—they rivaled the sun itself in brilliance. More than thirty thousand skilled craftsmen and more than three hundred thousand laborers—recruited by Ma Jun—toiled day and night on these projects, which consumed the strength of the common folk; their complaints were unceasing.

Cao Rui next sent down a command to build Fragrant Forest Park. He had all the ranking men at court carry earth and plant trees inside. Minister of the Interior Dong Xun submitted a vehement remonstrance to the Wei ruler:

The wars of the Jian An era broke some families and extinguished others, leaving as survivors orphans, the elderly, and the feeble. Even if Your Majesty had deemed the imperial quarters too confining and had sought to enlarge them, it still would have been appropriate to schedule the work to avoid interfering with agriculture. It is all the more so for work on unnecessary construction! Your Majesty has honored your courtiers by distinguishing them with fine headgear, clothing them in finery, transporting them in elegant carriages—all to separate them from those of no consequence. Today these same courtiers have been put to work lugging wood and earth until their bodies are drenched and their feet soiled. It detracts from the glory of the kingdom to give such importance to the irrelevant. The park is indefensible. Confucius has said, "The lord employs the vassal according to ritual formality; the vassal serves the lord with loyalty." How is the kingdom to stand with neither formality nor loyalty?

Your servant knows full well that thus to speak is to die. But my worth amounts to but one hair from an ox's hide. If one's life is useless, can death be a loss? Writing brush in hand, I let tears flow, in my heart bidding farewell to this world. My eight sons might become a burden to Your Majesty after my death. Overcome with anxiety, I await your command.

Cao Rui read the petition and said angrily, "Has Dong Xun no fear of death?" The imperial aides petitioned for his execution. Cao Rui said, "The man has always been loyal and honorable. Let us reduce him to commoner status now. Another outrageous statement and he dies." At the time Zhang Mao (Yancai), a companion of the crown prince, had also remonstrated vehemently; Cao Rui had ordered him executed.

That day Cao Rui summoned Ma Jun to ask his advice: "We are building a tall terrace and a multilevel gallery for easy commerce with immortal spirits who might bestow on us the secret of eternal youth." Ma Jun addressed the sovereign: "Of Han's twenty-four sovereigns, Emperor Wu enjoyed the longest rule. His extraordinary longevity was doubtless due to his having ingested the essence of the sun and the aura of the moon. Once in the Chang'an palace they built the Cypress Beam Terrace. Inside the terrace, they placed a standing bronze statue of a man holding a bowl in both hands. It was called the Bowl for Receiving the Dew; it caught the congealed mist called Heaven's Ambrosia or Sweet Dew that falls from the Northern Dipper during the third watch. If this fluid is mixed with the grindings of fine jade and then administered, it will reverse the course of age and restore youth." Cao Rui said with delight, "Take some men; go at once to Chang'an. Remove the bronze statue and set it up in Fragrant Forest Park."

Accordingly, Ma Jun led ten thousand workers to Chang'an, had them erect a scaffolding around Cypress Beam Terrace, and went up into it. In a short time five thousand men with ropes and lanyards had circled their way up as well. The terrace stood two hundred spans high, and the bronze column was ten arm-lengths around. Ma Jun ordered the statue pulled down first; but when a number of men joined together and accomplished this, lo, the statue's eyes filled with tears. The men were astonished. Suddenly a stormy wind sprang up along the terrace, sending dirt and stones flying with

the speed of driving rain. With a deafening roar, as if the heavens had fallen or the earth opened wide, the terrace and the pillar toppled over, crushing a thousand of the men.

Ma Jun took the bronze statue and the golden bowl back to Luoyang and presented them to the Emperor, who asked, "Where is the bronze pillar?" Ma Jun replied, "It weighed a million catties, too heavy to move here." Cao Rui ordered the pillar broken up for shipping to Luoyang. There it was recast into two bronze figures called *wengzhong*, and these were placed outside the Sima mansion gates.⁸ The Emperor also had cast a bronze dragon and a bronze phoenix, a pair. The dragon was forty spans high, the phoenix more than thirty; they were set before the hall. Finally, in Supreme Forest Park they planted rare flowers and trees and raised exquisite birds and strange animals.⁹ Yang Fu, an assistant to the imperial guardian, remonstrated by petition to Cao Rui:

Your servant has learned that the sage-king Yao built with thatch and bramble and the ten thousand kingdoms lived in peace. Great Yu kept a humble dwelling and the world labored content. The Yin and Zhou dynasties used reception rooms three spans above ground and nine mats in size. Never did the sagely sovereigns and enlightened kings of old adorn their quarters to excess and weaken thereby the economic strength of the population.

The villainous sovereign Jie, however, had gem-decorated rooms and ivory-inlaid corridors; and the evil monarch Zhou built the Tilted Palace and the Deer Terrace. Both destroyed their dynasties in this way. King Ling of Chu built Zhang Hua Hall and brought ruin on himself; and the First Emperor of Qin left a legacy of disaster for his son by building the E Pang Palace: the empire revolted, and the house of Qin fell in its second reign.

To gratify the desires of ear and eye without properly calculating the economic strength of the multitude is the sure road to oblivion. Take these kings as your model: Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu; and be forewarned by these: Jie, Zhou, Chu, and Qin. For if you still go on to amuse and regale yourself with fancy palaces and towers, your doom is assured. The sovereign is the head, the vassals his limbs. The vassals share the fate of their lord; they are parts of the whole. Your servant may be but a weak-willed jade, but I dare not forget a vassal's honored duty. If I did not speak keenly home, I could not awaken Your Majesty to the dangers. Let the coffin be prepared and my body washed: I await the death sentence.

Cao Rui ignored the petition and insisted that Ma Jun build the tower to house the bronze statue with its dew-collecting pan. Then he issued another edict for an empirewide selection of beautiful women to be brought into Fragrant Forest Park. His officials bombarded him with petitions and protests, but Cao Rui paid no heed.

Cao Rui's consort, nee Mao, came from Henei. Earlier, when Rui was prince of Pingyuan, they had enjoyed each other's deep love and affection. And when he later ascended the throne, she became his empress. But afterward Lady Guo had replaced her in Rui's favor. Lady Guo was lovely and shrewd. Cao Rui doted on her, and the enjoyment they shared day after day would often keep him inside the imperial living quarters for more than a month at a time. In the third month of the year, when the flowers of Fragrant Forest Park were in their glory, Cao Rui and Lady Guo went there to enjoy the gardens and to drink wine. Lady Guo said, "Shouldn't we invite the Empress to share our enjoyment?" "If she were with us," the Emperor replied, "I couldn't enjoy a drop of the wine." He instructed the palace beauties to keep all knowledge of his pleasure outings from Empress Mao.

Empress Mao observed that Cao Rui had not entered the official palace chambers for more than a month. She took a dozen of her attending ladies to the Alcedine Flowers Terrace for recreation where she heard music playing, clear and gay. "Where is the performance?" she asked, and one of her women let slip the truth, saying, "His Sacred Majesty and Lady Guo are enjoying the flowers and drinking in the royal garden." The Empress was vexed and returned to her palace to compose herself.

The next day Empress Mao rode forth to enjoy the sights in a small carriage. Meeting up with Cao Rui in a winding corridor, she smiled and said, "Your Majesty's excursion to the northern garden yesterday must have been great fun!" Cao Rui angrily ordered all his attendants brought before him to punish the discloser of his activities. "On yesterday's excursion," he said, "we forbade those with us to divulge anything to Empress Mao. How was the information released despite my order?" So saying, he roughly commanded his palace officers to execute all the attendants. Empress Mao returned to the palace in great distress, and Cao Rui issued an edict granting her permission to take her life. He then made Lady Guo his empress. No one at court dared remonstrate.

One day the imperial inspector of Youzhou, Guanqiu Jian, petitioned to inform the Emperor that Gongsun Yuan of Liaodong had revolted and declared himself king of Yan; that he had adopted the reign title Extending Han; that he had built a palace and appointed a body of officials; and that his invading army had shaken the north. Cao Rui, in great alarm, gathered his civil and military officials to discuss mustering the army to repel Gongsun Yuan. Indeed:

The northern kingdom was newly exhausted by Cao Rui's imperial projects;
It was now faced with war threats to the north.¹⁰

How would the ruler of Wei meet the invasion?

READ ON.



Suffering a Defeat, Gongsun Yuan Dies at Xiangping; Feigning Illness, Sima Yi Deceives Cao Shuang

GONGSUN YUAN WAS THE GRANDSON of Gongsun Du, also of Liaodong, and the son of Gongsun Kang. In the twelfth year of Jian An (A. D. 207), before Cao Cao had reached Liaodong in his pursuit of Yuan Shang, Gongsun Kang delivered Shang's head to him; for this favor Cao Cao had enfeoffed Gongsun Kang as lord of Xiangping. When Gongsun Kang died, two sons survived him: Huang, the elder, and Yuan. Because they were both quite young, Kang's brother, Gongsun Gong, inherited his position. At the time, Cao Pi appointed Gongsun Gong general of Chariots and Cavalry and enfeoffed him as lord of Xiangping. By the second year of Tai He (A. D. 228), Gongsun Yuan had grown to manhood well trained in civil and military matters. After Yuan, who had a resolute character and a penchant for combat, had wrested control of Liaodong from his uncle Gong, Cao Rui appointed him General Who Shows Mettle and governor of Liaodong.

Some time later, Sun Quan sent Zhang Mi and Xu Yan to Liaodong with gifts of gold, pearls, and fine gemstones and an offer to enfeoff Gongsun Yuan as king of Yan. But Yuan, unwilling to antagonize the Wei kingdom, put the two Southland envoys to death and sent their heads to Cao Rui. Cao Rui thereupon promoted Yuan to grand marshal and senior lord of Yuelang. Dissatisfied, Gongsun Yuan proposed to his court that he assume the title of king of Yan and change the reign title to Extending Han. Jia Fan, a lieutenant commander, remonstrated with him, saying, "The rank of senior lord granted to Your Lordship by Wei is no mean honor. If you break faith with them, it will be seen as rebellion. Further, Sima Yi is a fine general. Not even the Martial Lord Zhuge of the western Riverlands succeeded in besting him. What can Your Lordship expect to achieve?" Gongsun Yuan angrily ordered his attendants to tie up Jia Fan and take him away for execution.

Military Adviser Lun Zhi protested: "Jia Fan is in the right! The Sage has said, 'When a kingdom is going to fall, there will be monstrous visitations.' Recently many uncanny and frightful things have been seen in our kingdom—a dog in Taoist headgear and dressed in red walked on a roof like a man. In another case, some country folk south of the city were preparing their meal when inside the rice pot they found a small boy who had been steamed to death. Again, in the north market of Xiangping a hole opened up in the ground and a piece of flesh was thrown up. It was several spans around and it had a face with features, but it lacked the four limbs. It was impervious to sword or arrow; no one knew what to make of it. A diviner said, 'A shape not completed, a mouth that's mute: the ruling house will fall. Note well the warning sign.' Considering these three omens of ill fortune, it would behoove Your Lordship to make no reckless moves lest you incur disaster."

In a fresh outburst of anger Gongsun Yuan ordered his armed guards to take Lun Zhi and Jia Fan to the marketplace for execution. Then, placing Chief General Bei Yan in command and making Yang Zuo the vanguard, Gongsun Yuan mobilized an army of one hundred and fifty thousand Liao troops for

an attack on the kingdom of Wei.

Officials from the border area reported the threat to Cao Rui, who summoned Sima Yi to court. Sima Yi said to him, "The forty thousand in my command—infantry, cavalry, and officers—will suffice to defeat the rebels." Cao Rui responded, "Your force is too small to fight so far away. Won't it be difficult to get back?" "What counts," Sima Yi replied, "is not numbers but the ability to surprise and outwit the enemy. Your servant, favored with Your Majesty's boundless blessing, will not fail to capture Gongsun Yuan and deliver his head." Cao Rui responded, "What tactics do you expect from Gongsun Yuan?" Sima Yi answered, "His best move would be to leave the city before we arrive; the next would be to defend Liaodong against us; the worst would be to defend Xiangping. If he resorts to the last, I will capture him for sure." "How much time will it take you to go and return?" asked Cao Rui. "Four thousand *li*?" Sima Yi said. "One hundred days to go, one hundred to fight, one hundred to return; add sixty days of rest: one year should do." "And if Wu and Shu should invade?" Cao Rui asked. "Your Majesty need not worry," he replied. "Protective measures have already been taken." Satisfied, Cao Rui commanded Sima Yi to undertake the punitive expedition against Gongsun Yuan.

Sima Yi took his leave and left the city. His vanguard, Hu Zun, went ahead with the forward army and fortified a position near Liaodong. Mounted scouts quickly brought word to Gongsun Yuan; he had Bei Yan and Yang Zuo post two armies of forty thousand each at Liaosui, dig a moat around the town, and surround the moat with a dense barrier of brambles and sharp stakes. Informed of Gongsun Yuan's measures, Sima Yi smiled and said, "The rebels will not fight; they want to wear us down. If their main forces are here, their havens should be empty, so let's head for Xiangping. When the rebels try to rescue it, we can hit them en route and thus score a great victory." He therefore guided the Wei troops along the path to Xiangping.

Gongsun Yuan's commander, Bei Yan, conferred with Yang Zuo and said, "If the Wei troops attack, let us not engage. Having come such a distance, they will be too short of grain and provender to hold out for long. Once their food is gone, they'll withdraw; a surprise attack then should put Sima Yi in our hands. A few years ago Sima Yi was locked in a standoff with the Riverlands army. He sat tight on the south bank of the River Wei, and Kongming finally died during the campaign. The same tactics should work now on him." During this conference a fresh report came in: "The Wei army has shifted to the south." Bei Yan was alarmed. "Then they know how few troops we have at Xiangping and have gone to raid our old camp. If we suffer a loss there, defense here is useless." Bei Yan broke camp and pursued the northern forces.

Mounted scouts rushed word to Sima Yi, but he only smiled and said, "They are moving into my trap!" He had Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei put two ambushes in place along the shore of the River Liao, and told them, "Strike together if the Liao troops come." The two commanders went to perform their assignment.

Soon Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei saw Bei Yan and Yang Zuo approaching. At the report of a bombard they attacked from two sides, furiously sounding their drums and roaring and waving their flags. From the left Xiahou Ba and from the right Xiahou Wei closed in for the kill. Bei Yan and Yang Zuo lost all heart for combat and fled in disarray. Reaching Crown Mountain, they met Gongsun Yuan arriving with his forces and reorganized themselves to face the enemy and resume battle. Bei Yan rode forth and taunted the northerners: "Traitors, enough tricks! Do you dare to fight or no?" Xiahou Ba raced against him, sword wheeling. The battle was brief. Bei Yan fell under Xiahou Ba's blade. The Liao army went to pieces, and Xiahou Ba's troops hunted them down. Gongsun Yuan fled

with his defeated soldiers into Xiangping, where he sealed himself in. The Wei army mounted siege from all sides.

It was the season of autumn rains, and a month of steady downpour had left the ground flooded to a depth of three spans. Boats carrying grain reached Xiangping direct from the mouth of the River Liao. The Wei troops, surrounded by water, could neither march nor maintain their positions. Left Field Marshal Pei Jing went into the main tent and said, "These rains have turned the camps to mud; the soldiers cannot stay here. I request permission to move the camps onto the hill ahead." Sima Yi answered angrily, "We are on the verge of capturing Gongsun Yuan. The camps must not be moved, and the next man to speak of it dies." Pei Jing withdrew, mollifying Sima Yi. Soon Right Field Marshal Chou Lian entered the main tent and said, "The men are suffering from the wetness. We appeal to the grand commandant to move the camps to some high point." Sima Yi in great anger replied, "How dare you contradict a direct order?" He ordered Chou Lian removed and executed. His head was hung at the camp entrance, and the whole army was chilled into silence.

Sima Yi ordered his southernmost positions to withdraw twenty *li* to enable the troops inside the city to come out, fetch firewood, and graze their oxen and horses. Captain Chen Qun questioned Sima Yi: "Earlier, Grand Commandant, to attack Shangyong you divided your army into eight units, and inside of eight days you had reached the town and captured Meng Da alive in a great victory. Now with forty thousand in armor, and after coming a great distance, instead of ordering an attack on their fortified town, you settle down for a long wait in the mud and even let the enemy out for firewood and grazing. I find myself at a loss to understand what the grand commandant has in mind." Sima Yi smiled and answered, "Don't you know anything about the art of war? At that time Meng Da had ample grain and few soldiers; and we had many troops and little grain, so we had to fight quickly. We struck where he least expected it and we won the day. But in this case the Liao troops are numerous and ours are few. The enemy is going hungry, not us. Why spend our strength in an attack? The right thing is to let them escape and then attack them. I have opened the door: allowing them access to firewood and grazing gives them their way out." Chen Qun expressed respectful admiration for this plan.

At this point Sima Yi sent to Luoyang for grain. The Wei ruler Cao Rui held court, and his courtiers said, "The recent autumn rains have continued for one month. Our forces are worn and weary. Sima Yi should be recalled and the campaign suspended." Cao Rui responded, "Grand Commandant Sima Yi is a skilled strategist with a sound plan for every contingency. Word that he has taken Gongsun Yuan should be coming any day. Your anxieties are misplaced, gentlemen." Accordingly, Cao Rui, not heeding the courtiers' protest, sent grain to the front.

Sima Yi was in his base camp. After several more days of rain the weather had cleared. That night Sima Yi went out of his tent and looked up at the sky. Suddenly he saw a meteor the size of a ladle shift its position several dozen spans, from northeast of Crown Mountain down to the southeast of Xiangping. The officers and men in the various camps were terrified. But Sima Yi was delighted and said to his commanders, "In five days I will put Gongsun Yuan to the sword right where the meteor fell. Tomorrow all forces shall join for an attack on the city!" The commanders had their orders.

As dawn approached, Sima Yi's troops surrounded the city and built earthen ramparts, dug tunnels, and erected bombard platforms and scaling towers. Day and night they pressed the attack, sweeping the city with arrows like swift rain. Inside, Gongsun Yuan, out of grain, had to butcher oxen

and horses to feed his sorely complaining men. Their general wish was not to defend the city but to take Yuan's head, deliver the city to the enemy, and surrender. Gongsun Yuan knew he was losing support; in growing apprehension he dispatched his prime minister, Wang Jian, and his imperial censor, Liu Fu, to the Wei base camp to ask for terms.

After being let down from the wall, the two officials came to declare their mission to Sima Yi: "If the grand commandant will retire twenty *li*, our lord and his vassals will surrender on their own." But Sima Yi retorted angrily, "Why didn't Gongsun Yuan come himself? This is outrageous!" He had guards execute the officials and return their heads to their followers, who then reported back to Gongsun Yuan. In great alarm Gongsun Yuan next sent Privy Counselor Wey Yan to the Wei camp.¹

Sima Yi was in his tent, flanked by his commanders. Wey Yan entered on his knees. He stopped inside the tent and pleaded: "We beg the grand commandant's majestic anger may be appeased if, on a specified day, we send the heir apparent, Gongsun Xiu, as hostage; after this the king and his vassals will give themselves up in bonds." Sima Yi responded, "There are five inevitables in war. If you can fight, you must fight; if not, you must defend. If you cannot defend, you must flee; if you cannot flee, you must surrender. If you cannot surrender, you must die! We have no need of your hostage." Roughly he commanded Wey Yan to carry his words back to Gongsun Yuan. The humiliated Wey Yan scurried off to report.

In view of the dire situation, Gongsun Yuan secretly worked out a plan with his son, Gongsun Xiu. Then he selected a thousand men and fled through the south gate of the city during the second watch. He headed southeast, relieved to find none of the enemy. But before he had made ten *li*, a bombard rang out from a hilltop and drums and horns split the air. A contingent of troops—Sima Yi in the center, Sima Shi to his left, Sima Zhao to his right—blocked the fleeing group. Sima Yi's two sons shouted: "Stand and surrender, traitors and rebels!" Gongsun Yuan panicked. Swinging his horse around, he tried to escape. But Hu Zun had already arrived. Ringed by Xiahou Ba and Xiahou Wei to the left, Zhang Hu and Yue Chen to the right, Gongsun Yuan and his son Xiu had no choice but to dismount and give themselves up.

From horseback Sima Yi said to his commanders, "A few days ago, on the third cyclical day, I saw a star fall here; now, on the night of the ninth, the sign is fulfilled." The commanders voiced their congratulations: "The grand commandant is a true genius!" Sima Yi handed down the order for the execution of Gongsun Yuan and Gongsun Xiu; and father and son, facing each other, submitted to their punishment. Sima Yi then shifted his forces to capture Xiangping. But Hu Zun had already entered the city, whose population welcomed him with burning incense and reverent bows as his soldiers followed behind.

Sima Yi conducted business in the government headquarters. He ordered the execution of Gongsun Yuan's entire clan as well as all officials who had conspired with him. More than seventy were beheaded. Then a writ was widely posted to reassure the people. Someone informed Sima Yi: "Jia Fan and Lun Zhi strenuously protested Yuan's decision to rebel and were executed for their pains." Accordingly, Sima Yi made a fief of the lands where their tombs stood and raised their sons and grandsons to eminence. Finally, Sima Yi used the wealth collected in the city treasury to reward his army before leading them home to Luoyang.

One night when the ruler of Wei was in his palace, a chill gust blew his lamps out during the third watch, and before him he saw Empress Mao and several score of palace maidens pleading for their lives. This vision subsequently caused Cao Rui to fall ill. As his condition worsened, he ordered the privy counselors and palace bureau directors, Liu Fang and Sun Zi, to assume control of all business of the central council.

Cao Rui next summoned a son of Cao Pi, the late Emperor Wen, Cao Yu, king of Yan, to serve as regent for the heir apparent Cao Fang. Cao Yu, a sincere and reserved man with a warm and agreeable manner, expressed unwillingness to undertake so great a responsibility. Cao Rui then summoned Liu Fang and Sun Zi and asked, "Who in my clan can undertake the regency?" These two officials had long received the favor of Cao Zhen while he was alive. "Cao Zhen's son, Cao Shuang, would be suitable," they recommended, and Cao Rui approved. The two officials then made another representation to the sovereign: "If you appoint Cao Shuang, you must send the king of Yan home to his fief." Cao Rui approved this suggestion, and the two officials requested the edict, which they bore to the king of Yan, saying, "We carry an imperial edict in the ruler's hand ordering Your Highness back to your fief. You are to start out no later than today and may return to the capital only by edict." The king shed tears and departed, and Cao Shuang was honored as regent and granted control of court administration.²

Cao Rui's condition was grave. He authorized a special envoy to summon Sima Yi back to court. On receiving the edict, Sima Yi went directly to Xuchang and into the presence of the Wei ruler. Cao Rui said to him, "Our one fear was that we would not live to receive you, but now we may die without regret." Sima Yi touched his head to the ground and addressed his sovereign: "En route I was informed that Your Majesty's health was poor. Alas, had I had wings I would have flown to the gates of the palace. To behold today the dragon visage is a blessing to your servant."

Cao Rui had the heir apparent, Cao Fang, the regent, Cao Shuang, and the privy counselors, Liu Fang and Sun Zi, called to the foot of his bed. Taking Sima Yi's hand, Cao Rui said, "Many years ago, when Liu Xuande lay dying in the city of Baidi, he entrusted his son Liu Shan to Zhuge Kongming, who devoted the rest of his life to the young king. A small kingdom in a corner of the realm thus set an example which a major dynasty must live up to if not surpass. Eight years old, our son, Cao Fang, is too young to govern the dynasty. It will be our good fortune if the grand commandant, the clan elder Cao Shuang, and the veteran vassals who won merit in the founding reign support the boy fully and so fulfill our heartfelt hopes."

Next, Cao Rui called Cao Fang to his side. "Sima Yi and I are as one, in sacred union, and you should show him the utmost respect," he said, and he ordered Sima Yi to take Cao Fang's hand and approach the bed. Cao Fang embraced Sima Yi's neck and would not release him. Cao Rui said, "Grand Commandant, you must never forget the love he bears you." His eyes filled with tears. Sima Yi touched his head to the ground and wept freely. The sovereign began losing consciousness and spoke no more. Feebly he pointed toward the prince, and then, having reigned thirteen years, he died at the age of thirty-six in the third year of Jing Chu.³ It was the last third of the first month of spring.

Directly, Sima Yi and Cao Shuang assisted the heir apparent, Cao Fang, to ascend the imperial throne. Cao Fang, whose style was Lanqing, was really a foster son of Cao Rui. He had been raised in secret in the palace; no one knew his origins. After assuming the throne, Cao Fang declared Cao Rui's temple title to be Emperor Ming and had him interred in the Gaoping tombs. He honored Lady Guo as imperial queen mother, and he established a new reign year, Zheng Shi.⁴ Sima Yi and Cao

Shuang jointly guided the administration. Cao Shuang served Sima Yi with great diligence, informing him in advance of all important matters. Cao Shuang's style was Zhaobo; from his youth he had gone freely in and out of the palace. Emperor Ming had always treasured Shuang's caution and diligence.

Cao Shuang had five hundred followers, among whom five had achieved prominence for their superficial elegance. The first was He Yan (Pingshu); the second Deng Yang (Xuan-mao), a descendant of Deng Yu; the third Li Sheng (Gongzhao); the fourth Ding Mi (Yanjing); the fifth Bi Gui (Zhaoxian). Another of his followers was Minister of Agriculture Huan Fan (Yuanze), a man of considerable intelligence and acumen, widely known as "Store of Wisdom." Cao Shuang placed great trust in these few men.

Once He Yan said to Cao Shuang, "No one else should share the authority Your Lord-ship holds lest there be dire consequences." Cao Shuang replied, "The late Emperor mandated both Lord Sima and me to protect the young prince. How can I renege on that agreement?" "Some time ago when your father and Sima Yi were fighting the Riverlands, Sima Yi humiliated your father several times; it finally killed him. This is known to you, of course." With a shock of recognition Cao Shuang saw the wisdom of He Yan's advice.

After gaining the agreement of his officials, Cao Shuang entered the imperial presence and said to Cao Fang, "Sima Yi has the merit and the virtue to be advanced to the position of imperial guardian." Cao Fang approved, and thus all military authority passed into the hands of Cao Shuang. Cao Shuang ordered his younger brother Cao Xi to take command of the central army, Cao Xun to be general for Military Defense, and Cao Yan to be permanent attendant cavalier.⁵ Each had a command of three thousand royal guards and permission to enter the imperial quarters of the palace at will. In addition, He Yan, Deng Yang, and Ding Mi formed the Secretariat; Bi Gui became commandant of the Capital Districts; and Li Sheng was appointed governor of Henan. Cao Shuang constantly consulted these five. The number of his followers increased daily. Sima Yi stayed out of public business on pretext of illness, and his sons resigned from office and lived privately.

Cao Shuang, He Yan, and their associates spent their days drinking and amusing themselves. Their formal dress and the implements they used were no different from those of the imperial court. For their personal use they preempted the choicest of the rare articles presented as tribute from various localities, sending the remainder on to the palace. Elegant ladies and palace maidens crowded their halls and apartments. Zhang Dang from the Inner Bureau catered to Cao Shuang's every whim and stealthily selected seven or eight of the late Emperor's attending ladies for Cao Shuang's official residence. Cao Shuang also chose thirty or forty singers and dancers, daughters of good families, to serve as his private entertainers. In addition, Cao Shuang built a multistoried painted gallery, had gold- and silverware fashioned for him, and employed several hundred artisans who worked day and night.

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At this time He Yan learned that there was a famous mathematician in Pingyuan named Guan Lu, and he desired to study the *Book of Changes* with him. Deng Yang, attending one of their study sessions, asked Guan Lu, "You claim to know the *Changes* well, yet you never deal with the meaning of the book's phrases. Why?" Guan Lu responded, "Those who understand the *Changes* do not speak of the *Changes*." He Yan smiled and praised the teacher, saying, "A succinct statement, quite to the

point." Thereupon he asked Guan Lu, "Would you divine with a hexagram and tell me whether or not I will reach the status of an elder lord?" He Yan also asked, "For several nights I have dreamed that scores of black flies gathered around my nose. What does it signify?"

Guan Lu answered, "The eight talented sons of the house of Gaoxin and the eight talented sons of the house of Gaoyang guided and supported the sage-king Shun during his reign. The Duke of Zhou stood beside the young king of Zhou during his reign. All these men of gentle goodwill, self-restrained and sincere, enjoyed manifold blessings. Today Your Lordship holds an honored position of much influence. But few cherish your virtue while many fear your power, and it could well be that this is not the way safely to seek the blessings that come to those who rule. Now then, the nose is a kind of hill. When it is high and secure, it can maintain its eminence. But flies flock to foul odors. A position perched too high may overturn. Can one be too wary? I would urge Your Lordship to 'seek wider counsel and amend your shortcomings,' taking care to take no step unless sanctioned by tradition. Only thus can you attain a position as one of the three elder lords and disperse the flies annoying you."⁶

At this point Deng Yang interjected angrily, "This is pedantic rigamarole!" Guan Lu retorted, "A 'pedant' can detect what is not yet born; 'rigamarole' may reveal what is unspoken." So saying, he departed with a contemptuous flick of his sleeves. The two officials burst out laughing and said, "Crazy old scholar!"

At home Guan Lu discussed the incident with his maternal uncle, who was quite perturbed. "What's the good of offending two such powerful officials as He Yan and Deng Yang?" he said. "I was talking with dead men; there is nothing to fear from them," was Guan Lu's reply. When his uncle pressed him for an explanation, Guan Lu continued, "When Deng Yang walks, his muscles are slack on the bones: his vital sinews have lost control over his flesh. When he stands, he tilts to one side as if he had no limbs: this is 'the agitated look of a haunted man.' A study of the signs of He Yan shows that his cloud-soul does not keep to its house, his blood does not invigorate his expression, and his germinal essence has vaporized. He has the look of a dead tree, 'the fading look of a haunted man.' Should I fear two men who will soon die?" The uncle denounced Guan Lu as a madman and left.

Cao Shuang, He Yan, and Deng Yang regularly followed the hunt. Shuang's younger brother Xi criticized him: "Elder brother, you are too important to the government to indulge in the pleasures of outings and hunts. Were someone to plot against your life, it might be too late..." Cao Shuang dismissed this warning saying, "With military power in my hands, there is nothing to fear." A second remonstrance from Minister of Agriculture Huan Fan was also ignored. At this time the Wei ruler, Cao Fang, changed the calendar, and the tenth year of the reign Zheng Shi became the first year of Jia Ping.⁷

Cao Shuang had monopolized power for ten years, but he had no information about Sima Yi's condition. It so happened that the ruler had just promoted Li Sheng to imperial inspector of Jingzhou, so Cao Shuang ordered him to take formal leave of Sima Yi and at the same time to find out about him whatever he could. Li Sheng proceeded to the official residence of the imperial guardian, where a gate attendant reported his arrival. Sima Yi said to his two sons, "Cao Shuang is trying to find out if I am really sick or not." He removed his cap, loosened his hair, and, wrapped in a bedcover, seated himself on his bed; he had two serving maids prop him up. He then invited Li Sheng into his chambers.

Li Sheng prostrated himself before the bed and said, "It has been too long since I have seen the

imperial guardian; I never imagined your condition could be so serious. The Son of Heaven has commanded me to serve as imperial inspector of Jingzhou, and I have come to take formal leave." Feigning misunderstanding, Sima Yi said, "Bingzhou is near the northern border. Take good care!" Li Sheng said, "Not Bingzhou, Jingzhou." Sima Yi smiled and asked, "You've just come from Bingzhou?" "No. Jingzhou on the River Han," Li Sheng responded. Sima Yi burst out laughing and said, "So you've come from Jingzhou!" Li Sheng said, "How could the imperial guardian have become so ill?" An attendant replied, "The imperial guardian is hard of hearing." "Let me have a writing brush and paper," Li Sheng said, and the attendants brought them. Li Sheng wrote a note and handed it up to Sima Yi, who smiled as he read it. "I am so ill, my hearing has failed. Take care of yourself on this mission," he said. He pointed to his mouth, and a serving woman brought him a drink. Sima Yi tried to suck it into his mouth, but it spilled over his front. Then, as if choking, he said, "I am failing, and my symptoms worsen. Death awaits me. My sons are useless; I look to you to instruct them. If you see the regent, I beg you to have him see after them." With those words he toppled over on the bed, his breathing labored. Li Sheng took leave and went back to inform Cao Shuang of his visit. "If the old one dies, my worries are over," Cao Shuang said with great satisfaction.

Sima Yi watched Li Sheng leave. Then he rose from the bed and said to his sons, "After Li Sheng's report Cao Shuang will never fear me. When he leaves the city on his next hunt, we can make our move!"⁸

Soon afterward Cao Shuang invited the Wei ruler to visit the Gaoping tombs and perform the sacrificial service to his late father. A grand entourage of major and minor officials accompanied the sovereign. Cao Shuang led his three younger brothers as well as his trusted associate He Yan and others. As the procession advanced under the protection of the Royal Guard, Minister of Agriculture Huan Fan confronted Cao Shuang, seizing his horse's bridle, and remonstrated with him: "Your Lordship controls the whole court guard. It is unwise for all your brothers to come out with you. There might be a revolt in the city. What will you do then?" Cao Shuang pointed the tip of his whip at the man and said harshly, "Who would dare? No more wild talk!"

That day Sima Yi rejoiced to see Cao Shuang leave the city. Losing no time, he rallied the veterans who had campaigned with him in the old days, along with with several dozen commanders of his own household. All followed him and his two sons to arrange Cao Shuang's assassination. Indeed:

Behind the sickroom doors he feels a sudden burst of health;
In the field he'll let his manly mettle shine again.

Would Cao Shuang survive the conspiracy against him?

READ ON.



Wei's Rule Is Transferred to the House of Sima; Jiang Wei Loses a Battle at Ox Head Mountain

THE RULER OF WEI, CAO FANG, left the city to pay his respects at the grave of his father, Emperor Ming. Afterward, he took his position at the head of the royal hunt. Accompanying the Emperor were Cao Shuang; Shuang's three younger brothers, Cao Xi, Cao Xun, and Cao Yan; Shuang's confidants He Yan, Deng Yang, Ding Mi, Bi Gui, Li Sheng, and others. The Royal Guard was attending. The details of the excursion were known to Sima Yi.

Delighted by the opportunity of an emptied court, Sima Yi went straight to the imperial household and, on the authority of the battle-axe empowering him as regent, ordered Minister of the Interior Gao Rou to occupy Cao Shuang's military base. Next, Sima Yi ordered the supervisor Wang Guan, to act as palace general, replacing Cao Xi. Sima Yi conducted the officials of the former reign into the rear chambers and declared before Queen Mother Guo that Cao Shuang had committed a crime deserving impeachment: trusted with the orphan sovereign by the late Emperor, he had betrayed that trust and had thus treacherously undermined the dynasty.

Shocked, Queen Mother Guo said, "The Son of Heaven has left the city. What shall we do?" Sima Yi responded, "Your servant's petition for the Emperor contains a plan for executing the traitors. Let the queen mother remain unperturbed." The queen mother, despite her fears, could only comply with Sima Yi's demand. Moving swiftly, Sima Yi ordered the grand commandant,¹ Jiang Ji, and the chief of the Secretariat, Sima Fu, to draft petitions, which he sent to the Inner Bureau for delivery to the Emperor outside the city. Sima Yi himself occupied the armory with a large force.

The household of Cao Shuang was soon informed of Sima Yi's moves. Cao Shuang's wife (nee Liu) came forward and urgently summoned the officials in residence. "The master is away, and Sima Yi has raised troops. What is his intent?" she asked them. Pan Ju, commander of the Gate Guards, responded, "Have no fear, madam. I myself shall investigate," and led several dozen archers to the tower above the main gate. Directly before him he saw Sima Yi leading a force past Cao Shuang's official residence. On Pan Ju's order his men shot to prevent Sima Yi from marching past. But Suen Qian, a lieutenant commander positioned behind Pan Ju, said, "Imperial Guardian Sima acts in behalf of the dynasty. Hold your arrows!" Again and again Suen Qian attempted to stay the archers, and finally Pan Ju ordered the shooting to stop. Sima Yi, protected by his son Zhao, passed before Cao Shuang's gate and marched out of the city. His force took up positions at the River Luo, guarding the floating bridge there.

One of Cao Shuang's captains, Luu Zhi, realized that a coup was in progress and went to speak to the military adviser Xin Chang:² "Sima Yi is staging a coup. What shall we do?" Xin Chang replied, "Let's take our own forces out to see the Son of Heaven." Luu Zhi approved of his advice.

Xin Chang returned in haste to his private chambers, where his older sister Xin Xian-ying asked

him, "What are you dashing about so madly for?" Xin Chang answered, "The Son of Heaven is away from the court, and the imperial guardian has sealed the city gates. He must be planning a revolt." Xianying responded, "Lord Sima may not be planning a revolt. He may mean only to kill Regent-Marshal Cao Shuang." Xin Chang said uneasily, "Well, we don't really know." "The regent is sure to lose in any struggle with Lord Sima," Xianying went on. Xin Chang said, "Captain Luu Zhi has told me to go with him to the Emperor, but I don't know whether to go or not." Xianying answered, "A man's primary obligation is to perform the duties of his office. Even a stranger in trouble deserves our sympathy. To deny the service owed to one's master is an evil thing to do." Xin Chang approved of her suggestion and with Luu Zhi led several dozen horsemen to the gate. There they executed Sima Yi's guard, seized control of the area, and went out. This action was reported to Sima Yi.

Sima Yi feared Huan Fan³ would also flee and consequently had him summoned. Huan Fan consulted with his son, who said, "It would be better to go out by the south gate and find the Emperor." Huan Fan accepted his advice and rode to the Pingchang Gate. He found it sealed; but the gate commander, Si Fan, had formerly been in Huan Fan's service. Huan Fan produced a bamboo document from his sleeve and said to him, "I have an edict from the queen mother. Open the gate at once!" "May I examine it?" Si Fan replied. Huan Fan answered harshly, "You once served me. How dare you ask such a thing?" Si Fan could only let Huan Fan through. Once past the wall, Huan Fan shouted back to Si Fan: "The imperial guardian is in revolt. Follow me as fast as you can!" But the astounded Si Fan could not overtake Huan Fan. Apprised of the incident, Sima Yi was alarmed. "The 'Store of Wisdom' has been emptied. What are we to do?" he asked. Jiang Ji answered, "The worthless horse is content in its stall! He was of no use to us."

Sima Yi then summoned Xu Yun and Chen Tai and said to them, "Go to Cao Shuang and tell him the imperial guardian seeks only to have the military power of his three brothers reduced." Xu Yun and Chen Tai departed.

Next, Sima Yi summoned the commandant of the Palace Halls, Yin Damu, and he ordered Jiang Ji to write a letter for him to take to Cao Shuang. Sima Yi instructed Yin Damu: "You are on good terms with Cao Shuang and therefore qualified for this assignment. Tell Shuang that Jiang Ji and I have sworn by the waters of the Luo that we have no further purpose in mind." Yin Damu left to carry out his task.

Cao Shuang was with his hunting hawks and dogs when word of the coup and the imperial guardian's petition reached him. Cao Shuang nearly fell from his horse with astonishment. The Inner Bureau representative kneeling before the Son of Heaven then presented the petition. Cao Shuang snatched it, tore open the wrapping, and ordered an imperial attendant to read it aloud. It said:

Sima Yi, First Field Marshal Who Conquers the West and imperial guardian, in fear and trembling, with his head to the ground, submits this petition. Years ago, when I returned from Liaodong, the late Emperor issued an edict authorizing Your Highness, Cao Shuang, myself, and others to enter his throne room. Sitting up, the late Emperor took my hand and expressed the deepest concern for the future of his house.

But now General Cao Shuang has violated Emperor Ming's testamentary charge and played havoc with the sacred precepts of the dynasty. As he monopolizes power in the administration, usurpation is taking shape in the palace. Under the general supervision of Zhang Dang of the Inner Bureau, he has gathered all lines of communication into his own

hands. He keeps watch over the supreme ruler and aims for the sceptre itself. The enmity in the royal family is turning kinsman against kinsman. The empire is a seething cauldron, and fear grips men's minds. This is far from what the late Emperor Ming intended in his edict to Your Highness and his charge to this vassal.

This vassal's life now nears its end, but I will not forget what was said in the past. Grand Commandant Jiang Ji and Secretary Sima Fu are both convinced that Cao Shuang has no thought for his sovereign and that his brothers should not control the policing of the palace. The queen mother in Yongning Palace has sanctioned my petition to her, thereby authorizing my actions.

I have summarily ordered those in authority and the chief of the Inner Bureau to divest Cao Shuang, Cao Xi, and Cao Xun of their officials and officers and return them to the status of simple lords to prevent any coercion against Your Majesty. Resort to any such means will be dealt with under military law. Despite my physical weakness, I have taken up military command and stationed forces at the floating bridge by the River Luo to watch for any irregularity. With all reverence I bring this to your attention and stand ready to do what your sagely wisdom may dictate.

The ruler of Wei, Cao Fang, heard Sima Yi's petition and said to Cao Shuang, "The imperial guardian has made his statement. How will you cope with him?" Dumbfounded, Cao Shuang turned to his two brothers and asked, "What shall we do?" Cao Xi replied, "I, your worthless younger brother, once reproached you on this matter. You clung to your illusions, refusing to listen—until now! No one is craftier than Sima Yi. Even Kongming could not get the better of him—how much less could we! My advice is to humble yourself before him and avoid certain death."

As Cao Xi spoke, the military adviser Xin Chang and Captain Luu Zhi arrived. Cao Shuang asked their views, and they answered, "They have the city sealed as tightly as an iron drum. Imperial Guardian Sima Yi has stationed his force by the floating bridge over the River Luo. There is no way for us to get back. We must choose our course now." Next, Minister of Agriculture Huan Fan rode swiftly up and said to Cao Shuang, "The imperial guardian has staged a coup. General, you might invite the Son of Heaven to grace the city of Xuchang and from there organize troops outside the capital to suppress Sima Yi's revolt." Cao Shuang said, "My whole family is in the city. How can I seek refuge elsewhere and appeal for aid?" Huan Fan responded, "Even an ordinary man seeks to survive when his life is threatened. Your Lordship attends the Son of Heaven, to whose command the entire empire is answerable. How can you return to a hopeless position?" Cao Shuang weighed the arguments but could reach no decision. Overcome by emotion, he wept.

Huan Fan continued, "The stay at Xuchang would be brief; however, there is enough grain in the city for several years. My lord, you have forces encamped elsewhere, just south of the pass. You have only to summon them. The chief commanding officer's seal of command I keep with me. Hurry, Your Lordship. Delay will destroy us." "Do not press me," Cao Shuang said. "Give me time to consider this carefully."

A while later Privy Counselor Xu Yun and Chief of the Secretariat Chen Tai arrived and declared to Cao Shuang, "The imperial guardian's only concern, General, is your excessive authority. He wants nothing more than to divest you of military authority. You may return to the city as soon as you like." Cao Shuang made no reply. Then he saw Palace Commandant Yin Damu arrive; the commandant said,

"The imperial guardian has sworn by the waters of the Luo that his purpose is limited to what has been stated. Grand Commandant Jiang's letter is here to verify it. General, renounce your military powers and return to your official quarters." Cao Shuang trusted to the good faith of these statements, but Huan Fan again warned, "This is a critical moment. Do not let outsiders talk you into going to your death."

Evening found Cao Shuang still undecided. He drew his sword and sighed and pondered. He wept all night; by dawn he had still failed to come to a decision. Huan Fan entered his tent and urged him again, "My lord, you have deliberated all night. It is time to decide." Throwing aside his sword, Cao Shuang said with a sigh, "I shall not take the field. I am satisfied to resign my office and live in wealth and comfort." Huan Fan cried out in frustration and left the tent. "Cao Zhen often boasted of his shrewd planning. But these three brothers are no filial sons of his!" Huan Fan exclaimed. He wept long and bitterly.

Xu Yun and Chen Tai ordered Cao Shuang to give them the seal and cord of office for Sima Yi, but when Shuang went to deliver the credentials, his first secretary, Yang Zong, snatched them and said sharply, "Relinquishing military power will not save Your Lord-ship from public execution." "The imperial guardian would never break faith with me," Cao Shuang insisted, and he surrendered the seal and cord to Xu Yun and Chen Tai, who in turn conveyed them to Sima Yi. Shuang's soldiers dispersed once the seal of command was gone, leaving Cao Shuang with only a handful of mounted officers.

When Cao Shuang reached the floating bridge, Sima Yi issued an order for Cao Shuang and his two brothers to return to their homes; all others were taken into custody pending the Emperor's disposition. Cao Shuang and his party then entered the city, but not a person was there to attend them. As Huan Fan approached the side of the bridge, Sima Yi pointed his whip at him and said, "The high officer Huan Fan. What makes you look so sad?" Huan Fan lowered his head and silently entered the city.

Sima Yi bade the Emperor move from his encampment into the city of Luoyang. Cao Shuang and his brothers, after returning home, were locked in behind their gates; eight hundred townsmen were settled on their estate. Cao Shuang was deeply depressed. Cao Xi said to him, "Our households have no grain. Elder brother, could you write to the imperial guardian to borrow some? If he consents, it means he has no intention of harming us." Cao Shuang sent the appeal, and Sima Yi had one hundred bushels delivered to Cao Shuang's quarters in response. Cao Shuang, overjoyed, said, "Lord Sima does not intend to harm us." And his anxiety lifted.

Earlier Sima Yi had imprisoned Zhang Dang of the Inner Bureau to answer for his crimes. During the questioning Zhang Dang said, "I did not act alone. My coconspirators in the usurpation were He Yan, Deng Yang, Li Sheng, Bi Gui, and Ding Mi, these five." On this evidence, Sima Yi arrested He Yan and the others and subjected them to interrogation. They all confessed that a revolt was to have taken place within three months. Sima Yi had long wooden cangues fitted around the necks of all five. Next Si Fan, one of the city gate commanders, came forward with an accusation: "Huan Fan forged an edict and left the city, accusing the imperial guardian of plotting a revolt." Sima Yi said, "Those who accuse falsely must be punished for the crime alleged." So saying, he threw Huan Fan into prison with the others. Finally, Sima Yi had Cao Shuang and his brothers executed in the public market along with their co-conspirators. Their clans were exterminated, and their wealth confiscated for the treasury.

Among the victims was Cao Shuang's half brother Wenshu, who had been married to a daughter of

Xiahou Ling. Widowed young, she had borne no children. Ling wanted her to marry again, but she cut off her ear to mark her vow to remain chaste. At the time of Cao Shuang's execution Ling tried to arrange another marriage for her, so she cut off her nose. In their distress her family said to her, "Man's life in the world is light as the dust that moves from leaf to leaf. How can you cause yourself such pain? Remember, too, that your late husband's clan has been wiped out by Sima Yi in public executions. For whom are you defending your chastity?" The woman wept and said, "I have been taught that 'humanity means fidelity to one's integrity, for better or worse; honor means an unchanging heart and mind even if survival is at stake. ' The house of Cao was prosperous when I committed myself to remain faithful to the end. How can I abandon them in their hour of destruction? I will not behave as beasts do." To honor this woman's constancy, Sima Yi gave her a child to adopt to preserve the name of Cao. A poet of later times wrote:

Slight as dust on restless grass, she saw with vision true,
Daughter of the Xiahou: honor mountain-firm.
You manly ones outdone by skirt and pin,
Look down at your beards and sweat for shame!⁴

After the execution of Cao Shuang, Grand Commandant Jiang Ji said, "Offenders remain. Luu Zhu and Xin Chang killed the gate guard and fled; and Yang Zong still has the seal he stole. They must not get away with these crimes." "They acted for their lords; they are honorable men," Sima Yi replied, and he restored their previous offices. Xin Chang sighed and said, "But for elder sister's counsel, I would have betrayed my allegiance." A poet of later times has left these lines in praise of Xin Xianying's advice.

"The liege man for his keep must study to requite
His liege with perfect duty at his liege's day of fate. "
Xianying of the house of Xin counseled Xin Chang so,
And all men ever since have praised her spirit bold.

After pardoning Xin Chang and certain others, Sima Yi issued the following instruction: "All ordinary retainers in the household of Cao Shuang are herewith spared; officials will be restored to their former positions." Soldiers and civilians remained in their several occupations, and order was restored in the court and throughout the land. The violent fates of He Yan and Deng Yang bore out the predictions of Guan Lu. As a poet praising Guan Lu later wrote,

Tradition tells this worthy sage unriddled every sign:
Guan Lu of Pingyuan could reach a world unseen.
"Agitated," "Evanescent," he judged of He and Deng,
Knowing them for dead men before their deaths were known.⁵

Meanwhile, the ruler of Wei, Cao Fang, appointed Sima Yi as his prime minister, conferring upon him the Nine Dignities.⁶ Sima Yi protested strenuously, but Cao Fang prevailed, requiring Sima Yi and his two sons to manage jointly the affairs of state. A thought then occurred to Sima Yi: "Although

Cao Shuang's entire clan has been eradicated, Xiahou Xuan remains in control of Yongzhou⁷ and neighboring regions. He is a kinsman of Shuang's. Could we defend ourselves if he revolted? He must be disposed of." Sima Yi issued an urgent edict to Yongzhou recalling General Xiahou Xuan, Conqueror of the West, to Luoyang for a conference.

The edict so alarmed Xiahou Ba, Xiahou Xuan's uncle, that he went into revolt with three thousand of his own men. The imperial inspector on duty in Yongzhou, Guo Huai, immediately led a force out to confront Xiahou Ba. Guo Huai rode forth and railed upon the rebel: "You are a member of the imperial family of Wei. Has the Son of Heaven ever wronged you? How dare you betray him and revolt!" Xiahou Ba shouted back in scorn, "My grandfather spent his life toiling for the ruling house. Who is this Sima Yi, this nobody, to exterminate my cousin's clan and then come for me! He will soon be thinking of usurping the throne. What 'revolt' is there in loyally suppressing treason?"⁸

Guo Huai angrily raised his spear and charged, coming for Xiahou Ba headlong. Xiahou Ba bared his blade and entered the field. In less than ten passes-at-arms, Guo Huai fled defeated, and Xiahou Ba pursued him. Suddenly, Ba heard shouts from his rear force and turned his mount: Chen Tai was closing in on him. Guo Huai turned back at this point, catching Ba between two companies. Xiahou Ba fled in defeat, losing most of his men. With nowhere else to turn, he went to Hanzhong to surrender to the Second Emperor of Shu-Han.⁹

The defection was reported to Jiang Wei. At first mistrustful, he sent someone to investigate before permitting Xiahou Ba to enter the city. Xiahou Ba prostrated himself before Jiang Wei and tearfully told his story. Jiang Wei said, "In ancient times Wei Zi left the house of Zhou and earned immortal fame. Sir, if you can help restore the house of Han, your name will do the ancients proud." Then Jiang Wei entertained Xiahou Ba at a banquet. During the festivities Jiang Wei asked him, "Now that Sima Yi and his sons hold power, do they have their eye on our kingdom?" Xiahou Ba responded, "The old traitor is plotting to make himself emperor and has no time to spare for matters outside his domain. However, in the kingdom of Wei two young men just entering manhood have lately come to the fore. Given commands, they could pose grave problems for the Southland and the Riverlands." "Who are they?" Jiang Wei asked.

Xiahou Ba replied, "The first has been assigned to the palace library. He is Zhong Hui (styled Shiji) from Changshe in Yingchuan, the son of former Imperial Guardian Zhong Yao. He proved himself both brave and sensible even as a boy. Zhong Yao once brought his two sons into the presence of Emperor Wen. At the time Hui was seven, his bother Yu, eight. Yu was so overcome by the Emperor's presence that sweat flowed down his face. 'Why do you sweat?' the Emperor asked him. Zhong Yu answered, 'From fear and trembling—the sweat comes forth like juice.' Next, the Emperor asked Zhong Hui, 'Why do you not sweat?' Zhong Hui answered, 'From fear and trembling—the sweat dares not appear.' The Emperor was struck by this reply. When Zhong Hui was a little older, he delighted in reading military texts and gained a great understanding of strategy. Both Sima Yi and Jiang Ji admire his ability.

"The second young man," Xiahou Ba continued, "is presently a lower official. He comes from Yiyang, and his name is Deng Ai, his style Shizai. He lost his father while still a boy. Deng Ai has always had great ambition. On seeing a high hill or a wide dale, he will instinctively size up the best places for massing troops, for storing grain, for placing ambushes, and so forth. Others make fun of him, but Sima Yi values his ability and has him take part in his strategic decisions. Deng Ai has a speech defect: every time he introduces a petition he stutters: 'Ai... Ai...' Sima Yi once teased him:

'You say,' Ai... Ai... 'Just how many Ais are there?' Deng Ai replied, 'They say,' O phoenix! O phoenix! 'when really there is only one phoenix. ' Deng Ai's mind is quick and alert in this way. He and Zhong Hui are the two men who may prove troublesome to you.' Jiang Wei smiled as he replied to Xiahou Ba's account, 'I don't think those young pups worth our concern!'

After this, Jiang Wei brought Xiahou Ba to Chengdu, where they came before the Second Emperor. Jiang Wei addressed the sovereign: 'Sima Yi has compassed the death of Cao Shuang and tried to trick Xiahou Ba into returning to Luoyang. That is why he has surrendered to Your Majesty. At this time Sima Yi and his two sons hold power at court. Cao Fang is feeble and lacks courage. The kingdom of Wei has little chance of surviving. I, your servant, in Hanzhong many years, have superb troops and ample supplies. I want to command an imperial army and, with Xiahou Ba as my guide and counselor, bring the northern heartland under our control and restore the house of Han. I would thus requite Your Majesty for your kindness and fulfill the late prime minister's purpose.'

To this proposal Chief of the Secretariat Fei Yi objected: 'Recently Jiang Wan and Dong Yun passed away in succession. Our domestic government needs people. It is better to have Jiang Wei defend his positions and not act rashly.' 'Not at all!' Jiang Wei retorted. 'Life passes more swiftly than a fleet stallion glimpsed through a crack. If we continue to procrastinate, will we ever recover the heartland?' Fei Yi answered, 'Sunzi has said, 'Know the other, know yourself; never know defeat! ' None of us can compare to the late prime minister in framing long-range strategy. If even he failed to recover the heartland, how could we succeed?'

Jiang Wei went on, 'I've been in Longshang many years and I know the Qiang people well. If we engage their help, even though we may not recover the north, all the land west of the Longshan Mountains will come cleanly into our hands.' The Second Emperor said to Jiang Wei, 'If you really mean to go to war with Wei, then give me your full loyalty and unstinting effort; do nothing to weaken morale or undermine my command.' After this, Jiang Wei took the written mandate and left the court; with Xiahou Ba he returned to Hanzhong to plan the expedition.

Jiang Wei said, 'First we must send a man to work out a treaty with the Qiang. Then we will move through Xiping toward Yongzhou, where we must build two walled forts—well guarded—to serve as salients at the foot of the Qu Hills. I will dispatch all our grain and provender to the mouth of the river. We will follow the late prime minister's method, advancing in orderly stages.' It was the eighth month of the year (A. D. 249). Jiang Wei first sent generals Gou An and Li Xin in joint command of fifteen thousand troops to the Qu Hills to build the forts. Gou An defended the eastern fort, Li Xin the western.

Scouts soon informed the imperial inspector of Yongzhou, Guo Huai, of the Riverlands army's advance. Guo Huai sent the information on to Luoyang and at the same time dispatched his lieutenant commander, Chen Tai, to engage the westerners with fifty thousand men. Gou An and Li Xin marched against the northerners but, having too few to oppose them, quickly retreated into their forts. Chen Tai ordered his men to besiege the forts; he also cut off the supply route from Hanzhong. Behind their walls Gou An and Li Xin soon began to run short of grain.

Guo Huai himself arrived to reinforce Chen Tai. After looking over the terrain, Huai felt elated and in discussions with Chen Tai at the base he said, 'Their forts are in hilly terrain on high ground where water is scarce; they'll have to come out for it. If we can interdict their water upstream, they will perish.' He had his men dig a trench and cut the flow of water to the fort, forcing Li Xin and his troops to look for water outside the fort. Thus the Yongzhou soldiers tightened their siege. Li Xin's

struggle to get through the enemy line failed and he withdrew. Gou An's fort was also dry, so he joined with Li Xin. Together they came forth and massed in one place; the two western commanders fought the besiegers for hours but finally withdrew again.

The Riverlands soldiers had grown desperate for water. Gou An said to Li Xin, "I wonder why Field Marshal Jiang Wei's force hasn't arrived." Li Xin replied, "I'm going to risk breaking through to get help." At the head of a few dozen riders, Li Xin opened the gate and came out fighting, hurling his small force against the overwhelming blockade. Fighting for his life, he succeeded in getting past it, all alone and badly wounded; his followers perished. That night a storm blew thick clouds in from the north, and a heavy snow fell. The Riverlands soldiers were able to fill their stomachs with grain cooked in the melted snow.

After bursting through the encirclement and traveling two days along the bypaths of the western hills, Li Xin met up with Jiang Wei and his men. Bending low to the ground, Xin said, "Our two forts by the Qu Hills are surrounded by Wei forces. They have cut our water lines. Luckily we had snow and, melting it down, we scraped by. Things couldn't have been much worse." Jiang Wei explained, "Don't think I moved slowly. The Qiang missed the rendezvous, making us late." Jiang Wei had Li Xin escorted back to the Riverlands to recover from his injuries.

Jiang Wei turned to Xiahou Ba: "The Qiang haven't come, and the Qu Hills are surrounded. What should we do?" Xiahou Ba answered, "If we wait for the Qiang, both forts will fall. My guess is that all Yongzhou troops have joined the attack on the forts and must have left the chief city of Yongzhou ill defended. General, why not march directly to Ox Head Mountain and slip in behind the city? Guo Huai and Chen Tai will have to come back and rescue Yongzhou, and the siege will be lifted." "An excellent plan!" Jiang Wei exclaimed and led his men toward Ox Head Mountain.

Chen Tai, seeing that Li Xin had fought his way out of the fort, said to Guo Huai, "If Li Xin reports their plight to Jiang Wei, he will assume our men are all in the Qu Hills and will try to slip by Ox Head Mountain and surprise us from the rear. May I propose, General, that you take one company to hold the River Yao and cut off the Riverlands grain supply? I will detach half my force and attack the enemy at Ox Head Mountain. Once they know their supply line is cut, they will flee." Guo Huai approved his plan and quietly took control of the River Yao. Chen Tai led a company of men toward Ox Head Mountain.

Jiang Wei's forces reached Ox Head. Suddenly he heard shouts from his vanguard; scouts told him that the northerners had blocked the road. Jiang Wei hurried to the front to study the situation. He found Chen Tai bellowing at him: "Planning to surprise Yongzhou? We've been waiting for you all this while!" Angrily Jiang Wei raised his spear and charged Chen Tai. Chen Tai met him with broad sweeps of his blade. After three passes Chen Tai fled in defeat, and Jiang Wei motioned his men to hunt down Chen Tai's soldiers. When the enemy retreated up the mountain, Jiang Wei recalled his men and encamped at its base.

Each day Jiang Wei sent his men to challenge the Yongzhou troops, but the conflicts produced no victor. Xiahou Ba said to Jiang Wei, "This is no place for a long siege. These indecisive clashes day after day are only part of a plan to weaken us. They are planning a surprise. We had better pull back and rethink our strategy." At that moment scouts reported that Guo Huai had taken the River Yao and blocked all Riverlands grain supplies. Jiang Wei, caught by surprise, had Xiahou Ba retreat at once while he protected the rear.

Chen Tai divided his forces into five armies and hurried back toward Ox Head. Jiang Wei alone

resisted the joint attacks of the five armies and tied them down. Chen Tai maneuvered his men up the mountain and began hurling rocks and arrows down on the Riverlands force. Jiang Wei retreated to the river, where Guo Huai attacked him with blow upon blow, thrust upon thrust, as the northern troops sealed off his escape. Jiang Wei fought desperately, but after losing more than half his men, he fled toward Yangping Pass. At the pass another company confronted him; the general at their head charged him with leveled sword. He had a round face and large ears, a flat mouth and thick lips. Under his left eye was a black mole out of which a dozen fine hairs grew. The man was a Sima Shi, eldest son of Sima Yi and general of the Flying Cavalry.

Angrily Jiang Wei shouted, "You calf! How dare you block my way!" Whipping his mount and aiming his spear, he went straight for Sima Shi. Sima Shi met him, sword in play. They fought, and Sima Shi fell back. Jiang Wei escaped and continued toward the pass, and men atop the wall opened the gate and let him through. Sima Shi followed up to the pass. From both sides hidden archers shot at his troops, ten bolts at a time, using the repeating bow Kongming had designed before his death. Indeed:

How could Wei stave off defeat
By the ten-bolt device handed down years back?

Would Sima Shi survive the battle?¹⁰

READ ON.



***Ding Feng in the Snowstorm Uses Short Blades;
Sun Jun at the Banquet Works a Secret Plan***

HOW DID SIMA SHI'S ARMY come to intercept Jiang Wei's flight? Earlier, Jiang Wei's advance on Yongzhou had been reported at once to the Wei court by Guo Huai, imperial inspector of Yongzhou. The Wei ruler, Cao Fang, and Sima Yi had then agreed that Sima Shi should take fifty thousand men to defend the province. En route Sima Shi learned that Guo Huai had driven back the Riverlands force. Sensing opportunity, Sima Shi attacked the retreating troops, chasing them all the way to Yangping Pass. At the pass, however, the western forces struck back with their repeating crossbows. From both sides more than one hundred hidden marksmen shot simultaneous volleys of ten poison arrows, and crossbowmen on both flanks added their bolts. Northern men and their mounts fell in untold numbers. In the confusion Sima Shi managed to make his escape.

Meanwhile, in his Qu Hills fort, Riverlands commander Gou An, seeing no help coming, opened his gates and surrendered. Jiang Wei, whose losses numbered in the tens of thousands, led his defeated army back to Hanzhong and encamped there. Sima Shi returned to Luoyang.

In autumn, the eighth month of the third year of Jia Ping (A. D. 251), Sima Yi fell gravely ill. He called his two sons to his bedside and instructed them: "After years of service to the Wei, I was made imperial guardian, the highest civil office a vassal can hold. Many suspected my fidelity, to my great sadness. After my death, the two of you will have to manage the government well. Take care, great care!" So saying, he passed away. His sons, Sima Shi and Sima Zhao, officially informed the Wei ruler, Cao Fang. Cao Fang provided for a grand funeral service and bestowed posthumous honors on the imperial guardian. He appointed Sima Shi his regent-marshal and authorized him to supervise the Secretariat's most sensitive decisions; Sima Zhao was made superior general of the Flying Cavalry.

. . . .

The ruler of Wu, Sun Quan, initially had made Sun Deng his heir apparent. Deng was the son of Lady Xu. Deng, however, had died in the fourth year of Chi Wu,¹ and so the next son, Sun He, had become heir to the house. Sun He was the son of Lady Wang from Langye. He had bad relations with Princess Quan, however, and she spread evil rumors about him. The result was that Sun Quan removed Sun He as heir apparent; He subsequently died of vexation. The third son, Sun Liang, was then confirmed as heir apparent. He was the son of Lady Pan. By this time Lu Xun, Zhuge Jin, and other leading figures had passed away, and all matters great and small were left to Zhuge Ke.²

In the autumn of the first year of Tai Yuan,³ on the first day of the eighth month, a great storm suddenly struck, blowing rivers and lakes into great billows and flooding flatlands to a depth of eight spans. Pines and cypresses that had been planted at the Sun clan's ancestral tombs were uprooted by

the winds and blown to the south gate of Jianye on the main road. Sun Quan fell ill from the shock. In the fourth month of the following year, his condition graver, he called Imperial Guardian Zhuge Ke and the chief commanding officer, Lü Dai, to his beside and instructed them on the handling of the government in the future. When Sun Quan had finished speaking, he was no more. He had reigned for twenty-four years, reaching the age of seventy-one. By the Shu-Han calendar it was the fifteenth year of Yan Xi.⁴ A poet of later times left these lines about Sun Quan:

The purple beard, the gem green eyes, hailed a hero true;
And Sun Quan's vassal-officers freely gave their love.
One score and four he reigned, the Southland king:
A dragon coiled, a tiger poised below the mighty Jiang.

After Sun Quan's death, Zhuge Ke instated Sun Liang as emperor. A general amnesty was proclaimed, and the reign year was changed to Jian Xing, year 1.⁵ Sun Quan was posthumously titled Great August Emperor and buried at Jiangling. These events were soon reported in Luoyang.

When Sima Shi heard that Sun Quan was dead, he immediately began discussing a military expedition against the Southland.⁶ Chief Secretary Fu Gu said, "The Southland is defended by a formidable river; the late emperors' repeated attempts at conquest always failed their hopes. Better for each kingdom to guard its borders." Sima Shi said, "The way of Heaven brings great changes every thirty years. How can this three-way division of the realm last forever? I am for invading." Sima Zhao said, "With Sun Quan lately gone and Sun Liang still a boy without firm purpose, there is an opportunity to strike." And so Sima Shi ordered Wang Chang, General Who Conquers the South, to attack Nanjun with one hundred thousand soldiers. At the same time he ordered Hu Zun, General Who Conquers the East, to attack Dongxing with another hundred thousand. Finally, he ordered Controller of the South Field Marshal Guanqiu Jian to attack Wuchang with one hundred thousand men. The three field armies set forth. Sima Shi also sent his younger brother Sima Zhao to serve as first field marshal with supreme authority over the three armies.

It was the winter of the year, the twelfth month, when Sima Zhao reached the border of the Southland. He stationed his forces and summoned Wang Chang, Hu Zun, and Guanqiu Jian to his tent to plan the next step. Zhao said, "In Dongxing district, the Southland's most vital point, they have erected a defensive shore barrier fortified on either end to protect Lake Chao from the rear. My lords, you must think through your tactics." So saying, he ordered Wang Chang and Guanqiu Jian to fan out with ten thousand men each. "Do not advance for now," Sima Zhao said. "Wait until we take Dongxing; then we will advance together." The two generals accepted their assignment and departed. Sima Zhao had Hu Zun take the vanguard and lead the way for the three armies. Sima Zhao told Hu Zun, "First we must throw a floating bridge over the river to take the Dongxing barrier. Seizing the two forts would be a great achievement." Hu Zun went to carry out his charge.

Meanwhile Zhuge Ke, the Southland imperial guardian, conferred with his military about the approach of the three northern armies. General Who Pacifies the North Ding Feng said, "Dongxing is a vital point. If we lose it, Nanjun and Wuchang could fall." Zhuge Ke replied, "I agree fully. My lord, take three thousand marines from our river forces. I'll send three armies after you in support—Lü Ju, Tang Zi, and Liu Zan each with ten thousand horse and foot. A string of bombard shots will signal their onset. I myself will follow up in force." As commanded, Ding Feng detailed three

thousand marines to thirty vessels and headed for Dongxing.

The northern vanguard under Hu Zun, crossing by the floating bridge, managed to establish itself at the shore barrier. Hu Zun then sent Huan Jia and Han Zong to attack the two forts—the left defended by Southland commander Quan Duan and the right defended by Liu Lüe. The two forts, solid and imposing, withstood the most furious assaults. Commanders Quan and Liu, seeing the size of Wei's attacking force, did not venture forth but defended their outworks stoutly. Hu Zun encamped at Xutang. It was the dead of winter. Snow fell heavily.

Hu Zun had gathered his commanders for a banquet, when he was informed that thirty southern boats were moving up the river. Hu Zun went to study the scene and saw the boats paralleling the shore, each carrying about one hundred men. He returned to his tent and said to his commanders, "Nothing to fear—no more than three thousand." He sent a minor commander to investigate and resumed drinking.

Ding Feng, leading his boats in a string on the river, said to his lieutenant, "This is the day for men of courage to make a name, to win wealth and honor!" He ordered his men to remove their armor and helmets, leave their spears behind, and retain only their short daggers. The Wei soldiers laughed at the sight and made no move to defend themselves. Suddenly the report of three bombards rang out. Ding Feng drew his sword and raced ahead, leaping onto the shore. His men followed, daggers bared, and fell upon the Wei camp before the soldiers there could mobilize to defend it. In front of his tent Han Zong strove to meet the attack with his halberd, but Ding Feng seized him and felled him with one stroke of his sword. Huan Jia then swung in from the left and tried to spear Ding Feng, but Feng took hold of the shaft; Huan Jia left his weapon and fled. Ding Feng hurled his sword, striking Huan Jia's left shoulder. Huan Jia turned and fell, and Ding Feng overtook him and stabbed him to death. The three thousand Southland marines wreaked havoc in the Wei camp. Hu Zun fled on horseback by the nearest route. The bulk of the Wei troops scrambled onto the floating bridge, but it gave way and most of them drowned in the river. Numbers more fell in the snow and perished. The Southland reaped a harvest of wagons, horses, and weapons. When Sima Zhao, Wang Chang, and Guanqiu Jian learned of the debacle at Dongxing, they retreated.

Zhugé Ke, arriving at Dongxing with his force, reassembled the companies and rewarded the troops. Then he addressed the commanders: "Sima Zhao has returned north in defeat. It is time for an advance on the heartland." He sent an envoy to the Riverlands to solicit Jiang Wei's cooperation in a joint attack on the north, promising to divide the conquered realm with the west. At the same time he mobilized two hundred thousand men for the invasion.

On the eve of departure Zhugé Ke noticed a whitish trail of vapor emanating from the ground, blanking out the road his armies were to take. Jiang Yan said, "This vapor is a white rainbow, and it signifies the loss of troops. Imperial Guardian, you should return to court. You should not attack Wei." Zhugé Ke said angrily, "How dare you speak of ill omens and lower the men's fighting spirit?" and he ordered the guards to execute Jiang Yan. The many appeals in Jiang Yan's behalf, however, persuaded Zhugé Ke simply to demote the offender to commoner status. He then urged his soldiers to advance.

Ding Feng said, "Xincheng guards the main avenue into Wei. If we take it, Sima Shi will lose all will to fight." Zhugé Ke was delighted and sent his soldiers against the town. When the commander guarding the gate, Zhang Te, saw the mass of southern troops before him, he sealed the gate tight and reinforced his guard. Zhugé Ke ordered his men to lay siege. Swift riders reported the emergency in

Luoyang. First Secretary Yu Song informed Sima Shi: "Zhuge Ke has Xincheng surrounded, but let us delay engaging him. The southern troops have marched a long way and their food is running low. When it's used up, they will leave. If we strike then, we will rout them. But border defenses on the west must be strengthened." Sima Shi approved and ordered Sima Zhao to take a company to help Guo Huai defend against Jiang Wei. Meanwhile, Guanqiu Jian and Hu Zun held off the Southland army.

After besieging Xincheng for several months without success, Zhuge Ke issued an order to his commanders: "Attack in full strength. Slackers will be executed." The commanders pressed the attack with renewed energy, and the northeast corner of the wall began to buckle. Inside, Zhang Te decided on a plan. He sent a persuasive representative to the Southland camp with a census register and other documents. The envoy said to Zhuge Ke, "It is our practice in Wei for a town under siege to defend itself for one hundred days without aid. After that the commander may surrender without his family being incriminated in his disgrace. Your siege has lasted more than ninety days. If you can maintain it a few more days, my master will lead all his soldiers out to surrender. Here are the census register and other documents, which I tender now ahead of time." Zhuge Ke believed the envoy and suspended his attack on Xincheng.

Having tricked the enemy into holding back, Zhang Te had houses inside the town pulled down for materials to repair the damaged wall. Then he mounted the wall and denounced the attackers: "We still have six months' grain. Would we ever surrender to the Southland dogs? All-out war can't hurt us now!" In response Zhuge Ke angrily ordered a fresh assault on Xincheng. From the wall arrows rained down on the Southland soldiers. One struck Zhuge Ke square in the forehead and he tumbled from his horse. The commanders rescued him from the field and got him back to camp, his wound wide open.

The Southland soldiers had lost their will to fight, and the punishing summer heat made them sick. When Zhuge Ke's wound began to heal, he wanted to pursue the attack, but one of his lower officers told him, "The men are too sick to fight." Zhuge Ke said angrily, "The next to speak of sickness dies!" These words became known among the soldiers, and large numbers deserted. Suddenly it was reported that Field Marshal Cai Lin had defected to Wei with his force. Shocked, Zhuge Ke made a personal inspection of his camps: the faces of his men, sallow and distended, bore the marks of severe illness. And so he brought the army home to the Southland. News of this retreat reached Guanqiu Jian, who pursued the southerners in full force and took a heavy toll of the homeward-bound soldiers.⁷

In the Southland Zhuge Ke, too humiliated to appear in court, feigned illness. The Southland ruler, Sun Liang, visited his residence and asked about his health; civil and military officials came and paid their respects. Zhuge Ke, fearful of public censure, made a thorough investigation of all offenses, sending minor offenders to the border and executing major ones as examples. As a result, the ranks of officialdom were paralyzed with fear. In addition, Zhuge Ke appointed his trusted commanders Zhang Yue and Zhu En to direct the Royal Guard, which served as his personal police force.

Sun Jun (Ziyuan) was the son of Sun Gong and the great-grandson of Sun Jing, younger brother of Sun Jian.⁸ Sun Quan had loved Sun Jun and had put him in command of the Royal Guard. Now when Sun Jun heard that Zhuge Ke had transferred this command to Zhang Yue and Zhu En, he was outraged. Master of Ceremony Teng Yin, who was at odds with Zhuge Ke, took this occasion to say to Sun Jun, "Zhuge Ke uses his monopoly of power with unrestrained cruelty. He has killed some of the

elder lords and cannot be expected to remain loyal to the Emperor. My lord, as a member of the royal family, why don't you do now what must be done?" Sun Jun replied, "I have been meaning to take action for some time. I will petition the Emperor for the authority to execute him."

Following this, Sun Jun and Teng Yin came before the Southland ruler, Sun Liang, and secretly submitted their petition. Sun Liang responded, "When we see this man, we too feel fear and have often wished to remove him but have never found it convenient. Now you gentlemen, if you are truly loyal and honorable, may take the necessary measures in secret." Teng Yin said, "Your Majesty, hold a banquet and place guards behind the wall hangings. Throw a cup as a signal and have him killed then and there; it will spare us future trouble." Sun Liang approved the suggestion.

Since returning in defeat, Zhuge Ke had remained home on pretext of illness; his mental state was troubled, his concentration poor. One day by chance he went out of his central hall and came upon a man garbed in hemp and wearing white mourning cloth. Because the man was entering his dwelling, Zhuge Ke questioned him harshly. The man was startled and could not explain himself. When Zhuge Ke had him taken for interrogation, the man said, "I have come to find a Buddhist monk to perform a memorial service for my father, who has recently passed away. I saw the temple and went in, never dreaming it was the imperial guardian's residence—I have no idea how I came to be here." Zhuge Ke angrily summoned the gate guards and questioned them. "There are several dozen of us," they answered. "We carry spears and secure the gates. We are never away from them, not for a moment. We never saw a single person come through." Zhuge Ke was furious, and had the entire corps executed, including the trespasser.

That night Zhuge Ke could not sleep. Suddenly he heard peals in the main hall, much like thunder. When he went to look, he saw the main beam of the house had split in two. Startled, he returned to his bedchamber. A chilling gust of wind blew by; he could see the man in hemp and the gate guards carrying their heads in their hands, chiding him for having them killed. Zhuge Ke fainted with fright and revived only much later.

The next morning when washing himself, Zhuge Ke smelled blood in the basin water. At his insistence, the serving maids changed the water dozens of times, but the odor remained. Fear and perplexity tormented him. At this time he was informed that an envoy from the Son of Heaven had come to summon him to a royal banquet. Zhuge Ke ordered his carriage readied. He was about to go out of his door, when a tawny dog gripped his clothing in its teeth and yelped as if it were a man crying. "Is the dog trifling with me?" he said and angrily ordered his attendants to drive the animal off. Then he mounted his carriage and departed. After advancing a few paces, he noticed a white rainbow before the carriage, like a white ribbon reaching from the ground into the sky. Zhuge Ke watched it in amazement. His trusted commander Zhang Yue came to the front of the carriage and whispered to him, "This banquet in the palace—who knows what it bodes? Perhaps it would be wiser for Your Lordship not to go." On his advice Zhuge Ke turned back.

His carriage had gone homeward but a dozen paces, when Sun Jun and Teng Yin rode up before him and asked, "Why has the imperial guardian turned back?" "My stomach began to ache suddenly," Zhuge Ke answered. "I cannot enter the Son of Heaven's presence." Teng Yin said, "Since the army's return the court has yet to hear your account of the events. A grand banquet is therefore being held for you during which matters of state will also be taken up. Although you may feel some discomfort, Imperial Guardian, still you should force yourself to make the trip somehow." Zhuge Ke accepted this advice and, accompanied by Zhang Yue, followed Sun Jun and Teng Yin into the palace.

Zhuge Ke presented himself to the Southland ruler, Sun Liang, and, after performing the prescribed ritual, took his seat. Sun Liang ordered wine served, but Zhuge Ke was suspicious and declined the wine, saying, "My health is not good enough." Sun Jun said, "Imperial Guardian, you often take medicinal wine at home. Would you like to have some brought?" Zhuge Ke assented and ordered some followers back to his home to fetch the medicine he had prepared himself. This potion Zhuge Ke drank without uneasiness.

After several rounds of wine Sun Liang rose, claiming to have business to see to. Sun Jun descended from the banquet hall, replaced his surcoat with a short jacket covering a torso shield, and returned to the hall, knife in hand. "The Son of Heaven has issued an edict to execute a rebel traitor!" he shouted. Zhuge Ke panicked and flung down his cup. Before he could draw his sword to defend himself, his severed head was already on the ground. Zhang Yue, after watching Sun Jun kill Zhuge Ke, lunged with his sword; but Sun Jun dodged quickly, and the sword's point nicked only a finger of his left hand. Sun Jun turned and returned the blow, cutting Zhang Yue's right arm. By then the guards had reached the scene. They cut Zhang Yue down and chopped him to pieces. Sun Jun had Zhuge Ke's relatives arrested and the corpses of Zhuge Ke and Zhang Yue wrapped in reed mats, carted away, and thrown into the unmarked burial pits by Stone Ridge beyond the city's south gate.⁹

As these events were taking place Zhuge Ke's wife was in her room, too perturbed to occupy herself. Suddenly a maidservant entered the chamber. Zhuge Ke's wife asked her, "Why are you covered with blood?" The woman's look turned hostile; she ground her teeth, dashed toward a pillar, and smashed her head against it. "I am Zhuge Ke! Slain by the treacherous Sun Jun!" she cried. Ke's wife gathered the members of the household around her and wailed dreadfully. Moments later soldiers of the court arrived and surrounded the house. They bound all members of Zhuge Ke's family, young and old indifferently, and removed them to the public market, where they were put to death. It was winter, the tenth month of the second year of Jian Xing, according to the calendar of the Southland (A. D. 253).

Many years before, when Zhuge Jin was alive, he had observed that Zhuge Ke was a man who let his brilliance show too completely, and he had sighed as he reflected, "This is not a son who will preserve the clan." Also, Zhang Qi, palace director under the Wei dynasty, had once said to Sima Shi, "Zhuge Ke will not live long." When Sima Shi asked why, Zhang Qi had replied, "His prestige constitutes a threat to his lord—how long can he survive?" In the event, these predictions proved correct.

After Sun Jun had eliminated Zhuge Ke, the Southland ruler, Sun Liang, appointed Jun prime minister, regent-marshal, and lord of Fuchun; the ruler also gave him final authority over police and military matters. From then on all power was concentrated in Sun Jun's hands.

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Meanwhile, in Chengdu Jiang Wei had received Zhuge Ke's letter seeking the Riverlands' help in a war against Wei. Jiang Wei entered the court and, after receiving the Second Emperor's approval, mobilized a large army for an expedition against the northern heartland. Indeed:

If an earlier campaign could not report success,
Perhaps another attempt to suppress the traitors would achieve its end.

Would Jiang Wei's next campaign succeed?

READ ON.



A Han General's Ruse: Sima Zhao Trapped; Retribution for the House of Wei: Cao Fang Deposed

BY THE CALENDAR OF SHU-HAN it was autumn of the sixteenth year of Yan Xi (A. D. 253). General Jiang Wei had mobilized two hundred thousand men and ordered Liao Hua and Zhang Yi to serve as the left and right vanguard, respectively, Xiahou Ba as military adviser, and Zhang Ni as quartermaster. The army went forth from Yangping Pass and attacked Wei.¹

Jiang Wei, conferring with Xiahou Ba, said, "Our previous attempt on Yongzhou failed; this time we must make better plans. What is your esteemed view?" Xiahou Ba replied, "Nan'an is the only one of the Longshan districts rich in cash and grain—an ideal base, if we can take it. Our first attempt to occupy the region failed because the Qiang troops never arrived, but this time if we send someone to meet them in Longyou and advance with them through Shiyang, we can capture Nan'an direct by the route through Dongting precinct." "An excellent plan, my lord," Jiang Wei said, well pleased, and sent Xi Zheng as his envoy bearing friendship gifts of gold and pearls and Riverlands brocades for the Qiang king. King Midang received the gifts and mobilized fifty thousand men. He had the Qiang commander Eheshaoge lead the vanguard in the direction of Nan'an.

The Wei army general of the Left, Guo Huai, quickly informed Luoyang. Sima Shi put the question to his commanders: "Who dares go forth against the Riverlands army?" General Xu Zhi, Mainstay of the Kingdom, volunteered. Sima Shi was delighted, for he knew Xu Zhi to be a man of splendid valor. He ordered Xu Zhi to lead the vanguard under Sima Zhao's command. The force set out for Longxi and came face-to-face with Jiang Wei in Dongting, where the two armies formed their battle lines. Xu Zhi, carrying his mountain-splitting great axe, challenged the westerners to combat. From the Shu line Liao Hua rode forth. Defeated in a brief clash, Liao Hua rode back, trailing his sword. Next, Zhang Yi, spear high, came forth. He too was defeated quickly. Xu Zhi swept after him and took a heavy toll of the Riverlanders, who fell back thirty *li*. Sima Zhao recalled his troops and both sides pitched camp.

Jiang Wei consulted Xiahou Ba: "Xu Zhi is a great fighter. Is there any way to get him?" "Tomorrow feign defeat," Xiahou Ba replied, "then take him by ambush." Jiang Wei said, "I would think the son of Sima Yi knows the arts of war too well to give chase across such uneven terrain. But cutting the Wei grain lines, as they have cut ours so many times, may draw them out and deliver Xu Zhi to us." Jiang Wei summoned Liao Hua and Zhang Yi and gave them certain instructions. The two men departed with their units. At the same time Jiang Wei had his soldiers spread vines of barbed iron across the road and sharpened stakes and brambles around the base camp to show that he meant to dig in for the duration.

Xu Zhi sought battle day after day, but the Riverlands army refused to come forth. Mounted scouts reported back to Sima Zhao: "The enemy is behind Iron Cage Mountain, moving in grain with wooden

bulls and gliding horses to support a protracted defense. They are biding their time until the Qiang join hands with them." Sima Zhao summoned Xu Zhi and said, "In the past we defeated the west by cutting off their grain supply. Now they are behind Iron Cage moving grain. Tonight take five thousand men and interdict their line, and the Riverlands army will withdraw." Accordingly, at the first watch Xu Zhi led his force to Iron Cage Mountain and found some two hundred soldiers driving one hundred grain-laden "bull" and "horse" carriers.

From the Wei troops a war call went up and Xu Zhi took the lead. He blocked the carriers, and the Riverlands troops abandoned them and fled. Xu Zhi divided his force in two: half to bring the grain back to camp, half to pursue the enemy under his own command. Xu Zhi had pursued them less than ten *li* when he came to a string of wagons across his path. Xu Zhi ordered his men to clear them away. Suddenly fires broke out on either side of him. He tried to turn and flee the way he had come, but behind him was an inaccessible and narrow stretch of the mountain on which more burning wagons stood. Braving smoke and flame, Xu Zhi managed to gallop through, but then a bombard sounded and two corps attacked him: on the left Liao Hua, on the right Zhang Yi. In the ensuing slaughter the northern army was badly beaten. Xu Zhi, straining every nerve, escaped alone. His horse, like himself, was spent.

As Xu Zhi was fleeing, a detachment under Jiang Wei came at him. Xu Zhi panicked, unable to offer a defense. His horse took a spear thrust from Jiang Wei and he fell with it; a crowd of soldiers hacked him to death. Meanwhile, the troops Xu Zhi had sent back to camp with the grain had been intercepted by Xiahou Ba, to whom they all surrendered. Xiahou Ba had the Riverlands soldiers outfit themselves with the captured Wei uniforms and armor and mount the horses. Flying the banners of Wei, they rode back by side paths to the Wei base camp. Seeing what they took to be their own men returning, the gate guards let them through. The Riverlands army then sacked the camp. Sima Zhao desperately took to horse, but Liao Hua was already in front of him. Unable to advance, Sima Zhao tried to retreat, but Jiang Wei closed in on that side. Sima Zhao had no way out; he dashed back to Iron Cage Mountain with his men and there established a defense.

This mountain happened to have only one road. On all sides the ascent was treacherous and arduous. At the summit there was a well with water for no more than one hundred men. On this occasion Sima Zhao had six thousand. With Jiang Wei blocking the route, the well could not provide for so many, and the men and horses became desperate with thirst. Sima Zhao lifted his eyes to the heavens and, sighing resignedly, said, "Then I am to die here." A poet of later times has written:

For subtle schemes Jiang Wei's gift was rare:
He turned the enemy chief on Iron Cage
Into another Pang Juan caught at Maling Road,
Another Xiang Yu 'sieged at Nine Mile Hill!²

Sima Zhao's first secretary, Wang Tao, said, "Long ago Geng Gong, trapped this way, prayed to the well, and a sweet spring flowed. Why not try it, General?" Sima Zhao agreed. He climbed to the top of the mountain, prostrated himself by the well, and invoked its spirit: "I, Zhao, hold a royal edict to force back the Riverlands army. If I am to perish here, let these waters run dry. I will cut my throat and have my troops surrender. But if my mortal time runs yet, let the gray-blue heavens vouchsafe us drink and keep these men alive." After Sima Zhao had recited his prayer, water began gushing from

the well, sufficient to provide for all his men and horses.

Meanwhile, Jiang Wei had surrounded the base of the mountain. He said to his commanders, "The late prime minister failed to capture Sima Yi in Shangfang Gorge; but today I shall capture his son."³

When Guo Huai heard that Sima Zhao was trapped on Iron Cage Mountain, he wanted to rescue him at once. Chen Tai said, "Jiang Wei has allied with the Qiang; their first goal is Nan'an. The Qiang have arrived by now, and if you try to save Sima Zhao, they will exploit our exposure to the rear. Have someone pretend to surrender to the Qiang and find out what he can from within. If we can drive back the Qiang, we can relieve the siege." Guo Huai approved the plan and ordered Chen Tai to take five thousand men to the base camp of the Qiang king.

Chen Tai came to the Qiang camp, removed his armor, and went in. Tearfully, he prostrated himself and said, "I have come to surrender. Guo Huai thinks far too highly of himself, and he has always intended to murder me. I can tell you everything about his army. Tonight I request command of a company of men to raid their camp. Once I arrive, collaborators within will aid me." Midang was delighted and ordered Eheshaoge to accompany Chen Tai on the raid. Eheshaoge put the surrendered troops in the rear and gave Chen Tai command of the forward unit.

That night during the second watch Chen Tai arrived at the Wei base. The gates were thrown open for him, and he rode in alone. Eheshaoge charged, spear high, and tried to enter, but with a cry of anguish he found himself and his mount at the bottom of a pit. Chen Tai's troops then attacked from the rear as Guo Huai struck from the right. In their confusion the Qiang troops trampled over one another, leaving countless dead; the survivors surrendered. Eheshaoge slit his throat. Guo Huai and Chen Tai led their troops straight for the Qiang camp. When King Midang tried to leave his tent and mount his horse, the Wei soldiers took him alive and brought him back to Guo Huai.

Guo Huai hurriedly dismounted and personally undid the king's bonds. Comforting him with kind words, Guo Huai said, "The court has ever regarded you as loyal and true. How could you help the Riverlanders against us?" Covered with shame, Midang acknowledged his offense. Guo Huai said to him, "Sir, take the forward unit now and relieve the siege at Iron Cage; drive back the Shu army, and a rich reward should follow on approval of my petition to the Emperor."

Midang was persuaded. He put Qiang troops in the van, Wei troops in the rear, and set out for the mountain. At the third watch Midang sent a man to inform Jiang Wei of his arrival. A delighted Jiang Wei invited the envoy to audience. The Wei troops were almost all dispersed among the Qiang units. When they came before the Riverlands base camp, Jiang Wei ordered the soldiers to dig in outside the perimeter. Midang and a hundred followers went to the command tent, and Jiang Wei and Xiahou Ba came forth to welcome him. Before Midang could utter a word, the Wei commanders sprang out from behind him. Jiang Wei panicked and fled on horseback. The Qiang and Wei troops began to sack the camp, and the western soldiers, losing all discipline, escaped individually.

Jiang Wei carried no weapon save bow and arrow. As he fled, the arrows dropped, leaving his quiver empty. He raced on toward the hills, Guo Huai in hot pursuit. Seeing Jiang Wei unarmed, Guo Huai urged his mount on and, spear in hand, was soon upon him. Jiang Wei plucked his empty bow, and it sang out a dozen times. Each time Guo Huai ducked, but he saw no arrow and knew that Jiang Wei had run out. He holstered his spear and shot an arrow at Jiang Wei. Jiang Wei dodged and managed to catch the arrow by hand; he then fitted it to his own bow. He let Guo Huai ride close enough for a shot and then brought him down with an arrow sped with full force to the forehead. Jiang Wei wheeled around to slay Guo Huai as the Wei troops were racing up, but there was no time for the

deed, so he made off with Guo Huai's spear.

The Wei troops did not pursue. They rescued Guo Huai and took him back to base, where the arrow was pulled out; but the bleeding would not stop, and Guo Huai died. Sima Zhao descended the mountain and tried to chase Jiang Wei, but he turned back after a time. Xiahou Ba joined Jiang Wei in flight, and the two made good their escape. Jiang Wei returned to Hanzhong, his ranks in disarray, his losses high. Despite the defeat, Jiang Wei had killed Guo Huai and Xu Zhi—a stunning blow to the pride of the northern kingdom—and so his achievement redeemed his offense.⁴

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Meanwhile, Sima Zhao regaled the Qiang troops for their pains and sent them back to their own kingdom. He then withdrew the army to Luoyang and with his brother took control of court administration unopposed. The Wei ruler, Cao Fang, trembled on seeing Sima Shi enter court; he tingled with fear as if sitting on thorns.

One day Cao Fang was holding court, when Sima Shi entered wearing a sword. Cao Fang hurried down from his seat to welcome him. Sima Shi laughed and said, "There is no such thing as a sovereign greeting a subject. I beg Your Majesty, be less anxious." Moments later a group of officials presented a sheaf of petitions to the Emperor; but Sima Shi opened them all on his own authority, making decisions and comments without referring to the ruler. A little later court adjourned and Sima Shi strode imperiously down from the throne hall, his head held high. He rode in a carriage surrounded by several thousand soldiers whenever he came or went.

Cao Fang retired to his private chambers. A mere three officials attended him: Master of Ceremony Xiahou Xuan, Secretary Li Feng, and Director of the Palace Bureaus Zhang Qi. Zhang Qi was the father of Empress Zhang, and thus the imperial father-in-law. Cao Fang dismissed his personal attendants and conferred secretly with these three officials. Weeping, he took Zhang Qi's hand and said, "To Sima Shi, I, the Emperor, am a mere child, my officials as insignificant as a mustard plant. The dynastic shrines will soon fall into that man's hands." So saying, he continued to weep.

Li Feng said to him, "Your Majesty must not trouble himself. Despite my poor ability, I am willing to take your sagely edict and rally heroes from across the realm to rout the rebel." Xiahou Xuan added, "The only reason my uncle Xiahou Ba has surrendered to the Riverlands is his fear of conspiracy by the Sima brothers. I know he will come back if we drive out the traitors. I belong to a family related to the royal house for many generations, and I refuse to watch rebels and traitors overthrow the government. Together with Li Feng, I volunteer to receive your mandate to suppress them." "I doubt it can be done," was Cao Fang's response.

The three officials pleaded tearfully: "We are one in our vow to crush the traitors and thus require Your Majesty's love." Cao Fang removed his dragon-and-phoenix undershirt. He bit into the end of a finger and used the blood to write his edict on the shirt. He gave the shirt to Zhang Qi and instructed him: "Dong Cheng was executed by my ancestor Cao Cao, the August Emperor Wu, because such a conspiracy was disclosed. You must protect the secret diligently."⁵ Li Feng replied, "Do not say such unlucky things. We are not of Dong Cheng's ilk. And how can Sima Shi compare to Emperor Wu? Have no misgivings, Your Majesty." The three officials took leave and went out. When they came to the left of the Donghua Gate, Sima Shi, attended by several hundred armed men, approached them,

wearing his sword.

The three officials stood by the side of the road. Sima Shi asked them, "Why were you so late leaving court?" Li Feng answered, "Because we were attending His sagely Majesty in the inner court while he studied some texts—nothing more." "What books?" demanded Sima Shi. "Works of the three ancient regimes of Xia, Shang, and Zhou," was Li Feng's reply. "What questions did His Majesty put to you?" demanded Sima Shi. Li Feng replied, "He asked how Yi Yin guided the Shang sovereign and how the Duke of Zhou conducted his regency. We told him, 'In our time Regent-Marshal Sima is what they were then.'" Sima Shi smiled coldly and said, "Why would you be comparing me to them when in your hearts you see me for a Wang Mang or Dong Zhuo?"⁶ The three officials replied, "We are your retainers, General. How could we think such a thing?" Angrily Sima Shi said, "You are a bunch of fawning flatterers. Just now what were you and the Son of Heaven crying about in his hidden chamber?" "That's not what it was like," they countered. Sima Shi said harshly, "Your eyes are still red—dare you deny it?" Xiahou Xuan realized their plan was revealed, and railed at Sima Shi in a frenzied tone: "We wept for your coercion of the ruler! And for your intent to usurp his place!"

In great anger Sima Shi called his guards to seize Xiahou Xuan. Xiahou Xuan turned up his sleeves and flailed at Sima Shi with his bare fists until the guards took hold of him. Sima Shi had the three searched, and on Zhang Qi's person they found the dragon-and-phoenix shirt with its bloodscript. The guards showed it to Sima Shi, who studied it. The secret edict read:

Sima Shi and his brother Zhao have seized the dynasty's authority and plan to supplant our rule. Edicts and regulations which they have promulgated are not in keeping with our wishes. Let the officers and commanders, functionaries and soldiers of every unit lend their loyal aid to a righteous cause by suppressing and exterminating the party of treason and upholding the sacred shrines of the ruling house. Rank and reward will be generously bestowed when our cause prevails.

Sima Shi flew into a rage. "Plotting to kill my brother and me all along! No one can stand for that!" he cried and gave the order to execute the three officials in the public marketplace by severing their bodies at the waist and to exterminate their three clans. The three railed on at Sima Shi without stop. By the time they had been dragged to the Eastern Market, all their teeth had been knocked out by the guards. Before dying they muttered a few last curses.

Sima Shi made straight for the palace's private chambers. He found the Wei ruler, Cao Fang, and Empress Zhang discussing the edict. "Within the court his eyes and ears are many," the Empress said. "If our plan gets out, the consequences will fall on me." That moment they saw Sima Shi enter. The Empress took fright.

Sima Shi touched his sword and said to Cao Fang, "In making Your Majesty emperor, my father—both in merit and in virtue—compared to the regent Duke of Zhou himself, while I, your vassal, have been another Prime Minister Yi Yin. Why then has Your Majesty taken our love for enmity, our service for fault, and conspired against our lives with a handful of petty officials?" "I had no such thought!" Cao Fang replied. From his sleeve Sima Shi produced the undershirt bearing the edict and threw it to the ground. "If not, who wrote this?" he cried. Cao Fang lost his self-possession and quaked as he answered, "I was coerced. How could such a thought spring from my heart?" "How should baseless slander of high officials be punished? It is a heinous crime!" Sima Shi exclaimed.

Cao Fang knelt and pleaded, "We confess the offense and beg the regent-marshal's forgiveness." Sima Shi answered, "Stand up, please, Your Majesty. The law is the law." Pointing to the Empress, he added, "Zhang Qi's daughter. Get rid of her!" Cao Fang's plea for mercy was futile. Sima Shi's guards forcibly moved the Empress to the Donghua Gate and strangled her there with a white cord. A poet of later times has left these lines:

Thrust barefoot from the palace ground, Queen Fu
Parted from her liege; she cried for pity.⁷
Today the Sima treat Queen Zhang in kind—
Thus Heaven pays back Cao's posterity.

The next day Sima Shi summoned a grand council of vassals and said, "The present ruler, wildly depraved and barbaric, has fallen in with unseemly companions. He gives ear to slander, thus barring the advancement of worthy men; his crimes exceed those of the Changyi prince, and he is incapable of ruling the empire. Respectfully, on the pattern established by Yi Yin and Huo Guang, a new emperor must be established to protect the sacred shrines and restore security in the realm. Are you with me?"⁸ The assembly responded, "If the regent-marshal acts as Yi Yin did—conforming, as they say, to the dictate of Heaven and the wishes of men—who will disobey his command?"⁹

After this, Sima Shi and his officials proceeded to the Hall of Eternal Peace and informed the queen mother. The queen mother said, "Whom does the regent intend to establish?" "In my judgment," Sima Shi responded, "the Pengcheng prince, Cao Ju—intelligent, humane, and filial—would make a good ruler of the realm." The queen mother said, "The prince is my uncle; I cannot accept him. Cao Mao, however, lord of Gaogui village, is a grandson of Emperor Wen (Cao Pi). He is gracious and courteous and knows well when to be accommodating. Let him be emperor. All you great vassals must plan with deliberation."

One man said, "The queen mother is right. Do what she says." Everyone turned to Sima Fu, Sima Shi's uncle on his father's side. Directly, Sima Shi sent a representative to Yuancheng to summon the lord of Gaogui village. At the same time Sima Shi invited the queen mother to ascend the Hall of the First Principle, in which he had also commanded Cao Fang to appear. Sima Shi there condemned Cao Fang: "Your wild depravity knows no limit. Clinging to unseemly company, you are an unfit receiver of the realm and must surrender the royal seal and return to your rank as prince of Qi. Begin the journey home at once and do not show yourself in this court again unless officially summoned." Cao Fang wept and prostrated himself before the queen mother. Then he handed over the seal of state, boarded a prince's carriage, and departed crying aloud. Only a few loyal attendants, holding in their tears, saw him off. As a poet of later times described it;

Back in the days when Cao Man served the Han,
He wronged the widow and orphan of the clan.
And now that forty years have come and gone
His own widows and orphans are the wronged.¹⁰

Cao Mao (Yanshi)—lord of Gaogui village, grandson of Emperor Wen, son of Cao Lin, prince of Ding of Donghai—was summoned to the palace in the name of the Empress by Sima Shi. Civil

officials and military officers readied the royal carriage outside the west gate and, touching the ground, welcomed the new Emperor. Cao Mao promptly reciprocated the courtesy. Grand Commandant Wang Su said, 'it is not for the sovereign to reciprocate the courtesy. "' I, too, am a subject, "Cao Mao replied." How could I slight the ritual? "Officials and officers lifted Cao Mao onto the throne carriage to convey him into the palace. Cao Mao tried to decline, saying, " Why the queen mother has summoned me remains unclear. How dare I take a seat in the throne carriage? " So saying, he proceeded on foot to the eastern chamber of the Hall of First Principle.

In the palace Sima Shi welcomed him, but Cao Mao first prostrated himself. Sima Shi hastened to raise him to his feet and, when their spoken greetings were done with, conducted him into the presence of the queen mother. The queen mother said, "I saw you as a child, and you had the markings of an emperor. Today you shall rule the empire. Strive to be courteous, temperate, and frugal. Manifest your virtue and extend your benevolence, and you will never dishonor the former emperors of this house." Cao Mao humbly declined three times. Sima Shi had the officials and officers invite Cao Mao to come forth from the Hall of First Principle, and on that day they established him as the new sovereign. The reign year, Jia Ping 6, was changed to Zheng Yuan 1.¹¹ A general amnesty was proclaimed. The golden battle-axe of supreme military authority was placed in the hands of Regent-Marshal Sima Shi. He was permitted to walk into the palace without hastening and bending over, to petition the Emperor without using his given name, and to ascend the throne hall wearing a sword. The entire body of officials received fiefs or rewards.

In the first month of the following year spies urgently reported that Controller of the East General Guanqiu Jian and Yangzhou's Imperial Inspector Wen Qin were advancing on the capital in force, claiming deposition of the Emperor as their just cause.¹² Sima Shi was alarmed. Indeed:

Han vassals once had tried to save the throne;
Now Wei generals raised a loyalist host.

How did Sima Shi meet his enemies?

READ ON.



***Wen Yang, Riding Alone, Drives Back a Brave Force;
Jiang Wei, Back to the Water, Defeats a Great Enemy***

IN THE FIRST MONTH OF THE SECOND YEAR of Zheng Yuan,¹ General Guanqiu Jian (Zhong-gong) of Wenxi in Hedong was chief commander of Yangzhou, Controller of the East, and military authority for Huainan. On learning of Sima Shi's changes in the royal house, the general was deeply offended. His eldest son, Guanqiu Dian, said, "Father, can you remain secure in your control of this region while the dynasty is in imminent peril from Sima Shi's despotic deposition of the ruler?" "You are right," Guanqiu Jian said to his son, and he summoned Imperial Inspector Wen Qin to confer with him.

Wen Qin, who had been a follower of Cao Shuang's, responded at once to Guanqiu Jian's invitation. Guanqiu Jian led Wen Qin into a private chamber and, after the formalities, burst into tears as he began speaking. Wen Qin asked what the matter was, and Jian replied, "I grieve for Sima Shi's overthrow of the ruler. He has turned Heaven and earth upside down." "Commander, you control an entire region," Wen Qin said. "If you will suppress the traitors by armed force in the name of allegiance to the Emperor, I will risk my very life to aid you. My second son, Wen Shu, nicknamed Ah Yang, a man of boundless courage, has long wanted to avenge Cao Shuang by getting rid of the Sima brothers. Let him take the vanguard." Well pleased, Guanqiu Jian sprinkled sacrificial wine on the ground as a pledge of fidelity.

The two officials, claiming to have a secret edict from the queen mother, ordered all officials, commanders, and troops to the Yangzhou provincial capital at Shouchun. There they erected an altar in the western quarter on which they sacrificed a white horse and sealed their oath with its blood. Then they accused Sima Shi of high crimes and treason and announced their possession of the queen mother's secret edict to mobilize Huainan and suppress the rebellion in the name of true allegiance. Those assembled gladly accepted the call. Guanqiu Jian led sixty thousand men forth and occupied Xiangcheng. Wen Qin led twenty thousand and circled outside the town, providing support. Jian sent directives to the surrounding districts ordering the authorities to recruit more men.

Meanwhile, Sima Shi had developed a tumor in his left eye and suffered from frequent pain and itching. He summoned a physician, who removed the growth and sealed the eye with medicine; he was subsequently forced to remain at home recuperating for several days. Suddenly news of the revolt in Huainan was brought to him, and he called Grand Commandant Wang Su for consultation. Wang Su said, "Some time ago Lord Guan came close to subduing the north with his might and prestige. But Sun Quan had Lü Meng capture Jingzhou by surprise, and Lü Meng, by treating the enemy's families with great kindness, caused Lord Guan's force to fall apart. This time the soldiers' families are all in the north. Quickly go and comfort them, and also cut off their line of retreat. The enemy will become disorganized." Sima Shi said, "Excellent advice. But my eye is not well enough for me to go personally, and I would be uneasy with someone else going in my stead."

At this time an officer in the Secretariat, Zhong Hui, was beside Sima Shi and submitted a suggestion: "The Huainan force is strong, their vanguard in peak condition. To send another leader to drive them back is likely to fail. If something went wrong, we could ruin our whole enterprise." Sima Shi rose swiftly to his feet. "It is I then who must go and defeat the rebels," he said. He left his brother Zhao to defend Luoyang, entrusting all court affairs to his temporary authority.

Sima Shi was taken east in an invalid's carriage. He ordered Chief General Who Controls the East Zhuge Dan to take command of all forces in Yuzhou and advance on Shouchun from Anfeng Ford. Sima Shi also ordered General Who Conquers the East Hu Zun to bring his Qingzhou forces down between Qiao and Song and seal off the enemy's escape routes. Next, Sima Shi sent Jingzhou's imperial inspector and military supervisor Wang Ji to lead the forward army and capture the salients for controlling the southern territory. Sima Shi then occupied Xiangyang with his own forces and gathered his officials and officers in his tent for discussion. Zheng Mao of the Palace Directorate said, "Guanqiu Jian enjoys scheming, but he is indecisive. Wen Qin is brave but ignorant. Though they will not expect your grand army, do not engage the Southland and Huainan troops at their peak; dig in and wait and wear them down. This is the kind of long-range plan General Zhou Yafu devised."² But Military Supervisor Wang Ji said, "That will not work. The Huainan situation does not stem from seditious inclinations in the army or among the population. Guanqiu Jian has coerced them to revolt; they follow him because they must. The moment your army approaches, their army will fall to pieces." "An ingenious thought," Sima Shi said and moved his army up to the River Yin, occupying the bridge with his central unit. Wang Ji advised further: "Nandun is an ideal location for stationing the troops. We should capture it quickly before Guanqiu Jian gets there." Accordingly, Sima Shi ordered Wang Ji's forward unit to camp at Nandun.

In Xiangcheng Guanqiu Jian, having heard that Sima Shi himself was marching on him, gathered his leaders together. Ge Yong of the vanguard said, "Nandun abuts the hills and is near the river, an ideal place to station troops. If they take Nandun before us, it will be hard to drive them out. We should seize it quickly." Guanqiu Jian approved and rushed troops to Nandun. But before he had arrived, an urgent report came: enemy forces were encamped at Nandun. Incredulous, Guanqiu Jian went to the front. From there he could observe flags and banners covering the field and campsites in perfect array. Jian returned to his army at a loss for a plan. Mounted scouts then informed him, "Sun Jun of the Southland has crossed the Great River to attack Shouchun." Guanqiu Jian was astounded. "If Shouchun falls," he said, "I will have no place to return to." That night he retreated to Xiangcheng.

Sima Shi watched Guanqiu Jian's retreat, then he gathered his officials together. Chief Secretary Fu Gu said, "They fear the Southland will surprise Shouchun and are retreating to Xiangcheng, detailing troops to defend it. General, send one company to take Yue-jiacheng, another to take Xiangcheng, and a third to take Shouchun: the Huainan army will withdraw. The imperial inspector of Yanzhou, Deng Ai, is a shrewd planner. If he carries out the capture of Yuejia and we reinforce him, the defeat of the rebels should be easy." On this advice Sima Shi sent swift envoys bearing orders for Deng Ai to muster troops in Yanzhou and attack Yuejia. Sima Shi followed the envoys to rendezvous with Deng Ai.

From Xiangcheng, Guanqiu Jian kept sending scouts out to check if troops were approaching Yuejia. He called Wen Qin to his camp to seek his advice. Wen Qin said, "Field Marshal, do not worry. My son Yang and I can secure the town with five thousand men." Guanqiu Jian was relieved.

Father and son proceeded to Yuejia with five thousand men. But the forward company reported back, "Wei troops—more than ten thousand—have massed west of the city. We saw their main army in the distance, with the white yak-tail banner and gilded battle-axe of command, the black umbrella and vermilion pennants clustered around the command tent. High above the tent flew a flag woven with the commanding general's name: Sima Shi. However, they have not finished establishing their camps."

At that time Wen Yang, armed with a steel whip, happened to be beside his father. Hearing the report, he said, "Before they finish the camps, attack from both sides and overwhelm them." "When?" Wen Qin asked. "At dusk," Wen Yang answered. "You take twenty-five hundred and strike from the south; I will strike from the north with the same number. During the third watch we will rendezvous in the Wei camp." Wen Qin accepted this plan and that evening divided his force in half. Wen Yang was eighteen years old; he was eight spans tall. Wrapped in mail, his steel whip at his waist, he hefted his spear and mounted. Then he headed toward the Wei camp.

That night Sima Shi pitched camp at Yuejia and waited for Deng Ai to join him. Sima Shi was still suffering some pain from the recent removal of the tumor, so he lay down in his tent with a guard of several hundred posted around it. During the third watch earthshaking shouts broke the silence, throwing men and horses into confusion. Someone informed Sima Shi, "An enemy company has broken through the northern perimeter. Their commander is too fierce to oppose." Shocked by the news, Sima Shi felt a rush of fever within him as the wound on his eye burst; the eyeball slipped from its socket. Blood spilled on the ground and the pain was overwhelming. But Sima Shi, rather than risk destroying his men's morale, clamped a piece of his bedding between his teeth and bore up under the pain. The bedding soon was torn to shreds.

Earlier, Wen Yang had reached Yuejia, burst into the camp, and slaughtered many. Few had dared resist; those who tried to challenge the invaders were stabbed or whipped to death. Wen Yang looked for his father's arrival to lend support, but he did not appear. Each time Yang fought his way toward the Wei's main force, bowshots drove him back; but Wen Yang fought on. When the morning sky began to lighten, he heard at last the sound of drums and horns filling the air on the north side. Wen Yang asked his followers, "Why is my father coming from the north and not the south?" He raced ahead to look, only to find a company of troops galloping like the wind—the commander, Deng Ai!

Deng Ai charged back and forth, his sword leveled, and shouted, "Stand your ground, rebel!" In a fury Wen Yang raised his spear and engaged Deng Ai. But after fifty bouts neither had prevailed. As the struggle continued, the Wei soldiers moved in from front and rear. Wen Yang's unit panicked and fled. Abandoned by his men, Wen Yang, riding alone, broke through the Wei line and escaped to the south. In a display of martial spirit, hundreds of Wei officers bore down on him as he neared Yuejia Bridge. Suddenly Wen Yang wheeled round and with a powerful shout plunged back into the Wei line. Plying his steel whip, he knocked riders from their mounts on all sides. As the Wei ranks fell back, Wen Yang proceeded unhurried.

The Wei officers gathered together and cried in dismay, "Can one man push back so many of us? Let's join forces and pursue him again." One hundred Wei officers resumed the chase. Exploding in anger, Wen Yang cried, "These rats hold their lives cheap!" Raising his whip and rousing his mount, he charged into the thick of the Wei officers. After killing a number of them, Wen Yang swung his horse back around again and continued unhurried on his way. In the same manner Wen Yang foiled each attempt of the officers to pursue him. In the words of a poem of later times;

Alone at Steepslope holding Cao Cao off,
Zilong came to fame, a prodigy of war.
Now Wen Yang crossing points in Yuejia town
Shows courage worthy of comparison.

What had happened to Wen Qin was this: the sharp and irregular mountain roads had led him into the wrong valley. He had traveled aimlessly half the night, finding his way out only at dawn. Meanwhile Wen Yang's forces were nowhere to be found—it was the Wei that had won the day—so Wen Qin withdrew without joining the battle. Hotly pursued by the Wei army, he fled to Shouchun.

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Wei Palace Commandant Yin Damu, a confidant of the late Cao Shuang, was in the service of Sima Shi. Because Sima Yi had murdered Cao Shuang, however, Yin Damu secretly hoped to avenge Cao Shuang by killing Sima Shi. Furthermore, Yin Damu and Wen Qin were close friends. When Yin Damu saw that the tumor on Sima Shi's eye was bulging and thus immobilizing him, Damu entered Shi's tent and said, "Wen Qin never intended to rebel; Guanqiu Jian drove him to it. I think I can persuade him to submit." Sima Shi approved the attempt, and Damu, helmeted and armored, rode after Wen Qin.

About to overtake Wen Qin, Yin Damu called out loud and clear, "Will Inspector Wen meet with Yin Damu?" Wen Qin turned and saw that Yin Damu had hung his helmet on the front of his saddle. Pointing with his whip, Yin Damu added, "Could not Inspector Wen abide a few days more?" meaning to suggest that he had come to keep Wen Qin back since Sima Shi would soon die. But Wen Qin missed the point of Yin Damu's words and, hurling insults at his pursuer, drew his bow to shoot. Damu cried out in frustration and turned back. Wen Qin gathered his troops and headed for Shouchun, but by this time it had fallen to Zhuge Dan. Wen Qin turned back to Xiangcheng, but Hu Zun, Wang Ji, and Deng Ai had already reached it. In desperation Wen Qin started off toward the Southland and its ruler, Sun Jun.

In Xiangcheng, Guanqiu Jian had learned of the fall of Shouchun, the plight of Wen Qin, and the approach of the three hostile armies, and he had sent all his forces into the field. He encountered Deng Ai first and told Ge Yong to engage him. Before they could grapple, Deng Ai had cut Ge Yong down and led his men on to attack the opposing line. Guanqiu Jian fought desperately to check Deng Ai, but his Huainan troops became disorganized. Hu Zun and Wang Ji surrounded them and attacked. Guanqiu Jian, unable to resist further, fled with a dozen riders by the nearest road. He reached Shen county, where Prefect Song Bai received him. At the reception banquet Guanqiu Jian drank himself into a stupor. Song Bai ordered him killed and sent his head to the Wei army. Thus, the Huainan revolt was quelled.

Too ill to leave his bed, Sima Shi summoned Zhuge Dan to his tent and presented him with the seal of command, appointing him Chief General Who Controls the East, with military authority over all forces in Yangzhou. At the same time he recalled the army to Xuchang. The pain in Sima Shi's eye had not subsided. At night the three men he had killed—Li Feng, Zhang Qi, and Xiahou Xuan—haunted his couch. Sima Shi's spirit was fading. Realizing the end was near, he sent to Luoyang for Sima Zhao.

Sima Zhao came to the foot of his bed and prostrated himself as he wept. Sima Shi's dying injunction to him was: "It is not possible, whatever I might prefer, to divest myself of the awesome power I hold. You will have to carry on for me. Control of the government cannot be entrusted to anyone else, for our clan could be exterminated." So saying, tears covering his face, he handed his brother the seal of his office. Sima Zhao started to question him, but Sima Shi uttered a terrible cry and expired; his eye had popped out of its socket.

It was the second month of the second year of Zheng Yuan. Sima Zhao arranged the funeral services and notified the Wei ruler, Cao Mao. Cao Mao sent an envoy with an edict ordering Sima Zhao to remain at Xuchang to defend against the Southland, but Sima Zhao could not make up his mind whether or not to comply with Cao Mao's order. Zhong Hui said to him, "Regent-Marshal Sima Shi has died and people's loyalties are in abeyance. If you remain here, General, and there is a coup at court, regret will do no good." Sima Zhao accepted this counsel and returned to the capital, placing his army south of the River Luo. Cao Mao was frightened when he learned of Sima Zhao's move.

Grand Commandant Wang Su said to the Wei ruler, "Since Sima Zhao has inherited his brother's power, it behooves Your Majesty to secure his loyalty by honoring him with fitting rank." Accordingly, Cao Mao had Wang Su convey his edict honoring Sima Zhao as regent-marshal and director of the Secretariat. Sima Zhao presented himself at court to express his gratitude. Thereafter, all governmental and military matters were decided by Sima Zhao.

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Meanwhile, Riverlands spies reported these events to Chengdu. Jiang Wei petitioned the Second Emperor: "Sima Shi has died, and Sima Zhao has taken power. He will not risk leaving Luoyang. Your vassal requests that we seize the moment to attack Wei and recover the northern heartland." The Second Emperor approved and gave the order for Jiang Wei to mobilize. Jiang Wei arrived in Hanzhong and put his forces in fighting condition. Zhang Yi, Chief General Who Conquers the West, said, "The Riverlands has neither the depth of territory nor the resources in grain and cash to support a campaign so far away. A better course would be to defend our portion of the realm by reinforcing our strongpoints; protecting our troops and cherishing the people is the best way to preserve our kingdom."

"Not at all," Jiang Wei retorted. "Long ago, the late prime minister, still secure in his thatched hut, spelled out the threefold division of the empire. He conducted six offensives from the Qishan hills in order to retake the north, but the pity is that he passed away before reaching his goal and his cause remains to be consummated. I who bear his dying charge mean to dedicate myself to repaying the house he served by keeping that cause alive. And if I must die in the attempt, I will die without regret. At this moment there are divisions in the kingdom of Wei that we can exploit. A better time to invade may not come again."

Xiahou Ba said, "The general is correct. Send the light cavalry out to Fuhan. If we can take Nan'an west of the Tao, the other districts will come under our control." Zhang Yi responded, "The last time, we were deprived of our victory and driven back because our forces were too slow in moving out. Military science teaches 'Attack the unprepared; strike where unexpected.' A lightning advance now will catch the northern army before it can defend itself, and yield a complete victory."

Jiang Wei thereupon advanced to Fuhan with fifty thousand in his command. When the western

army reached the River Tao, guards of the Wei kingdom reported it to Yong-zhou's Inspector Wang Jing and to Conqueror of the West General Chen Tai. Wang Jing mobilized seventy thousand foot and horse to confront the invaders. Jiang Wei gave Zhang Yi and Xiahou Ba certain instructions, and the two went to perform their duties. Jiang Wei then deployed his main army with its back to the river, and Wang Jing led several garrison commanders forth. Jing demanded of Jiang Wei; "The three kingdoms of Wei, Wu, and Shu have already established tripartite power. What is the reason for these repeated aggressions?" Jiang Wei answered, "Sima Shi has deposed your ruler for no good reason. Even neighboring kingdoms must call him to account, not to speak of enemy kingdoms."

Wang Jing turned to the four commanders behind him—Zhang Ming, Hua Yong, Liu Da, and Zhu Fang—and said, "The Riverlands army has its back to the water. If we defeat them, they will drown. Jiang Wei is valiant in combat. You four take him on. If he retreats, pursue and strike." The commanders departed, two to the left and two to the right, and engaged Jiang Wei. Wei, after a brief skirmish, turned around and fled toward his line.

Wang Jing came after him in full force. Jiang Wei led his men toward the river until they were almost at the water. He then shouted to his officers and men: "The moment has come! All commanders must fight their hardest!" The Riverlands commanders reversed direction and fought fiercely and strenuously; the Wei army was defeated. Two units under Zhang Yi and Xiahou Ba got behind the northerners and trapped them. Jiang Wei, exerting his martial powers to the full, fought his way into the Wei army. Thrusting and plunging, he disrupted the Wei ranks, and the northern soldiers trampled one another down. More than half perished; many more drowned in the Tao. Ten thousand heads were taken, and piles of corpses covered the land for several *li*.

Leading his defeated men and a hundred riders, Wang Jing broke out of the trap and fled directly into the town of Didao. There they sealed the gates and set up a defense. Jiang Wei's triumph was complete; after rewarding the army, he made ready to attack Didao. But Zhang Yi protested. "General, your triumph is complete. Your prestige is felt everywhere. It is time to call a halt. If we advance now and something goes wrong, it will be a case of 'ruining a perfect picture of a snake by adding paws.'" "Not at all," Jiang Wei answered, "Just a little while ago our defeated soldiers were still willing to strive to win and overrun the northland. Today at the battle of the River Tao the Wei army was broken in spirit. Didao, I reckon, will fall as easily as spittle on your hands. Don't lose heart now." Zhang Yi could not prevail upon him. Jiang Wei led his soldiers to capture Didao.

Meanwhile in Yongzhou, General Chen Tai, Conqueror of the West, was mobilizing his forces to avenge Wang Jing's defeat. Suddenly, Deng Ai, imperial inspector of Yanzhou, arrived with his troops. Chen Tai welcomed him, and after the exchange of formalities, Deng Ai said, "I bear the regent-marshal's command to assist you against the foe." Chen Tai asked if he had a plan, and Deng Ai replied, "The Riverlands won the day at the Tao. We would have had real trouble had they called in Qiang troops to contest Longyou and Guanzhong and rally the four districts. But they did not and have not thought of that, and are now squandering their strength on the impregnable walls of Didao. I am going to deploy at Xiangling and then attack. The Riverlanders are sure to suffer defeat." Chen Tai said, "A marvelous analysis!" Then he picked twenty squadrons of fifty men to go to the steep hills southeast of Didao and conceal themselves there. Each squad—moving by night and hiding by day—carried banners, horns, drums, and flares. When the Riverlands troops came to Didao, the squads were to frighten the enemy, sounding their horns and drums if by day or lighting their flares and hurling bombards if by night. These arrangements completed, the Wei force settled in to wait.

Soon after, Chen Tai and Deng Ai advanced to Didao, each with twenty thousand men.

Meanwhile, Jiang Wei had been laying siege to Didao. Day after day his troops assaulted the town but failed to subdue it. Jiang Wei despaired of finding a successful plan. One day at dusk several mounted scouts reported: "Two field armies are coming. Their banners proclaim boldly the names of Chen Tai, Conqueror of the West, and Deng Ai, imperial inspector of Yanzhou." Jiang Wei, alarmed, summoned Xiahou Ba, who said, "I warned you, General, that Deng Ai had mastered warfare at an early age. He knows topography well. He has led his army here, and he will prove a formidable foe." Jiang Wei said, "His army comes from afar. If we prevent them from establishing their positions, we can attack." He left Zhang Yi to continue the siege of Didao and ordered Xiahou Ba to engage Chen Tai while he engaged Deng Ai himself.

Jiang Wei had not gone five *li* when a bombard resounded from the southeast and horns and drums shook the ground beneath him as flames shot into the sky. Jiang Wei rode ahead to look and found himself surrounded by Wei signal flags. "I have fallen into Deng Ai's trap," he exclaimed in fright and sent orders to have Xiahou Ba and Zhang Yi abandon the siege at Didao and retire from the field. Thus, the entire Riverlands force withdrew to Hanzhong. Jiang Wei himself was holding the rear when he heard the steady roll of drums behind him. By the time he had withdrawn through Saber Gateway, he realized that the drumming and twenty or so fire sites were all decoys. Jiang Wei rallied his men and stationed them at Zhongti.

At this time the Second Emperor issued an edict making Jiang Wei regent-marshal on the strength of his victory at the River Tao. Jiang Wei accepted the office and submitted a memorial of gratitude. Then he proposed another invasion of Wei. Indeed:

Don't try to improve upon a success;
There's always fight in a rebel tiger.

Would the next western expedition succeed?

READ ON.



*With Ingenuity Deng Ai Defeats Jiang Wei;
For Justice's Sake Zhuge Dan Campaigns Against Sima Zhao*

JIANG WEI RETREATED AND STATIONED HIS FORCE at Zhongti; the Wei army occupied the area outside Didao. Wang Jing welcomed Chen Tai and Deng Ai into the town and, prostrating himself, thanked them for breaking the siege. He prepared a feast for the commanders and rewarded the entire army. Chen Tai announced Deng Ai's achievements to the Wei ruler, Cao Mao, who appointed Ai General Who Secures the West and also Commandant Who Protects the Eastern Qiang, authorizing him and Chen Tai to station troops at various points in Yongzhou and Liangzhou.

After Deng Ai had submitted a memorial of gratitude to the Wei ruler, Chen Tai held a congratulatory banquet. On the occasion Chen Tai said, "Jiang Wei, his power spent, has skulked away by night and will not show himself again." Deng Ai replied with a smile, "I can give five good reasons for the Riverlands army to return." Queried by Chen Tai, Deng Ai went on: "Though they have withdrawn, they still have strategic advantages, and we still have strategic liabilities—that's the first reason they will come back. The Riverlands army was educated and disciplined by Kongming, and his well-conditioned soldiers are easily redeployed, while our commanders are periodically rotated and our men poorly trained—that's the second reason. The Riverlanders rely largely on riverboat transport; our troops move on land, which is far more tiring—that's the third reason. Didao, Longxi, Nan'an, and the Qishan hills are four points we have to defend. If the Riverlanders feint east and strike west, or point south and attack north, they can stretch our defenses and overwhelm any one of the four points with a concerted attack—that's the fourth reason. If the Riverlands army leaves the Nan'an-Longxi region, they can obtain food from the valleys of the Qiang; if they move out through the Qishan hills, there is sown wheat to supply them—that's the fifth reason." Chen Tai, won over by Deng Ai's cogent reasoning, said, "You read the enemy so marvelously, I don't think we have much to fear from them." From then on, Chen Tai and Deng Ai became close friends despite the large difference in their ages. Deng Ai undertook to organize and train the soldiers of Yongzhou and Liangzhou and other regions, and established forts at all the defense points.

Jiang Wei held a grand banquet in Zhongti to discuss the next invasion of Wei. Staff officer Fan Jian said, "General, not one of our offensives has ever brought a decisive victory. But our recent showing at the River Tao has the northerners quite intimidated. What purpose is served by another foray? And if something goes amiss, we will have to forfeit the gains already made."¹ Jiang Wei answered, "All of you seem to think that the size and population of the Wei kingdom make it unconquerable at this time. You fail to see the five prospects of success for an invasion."

Asked to elaborate, Jiang Wei continued, "Wei's defeat at the River Tao has completely blunted their fighting spirit. Though we retreated, we took no losses and can advance again—that is one reason for optimism. Our soldiers, transported by ship, will be spared fatigue; the enemy must march

some distance to meet us—that is the second. Our army has undergone prolonged training; the enemy is a loosely gathered bunch, poorly organized—that is our third advantage. Our troops will benefit from the autumn harvest if we move out from the Qishan hills—that is our fourth advantage. The enemy will have to disperse its strength to defend various points; ours is a unified force, and the enemy cannot relieve all the points we attack—that is our fifth advantage. No better time will come for invading Wei."

Xiahou Ba said to Jiang Wei, "Deng Ai is a deep strategist for one so young. They have made him General Who Secures the West, and he will have established more effective defenses at various points than they had before." Jiang Wei replied sharply, "I fear him not! I've had enough of your building up the enemy's fighting capacity and undermining our own confidence. I have decided to begin with the capture of Longxi." No commander dared protest further.

Jiang Wei led the advance guard and ordered the commanders to move up behind him as the Riverlands army evacuated Zhongti and headed for the Qishan hills. Mounted scouts informed Jiang Wei that the northerners had already fortified nine positions in the Qishan hills. In disbelief, Jiang Wei and some riders climbed an elevation to observe. There before them like a giant serpent lay the line of enemy campsites, its two ends within signaling range. Jiang Wei said to his followers, "Xiahou Ba was right. Only my master the late military director, His Excellency Zhuge, could have positioned the forts so perfectly. Deng Ai's skill is not inferior to his."

Jiang Wei returned to his base camp and summoned his commanders. "If the northerners have prepared," he said, "then they knew we were coming. My guess is that Deng Ai is with them. I want you to fly my banner as a decoy and pitch camp at the entrance to this valley. Send a hundred riders to reconnoitre daily. On each sortie have them change their armor and their banners, rotating the colors of the five directions, blue, yellow, red, white, and black. I, meanwhile, will quietly lead the main force out through Dongting precinct and surprise Nan'an directly." Jiang Wei ordered Bao Su to station troops at the valley leading to the Qishan hills while he set out for Nan'an.

Meanwhile, Deng Ai worked with Chen Tai making preparations to meet the Riverlands army when it emerged from the Qishan hills. Ai noted, however, that the western troops did not come forth with challenges to battle. Instead, each day mounted scouts made five forays, some riding as far as ten or fifteen *li*. After surveying the enemy from a high vantage, Deng Ai rushed back to the command tent. "Jiang Wei is not with them," he exclaimed to Chen Tai. "He must mean to surprise Nan'an from Dongting. Too few scouts are coming out, and they keep changing their attire and wearing out their horses riding back and forth. And the commander in charge doesn't seem too able. General Chen, take a company and attack; their camp is vulnerable. Destroy the outworks, then go straight to the Dongting road and cut Jiang Wei's avenue of retreat. I will go to protect Nan'an and to capture Wucheng Hill. If we can control its summit, Jiang Wei will head for Shanggui. There is a valley near Shanggui, the Duan: arduous hills hemming in a ravine—ideal for an ambush. When they come to take Wucheng Hill, we should have two units in position in Duan Valley to ambush them. Jiang Wei's defeat is certain."

Chen Tai said, "In the two or three decades I have been defending Longxi, I have never acquired so clear a grasp of the terrain. Your calculations are simply marvelous! Leave at once; I will attack the enemy positions here." Deng Ai led the north's main army to Wucheng Hill by rapid night marches and pitched camp there. No Riverlands troops appeared, and so Deng Ai sent his son Zhong and Shi Zuan, captain of his tent guards, into Duan Valley with five thousand men each. The two commanders

departed to carry out their instructions. Deng Ai ordered all flags lowered, all drums stilled, and waited for the Riverlands army to arrive.

On his way to Nan'an via Dongting, Jiang Wei passed the ground before Wucheng Hill. To Xiahou Ba he said, "That hill near Nan'an called Wucheng—control of it would give us control of Nan'an. But Deng Ai is resourceful. We must be on guard." Even as he was deliberating, a bombard shot rang out from the summit of the hill. Loud shouts shook the ground, and horns and drums sounded together. Everywhere flags shot up and northern troops swarmed all over. In the center stood a yellow banner bearing the words "Deng Ai." The Riverlands troops panicked.

Crack troops poured down from various staging points on the hill, overwhelming the Riverlands advance guard. Jiang Wei rushed the main army forward to save the van; the northerners had already withdrawn. Marching straight to the foot of Wucheng Hill, Jiang Wei challenged Deng Ai; the northern troops refused to come down despite the taunts Jiang Wei ordered his men to hurl at the foe. By evening he wanted to pull back. Again, horns and drums resounded from the hilltop, but the Wei troops did not show themselves. Jiang Wei tried to attack uphill, only to face a furious barrage that blocked all advance. The Riverlands soldiers maintained their positions on the hill until the third watch. They tried to turn back then, but horns and drums rang out from the hilltop again, and Jiang Wei repositioned his men at the foot of the hill. By the time Jiang Wei had gotten enough wood and stone moved into the area to begin building fortifications, horns and drums spoke again from the summit. The Wei troops descended and routed the Riverlands forces. Many were trampled to death by their comrades during the retreat to their original campsite.

The next day Jiang Wei ordered supply wagons to Wucheng Hill, intending to link them into a defensive outwork that would allow his troops to occupy the position. That night during the second watch Deng Ai led five hundred men with torches down the hill. They came by two separate routes and set fire to the western army's wagons. Troops on both sides battled wildly through the night, and the Riverlands army was unable to set up the line of wagons. Once again Jiang Wei withdrew and consulted with Xiahou Ba. "We have yet to take Nan'an," Jiang Wei said to him. "We had better take Shanggui first. It's the grain depot for Nan'an. Then Nan'an should fall."

Leaving Xiahou Ba at Wucheng Hill, Jiang Wei led his crack troops and proven commanders on to Shanggui. They marched through the night, until the dawn made visible the steep hills pressing in upon them and the twists and turns of the road. Jiang Wei said to his guide, "What is this place called?" "Duan Valley," he replied. Jiang Wei took fright. "An unpleasant name," he said, "the valley 'in which one is cut off.' If anyone cut off the entrance, what could we do?" Jiang Wei hesitated; then a report came from the advance guard: "Behind the hill much dust is rising. There must be an ambush there." But when Jiang Wei ordered the retreat, Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong attacked him in force. Jiang Wei fought as he retreated, and retreated as he fought. Ahead of him roaring voices announced Deng Ai, who was closing in on the third side. Attacked from three directions, the Riverlands army suffered a heavy defeat. Luckily Xiahou Ba joined the fray, and the northerners drew back. Xiahou Ba rescued Jiang Wei, who wanted to go again to the Qishan hills.

Xiahou Ba said, "Chen Tai has already destroyed our positions in the Qishan hills. Bao Su was killed in action, and the entire force has removed to Hanzhong." Jiang Wei abandoned the attempt to capture Dongting precinct and headed back by mountain bypaths. He had the main force go on while he defended the rear against Deng Ai's hot pursuit. But as Jiang Wei marched in the hills, a company of men sprang upon him unawares. It was the northern general Chen Tai. His men gave a great war

cry and boxed Jiang Wei in. Jiang Wei's men and horses were exhausted. Thrust and charge as he might, he could not break through. General Zhang Ni, Sweeper of Invaders, heard that Jiang Wei was trapped and led a few hundred riders to free him. Ni broke through the encircling rings, enabling Jiang Wei to fight his way free, but Ni then fell to a stray northern arrow.

On returning to Hanzhong, Jiang Wei, moved by Zhang Ni's loyal and courageous sacrifice for the Emperor's cause, recommended rewarding his sons and grandsons. Jiang Wei himself, however, was held to blame by most Riverlanders for the relatives they had lost in battle. And so, in keeping with the precedent Kongming had established after his defeat at Jieting, Jiang Wei recommended that the Emperor demote him to general of the Rear Army and acting chief general.

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On seeing the last of the Riverlands army retreat, Deng Ai and Chen Tai congratulated each other at a banquet. The Wei army was also heavily rewarded. Chen Tai memorialized the Wei court on the achievements of Deng Ai, and Sima Zhao sent an envoy authorized to raise Deng Ai's rank and award him the seal of his higher office. In addition, the court honored Deng Ai's son, Zhong, as a precinct lord.

At this time the Wei ruler, Cao Mao, changed the reign title Zheng Yuan, year 3, to Gan Lu, year 1.² Sima Zhao made himself first field marshal of all military forces in the empire. Entering and leaving court he kept at his command three thousand armored valiant commanders, who formed a front and rear guard for him. Zhao decided all matters in his ministerial quarters without petitioning the court, and he began to harbor thoughts of usurping the dynasty.

Sima Zhao's trusted confidant, Jia Chong (Gonglu), was the son of the late Jia Kui, General Who Establishes Prestige. Jia Chong served as senior adviser in Sima Zhao's household. One day Jia Chong said to Sima Zhao, "Your Lordship wields such great power that people everywhere are bound to be uneasy. Let's inquire quietly into the opinions of those concerned and cautiously begin preparing to seize the throne." Sima Zhao responded, "My very own intention. I want you to go to the east for me on the pretext of rewarding the expeditionary forces. See what you can find out."

As ordered, Jia Chong went to Huainan to see Zhuge Dan, Chief General Who Controls the East. Zhuge Dan (Gongxiu) was from Nanyang in Langye and was a cousin of the late Kongming. Although he served the Wei, Kongming's service as prime minister in Shu had made it impossible for Zhuge Dan to receive any significant appointment. After Kongming's death, however, Zhuge Dan gradually rose through the ranks; he was enfeoffed as lord of Gaoping and had overall command of the armed forces on both sides of the River Huai.

Jia Chong left that day, ostensibly to reward the army, but on arriving at Huainan, he went directly to see Zhuge Dan. At the reception in Jia Chong's honor the company was already well warmed with wine when Jia Chong said pointedly to Zhuge Dan, "Recently those of merit and worth in Luoyang have come to believe that the present ruler is no longer capable of acting as sovereign. Regent-Marshal Sima, guide and support of the imperial house for three reigns, whose achievements and virtues reach high as Heaven, would make a fit successor to the house of Wei in the event of the present ruler's formal abdication. What is your esteemed view in this matter, I wonder?" Zhuge Dan was furious. He said, "You dare speak treason? The son of Jia Kui, imperial inspector of Yuzhou, who earned his keep by the grace of the Wei!" Excusing himself, Jia Chong said, "I have

simply conveyed to Your Lordship what someone else had said." "If a coup is attempted, I shall die protecting the court," Zhuge Dan added. Jia Chong kept silent.

The next day Jia Chong took his leave and went back to report in full to Sima Zhao. Furious, Sima Zhao said, "That rat defies me?" "Zhuge Dan is popular in Huainan," Jia Chong said. "He will cause trouble sooner or later and should be eliminated swiftly." And so Sima Zhao sent confidential instructions to Yangzhou's imperial inspector, Yue Chen, while openly he sent an edict appointing Zhuge Dan minister of public construction.

On receiving the edict, Zhuge Dan realized that Jia Chong had betrayed him. He therefore arrested and interrogated the envoy. The envoy said, "Yue Chen knows all about this." Zhuge Dan said, "How could he know?" The envoy answered, "General Sima has sent someone to Yangzhou with a secret letter for him." The outraged Zhuge Dan ordered his attendants to behead the envoy; then he organized an armed guard of one thousand, which he led to Yangzhou to deal with Yue Chen.

Zhuce Dan reached the southern gate of the provincial capital. Finding it sealed and the drawbridge raised, Dan shouted up, but no one on the wall responded. Zhuge Dan cried, "How dare the low-down Yue Chen do this!" He ordered his force to storm the wall. More than ten of his valiant cavaliers dismounted and crossed the moat. They scrambled up the wall, slaughtered the guard, and flung wide the gate. Then Zhuge Dan entered the town and put it to the torch. All of Yue Chen's family was killed. Yue Chen rushed to a tower to save himself. Zhuge Dan followed him, sword drawn, and shouted, "Your father, Yue Jin, once enjoyed the love and grace of Wei. Will you promote the treason of Sima Zhao and abandon your duty to your liege's house?" Before Yue Chen could answer, Zhuge Dan slew him. He then sent a petition to Luoyang enumerating the crimes of Sima Zhao. Next, Zhuge Dan stocked up on grain and organized the soldier-tiller families of Huainan—numbering more than one hundred thousand—and the more than forty thousand newly surrendered Yangzhou troops for a fresh advance. Zhuge Dan also had Senior Adviser Wu Gang deliver his son Zhuge Jing to the Southland as a pledge to accompany his request for cooperation in a joint campaign of chastisement against Sima Zhao.³

At the time of Wu Gang's mission, the Southland's prime minister Sun Jun had already died of illness and his paternal cousin Sun Chen (Zitong) was administering his office. Sun Chen, a cruel and violent man, had killed Grand Marshal Teng Yin, General Lu Ju, Wang Chun, and others and then taken state power into his own hands. Though he was an intelligent ruler, Sun Liang could not control Sun Chen. This was the situation when Wu Gang brought Zhuge Jing to the City of Stones.

Zhuce Jing prostrated himself before Sun Chen, who asked the purpose of the visit. Wu Gang said, "Zhuge Dan is a clansman of the late Martial Lord Zhuge Liang of Shu-Han. Previously Dan served the kingdom of Wei; but now, after watching Sima Zhao degrade the royal house, depose the ruler, and assume his powers, Zhuge Dan seeks to bring the villain to justice by armed force. To supplement his military deficiencies Zhuge Dan wishes to offer his allegiance, sending his own son Jing as hostage as a token of his sincerity. He prays you will send troops to aid him." Sun Chen allowed the request and dispatched two chief generals, Quan Yi and Quan Duan, to command the expedition; Yu Quan to support them from the rear; Zhu Yi and Tang Zi as the vanguard; and Wen Qin as guide. Seventy thousand advanced, mustered into three armies. Wu Gang returned to Shouchun to inform Zhuge Dan. Delighted at the success of Gang's mission, Zhuge Dan organized his troops in preparation.

Meanwhile, Zhuge Dan's memorial enumerating Sima Zhao's crimes had reached Luoyang. Sima

Zhao read it and was enraged. He wanted personally to lead the army to suppress Zhuge Dan, but Jia Chong expressed objections. "Your Lordship controls the patrimony your father and elder brother built," he said. But your benevolent virtue has yet to be fully appreciated throughout the realm. If you leave the Son of Heaven behind and someone stages a coup at court, your regrets will come too late. Better to petition for the queen mother and the Son of Heaven to accompany you on the expedition. That should prevent unexpected difficulties. "

Delighted, Sima Zhao replied, "Our views agree," and he petitioned the queen mother; "Zhuge Dan has organized a revolt. I, your vassal, and the civil and military officials jointly petition Her Majesty and the Son of Heaven to accompany the punitive expedition we are undertaking to fulfill the late Emperor's dying wishes." Intimidated, the queen mother had to comply.

The next day Sima Zhao requested the Wei ruler, Cao Mao, to begin the march. Cao Mao said, "Regent-Marshal, you command the forces of the realm as you see fit. Why need we march in person?" "That is not the question," Sima Zhao answered. "In the past the Martial Ancestor, Cao Cao, towered over the realm. His son, Emperor Wen, and grandson, Emperor Ming, aspired to embrace the whole sphere of dominion, even to the eight directions. To oppose a major foe, they took the field in person. Your Majesty should live up to the example these former sovereigns set in ridding the realm of longstanding wrongs. What have you to fear?" Intimidated by Sima Zhao's power, Cao Mao could only comply.

Sima Zhao issued an edict mobilizing all troops in the two capitals, some two hundred and sixty thousand. He ordered General Wang Ji, Controller of the South, to take the van, and General Chen Qian, Securer of the East, to serve as his lieutenant. Military Supervisor Shi Bao and Yanzhou Imperial Inspector Zhou Tai led the left and right forces protecting the imperial carriages. The army bore down on Huainan like a moving flood.

The Southland vanguard, Zhu Yi, led his troops to meet the northern onslaught. The two armies drew themselves into battle formation. Wang Ji rode forth from the Wei side, and after a brief clash Zhu Yi fled the field. Tang Zi followed Zhu Yi, but he too was beaten after a brief engagement. Wang Ji, commanding the field, dealt the Southland troops a heavy defeat. They retreated fifty *li*, pitched camp, and reported to Shouchun.

Zhugé Dan meanwhile had led his own crack forces to rendezvous with Wen Qin and his two sons, Wen Yang and Wen Hu. The four, in command of tens of thousands of doughty warriors, now came marching against Sima Zhao. Indeed:

The moment Sima Zhao's commanders saw the Southland fighters flag,
They saw stout northern forces in arms against them.

Who would emerge the victor?

READ ON.



*Yu Quan Dies Nobly Trying to Save Shouchun;
Jiang Wei Fights Fiercely Attempting to Seize Longwall*

INFORMED THAT ZHUGE DAN HAD JOINED FORCES with the Southland troops for a decisive battle, Sima Zhao summoned Detached Cavalry Senior Adviser Pei Xiu and Inner Bureau Attendant Zhong Hui to discuss measures to destroy the enemy. Zhong Hui said, "The Southland is helping Zhuge Dan for mere advantage. If we can lure the southerners away by the same means, we can win the day." Sima Zhao agreed and sent Shi Bao and Zhou Tai with two companies to the City of Stones to set up an ambush. He had Wang Ji and Chen Qian command a contingent of crack troops in the rear, and ordered Subordinate Commander Cheng Zu to take several tens of thousands of troops to try and divert the enemy. Sima Zhao also ordered Chen Jun to take wagons, horses, oxen, and mules loaded with items that would be used for rewards. These items, piled on all sides of the camps, were to be abandoned if the enemy came.

That day Zhuge Dan had under him two Southland generals: Zhu Yi on his left and Wen Qin on his right. Observing that the Wei formation was poorly organized, Zhuge Dan advanced directly in force. When Cheng Zu withdrew, Zhuge Dan pursued hotly. Then he noticed the many draught animals on the field and the southern troops striving to catch them; they had lost all interest in the battle. Suddenly a bombard sounded as two armies closed in on him, one led by Bao Shi, the other by Zhou Tai. Zhuge Dan panicked and tried to withdraw, but Wang Ji and Chen Qian joined the battle, and Dan suffered a major defeat. Sima Zhao himself arrived and reinforced his commanders. Zhuge Dan fled into Shouchun and sealed the city gates for a long defense. Sima Zhao surrounded the city and laid siege to the walls.

At this time the Southland troops withdrew to Anfeng, and the Wei ruler advanced in person to Xiangcheng. Zhong Hui said, "Despite today's defeat, Zhuge Dan remains well provided with grain and provender in Shouchun. And now the southern troops have come to Anfeng, forming a pincer against us. We have Shouchun under siege on four sides, but the enemy can hold on indefinitely if we slacken, or fight to the death if we press harder. And the southern force could take advantage of the situation to mount a simultaneous attack on us, putting our forces at dire risk. It would be better for us to attack Shouchun on three sides but leave the south gate free so that the rebels can get out. If they do, we can pursue and strike them down to complete our victory. As for the Southland troops—having come so far, they will not have the grain to sustain themselves. If we slip behind them and harass them with light cavalry, they should fall apart without a battle." Sima Zhao put his arm on Zhong Hui's back and said, "My very own Zifang!"¹ Zhao then ordered Wang Ji to withdraw his men from the south gate of Shouchun.

Sun Chen was in Anfeng with the southern troops. He summoned Zhu Yi and said to him, "If you can't save a single city like Shouchun, how are you going to conquer the north? One more failure, and

it's your head!" Zhu Yi returned to his base to discuss the next move with his officers. Yu Quan said, "The south gate is open now. I volunteer to go in and help Zhuge Dan defend the walls. You, General, provoke the Wei troops to battle. I will come back out and form a second front to defeat the Wei army." Zhu Yi approved the plan. Quan Duan and Wen Qin volunteered to join Yu Quan; the three entered Shouchun with ten thousand men.² In the absence of specific orders, the Wei troops dared not go into action; they simply allowed the southerners to enter Shouchun unopposed and reported it to Sima Zhao.

Sima Zhao said, "Zhu Yi and Yu Quan are trying to defeat us with a two-front attack." He summoned Wang Ji and Chen Qian and ordered them, "Take five thousand men and cut Zhu Yi's route into Shouchun, then attack from behind." The two left to perform the task. Zhu Yi was already marching toward the city when bombards sounded behind him, shattering the air. Wang Ji and Chen Qian attacked Zhu Yi and crushed the southern force. Zhu Yi returned to face Sun Chen, who said angrily, "What use have I for a commander who never wins?" On his order Zhu Yi was beheaded. Sun Chen also berated Quan Duan's son Quan I: "If you can't drive back the northern soldiers, neither you nor your father will ever enter my presence again." With that, Sun Chen returned to the southern capital at Jianye.

Zhong Hui said to Sima Zhao, "Sun Chen has withdrawn; the city is isolated. The siege should be resumed," and on his advice Sima Zhao ordered the siege laid once again. Quan I tried to enter Shouchun, but the northern force was so powerful that he saw no hope in the final outcome and surrendered to Sima Zhao. Sima Zhao made him a subordinate commander. Grateful for this kindness, Quan I drafted a letter to his father Duan and his uncle Yi accusing Sun Chen of cruelty and advising surrender to the kingdom of Wei. The letter was tied to an arrow and shot over the wall of Shouchun. Quan I's uncle obtained the letter, and he and Quan Duan led several thousand soldiers out of Shouchun to submit to Sima Zhao.

Inside the city a deeply worried Zhuge Dan listened to a suggestion from his counselors Jiang Ban and Jiao Yi: "Our grain stores are too low to feed so many soldiers.³ We cannot hold out long. Let us lead the southern troops out for a last-ditch battle." Zhuge Dan replied with anger, "I say defend; you say fight. Perhaps you have treachery in mind? Mention it again, and you will die for sure." The two counselors looked upward and sighed, saying, "Zhuge Dan is doomed. We had better surrender quickly and save ourselves." That night during the second watch Jiang Ban and Jiao Yi slipped out of the city and surrendered. Sima Zhao awarded them important posts. As a result, no one in the city dared mention fighting, though many inside were willing to fight.

Inside Shouchun, Zhuge Dan watched the northern soldiers constructing a loop of earthen walls to divert the River Huai when it rose. Dan was hoping that a flood might undermine these walls, enabling him to launch an attack on the northern troops. But to his disappointment little rain fell from autumn on into winter, and the Huai did not overflow.⁴ Within the city food ran short. Wen Qin and his sons, making a determined stand at a rampart, watched as more and more of the defenders collapsed from hunger.⁵ He informed Zhuge Dan, "Our grain is nearly gone. The men are famished. To save food, I think we should let out all your troops from the north." Zhuge Dan retorted hotly, "Are you conspiring against me, telling me to send out my troops from the north?" Zhuge Dan ordered Wen Qin executed.

Having seen their father killed, Wen Qin's sons, Yang and Hu, drew their swords and dispatched several score of men. They then leaped to the top of the wall, dropped to the other side, crossed the

moat, and went to the Wei base camp to surrender. Sima Zhao remembered his grudge against Wen Yang for single-handedly driving back his troops and wanted to kill him. But Zhong Hui protested: "It was Wen Qin's offense, and he is gone. His two sons, in extremity, have tendered their allegiance. Killing surrendering commanders will only harden the city's defenders." On this advice Sima Zhao summoned Wen Yang and Wen Hu to his tent and spoke reassuringly to them. Zhao granted them fine horses and damask clothes, gave them subordinate commands, and enfeoffed them as honorary lords. Wen Qin's sons bowed low and thanked their benefactor. Then they circled Shouchun's wall shouting, "The Regent-Marshal has forgiven our crimes and awarded us rank. All of you should surrender quickly." Hearing their voices, those inside thought to themselves, "Wen Yang is Sima Zhao's enemy. If even he is given high office, would we be given less?" And so all decided to surrender. Enraged, Zhuge Dan patrolled the city day and night, striking down dissenters in order to sustain his authority.

Zhong Hui knew of the disaffection inside Shouchun. He entered the command tent and said to Sima Zhao, "The time to strike has come." Delighted, Sima Zhao urged the whole army to storm the city. The commander of the north gate, Zeng Xuan, delivered the gate, letting the northerners in. When Zhuge Dan learned that the enemy was inside, he exited hastily by a small road. A few hundred remained under him. But as he came to the drawbridge, Hu Fen confronted him. A hand rose, a blade fell, and Zhuge Dan lay dead beneath his horse. His followers were seized.⁶

Wang Ji led his men to the west gate, where he encountered the southern commander Yu Quan. "Surrender at once!" Wang Ji shouted, but Yu Quan retorted hotly, "I went forth entrusted with the task of saving people in distress. No man of honor, having failed in his task, surrenders to the foe." Throwing his helmet to the ground, Yu Quan cried aloud, "A man born into this age is fortunate to give his life on the field." Wielding his sword, he fought another thirty or forty desperate passes-at-arms until, broken by fatigue, he was slain by a passing soldier. A poet of later times has left this verse in admiration of Yu Quan:

The year Sima kept Shouchun under siege,
Its defenders gave up in the wagons' dust.
Which Southland hero justly stands beside
Yu Quan, who fought for honor to the last?

Sima Zhao entered Shouchun and executed every member of Zhuge Dan's household, old and young alike, as well as all the members of his clan. Soldiers brought Zhao several hundred prisoners from Zhuge Dan's own unit. Sima Zhao demanded, "Are you surrendering or not?" All shouted, "We vowed to die with Lord Zhuge. We will never submit to you!" Furious, Sima Zhao had his guards take them bound outside the city, where he asked each in turn, "Will you surrender and be spared?" Each soldier went to his death without submitting. Sima Zhao sighed and sighed again in admiration of their steadfastness; then he had the corpses buried. A poet of later times has left these lines of praise:

Vassals bound in fealty disdain cheating death—
Such were Zhuge Dan's soldiers of command,
For whom "The Dew on the Leaf" will never be sung;⁷
They add to our lore another Tian Heng.

When most of the southern troops had surrendered, Pei Xiu informed Sima Zhao, "The families of the southern soldiers are located to the southeast, between the Great River and the Huai. Lest they turn against you, slaughter them and bury them in a mass grave." Zhong Hui said, "No. The master strategists of old considered it essential to take an enemy kingdom whole—land and people—and execute only the principal villains. It would be inhumane to slaughter so many; letting them go will show the magnanimity of our middle kingdom." "A well-reasoned conclusion," Sima Zhao said and sent all the southern troops home. Tang Zi also surrendered to Wei, rather than return and face Sun Chen. Sima Zhao appointed all the surrendering commanders and posted them in various places in the three river districts.⁸ Thus order was restored in Huainan.

As the northern army was preparing to withdraw, reports arrived that Jiang Wei of the Riverlands was leading troops to capture Chang'an and intercept grain shipments. Alarmed, Sima Zhao hastened to consult with his officials on ways to repel the invasion.

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It was the twentieth year of Yan Xi, by the calendar of Shu-Han.⁹ In Hanzhong, Jiang Wei had selected two Riverlands commanders to train his forces, Jiang Shu and Fu Qian, two brave leaders whom he prized highly. During this time Jiang Wei learned that Zhuge Dan of Huainan had raised an army to chastise Sima Zhao, that Sun Chen of the Southland was helping him, and that Sima Zhao had mobilized both northern capitals and marched against Zhuge Dan together with the queen mother and the ruler of Wei. Delighted by this news, Jiang Wei said, "This time my ambition will succeed." He petitioned the Second Emperor to wage war again on the kingdom of Wei.

Household Master¹⁰ Qiao Zhou learned of these developments and said with a sigh, "How low the court has sunk these days, succumbing to the temptations of vice and luxury and placing all its trust in the favored eunuch Huang Hao, who ignores official business in his pursuit of pleasure. All the while Jiang Wei remains addicted to his campaigns of conquest, unconcerned for the troops' welfare. This house stands in grave peril." Qiao Zhou then wrote the essay "On Enemy Kingdoms" and sent it to Jiang Wei. Jiang Wei opened the seal and studied it. The text read:

Someone asks, "In ancient cases of the weaker overcoming the stronger, what method was used?" I reply, great, confident kingdoms typically disdain those around them; small, insecure kingdoms typically concentrate on keeping all sides satisfied. Normally, such disdain leads to disaffection and disorder, while concentrating on satisfying all sides leads to orderly rule. King Wen of Zhou nurtured the people and won wide support though he started with few; Gou Jian showed concern for the army and from a position of weakness destroyed a stronger foe.

Another question: "Before the Han regime the forces of Chu were stronger than those of Han. Liu Bang and Xiang Yu agreed to divide the realm at the Great Canal.¹¹ But Zhang Liang convinced Liu Bang that once the people's adherence was fixed, it would be difficult to mobilize them again. And so Bang chased Xiang Yu east and in the end destroyed the house of Xiang. So why is it necessary to follow the virtuous oath of King Wen and Gou Jian?" My answer is, during the regimes of Shang and Zhou, when princes and lords were honored generation after generation, when the relationship of liege to liege man had long been settled, not even a Han Gao Zu could take the empire by force of arms. But by the time of the Qin

regime, when lordships were abolished and imperial governors established, when the people were wearied by Qin's campaigns and the empire itself was crumbling, then bold spirits rose and vied for power.

Now we have entered another age—not the seething cauldron years of Qin's fall, but rather a time like the Warring States when six kingdoms held their own, a time, indeed, when the role of a King Wen can be played, but not the role of a Han Gao Zu. So do not act before the time is right; do not strike until all factors are conducive. The hosts of Tang and Wu, founders of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, conquered without having to fight a second time. Truly they took seriously the strain on the people and evaluated the occasion with circumspection. If in the end the military mentality prevails and the outcome is unfortunate, the wisest of men will be unable to redeem the situation.

Qiao Zhou's essay angered Jiang Wei. "The views of a rotten pedant!" he cried and threw the paper down. Then he readied the Riverlands army for the march against the northern heartland. He asked Fu Qian, "Where do you think we should sortie?" "All Wei's grain and provender are stored at Longwall," Fu Qian answered. "We should go straight through Luogu Gorge and across the Shen Range, direct to Longwall. We'll first burn out their supplies, then capture Qinchuan. That will put the north within reach." "Your plan tallies nicely with mine," Jiang Wei confided, and he set out for Longwall via Luogu Gorge and the Shen Range.

Sima Wang, a cousin of Sima Zhao's, was commander in control for Longwall, a well-stocked but lightly defended city. Hearing that Riverlands troops were approaching, Sima Wang and two commanders, Wang Zhen and Li Peng, established fortifications twenty *li* outside the city walls. The next day the Riverlands force arrived, and Sima Wang led the two commanders out in formation. Riding ahead, Jiang Wei pointed at Sima Wang and said, "Sima Zhao has moved the ruler of Wei into his army camp. He must be intending to do what Li Jue and Guo Si did.¹² But I hold a mandate from the court to make you answer for your crimes. Surrender now! Persist in this course of folly, and your whole family will be executed." Sima Wang answered in a booming voice, "None of your impudence! You have violated our greater kingdom time and again. Withdraw now or be wiped out to the last man."

As Sima Wang spoke, his first commander Wang Zhen emerged, spear held high. From the Riverlands line Fu Qian went forth to meet him. After less than ten passes Fu Qian feinted, and Wang Zhen thrust hard. Fu Qian swerved and seized Wang Zhen, hauling him onto his own mount; then he rode back to his line. In great anger Li Peng galloped forth, swinging his sword, to save Wang Zhen. Fu Qian let Li Peng draw near, then flung his prisoner to the ground and surreptitiously grasped a four-pronged iron bar. Catching up, Li Peng raised his sword to strike. Fu Qian turned sideways and, looking back, hurled the bar at Li Peng's forehead. It pierced Peng's eye, and he fell dead from his horse; Wang Zhen was speared by Riverlands soldiers. When Jiang Wei pressed his advantage, moving up in force, Sima Wang abandoned his base and retreated into the city, sealing himself in behind the gates. Jiang Wei issued an order: "Tonight the troops are to rest and restore their energies. Tomorrow we enter Longwall."

The next day at dawn the Riverlands soldiers vied in leading the assault. Crowding up to the foot of the city wall, they sent incendiary arrows and missiles over the top. The thatched rooms on the wall burst into flames, and the northern soldiers broke ranks. Jiang Wei had his men fire the kindling

they had piled up along the wall. Giant flames shot upward, licking the sky. The city was about to fall, and the piteous cries of the Wei troops inside carried far into the surrounding countryside.

The Riverlands forces were pressing the attack when suddenly behind them lusty shouts shattered the air. Jiang Wei maneuvered his horse around and saw northern troops swarming toward him, beating their drums and waving their banners. Jiang Wei ordered his force to reverse direction, making the rear the van. Standing beneath his banner at the entrance to his line, awaiting the enemy, Jiang Wei watched as a young Wei commander rode forth in full battle dress, his spear ready for action. He appeared to be in his early twenties, with a face so fair it seemed powdered; his lips were like daubs of red. The young commander called out harshly, "Know me for General Deng!" "Deng Ai," Jiang Wei thought and raised his spear for combat. He raced forth, and the two closed in a grand display of martial spirit. But after some thirty or forty passes-at-arms neither had prevailed.

The young commander worked his spear flawlessly. Jiang Wei thought, "There's only one way I can win," and guided his horse to the left toward the mountain paths and fled. The young commander gave chase. Jiang Wei fixed his spear in its sling, surreptitiously fitted an arrow to his bow, and shot. The sharp-eyed young commander spotted the maneuver at once and leaned forward on hearing the bowstring's tone; the arrow sailed harmlessly overhead. The next time Jiang Wei looked back, his pursuer had caught up and was about to thrust his spear home. Jiang Wei dodged the blow and gripped the shaft under his arm as it slid along his ribs. The young commander released the spear and fled for his life. Jiang Wei cried, "What a shame! What a pity!" and chased Deng Ai down to the front of his line.

Another commander emerged waving his sword. "Jiang Wei, you low-down rogue! Don't chase my boy! Deng Ai is here for you!" And so Jiang Wei discovered to his amazement that the young commander was not Deng Ai but his son, Deng Zhong. Jiang Wei inwardly voiced his admiration. He wanted to fight Deng Ai but feared his horse was tired, so he pointed to Ai and said, "Today I have met both father and son. Let us withdraw for now and fight to the finish tomorrow." Deng Ai himself realized that the arena was unfavorable to him, and he, too, reined in and said, "In that case, let us recall our men. Let no man of honor take unfair advantage."

Thus the two armies retired. Deng Ai built his camp against the River Wei; Jiang Wei made camp across two hills. After looking over the terrain and position of the Riverlands troops, Deng Ai sent a letter to Sima Wang: "We must avoid battle and hold our lines until reinforcement from within the passes reaches us and the Riverlands army runs out of grain. Then a three-sided attack will make victory certain. I am sending my eldest son, Deng Zhong, to help you defend the city." At the same time Deng Ai sent to Sima Zhao for aid.

Meanwhile, Jiang Wei had delivered a written challenge to Deng Ai's camp to do battle the following day. Deng Ai falsely accepted the challenge. The next day at the fifth watch Jiang Wei ordered his men to take their meal, and at the first light they deployed and waited. In his camp Deng Ai stilled the drums and took down all flags to create the appearance of an evacuated position. Jiang Wei waited until night fell, then he returned to his base. The next day he sent another challenge and a reproach to Deng Ai for not showing up the day before. Deng Ai entertained the envoy with food and wine and sent his reply: "I had a slight ailment and missed the engagement. I will meet you on the field tomorrow."

On the morrow Jiang Wei led his forces out, but Deng Ai again failed to appear. The same scene was repeated every day for four or five days. At last Fu Qian said to Jiang Wei, "They are up to

something. We must be on guard." Jiang Wei replied, "They are holding back until their troops from within the passes get here; then they will be able to attack us on three sides. I am going to have a letter carried to Sun Chen in the Southland to persuade him to support our attack."

That moment mounted scouts reported: "Sima Zhao has attacked Shouchun and killed Zhuge Dan. All the southern troops have surrendered. Sima Zhao has withdrawn to Luoyang and is preparing to relieve Longwall." This news, beyond all expectation, forced Jiang Wei to say, "So our campaign against Wei has become an empty dream once again. We might as well return home now." Indeed:

The first four campaigns yielded no success;
The fifth attempt proved a failure, too.

How would Jiang Wei manage the retreat?

READ ON.



***Ding Feng Frames a Plan to Kill Sun Chen;
Jiang Wei Forms a Battle to Defeat Deng Ai***

JIANG WEI BEGAN RETREATING before reinforcements could reach Deng Ai. He sent his weapons, wagons, military equipment, and infantry back first, assigning the cavalry to secure the rear. Spies reported Jiang Wei's movements to Deng Ai, who smiled and said, "He knows our supreme commander's army is coming and so retreats in good time. No need to pursue. We would only be trapped." Deng Ai's scouts, after tracking the enemy, reported that, indeed, firewood had been piled at narrow points along the Luogu Gorge road: they had evidently intended to surprise their pursuers with fire. Deng Ai's council exclaimed, "A marvelous deduction, General." Deng Ai sent a written account to the court, and Sima Zhao, well pleased with the outcome of the fighting, again rewarded him.

. . . .

Meanwhile the Southland's supreme commander Sun Chen had learned that Quan Duan and Tang Zi had surrendered to the Wei. Exploding in anger, he had their families executed. The ruler of Wu, Sun Liang, sixteen years old, deplored the extreme cruelty of Sun Chen. One day while eating a fresh plum in the western garden, he sent a eunuch to fetch some honey. Moments later it was brought. The ruler saw mouse droppings in the honey. He summoned the steward who kept the honey, and rebuked him. Touching his head to the ground, the steward replied, "The honey was strictly locked up and sealed. How could there be mouse droppings in it?" Sun Liang said, "Did anyone from the Inner Bureau ask you for some?" The steward answered, "Several days ago, yes, but I didn't dare give him any."

Sun Liang turned to the eunuch and said, "You put the droppings in because the steward refused you honey and you wanted to ruin him." The eunuch would not own up. "It's easy enough to find out," Sun Liang continued. "If the droppings have been in the honey for any length of time, they will be soaked through; if not, they will be dry inside." He ordered one opened and examined. True enough, the core was dry, and the eunuch confessed. Thus Sun Liang demonstrated his quick mind. But for all his cleverness, Sun Liang was under Sun Chen's control and could not act on his own.

Sun Chen ordered his younger brother, Sun Ju, General Who Overawes Distant Regions, to enter Canglong and establish a permanent guard there. He ordered Sun En, general for military protection, Subordinate Commander Sun Gan, and the commandant for Changshui, Sun Kai, to occupy various campsites.

One day the Wu ruler, Sun Liang, attended by the imperial brother-in-law, Quan Ji of the Inner Bureau, sat pondering the plight of his ruling house. Sun Liang said to him tearfully, "Having concentrated great power in his hands, Sun Chen now uses it to kill others wantonly. Me he has

abused beyond belief. Measures must be taken now, or we will face grave danger." Quan Ji replied, "I am at Your Majesty's disposal, no matter what the risk." Sun Liang said, "I need you to mobilize the Palace Guard; then, with General Liu Cheng, take control of the city gates. That way I can get out and kill Sun Chen. But be sure to keep this from your mother, for she is the elder sister of Sun Chen, and I will pay dearly if she finds out." "I beg Your Majesty," Quan Ji said, "let me have a handwritten edict from you to show the troops when the time comes—it will prevent Sun Chen's henchmen from taking matters into their own hands." Sun Liang agreed and gave Quan Ji a secret edict.

Quan Ji returned home with the imperial decree and privately informed his father, Quan Shang. Shang informed his wife at once: "They're going to kill Sun Chen within three days." "And well they should!" she replied, but secretly she had the information conveyed to Sun Chen. Enraged, Sun Chen summoned his four brothers that night, mustered his crack troops, and surrounded the imperial palace. At the same time he arrested Quan Shang, Liu Cheng, and their entire families. As day broke, the ruler of Wu, Sun Liang, heard loud gongs outside the palace gates. A courtier entered and told him, "Sun Chen has surrounded the grounds." Angrily, Sun Liang accused Empress Quan. "Your father and brother have ruined my work," he cried and drew his sword to make his way outside. But Empress Quan, together with his courtiers and personal attendants, hung onto his garments and wept and thereby prevented him from going out.

Having put Quan Shang and Liu Cheng to death, Sun Chen summoned all officials and officers to court and issued an edict: "The sovereign has long suffered physically from his wanton depravities. Incompetent and immoral, he cannot perform the temple services to the ancestors and should therefore be deposed. Anyone who objects will be considered a conspirator." The fear-stricken assembly responded, "We will comply gladly with your command." But Chief of the Secretariat Huan Yi angrily rose to his feet and stepped forth from the ranks of officials to condemn Sun Chen: "How dare you speak treason of our wise and knowing sovereign? Give me death before I follow a traitor's decree." In a fury Sun Chen drew his sword and dispatched the secretary. Then he strode into the ruler's quarters and denounced Sun Liang: "Immoral, ignorant leader. You should by rights be executed to satisfy the empire. But out of respect for the late Emperor we will demote you to prince of Kuaiji and select someone virtuous to assume the throne in your place." Sun Chen harshly ordered a courtier from the Secretariat to remove the ruler's seal and cord and ordered Deng Cheng to take possession of them. Sun Liang gave vent to loud cries and departed for Kuaiji.¹ A poet of later times has left these lines expressing his dismay:

Such treason mocks Yi Yin's hallowed name
And wrongly claims Huo Guang's authority.²
Lament Sun Liang, this wise and knowing lord,
Who never would preside again at court.

Sun Chen sent Sun Kai, the keeper of the Imperial Clan Registry, and Dong Chao, a courtier in the Secretariat, to the town of Hulin to welcome the new sovereign, Sun Xiu (Zilie), prince of Langye. He was the sixth son of Sun Quan. While in Hulin, Sun Xiu had dreamed he was riding a dragon into the sky but on looking back could not see the dragon's tail. He woke with a violent start. The next day Sun Kai and Dong Chao came and, prostrating themselves, invited Xiu to return with them to the capital.

On their way the three came to Qu'e. An old man knocked his head on the ground before them,

claiming his name was Gan Xiu. He said, "Any prolonged situation is bound to change. I pray Your Highness, move faster." Sun Xiu thanked the old man. When they reached Busai precinct, Sun En brought the imperial carriage to welcome Sun Xiu. Sun Xiu did not dare ascend it; instead, he entered the capital in a smaller carriage. The entire body of officials prostrated themselves along the roadway to welcome him. Sun Xiu anxiously stepped down from the carriage and reciprocated their courtesy. Sun Chen appeared, ordered the new ruler raised to his feet, and invited him into the main hall. Sun Xiu ascended the platform and assumed the seat of the Son of Heaven.

Sun Xiu declined several times before finally accepting the jade seal. After the civil and military officials finished offering their congratulations, a general amnesty was proclaimed and the reign year changed to Yong An, "Perpetual Peace," year 1 (A. D. 258). Sun Chen was appointed prime minister and protector of Jingzhou, and the various officials received fiefs and awards. Sun Xiu also enfeoffed Sun Hao, the son of his elder brother, as lord of Wucheng. The clan of Sun Chen received five lordships; all five lords had authority over troops guarding the emperor. They dominated Sun Xiu so completely that he feared a coup. Publicly he showed the five lords favor while secretly he tried to protect himself against them. Sun Chen meanwhile was becoming more arrogant and arbitrary than ever.

In winter, the twelfth month, Sun Chen brought beef and wine to the palace to celebrate the sovereign's health. The ruler of Wu, Sun Xiu, refused the gift. Deeply offended, Sun Chen took the food and drink to the residence of General of the Left Zhang Bu to share them. They drank and grew mellow with the wine. Sun Chen said to Zhang Bu, "Initially, when I deposed the prince of Kuaiji, many urged me to take power. But I had taken the present ruler for a worthy man, so I placed him on the throne instead. Now he refuses my congratulatory gifts and treats me most shabbily. Before long you will hear from me!" At this boast Zhang Bu nodded obsequiously.

The next day Zhang Bu entered the palace and secretly informed Sun Xiu of Sun Chen's threat. The ruler had no peace of mind thereafter. Several days later Sun Chen sent an official of the Secretariat, Meng Zong, to Wuchang with a force of fifteen thousand picked troops that had been made available to him from the central camp. The entire armory was also placed at Meng Zong's disposal. At this point General Wei Miao and an officer of the guard, Shi Shuo, secretly informed Sun Xiu, "Sun Chen has transferred troops outside the city and distributed all of the weapons in the armory. A coup must be coming." Sun Xiu summoned Zhang Bu for an emergency meeting.

Zhang Bu said to the ruler, "Let us consult veteran general Ding Feng. He is an excellent strategist and will be capable of dealing with so grave a matter." Sun Xiu summoned Ding Feng and explained the situation. Ding Feng said to the ruler, "Let Your Majesty be at ease. I think I know how to save the dynasty." Sun Xiu asked his plan, and Ding Feng answered, "Tomorrow begins the year-end La festival. Use the occasion of the grand congregation of the court to summon Sun Chen. I will make the necessary arrangements." Sun Xiu was delighted. Jointly with Wei Miao and Shi Shuo, Ding Feng took charge of all measures outside the palace; Zhang Bu coordinated from within.

That night the wind blew with great force, carrying stones and dirt through the air and uprooting old trees. At dawn the winds died, and envoys came to invite Sun Chen to the palace for the congregation. But when he tried to rise, Sun Chen fell flat as if someone had pushed him over. He lost his composure further as the envoys, who numbered more than ten, crowded into the room. Sun Chen's steward, to dissuade him from going to court, said, "The winds blew all night, and this morning you lost your balance and fell for no reason. These are ominous signs. You should stay home." Sun Chen

replied, "My brothers and I control the palace police. Who would dare threaten me? If there is the slightest disturbance, start a fire in my compound as a signal." After giving these instructions, Sun Chen entered the carriage.

The ruler of Wu, Sun Xiu, hastened from his throne to receive Sun Chen and invited Chen to sit beside him. After several rounds of wine, the courtiers said in astonishment, "There are flames outside the palace." Sun Chen started to rise, but Sun Xiu stopped him saying, "Remain calm, Prime Minister. With so many troops outside, there is nothing to fear." As he spoke, Zhang Bu, with drawn sword, led thirty armed guards into the hall. Assuming control, Zhang Bu said harshly, "I have an edict to arrest the traitor Sun Chen." Sun Chen tried to leave, but Bu's guards seized him. Bending low and touching his head to the ground, Sun Chen pleaded, "I beg to be exiled to Jiaozhou where I have some land."³ "When did you allow the mercy of exile to your victims—Teng Yin, Lü Ju, Wang Chun?" Sun Xiu asked bitterly and gave the order for execution.

Zhang Bu had Sun Chen dragged down to the east side of the hall and beheaded; not one of his followers dared defend him. Zhang Bu then declaimed the edict: "The crime was Sun Chen's alone. No one else stands accused." The courtiers were relieved. Zhang Bu invited Sun Xiu to ascend the Tower of Five Phoenixes. Ding Feng, Wei Miao, Shi Shuo, and others brought in Sun Chen's brothers under arrest; Sun Xiu ordered all their families executed in public. The members of his paternal clan who were slain numbered in the hundreds. All branches of the clan were exterminated as well, and soldiers were ordered to reopen the tomb of Sun Jun and mutilate and expose his corpse. At the same time Zhuge Ke, Teng Yin, Lü Ju, Wang Chun, and their murdered families were reburied in newly constructed tombs to commemorate their loyalty. Their relatives who had been charged and exiled to remote areas were amnestied and returned to their lands. Ding Feng and those around him received fiefs and handsome rewards.

Mounted Southland couriers carried reports of these developments to Chengdu. In response, Second Emperor Liu Shan sent a congratulatory delegation to Sun Xiu, and Sun Xiu sent his envoy, Xue Xu, to reciprocate the courtesy. When Xue Xu returned from the Riverlands, the ruler of Wu asked him to report on recent developments in that kingdom. Xue Xu told Sun Xiu: "The eunuch Huang Hao has recently acquired great authority, and the majority of the elder lords cater to his demands. In the court not an honest word is heard; throughout the countryside the people look starved. Theirs is a case of 'sparrows in the eaves unaware that the mansion is about to burn down.'" With a sigh Sun Xiu said, "The Martial Lord Zhuge Liang would never have let this happen." The ruler of Wu drew up another official letter to Liu Shan and had it carried to Chengdu. It told of Sima Zhao's imminent usurpation of Wei, the threats to the south and the west that would ensue, and the defensive preparations both kingdoms should make.

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No sooner had Jiang Wei learned of the Southland's letter than he promptly submitted a memorial proposing an expedition against the kingdom of Wei. By the calendar of Shu-Han it was winter, the first year of the reign period Jing Yao (A. D. 258-59).⁴ Supreme Commander Jiang Wei put Liao Hua and Zhang Yi in the vanguard, made Wang Han and Jiang Bin left commanders, and Jiang Shu and Fu Qian right commanders. Hu Ji served as coordinator of the rear; Jiang Wei himself and Xiahou Ba commanded the central army. All told, two hundred thousand were mobilized. The commanders took

respectful leave of the Second Emperor and proceeded to Hanzhong.

In consultation over the first place to attack, Xiahou Ba said to Jiang Wei, "The Qishan hills is the place to wage war. Let us advance there. The late prime minister conducted six major offensives from the hills. No other place affords such access to the Guanzhong plain." On this advice Jiang Wei ordered all armies to set out for the hills. They arrived and camped at the entrance to the gorge.

At this time Deng Ai was in his fort in the Qishan hills reviewing the Longyou legions. Suddenly a swift courier arrived and informed him that Riverlands armies had pitched camp at the gorge. Deng Ai climbed to a high point to observe enemy positions; then he returned to his tent and said with delight, "Exactly as I expected!" It happened that after surveying the terrain, Deng Ai had purposely left clear ground for the Riverlands armies to pitch their camps on. Under the ground Deng Ai had had a tunnel dug reaching back to his own position, and he had been waiting for the Riverlands force to arrive so that he could reap the benefit of these preparations.

Jiang Wei came to the gorge and established three positions. The secret tunnel ran through the left position, where Wang Han and Jiang Bin were camped. Deng Ai summoned his son Zhong to lead a strike force of ten thousand parallel to a like force led by Shi Zuan. Deng Ai next ordered Deputy Commander Zheng Lun to have five hundred sappers bore through from the main tunnel to the left camp at the second watch and emerge behind the enemy's command tent.

Wang Han and Jiang Bin, their fortifications still incomplete, were sleeping in full armor for fear the northern troops would strike. Suddenly they heard a great commotion in the center of the camp; swiftly, weapons readied, they took to their horses. From beyond the perimeter Deng Zhong was leading an attack. Caught between the enemy without and within, Wang Han and Jiang Bin fought desperately but failed to hold their ground and fled the camp. In his command tent Jiang Wei heard the disturbance in the left army's camp. Anticipating a coordinated attack, he swiftly mounted and positioned himself in front of his tent. Then he issued a command: "Death to anyone who makes a reckless move. The moment enemy troops come alongside the camp, ask no questions, just shoot them down with bows and crossbows." At the same time he ordered the camp on the right to make no rash moves.

In the event, the northerners made more than ten sallies against the camp; each time the defenders' arrows turned them back. As dawn broke, the northerners still had failed to penetrate the Riverlands position. Finally Deng Ai recalled his troops to camp and said with a sigh, "Jiang Wei has a deep knowledge of Kongming's art. His men got through the night without succumbing to fear; his commanders listened to the upheaval without losing discipline. This shows he is a superb general."

The next day Wang Han and Jiang Bin gathered their defeated troops and presented themselves in front of the main camp, heads to the ground, pleading for forgiveness. Jiang Wei said to them, "Not knowing this terrain was my fault, not yours." Then he assigned forces to the two generals and ordered them to resecure the camp. That done, Jiang Wei had the corpses of his slaughtered soldiers piled up in the tunnel and sealed.

The next day Jiang Wei issued Deng Ai a challenge to battle. Deng Ai responded eagerly. The two forces formed their lines before the Qishan hills. Relying on the eightfold order of battle he had learned from Kongming, Jiang Wei deployed in the pattern of Heaven—Earth—Wind—Cloud—Bird—Snake—Dragon—Tiger. Deng Ai rode forth and, observing that Jiang Wei's array conformed to the eight trigrams, deployed his own in a like formation: left and right, van and rear, the articulation of the units was identical.

Grasping his spear, Jiang Wei galloped forth and shouted, "You mimic my order. But have you mastered its movements?" "Do you think only you can use the eightfold battle plan? If I can deploy, be sure I can maneuver!" Deng Ai retorted with a smile. Then he turned and rode back into his line. There he ordered the control officers to work their semaphore flags and display the sixty-four variations into which the eight orders could be maneuvered. Then Deng Ai reemerged from his line and asked, "What do you think of the maneuvers?"

Jiang Wei replied, "Close to the mark! All the same, do you think you can encircle my order?" "Why not?" Deng Ai responded. The two armies approached one another marching in formation. Deng Ai directed his force from the central army. The two armies clashed but maintained their formations. Jiang Wei moved to the center of his force and waved his signal flag. At once the Riverlands soldiers assumed the order called "Serpent Coiled on the Ground," wrapping themselves around Deng Ai and shouting mightily. Deng Ai did not recognize the formation and began to panic. The Riverlands soldiers slowly closed in. Deng Ai led an attempt to break out, but he failed. All the northerners heard was "Surrender at once, Deng Ai!" Deng Ai looked to Heaven and said, "I momentarily flaunted my ability, and now Jiang Wei has trapped me."

Suddenly from the northwest a band of soldiers attacked. Recognizing his own men, Deng Ai came out fighting, coordinating with his opportune rescuer, Sima Wang. But by the time Wang had brought Deng Ai to safety, the Riverlands troops had seized all nine of Ai's northern positions in the Qishan hills. Deng Ai retreated in defeat and pitched camp south of the River Wei. Deng Ai said to Sima Wang, "How were you able to rescue me out of his encircling formation?" Sima Wang answered, "As a youth I traveled to Jingzhou and became friends with Cui Zhouping and Shi Guangyuan, who once explained the formation to me.⁵ The position Jiang Wei used, 'Serpent Coiled on the Ground,' is vulnerable at only one point. I noticed its 'head' in the northwest and attacked it. It broke apart easily." Gratefully Deng Ai said, "Although I have studied the orders of battle, I don't really understand their transformations. Since you do, my lord, could you use the maneuver to retake our positions in the Qishan hills?" "What I know couldn't fool Jiang Wei," Sima Wang replied. Deng Ai went on, "Then tomorrow pit your line against his, and I will surprise them in the Qishan hills from the rear. A brief battle should win back our camps for us."

And so Deng Ai sent Zheng Lun out as the vanguard while he slipped into the Qishan hills behind the enemy. Simultaneously Deng Ai sent a letter challenging Jiang Wei to a contest of the orders of battle.

Jiang Wei accepted the challenge and said to his commanders, "According to secret texts I have received from the Martial Lord Kongming, this deployment has three hundred and sixty-five transformations following the days of the year. Deng Ai's calling me to battle is a case of 'flaunting one's prowess before one's master.' Nonetheless, the northerners have set a trap in all this. Can you see it?" Liao Hua said, "They mean to surprise the rear while luring us into the contest." With a smile Jiang Wei said, "Exactly." He sent Zhang Yi and Liao Hua with ten thousand men into ambush behind the hills.

The next day Jiang Wei pulled up all nine camps and deployed his men in front of the Qishan hills. Sima Wang led his soldiers forward to the hills some distance from the river; then he rode forth to speak with Jiang Wei. Jiang Wei said, "You proposed the contest. You demonstrate first." Sima Wang deployed in the order of the eight trigrams. Jiang Wei smiled and said, "That is the same order I used. You are merely copying me. We're not impressed." Sima Wang answered, "You have stolen

the methods of someone else yourself." Jiang Wei asked, "How many maneuvers in this order?" "If I can deploy, be sure I can maneuver. There are eighty-one maneuvers to the formation." "Then try," Jiang Wei retorted.

Sima Wang returned to his line and performed several maneuvers; then he reemerged and demanded, "Do you recognize them?" Jiang Wei smiled and said, "My orders of battle have three hundred and sixty-five maneuvers following the cycle of days. You are the proverbial frog in the well who sees but a corner of the sky. What would you know of the arcana of formations and maneuvers?" Sima Wang knew well enough that he had not mastered the maneuver, but with forced bravado he said, "I do not believe it. Try and perform the maneuvers." Jiang Wei answered, "Have Deng Ai come forth and I will show him." "General Deng has his own sound tactics; orders of battle do not interest him," Sima Wang said. Jiang Wei laughed and said, "What sound tactics? Having you lure me into deploying here while he raids my rear?" Astonished, Sima Wang was about to advance and engage when Jiang Wei, with a flick of his whip handle, called forth his two wing forces. They did battle with the northerners who fled for dear life, leaving behind their armor and weapons.

Meanwhile, Deng Ai was pressing the vanguard leader Zheng Lun to surprise the westerners from behind. Zheng Lun had just come around a hill when a bombard sounded and the call of horns rent the air. Troops came out from ambush, their leader Liao Hua. Before the two commanders could exchange words, the horses closed and Liao Hua cut Zheng Lun down with a single sword stroke. Deng Ai panicked and fled; Zhang Yi came in for the kill. Caught in a double attack, the Wei troops were badly defeated. Deng Ai dashed ahead to save his life, four arrows stuck in him. As he reached his camp at the River Wei, Sima Wang arrived, and the two generals worked out a plan for withdrawing the army. Sima Wang said, "Recently the ruler of Shu, Liu Shan, made the palace eunuch Huang Hao his favorite, and now Shan spends all his time in drink and dalliance. We should be able to sow dissension in Shu and get Jiang Wei recalled. That would end our difficulties."

Deng Ai put the proposal to his counselors: "Who will go into the Riverlands and open a channel to Huang Hao?" As he was speaking, a man responded, "I volunteer." Deng Ai studied the man, Dang Jun of Xiangyang. Well pleased, Deng Ai ordered Dang Jun to carry gold, pearls, and precious articles to Chengdu and open relations with Huang Hao; at the same time Dang Jun was to spread the rumor that Jiang Wei felt so wronged by the Riverlands Emperor that he would shortly enter the service of Wei. As a result of Dang Jun's mission, people all over Chengdu were soon repeating the false rumor. Huang Hao petitioned the Second Emperor to summon Jiang Wei home at once.

Jiang Wei had been issuing daily calls to battle, but Deng Ai maintained his defense and would not respond. Jiang Wei wondered what was wrong when the envoy from Chengdu arrived with the edict commanding him to return to court. Puzzled, he had no choice but to bring the army home to the capital. Deng Ai and Sima Wang realized that Jiang Wei had been deceived, so they roused their troops to harry the retreating western army. Indeed:

Yue Yi was dealt many a check in Qi;
And Yue Fei was slandered after defeating the foe.⁶

Which side would win, which would lose?

READ ON.



***Cao Mao Is Slaughtered in His Carriage at South Capital Gateway;
Jiang Wei Sacrifices Grain to Defeat the Wei Army***

JIANG WEI HAD GIVEN THE ORDER to retreat, but Liao Hua argued, "A commander in the field may ignore the king's command. ' Edict or no edict, we should not move. " Zhang Yi responded, " Long, hard years our Riverlands men have been fighting for their supreme commander, and each has his tale of woe. After such a victory we should bring the army home and comfort the people while we plan for another day. "" Agreed, " Jiang Wei said and ordered the units to withdraw in proper order. Jiang Wei commanded Liao Hua and Zhang Yi to secure the rear against a raid by the Wei army.

Meanwhile, Deng Ai had started out in hot pursuit. But at the sight of the flags and ensigns in perfect array as the Riverland forces made their slow and orderly retreat, he said with a sigh, "Jiang Wei has learned well the tricks of the late Martial Lord." Deng Ai broke off the chase and took his troops back to the Qishan camps.

By this time Jiang Wei had reached Chengdu. He entered the presence of the Second Emperor and asked the reason for his recall. The Emperor said, "So long a stint at the front without home leave wearies the men—no other reason." Jiang Wei said, "I had already taken the enemy positions in the Qishan hills. Victory stood within sight. It makes no sense to have to stop mid-course—unless some discord-sowing deception of Deng Ai's is the cause." The Second Emperor kept silent. Jiang Wei addressed the Emperor again: "Your vassal is sworn to suppress the traitors and requite the dynasty's love. Let Your Majesty give no further heed to the purposes of opportunists who sow mistrust and anxiety." After a good while the Second Emperor said, "I do not mistrust you. You may return to Hanzhong. Remain vigilant for any favorable change in the Wei government; then attack." With a long sigh Jiang Wei left the court and headed for Hanzhong.

Dang Jun reported these events back to the Qishan camp; Deng Ai said to Sima Wang, "These divisions in the west between liege and vassal foretell a coup." Deng Ai ordered Dang Jun to Luoyang to inform Sima Zhao, who, delighted by the troubles in the Riverlands, began planning its conquest. Zhao asked Jia Chong, commissioner of the Central Army, "What do you think of attacking the Riverlands?" Jia Chong replied, " It is not yet time. Your Lordship has yet to win the Son of Heaven's full trust. To go to war with insufficient preparation will give your enemies at court the upper hand. Some years ago a yellow dragon was twice observed in the well by Ningling. All the vassals congratulated the Emperor, supposing it to be a favorable omen. But the Son of Heaven said, 'It is not auspicious. The dragon signifies the liege. If the liege is not in the heavens and not in the fields but trapped in a well instead, it signifies eclipse and confinement. ' So saying, the Emperor composed the 'Ode on the Submerged Dragon. ' The intent of the poem clearly points to you, my lord. It goes:

Weep for the dragon when he's ta'en,
And cannot prance beneath the waves,
Nor mount up on the Milky Way,
Nor show himself among the fields.
Deep inside the well he's coiled:
Before him loach and eel make free,
Safe from tooth or claw or scales—
Alas, I am the same as he! "

Deeply angered by the verse, Sima Zhao said to Jia Chong, "So he wants to go the way of Cao Fang! We have to get rid of him now or he will destroy us." "I'm ready, Your Lordship, any time," Jia Chong replied.

It was summer, the fourth month of the fifth year of Gan Lu by the calendar of Wei (A. D. 260). Sima Zhao, wearing his sword, ascended the royal hall; Cao Mao rose to welcome him. The courtiers all said, "For his towering merit and magnificent virtue the supreme commander deserves to be made lord patriarch of Jin and receive the Nine Dignities." Cao Mao bowed his head and made no reply. Sima Zhao said sternly, "We three, my father, my brother, and myself, have rendered the Wei most distinguished service. Would the Nine Dignities not be appropriate?" Cao Mao responded, "Dare I not comply?" Sima Zhao said, "In your 'Ode on the Submerged Dragon' you called us loaches and eels, showing no respect." Cao Mao did not answer. Sima Zhao smiled icily and descended from the royal hall. A chilling fear swept the assembly.

Cao Mao went to his personal quarters in the rear palace and summoned Privy Counselor Wang Shen, Chief of the Secretariat Wang Jing, and Royal Mounted Guard Wang Ye. To the three Cao Mao said tearfully, "Sima Zhao means to usurp the house—anyone can see that—but I cannot bear the disgrace of deposition. If only you three would help me suppress the revolt." Wang Jing said, "That would not be possible. In ancient times Patriarch Zhao of the kingdom of Lu could not tolerate the house of Ji. In the end he fled to another kingdom, having lost his own. The Sima have been holding real power for some time. The elder lords within the court and without, indifferent to the meaning of legitimate authority, adhere cravenly to the party of traitors. Far more than one man is involved. Moreover, Your Majesty's private guards are too few and too weak to carry out your command. If Your Majesty cannot accept the Sima's demand, worse will follow. This is no time for rashness but for careful planning." "If I can bear this, what can I not bear? ' I am resolved and fear not even death itself," Cao Mao said and withdrew to inform the queen mother.

Wang Shen and Wang Ye said to Wang Jing, "The moment has come. Before clanwide execution destroys our houses, let us go to the Sima residence, tell all, and beg for mercy." But Wang Jing retorted indignantly, "The liege's grief is the vassal's shame. The liege's shame is the vassal's death. Do you hold disloyal thoughts?" Unable to persuade Wang Jing to go along, Wang Shen and Wang Ye went without him to inform Sima Zhao of the state of Cao Mao's mind.

Not long afterward the ruler of Wei, Cao Mao, emerged from the royal chambers and ordered Jiao Bo, his chief of guards, to assemble the guards, manservants, and attendants, a total of some three hundred. Raising a hubbub, the crowd escorted their sovereign from the palace. Cao Mao, armed with a sword, climbed into the imperial carriage and shouted to his attendants to move the carriage out.

Wang Jing, bent to the ground before the carriage, tearfully remonstrated, "Your Majesty, to lead these paltry hundreds into a fight with Sima Zhao is to drive sheep into a tiger's jaws. They will die for nothing. I hold not my life dear, but I see the futility of this action." "My troops have gone forth; you are not to stand in my way," Cao Mao responded and headed for the Cloud and Dragon Gate.

Armed and mounted, Jia Chong came into view, flanked by Cheng Zu and Cheng Ji and followed by several thousand iron-armored imperial troops. Shouting for battle, they approached Cao Mao, who, hand to sword, cried loudly, "It is the Son of Heaven before you. Do you mean to charge in here and commit regicide?" At the sight of Cao Mao the imperial troops froze. But Jia Chong called to Cheng Ji, "What has Lord Sima kept you for, if not for today?" Cheng Ji hefted his halberd and, turning to Jia Chong, said, "Dead, or bound and delivered?" Jia Chong answered, "By Lord Sima's order, dead!" Cheng Ji gripped his halberd and charged toward the imperial carriage. "How dare you!" Cao Mao shouted. His voice hung in the air as Cheng Ji stabbed him through the chest. Cao Mao stumbled from the carriage. Another stroke and the blade pierced his back; Cao Mao fell dead alongside the carriage. Jiao Bo raised his lance to challenge the killer, only to be slain with a single thrust. His followers fled. Wang Jing dashed forward and cursed Jia Chong: "Turncoat traitor! Will you not stop at regicide?" Jia Chong angrily ordered Wang Jing bound tightly; then he reported the day's events to Sima Zhao.

Sima Zhao went to the scene and found Cao Mao dead. Feigning surprise, he knocked his head against the carriage and wept. He subsequently ordered all the important officials informed. Imperial Guardian Sima Fu came into the carriage and saw the ruler's corpse. Pillowing the head on his thigh,¹ Sima Fu wept as he said, "I am to blame for Your Majesty's murder." Fu had Cao Mao's corpse cased in a double coffin and placed at the west end of a side hall.

Sima Zhao assembled the officials in the royal hall for a conference. Chen Tai, a supervisor in the Secretariat, refused to attend. Sima Zhao sent Chen Tai's uncle, Chief of the Secretariat Xun Yi, to summon him. But Chen Tai said tearfully, "People always measure me against you; now I see that after all you do not measure up to me." Donning hemp weeds and white garb, Chen Tai entered the palace and mourned prostrate before the bier of the late ruler. Feigning grief, Sima Zhao asked him, "How should we punish them?" "If Jia Chong alone is put to death, it will serve as an apology, however slight, to the empire." Having pondered this advice a long while, Sima Zhao asked again, "Can you think of something less harsh?" Chen Tai replied, "No. I have only punishments even harsher in mind." Sima Zhao said, "Cheng Ji is the real traitor and renegade. Let him be carved slowly to death, then exterminate his clan." Cheng Ji protested loudly, "I am not to blame for the killing. Jia Chong transmitted your command." Sima Zhao ordered Cheng Ji's tongue cut out, but to the end Cheng Ji protested his innocence. His younger brother Cheng Zu was executed in the market, and his entire clan was killed. These verses from a later time lament his fate:

That year Jia Chong at Sima Zhao's command
Killed the king and stained the royal robes red.
A crime that Cheng Ji paid for, and his clan—
The scheme did not deceive the common man.

Sima Zhao next had Wang Jing's family jailed. Wang Jing himself was in the court of justice when he saw his mother arrive in bonds. He touched his head to the ground and cried aloud, "My mother

has been seized on account of an unfilial son." But his mother laughed loudly and said, "All who live must die. What counts is dying well. To give my life for this is not to be regretted." The next day Wang Jing's family was marched to the eastern marketplace, and mother and son went to their deaths smiling bravely. There was not a courtier nor a commoner in the city but wept for her. A man of later times has left this verse:

Suicides were acclaimed when Han began;
At Han's end consider then Wang Jing:
A martyr true, of undivided heart,
Of steadfast will, untainted, clear, and pure.
We weigh their lives as mountains, Tai and Hua;
They weighed their lives as light as goose's down.
The mother like the son is known today,
And shall so be while sky reigns over land.

Imperial Guardian Sima Fu requested that Cao Mao be buried with the ceremonies of a king, and Sima Zhao consented. Jia Chong and his party urged Sima Zhao to receive the abdication of the Wei dynasty and assume the throne, but Sima Zhao said, "In ancient times King Wen held two-thirds of the empire, yet he served the Yin dynasty obediently. That is why Confucius called him the man of the 'greatest virtue.' Cao Cao, the August Emperor Wu, declined the abdication of Han. We now likewise decline that of Wei." From these words Jia Chong and his party understood that Sima Zhao wanted his son Sima Yan to receive the abdication, so Chong did not raise the matter again.

In the sixth month of the year, Sima Zhao established Cao Huang, the lord of Changdao village, as emperor and changed the reign to Jing Yuan, "Spectacular Origin," year 1 (A. D. 260). Cao Huang's name was changed to Cao Huan (Jingming). He was the grandson of the Martial Emperor, and the son of Cao Yu, prince of Yan. Cao Huan honored Sima Zhao as prime minister and lord patriarch of Jin, with a grant of one hundred thousand coins and ten thousand bolts of silk. The entire body of officials, civil and military, was rewarded according to degree.

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Spies soon reported these changes back to the Riverlands. Jiang Wei, well pleased by the news that Sima Zhao had murdered Cao Mao and instated Cao Huan, said, "All the more justification for waging war on the kingdom of Wei." Jiang Wei sent a letter calling on the Southland to raise an army to make Sima Zhao answerable for the regicide. At the same time he sought the permission of the Second Emperor to mobilize one hundred and fifty thousand soldiers and several thousand war chariots, all with wooden compartments built onto their chassis. Jiang Wei also ordered Liao Hua and Zhang Yi to the vanguard with orders to capture Zi-Wu Gorge and Luogu Gorge, respectively. Jiang Wei himself intended to capture Ye Gorge. The three generals led their forces toward the Qishan hills, planning to emerge on the eastern side in coordinated actions.

At this time Deng Ai was fortified in the Qishan hills, his forces battle-ready. Told of the approach of the Riverlands armies, he met with his commanders. The military adviser Wang Guan said, "I have a plan that I would rather not discuss openly. Allow me respectfully to submit the details

in writing for your perusal." Deng Ai accepted and unrolled the letter. After reading it, he said with a smile, "Most ingenious! But will it fool Jiang Wei?" Wang Guan said, "I would risk my life to carry the plan out." "Such determination assures success," Deng Ai replied and assigned five thousand men to Wang Guan.

Wang Guan marched directly to Ye Gorge to meet the Riverlands forces and made contact with the first scouting parties. Wang Guan called to them, "I am a Wei general surrendering with troops. Inform your commander."

The scouts informed Jiang Wei, and he ordered all the arriving troops detained, receiving only the commander. Touching his head and hands to the ground, Wang Guan said, "I am the nephew of Wang Jing. After Sima Zhao murdered the sovereign, he put my uncle's entire clan to the sword. Hatred for Zhao burns in every fiber of my being. Now by good fortune you, General, have raised an army to make Zhao answer for his crime. That is why I have led my personal guard of five thousand to surrender to you. I hereby place myself at your disposal for the purpose of cleaning out that nest of traitors and avenging my uncle."

Well pleased, Jiang Wei said to Wang Guan, "If you come to us in all sincerity, I will receive you in like spirit. The problem is, our forces here lack grain; but on the Riverlands border we have several thousand loaded grain carts. I'd like you to move them to the Qishan hills; I will go and seize the northern camp there." Jiang Wei has taken the bait, Wang Guan thought with pleasure. He eagerly accepted the assignment. Jiang Wei added, "When you go, you won't need all of your five thousand. Take three thousand and leave the other two here to lead our attack on Qishan." Unwilling to awaken suspicion, Wang Guan agreed and went off with three thousand troops. Jiang Wei directed Fu Qian to use the remaining Wei troops on his campaign.

At that moment Xiahou Ba unexpectedly arrived. "Field Marshal, how could you trust Wang Guan?" he said. "I can't be absolutely certain, but I don't remember hearing that Wang Guan was a nephew of Wang Jing's when I was serving Wei. There's something a bit too tricky in all this; it merits a careful look, General." With a loud laugh Jiang Wei answered, "I have it all figured out. That's why I split up his force—to fight fire with fire." "Your Lordship, explain it to me," Xiahou Ba requested. Jiang Wei continued, "Sima Zhao is no less bold and treacherous than Cao Cao. After killing Wang Jing and exterminating his clan, why would he spare a paternal nephew and give him an outside command? I knew it was a ruse; and you drew the same conclusion on your own." And so Jiang Wei did not go forth from Ye Gorge, but placed men in hiding along the road to interdict Wang Guan's agents.

Within ten days the hidden men had seized Wang Guan's courier to Deng Ai. By close questioning Jiang Wei uncovered a secret written promise to deliver the grain to the Wei camp by side paths on the twentieth day of the eighth month; the document told Deng Ai to dispatch troops to Yunshan Gorge to receive the shipment. Jiang Wei had the courier killed and he altered the date on the document to the fifteenth of the month. Then he sent the letter to Deng Ai's camp by a courier disguised as a Wei soldier. That done, Jiang Wei had several hundred grain carts unloaded and repacked with kindling, straw, and fuses and covered over with black cloth, and he directed Fu Qian to take the two thousand surrendered Wei troops out under the ensign of the transport corps. Jiang Wei and Xiahou Ba each led a company into the gorge to lay their ambush. Jiang Wei ordered Jiang Shu to march out from Ye Gorge, and Liao Hua and Zhang Yi to advance and take the Qishan hills.

Delighted with Wang Guan's letter, Deng Ai replied at once. When the fifteenth arrived, Deng Ai

led fifty thousand elite troops into Yunshan Gorge, sending scouts far ahead to high ground to scour the horizon. What they saw was an endless chain of grain carts moving along the valley. Deng Ai halted and observed. As expected, the soldiers were his own. His attendants said, "It's nearly dark. Let's move the carts out of the gorge quickly." "The hill terrain ahead is quite irregular. We would have a hard time retreating in case of ambush. Better wait for them here," Ai answered. That moment two riders charged up and reported: "Enemy forces pursued General Wang into the gorge; he needs reinforcement urgently."

Greatly surprised, Deng Ai urged his men forward. The first of the watches had begun, but a bright moon made the night like day. Hearing a clamor from behind a hill, Deng Ai assumed that Wang Guan was engaged in battle and moved around the hill. Suddenly, from a stand of trees a band of soldiers led by the Riverlands general Fu Qian rushed forward. Galloping hard, he cried, "Deng Ai, low-down rat, you have fallen into our commander's trap. Dismount and prepare to die." Panicked, Deng Ai turned his mount and fled. All the carts went up in flames—a signal for the Riverlands troops, who struck from two sides and cut the Wei force to pieces. Then a voice sounded from a hilltop: "A thousand in gold for the man who takes Deng Ai—and a fief of ten thousand households!"

At this shout, Deng Ai flung off his shield and helmet, slipped down from his horse, and tried to lose himself among his foot soldiers as they escaped over the hilltops. Jiang Wei and Xiahou Ba were aiming to capture the lead rider, never imagining Deng Ai would get away on foot. Jiang Wei led his triumphant troops to wait for Wang Guan and the grain carts.

In accordance with his secret agreement with Deng Ai, Wang Guan had had the grain carts loaded and ready to move before the appointed date. He was waiting to start when a close adviser reported to him, "The secret is out. General Deng was badly defeated and may not have survived." Astonished, Wang Guan sent out scouts; they reported the advance of three hostile armies. Behind him great clouds of dust were rising as well, blocking the last avenue of retreat. Wang Guan angrily ordered his attendants to have the grain carts set afire. In moments savage flames shot skyward. The wagons were consumed. Wang Guan shouted to his men, "We are done for. Fight for your lives!" Sword in hand, he headed west, Jiang Wei and the three armies close behind.

Jiang Wei was confident that Wang Guan would risk all to get back to the kingdom of Wei, and never expected that he would fight his way toward Hanzhong. Guan himself had so few troops, he thought of nothing but his own fate if overtaken. And so he burned down the wooden plank road as well as various strongpoints. Uneasy now about the security of Hanzhong, Jiang Wei gave up the pursuit of Deng Ai and tried to overtake Wang Guan by forced marches on side trails. Attacked on all sides, Wang Guan jumped into the Black Dragon River and drowned. His troops were buried alive by Jiang Wei.

Jiang Wei's victory over Deng Ai had cost him numerous grain carts in addition to the loss of the wooden plank road. He led his troops back to Hanzhong. Deng Ai led his defeated soldiers back to his camps in the Qishan hills and sent a memorial to the Wei court acknowledging his failure and offering to reduce his rank. In view of Deng Ai's many contributions, Sima Zhao could not bring himself to demote the commander; instead, he rewarded him handsomely. Deng Ai distributed all valuables received among the families of those officers and men who had fallen. Because Sima Zhao feared another attack by the Riverlands army, he gave Deng Ai fifty thousand troops to augment his defenses. Jiang Wei devoted his time to repairing the wooden plank road and at court again raised the

question of invading Wei.² Indeed:

He restored the wood-plank road so that troops could reinvade;
Jiang Wei would die before he'd live in peace with Wei.

What was the outcome?

READ ON.



Succumbing to Slander, the Second Emperor Recalls His Army; Using Military Farms, Jiang Wei Escapes Disaster

BY THE CALENDAR OF SHU-HAN it was the fifth year of Jing Yao (A. D. 263). In winter, the tenth month, Supreme Commander Jiang Wei had the wooden cliff roads repaired, replenished his grain supplies, and had all weapons and equipment readied for war. At the same time he dispatched ships to the rivers of Hanzhong. After these preparations Jiang Wei petitioned the Second Emperor: "Though no great victory has crowned my many campaigns, the enemy's morale has been shaken. The troops we have worked so hard to train will lose their mettle without the challenge of battle. They dream of sacrificing themselves in our cause, and the commanders dream of carrying out your mandate. But if I do not prevail over the enemy, I will accept a well-deserved death."

The Second Emperor reviewed the petition but reached no decision. Qiao Zhou stepped forward from the ranks and addressed the sovereign: "Last night in the constellation guarding our kingdom of Shu, the general's star burned low. For the supreme commander to take the field again would prove a most unprofitable course. Your Majesty should issue an edict preventing him from doing so." The Second Emperor answered, "Let the outcome decide it. If he fails, I shall end the campaigns." Because Qiao Zhou's insistent appeals to the Emperor were ignored, he returned home in despair and thereafter claimed to be too ill to appear publicly.

Meanwhile, on the eve of the expedition Jiang Wei asked Liao Hua, "With this campaign I am committed to regain the northern heartland: what should our first objective be?" Liao Hua replied, "These incessant wars have worn out the people and the army. In Deng Ai, our adversary Wei has a general of uncommon intelligence and strategy. I cannot share your commitment, General, to so forbidding an undertaking." Jiang Wei burst out angrily, "The late prime minister conducted six campaigns from the Qishan hills, all for the sake of the kingdom. This will be my eighth. Do you think I do it in my personal interest? Taoyang is the place to capture first. Behead whoever opposes us!" So saying, Jiang Wei left Liao Hua defending Hanzhong and set out for Taoyang with his commanders and a force of three hundred thousand.

Border residents reported these moves to the Qishan camps. The news reached Deng Ai while he was holding military consultations with Sima Wang. Deng Ai sent scouts to investigate; they reported western troops moving on Taoyang. Sima Wang said, "Jiang Wei is full of schemes. He must be coming to take the Qishan hills while pretending to go for Taoyang." "No," Deng Ai replied. "His real objective is Taoyang." "How do you know?" Sima Wang asked. "Previously Jiang Wei has always come into areas where we have had grain. But Taoyang has no grain. Therefore, he must be assuming that we are defending the Qishan hills only, and not Taoyang. That explains his move. If he captures Taoyang, he will start storing grain and provender, form ties with the Qiang people, and plan a long-term strategy." "Then what can we do?" Sima Wang asked. Deng Ai responded, "Evacuate this

position and send the troops in two units to rescue Taoyang. About twenty-five *li* short of the town you will find Marchriver, a small hamlet that is the key to Taoyang. Hide your force in Taoyang; lower all flags and still all drums; open wide its four gates. There will be certain other steps you must take as well. I will bring the second force to Marchriver and wait in ambush. Together we will defeat the enemy completely." Their plan set, the two departed, leaving the Qishan camps guarded by a subordinate commander, Shi Zuan.

Meanwhile Jiang Wei sent Xiahou Ba with the forward unit to capture Taoyang. Approaching the objective, Xiahou Ba saw the city wall bare—not a single flag was flying—and the four gates wide open. Warily declining to enter, Ba turned to his commanders and said, "This must be a trap!" "To all appearances the city is empty," they replied, "only a few commoners remain. The enemy must have abandoned it when they heard you were coming, General." Unconvinced, Xiahou Ba rode around to inspect the south entrance behind the city. There he found a large number of refugees, either very old or very young, all fleeing to the west. "So it is empty after all," Xiahou Ba exclaimed, and he led his men inside, arms at the ready. But as he came alongside the inner city wall, a bombard roared and from the top of the wall drums and horns blasted in unison. Flags popped up all around and the drawbridge was raised. In a panic, Xiahou Ba said, "They have caught me!" He tried desperately to withdraw, but arrows and stones pelted down on him. And the unfortunate Xiahou Ba perished at the base of the wall with his five hundred soldiers. A poet of later times has left this verse:

Jiang Wei was bold; in planning he excelled—
Who could have foreseen Deng Ai's counter plan?
Pity Xiahou Ba, who joined the cause of Han
And fell in a storm of bolts by Taoyang town.

Sima Wang emerged from the town, fought and defeated the western troops, and drove them from the field. Jiang Wei arrived with reinforcement, drove Sima Wang back into the city, and pitched camp close by. At the news of Xiahou Ba's death Jiang Wei wept inconsolably and gave voice to his grief.

That night during the second watch Deng Ai stealthily led a company out of the town of Marchriver and into the Riverlands camp. His attack threw the western troops into disorder; not even Jiang Wei could control them. Simultaneously the clamor of drums and horns from the top of the wall shattered the calm as Sima Wang led his men out of Taoyang. The Riverlands troops, caught between the two northern forces, were badly defeated. Jiang Wei himself, thrusting and charging left and right, finally managed to get away in heavy fighting; he withdrew twenty *li* from the field and camped.

These two defeats shook the Riverlanders. Jiang Wei said to his assembled commanders, "The hazard of the field offers no surprise to the true strategist. Despite our losses of men and officers, we must not lose heart. Our fortunes rest on this campaign. You must persevere. He who calls retreat, dies." Zhang Yi said, "If the Wei troops are now all here, the Qishan hills should be undefended. General, array for battle against Deng Ai. Attack Taoyang and Marchriver. I will take a company to capture their positions in the hills. Once their nine camps fall, we can drive through and take Chang'an. That is the best plan."

Jiang Wei approved and ordered Zhang Yi to lead the rear army on to the Qishan hills. Jiang Wei took his own forces to Marchriver to challenge Deng Ai. At Wei's challenge Deng Ai came forth. The

armies drew themselves into opposing formations as the two leaders clashed. Neither prevailed after several dozen passes-at-arms, and both sides were recalled to their camps. The next day Jiang Wei gave the challenge again, but Deng Ai did not respond. Jiang Wei had his men revile the northerners.

Deng Ai mused to himself, "The Riverlanders have already tasted severe defeat. Yet far from giving any sign of retreating, they return each day to issue the challenge. They must have sent a surprise force over to the Qishan camps. Our defender, Shi Zuan, has too few soldiers and too little sense to save himself. I shall have to go myself." Deng Ai summoned his son Deng Zhong and instructed him: "Hold this place well and ignore their challenges. Tonight I will leave to rescue the Qishan camps."

During the second watch, as Jiang Wei sat plotting his moves, harsh shouts outside the camp shook the ground and the call of horns and drums split the air. Jiang Wei was informed that Deng Ai had come with three thousand elite troops for a night battle. The Riverlands commanders wanted to go forth, but Jiang Wei stopped them saying, "No rash moves!" Actually, Deng Ai had merely passed by the front of the Riverlands camp to reconnoitre. Then he marched off to the Qishan hills while Deng Zhong returned to the town.

Jiang Wei summoned his commanders and said, "Deng Ai was pretending to commence a night battle. He must have gone to the Qishan hills." He instructed Fu Qian: "Defend this camp. Do not engage the enemy." With that, Jiang Wei left with three thousand men to assist Zhang Yi.

Zhang Yi had just begun the attack. The defender, Shi Zuan, having too few troops to resist, was swiftly defeated. Suddenly Deng Ai and his force arrived, and heavy fighting began. Zhang Yi's Riverlands soldiers were defeated and sealed up behind a hill, their return route cut off. At this desperate moment amid the clamor of voices and the noise of drums and horns, before the westerners' eyes the northern troops began reeling back in every direction. Zhang Yi's attendants reported: "Supreme Commander Jiang Wei has come!" Zhang Yi seized the moment to rejoin the battle, and the two Riverlands armies caught Deng Ai between them and drove him back with heavy losses into his hill camps. Jiang Wei ordered the Wei positions surrounded and attacked.

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In Chengdu the Second Emperor, having fallen under the influence of the eunuch official Huang Hao, indulged in vice and luxury and neglected the business of the court. Lady Hu, wife of the high court official Liu Yan, was an exceptional beauty. On one occasion she entered the court to pay her respects to the Empress, who kept her in the palace for a full month. Afterward, Liu Yan, suspecting that his wife had become intimate with the Second Emperor, arrayed five hundred of his guard before him. At Liu Yan's order, the soldiers tied up Lady Hu and struck her in the face several dozen times with a shoe. The woman fainted and nearly died, but then revived. The Second Emperor was furious when he learned of this incident and ordered an executive officer to condemn Liu Yan. The accusation read: "A common soldier is not the one to strike a wife; the face is not the place to receive punishment; Liu Yan deserves to be executed publicly." Consequently, Liu Yan was beheaded.

Thereafter ladies with titles conferred by the sovereign were banned from court. But court officials continued to view the Emperor as given to lust, and many resented and mistrusted him. As a result, worthy and able men began gradually to withdraw, while opportunists advanced steadily.

At the time General of the Right Yan Yu, a man without a shred of merit, had reached a rank of

importance by fawning on Huang Hao. On learning that Jiang Wei had command of troops in the Qishan hills, he persuaded Huang Hao to petition the Emperor: "Jiang Wei has fought many battles and accomplished little. Let Yan Yu replace him." The Second Emperor approved and dispatched an envoy with the edict recalling Jiang Wei. Jiang Wei was in the heat of the struggle against the Wei fortifications in the Qishan hills. Suddenly three edicts arrived in a single day instructing Jiang Wei to bring his armies back to the capital. Jiang Wei had to comply.¹ First he had the troops at Taoyang withdraw, then he slowly retreated with Zhang Yi. In camp Deng Ai heard drums and horns all night long, but he had no idea what it meant. At dawn his scouts informed him that the Riverlanders had retreated and left their sites empty. Assuming a trick, Deng Ai did not dare pursue.

Reaching Hanzhong, Jiang Wei rested his forces; then he entered Chengdu with the envoy to present himself to the Second Emperor. But for a full ten days the Emperor did not appear in court. Perplexed, Jiang Wei went to the Donghua Gate, where he chanced to meet Xi Zheng of the Documents Department and asked him, "Do you know why the Son of Heaven summoned the army and myself back to Chengdu?" "How could the supreme commander not know the reason?" Xi Zheng answered grinning. "Huang Hao wanted Yan Yu to earn merit, and so he petitioned the court to have you recalled. The latest news is that Deng Ai has shown such skill on the field that Huang Hao has quietly dropped the whole matter of sending Yan Yu to the front."

Enraged, Jiang Wei said, "I will kill that eunuch." Xi Zheng checked him saying, "General, you are the successor of the Martial Lord Kongming. Can you act so impetuously while in so responsible a position? If the Son of Heaven should take offense, things will not turn out pleasantly." Apologetically, Jiang Wei said, "Master, you advise me well."

The next day the Second Emperor and Huang Hao were feasting in a rear garden when Jiang Wei charged into the palace with a small body of men. Someone rushed to inform Huang Hao, who quickly took refuge in a hiding place near a lakeside hill. Jiang Wei reached the pavilion and prostrated himself before the Second Emperor. Tearfully, he petitioned him: "I had Deng Ai surrounded in the Qishan hills. Your Majesty then issued three edicts recalling me to the capital; but I have yet to understand what your sacred purpose might have been." The Emperor made no reply. Again Jiang Wei petitioned him: "Huang Hao monopolizes power through treacherous cunning, just as the Ten Eunuchs did in the time of Emperor Ling. Let your Majesty reflect upon the example of Zhang Rang in recent times and the example of Zhao Gao in a more remote era.² Have his man killed. Then peace will return to your court and the northern heartland will be recovered."

With a smile the Second Emperor said, "Huang Hao is a mere attendant at my beck and call. Even if he had the power of a Zhang Rang or a Zhao Gao, he wouldn't be able to do anything with it. Dong Yun bore malice toward Huang Hao, and we were quite puzzled over it. I hope you are not forming an unfavorable opinion of him." Knocking his head to the ground, Jiang Wei petitioned: "Your Majesty, have Huang Hao killed today or the consequences will be swift and painful." "We desire those we love to live, those we hate to die. ' Can you not learn to live with a single eunuch official?" the Second Emperor demanded, and then he summoned Huang Hao from his hiding place by the lake.

Huang Hao came to the pavilion on the Emperor's order and prostrated himself before Jiang Wei to acknowledge his offense. Pleading tearfully, Huang Hao said, "I was only hoping to be of service to the sovereign at all times—that is all—and had no intention whatsoever of involving myself with government affairs. General, please do not seek my life for what others may say about me. I am in your hands, and I plead for your kind mercy." Finished speaking, Huang Hao continued touching his

forehead to the ground as he wept.

Indignantly Jiang Wei left and went to see Xi Zheng to whom he recounted in full his visit to the sovereign. Xi Zheng said, "It is you, General, who are in trouble now. And if *you* are in danger, the dynasty itself will perish." Jiang Wei replied, "I will stand in your debt, master, for any advice on saving the dynasty—and myself." Xi Zheng responded, "There is good farmland in Tazhong in Longxi. That's the place to go, General, to continue the Martial Lord Kongming's soldier-tiller policy and set up military colonies—but make sure to inform the Son of Heaven. First, the ripening harvest will supply your troops; second, you can plan to occupy all districts in Longyou; third, you will forestall Wei's hostile ambitions in Hanzhong; and fourth, if you are in the field and holding military authority, you will be able to frustrate any internal schemes against you. Thus, you can save the dynasty and yourself if you waste no time." A delighted Jiang Wei said humbly, "Master, I shall treasure your words."

The next day Jiang Wei petitioned the Second Emperor in writing to request the establishment of soldier-tiller colonies in Tazhong after the manner of those created by the Martial Lord. The Second Emperor approved. Jiang Wei returned to Hanzhong and gathered his commanders. "None of our campaigns has succeeded," he said to them. "The reason is insufficient food supply. Now I am going to lead eighty thousand troops into Tazhong to plant wheat in soldier-tilled fields to prepare gradually for our next offensive. All of you are war-wearied, so we shall put away our weapons, reap grain, and strengthen our defenses in Hanzhong. The enemy has to move grain great distances, trudging over the mountains, and will be forced withdraw from fatigue in due course. At that moment we can attack with every assurance of victory." So saying, he ordered Hu Ji to guard Hanshoucheng, Wang Han to guard Yuecheng, and Jiang Bin to guard Hancheng. Jiang Shu and Fu Qian were assigned to protect the passes. His preparations complete, Jiang Wei led the eighty thousand men into Tazhong to plant wheat, the first step in his longterm strategy.

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Deng Ai meanwhile had heard of Jiang Wei's activities in Tazhong, and of his string of forty forts along the road as inseparably linked as the segments of a snake.³ Deng Ai ordered a spy to inspect the terrain and prepare maps, which he submitted to the court. The lord of Jin, Sima Zhao, looked at the sketches and said angrily, "Jiang Wei's persistent raids into our northern territory pose a most grave threat to our regime, a threat we have so far failed to eliminate." Jia Chong replied, "Jiang Wei has grasped well the tactics Kongming taught him; his men will be difficult to dislodge. We need a brave and ingenious commander to assassinate him and spare us the hardship of a field campaign."

A staff officer and imperial corpsman, Xun Xu, said, "There is another way. The ruler of Shu, Liu Shan, steeped in drunken lechery, has placed his fullest confidence in the eunuch Huang Hao; and the principal ministers are occupied with saving themselves from the doom they see approaching. Jiang Wei is building military colonies in Tazhong to avoid disaster to himself. If you send your chief generals on a punitive campaign against him, you are certain to win. There is no point in sending an assassin." Sima Zhao laughed and said, "You are quite right. I will move against the Riverlands. Who will lead my forces?" Xun Xu said, "Deng Ai is one of the superb talents of the age. If Zhong Hui would be his deputy, our cause will triumph." "Exactly my thought," said Sima Zhao, well pleased.

Sima Zhao summoned Zhong Hui and asked, "I want to put you in command of a punitive expedition against the Southland. Are you willing?" Zhong Hui answered, "My lord, your real purpose is to attack Shu, not Wu." Sima Zhao laughed and said, "Well you know my mind. But what tactics would you use against Shu?" "I assumed," Zhong Hui replied, "that you meant to attack Shu and so have the maps here in hand." Sima Zhao unrolled the maps and studied the fine drawings: a line of bases, forts, grain and fodder depots, points for advance and retreat, all logically marked out. Sima Zhao examined the maps with pleasure. "What an excellent commander!" he exclaimed. "Are you willing to join forces with Deng Ai for an attack on the Riverlands?"⁴

Zhong Hui replied, "That is too broad a territory to be entered by a single route. It would be better to have Deng Ai enter separately with his forces." Sima Zhao appointed Zhong Hui general, Queller of the West, and gave him the credentials of military authority and command of all forces in the Guanzhong region. He also moved units from the eastern provinces of Qing, Xu, Yan, Yu, Jing, and Yang to the western front. At the same time he sent an envoy with official documents assigning General Deng Ai the title Conqueror of the West, giving him field command of all forces in Longshan beyond the limits of Guanzhong, and setting the time for him to begin the expedition against the Riverlands.

The next day at court Sima Zhao evaluated the plan of action. Deng Dun, general of the Van, said, "Jiang Wei's ceaseless attacks on our borders have cost the lives of many soldiers. If even our defense is uncertain, an offensive deep into the difficult enemy terrain will only invite disaster." Sima Zhao responded angrily, "Against a renegade ruler I am fielding a host dedicated to the principles of just and humane government. How dare you oppose my purposes?" So saying, Sima Zhao ordered the guard to remove Deng Dun and execute him. Moments later the general's head was presented at the stair below Zhao's seat. The audience turned pale.

Sima Zhao said, "Since we set out to conquer the Southland six years ago, our soldiers have not campaigned. Now they are ready and our weapons in good order. It is time to fulfill our long-standing desire to bring the kingdoms of Wu and Shu to justice. First we will conquer Shu in the west, then we will advance downriver—by both land and water—and devour Wu in the east, as the lord of Jin did in ancient times when he captured the kingdom of Yu after destroying the kingdom of Guo. I reckon the Riverlands force at eighty or ninety thousand guarding Chengdu, leaving at most forty or fifty thousand guarding the border. And Jiang Wei's military colonists amount to no more than another sixty or seventy thousand. I have already ordered Deng Ai to lead one hundred thousand Longyou troops to pin down Jiang Wei in Tazhong so that he will not dream of moving east. I have also sent Zhong Hui with two to three hundred thousand crack troops from Guanzhong to march directly to Luogu Gorge to surprise Hanzhong with three field armies.⁵ The Riverlands ruler, Liu Shan, is no light to his people. Once the border defenses are breached, the populace in the capital will panic and the kingdom will fall." The assembly received Sima Zhao's explanation with deep respect.

Meanwhile, Zhong Hui had accepted the seal of general, Queller of the West, and mobilized his troops for the expedition against the Riverlands. To keep his objective secret, however, he gave out that he would attack the Southland, ordering the five provinces of Qing, Yan, Yu, Jing, and Yang to build boats for the navy. At the same time he sent Tang Zi to various points on the coast such as Dengzhou and Laizhou to requisition and assemble warships.⁶

Sima Zhao, unaware of Zhong Hui's intentions, summoned him. "You will have to take Shu by land," he said. "What is the point of building boats?" Zhong Hui answered, "If the Riverlands learns

our forces are planning a major advance, they will be sure to seek the Southland's help. So by both word and deed I am trying to create the impression that our expedition is against the Southland. I am sure the Southland will make no rash moves, and within a year Shu will fall. At that time the ships will be ready, and we will be able to invade the south. This way everything will follow in good order." Sima Zhao was delighted and selected a day for the army to march.

It was the third day of the seventh month of the fourth year of Jing Yuan, "Spectacular Origin" (A. D. 263), reckoning by the calendar of the kingdom of Wei, when Zhong Hui took the field. Sima Zhao escorted him ten *li* beyond the capital's wall before returning. Shao Ti of the Western Bureau said privately to Sima Zhao, "My lord, you have placed Zhong Hui in command of one hundred thousand men. In my humble opinion he aims too high, his ambition is too great, to be allowed to wield such power by himself." With a smile Sima Zhao responded, "Do you think I don't know it?" "Then why not send someone to share the command?" Shao Ti asked. Sima Zhao gave a few words of explanation which instantly dispelled Shao Ti's doubts. Indeed:

On the very day the armies galloped off to war,
One man remembered the general's overweening pride.⁷

What did Sima Zhao say?

READ ON.



***Zhong Hui Details a Force to Enter Hanzhong;
The Ghost of the Martial Lord Haunts Dingjun Mountain***

SIMA ZHAO SAID TO SHAO TI of the Western Bureau, "Our fainthearted court officials claim that no invasion of the Riverlands can succeed and that if we force them to fight, we will only lose. But Zhong Hui has worked out a plan of attack. This shows his courage—the kind of courage that will subdue the Riverlands. And once subdued, the Riverlands people will lose the will to fight. As they say, 'Defeated commanders make poor heroes; and officials of a fallen kingdom rarely plot to preserve it.' Even if Zhong Hui betrays us, the defeated Riverlanders will give him no help. And which of our victorious troops will follow him in rebellion when all they want is to return home? Even more reason not to worry. But let us keep this between ourselves." Persuaded, Shao Ti bowed low with respect.

Zhong Hui pitched camp and gathered his commanders in his tent to receive their orders. Hui had more than eighty commanders, including Supervisory Commander Wei Guan, Commissioner Hu Lie, and ranking commanders Tian Xu, Pang Hui, Tian Zhang, Yuan Xing, Qiu Jian, Xiahou Xian, Wang Mai, Huangfu Kai, Gou An, and others. Zhong Hui said, "We need one ranking commander for the vanguard, a warrior who will have to cut through mountains and build bridges over rivers. Is there a volunteer?" One man responded. Zhong Hui turned to Xu Yi, son of Tiger General Xu Chu. Those assembled declared, "None more fit than he."

Zhong Hui summoned Xu Yi and said to him, "You rank as a highly qualified commander, the renowned son of a renowned father, and the commanders all vouch for you. You may take the vanguard seal and lead five thousand horse and one thousand foot to seize Hanzhong directly. Our army will be divided into three: you will take the center and proceed through Ye Gorge; the left army will go through Luogu Gorge, the right through Zi-Wu Gorge—arduous terrain with formidable hills. Have your troops smooth out the roadways, repair the bridges and crossings, and cut passages through the hills in order to eliminate all obstacles. If you fail to fulfill the mission, military law will be applied." Xu Yi accepted his orders, took his command, and set forth. Zhong Hui followed with one hundred thousand troops, setting out without delay.

In Longxi, Deng Ai, after receiving the edict for an expedition against the Riverlands, sent Sima Wang to take measures against any Qiang forces. He also sent the imperial inspector of Yongzhou, Zhuge Xu, and the district governors of Tianshui, Longxi, and Jincheng—namely, Wang Qi, Qian Hong, and Yang Xin—to prepare their home units for action.

After all the forces had gathered, Deng Ai had a dream: he was climbing a high hill and surveying Hanzhong, when a spring erupted at his feet and overflowed. The next moment he awoke, his body bathed in sweat. He sat in his room and waited for the dawn.

Deng Ai told his guard, Yuan Shao, a man well versed in the *Book of Changes*, about his dream,

describing it in detail. Yuan Shao commented, "The *Changes* says, 'The symbols' water "above" mountain "form the hexagram *jian*, " Impeded, "' which reads: 'Gain to the southwest, loss to the northeast. ' Confucius said, '*Jian* means gain to the southwest—go there and win merit; loss to the northeast—there your road will end. ' General, this expedition will undoubtedly lead to the conquest of the Riverlands. Unfortunately, however, you will be 'impeded' there and not return." This interpretation left Deng Ai depressed and anxious. At that moment Zhong Hui's call to arms arrived, enjoining Deng Ai to mobilize and coordinate with the main force in Hanzhong.

First, Deng Ai sent the imperial inspector of Yongzhou, Zhuge Xu, with fifteen thousand troops to cut off Jiang Wei's retreat. Next, he sent the governor of Tianshui district, Wang Qi, and the governor of Longxi district, Qian Hong, with fifteen thousand each to attack Tazhong from the east and west. Last, he sent the governor of Jincheng district, Yang Xin, with fifteen thousand to intercept Jiang Wei to the rear at Sweet Pine. Deng Ai himself led a force of thirty thousand to reinforce these units.

Zhong Hui marched forth past the city wall escorted by the entire body of officials. The multitude of military banners darkened the sky; the armor gleamed like frost; the men were stout, the mounts sturdy—it was a picture to chill an enemy's ardor. Everyone expressed approbation with the exception of the prime minister's military adviser Liu Shi, who smiled faintly and said nothing. Grand Commandant Wang Xiang noticed Liu Shi's icy smile and, riding alongside, took his hand and asked, "Do you think Zhong Hui and Deng Ai will conquer the Riverlands this time?" Liu Shi answered, "The defeat of Shu is not to be doubted. But neither Hui nor Ai, I fear, will make it back to the capital." Wang Xiang asked why, but Liu Shi simply smiled without responding. Wang Xiang did not press for an answer.

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In Tazhong swift spies reported to Jiang Wei that the invasion had commenced. Jiang Wei informed the Second Emperor and petitioned him: "I request an edict authorizing Left General of Cavalry and Chariots Zhang Yi to take command of the guard at Yang'an Pass, and Right General of Cavalry and Chariots Liao Hua to take command of the guard at Yinping Bridge. The loss of either the pass or the bridge would imperil Hanzhong. Also, an envoy should be sent to seek the Southland's assistance while I rally troops to defend Tazhong."

At this time the Second Emperor renamed the reign period, changing the calendar from Jing Yao, year 6, to Yan Xing, year 1.¹ Day in and day out the Emperor indulged himself in the palace in the company of the eunuch Huang Hao. When Jiang Wei's petition arrived, he summoned Huang Hao and asked, "The kingdom of Wei has sent Zhong Hui and Deng Ai at the head of two grand armies that are advancing by separate routes. What shall we do?" Huang Hao replied, "The motive behind this petition is Jiang Wei's thirst for fame. Your Majesty, banish all worry and misgivings. I have heard that in the city there is a sorceress whose god can foretell the future. Why not put your question to her?"

On this advice the Second Emperor ordered Huang Hao to bring the woman into the palace in a private chariot and seat her on the imperial bed. For her use, a rear chamber had been furnished with joss sticks, candles, and sacrificial offerings. The Second Emperor lit the joss sticks and prayed. Suddenly, the sorceress unbound her hair, removed her shoes, and performed a frenzied dance, circling about the chamber several dozen times; then she twirled around on the table. Huang Hao said,

"The spirit is descending on her. Dismiss the attendants, Your Majesty, and pray for its aid."

The Emperor sent his attendants away and, prostrating himself twice, uttered the ritual words. The sorceress shouted out, "I am a local god of the western Land of the Rivers. Your Majesty, you enjoy peace and tranquility and need demand nothing else. In a few years the territory of Wei will become part of Your Majesty's domain. This is past all doubt." So saying, she fell to the ground and remained unconscious for a long while. When she revived, the Emperor, well pleased, rewarded the sorceress handsomely and thereafter, completely taken in by her act, ignored Jiang Wei. Day after day, sunk in dissipation, he kept to the palace. Huang Hao saw to it that the stream of emergency appeals from Jiang Wei never reached him. In this way the security of the kingdom was compromised.²

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Meanwhile, Zhong Hui's grand army was wending its way toward Hanzhong. Xu Yi, van of the forward contingent, determined to make his mark first, led his force to Nanzheng Pass. Xu Yi said to his commanders, "Beyond this pass—lightly defended by Riverlands forces—lies Hanzhong. If we exert ourselves, we can seize it." The commanders, as assigned, advanced in a coordinated line.

It so happened that the Riverlands commander guarding the pass, Lu Xun, had been forewarned of the enemy's approach and had hidden warriors by the bridge leading to the pass. The ambush detail was armed with the repeating crossbow the Martial Lord had invented. Thus, when Xu Yi's men reached the pass, signal-sticks began beating, and stones and arrows rained down. Xu Yi retreated at once, but dozens of his cavalry had already fallen. Xu Yi reported the defeat back to Zhong Hui. Zhong Hui and more than a hundred armored cavalry of his personal guard went to inspect the field, only to ride into fresh volleys of arrows. When Zhong Hui turned to retreat, Lu Xun stormed down from the pass with five hundred men.

Zhong Hui laid on the whip. But as he crossed the bridge, the earthen surface gave way, snagging his horse's hooves; Zhong Hui was nearly thrown. The horse could not free itself, and Zhong Hui had to proceed on foot. He ran off the bridge, and Lu Xun pursued, stabbing with his spear. A Wei soldier, Xun Kai, turned and with a single arrow shot Lu Xun from his horse. Zhong Hui then waved his men on to take the pass. The western defenders, seeing their own men below, refrained from shooting as Zhong Hui dispersed the Riverlands soldiers and took possession of the pass. On the spot Zhong Hui made Xun Kai his commissioner and presented him with a complete cavalry outfit of saddle horse and armor.

Next, Zhong Hui summoned Xu Yi to his tent and reprimanded him: "You were the vanguard. No obstacle should have daunted you. You were to concentrate on repairing the bridge and the roadway so that the troops could move on easily. But the moment I reached the bridge, my horse's hooves sank through the surface. I nearly fell from the bridge, and survived only because of Xun Kai! For disobeying orders you shall face the law." So saying, he ordered Xu Yi removed and executed. The commanders appealed for mercy, saying, "His father, Xu Chu, gave great service to the court. Let the commanding general spare him." Angrily Zhong Hui replied, "If military law is compromised, how shall we command the many?" Overruling his shocked commanders, Zhong Hui ordered the execution to proceed to set an example.

At this time Riverlands commanders Wang Han and Jiang Bin were defending Yuecheng and Hancheng, respectively. Seeing the size of the Wei army, however, both chose to remain behind their

gates rather than venture into the field. Zhong Hui issued an order: "In war unexpected speed is what counts. Let there be not the slightest delay." He sent the forward army under Li Fu to surround Yuecheng, and Commissioner Xun Kai to surround Hancheng. Then Zhong Hui himself led the main army to capture Yang'an Pass.

The Riverlands defenders of the pass, Commander Fu Qian and Lieutenant Commander Jiang Shu, took counsel together. Jiang Shu said, "We cannot hold off so many northerners. A stout defense is our best course." "I don't agree," Fu Qian answered. "Coming so far, the Wei troops—however numerous—will surely be too tired to pose a threat. We must go down from the pass and fight, or both Yuecheng and Hancheng will be lost." Jiang Shu sat silent and made no reply. Suddenly they were told that a large contingent of Wei troops had come before the pass.

The two commanders went to survey the situation. Zhong Hui, raising his whip, shouted up, "I have in my command a force of ten thousand. Submit promptly, and you will all be promoted and employed according to rank and station. Remain obstinate, and the good will die with the bad when we destroy your position." Fu Qian angrily ordered Jiang Shu to hold the pass; then he led three thousand men down to meet Zhong Hui. Zhong Hui fled, and the Wei troops withdrew. Fu Qian followed up his success and gave chase, but the Wei force regrouped. Fu Qian tried to get back up, but the flags of Wei were already standing on the pass. Jiang Shu shouted down to Fu Qian, "I have surrendered to Wei!"

In great fury Fu Qian denounced Jiang Shu: "Faithless, treasonous ingrate! How can you face the world again?" Then he wheeled his horse around and battled the northerners. The enemy closed around him. Caught in the center, Fu Qian charged left and thrust right, moving back and forth in a last-ditch battle. But escape was impossible. Eight or nine of every ten Riverlanders fell. Fu Qian raised his eyes to the heavens and said with a sigh, "I have lived as a servant of the Riverlands, and so shall I die." Laying on his whip, he plunged back into the fray. But he was badly wounded, and his surcoat and armor became drenched with blood. When the horse he was riding toppled over, Fu Qian slit his throat. A poet of later times has left these lines:

That final day he vented righteous rage,
And we forevermore hold high his name.
Who, to save himself, would play Jiang Shu
When he could die in glory like Fu Qian?

Zhong Hui seized Yang'an Pass and the quantities of grain, fodder, and equipment stored there. Delighted with this victory, he rewarded his entire army.

That night the Wei troops were sheltering in Yang'an town, when suddenly they heard a great clamor from the southwest. Startled, Zhong Hui left his tent to investigate. All was still. But the troops could not sleep the rest of the night. The following night during the third watch another uproar was heard from the southwest. Zhong Hui was alarmed. Toward dawn he sent men to probe the area. They returned and reported: "We covered more than ten *li* and found nothing." His anxiety unallayed, Zhong Hui took a few hundred riders, fully armed, to explore the area southwest of the town.

Coming to a hill, he saw lethal signs on every side: ominous clouds gathered above and mists hemmed in the hilltops. Zhong Hui halted and said to the guide, "What mountain is this?" "It is Dingjun Mountain," he replied. "Long ago Xiahou Yuan perished here." This made Zhong Hui even

more uneasy, and he turned back. As he rounded the slope, a storm blew up. Thousands of riders charged forth from behind the hill and attacked in the wake of the wind. Zhong Hui panicked and led his troops in headlong flight. Countless commanders tumbled from their mounts. On reaching Yang'an Pass, however, they found that not a single man or rider had been lost—though many bore marks of injury on their faces or had lost their helmets. Zhong Hui's men said, "Those soldiers charged out of the gloom, but when they came near they hurt no one. It was only a passing whirlwind."

Zhong Hui asked the surrendered commander Jiang Shu, "Does Dingjun Mountain have a holy temple?" "No," Jiang Shu replied, "only the tomb of the Martial Lord Zhuge." Startled, Zhong Hui said, "This must be a manifestation of his departed spirit. I must go myself to present sacrificial offerings to it." The next day Zhong Hui prepared the ceremonial articles and had a sheep, a bull, and a pig butchered. Then he went to the front of the Martial Lord's tomb, prostrated himself repeatedly, and offered the great sacrifice. When he was finished, the wild winds abruptly ceased and the ominous clouds dispersed. A fresh, gentle breeze brushed against him, and a fine rain fell all around. Moments later, the sky cleared. Overjoyed, the Wei soldiers gave thanks and returned to their base.

That night in his tent Zhong Hui fell asleep leaning against his low table. Suddenly a gust of pure air passed, and he saw a man with a Taoist headband and a feathered fan, a cloak of crane feathers, white shoes, and a black sash. His face was like the finest jade, and his lips like daubs of vermilion; his brows were finely drawn, and his eyes bright and clear. He stood some eight spans tall and moved with the light grace of a divine immortal as he stepped into Zhong Hui's tent. "Who are you, good sir?" Hui asked, rising to greet the visitor. The man responded, "This morning I was honored by your kind attention; now let me impart this brief word to you: The rites of Han are ending, and Heaven's Mandate must be followed. Still, the living souls of the Riverlands are much to be pitied for their grievous suffering during this long period of military action. After you enter the western territory, therefore, let there be no unwarranted killing." The visitor stopped, flicked his sleeves, and departed. Zhong Hui tried to drag him back, only to awaken with a start from his dream.

Zhong Hui knew he had seen the spirit of the Martial Lord and was overwhelmed by the strangeness of it. Then and there he ordered the forward army to carry a white banner inscribed "Protect the Kingdom, Spare the People" ; and to execute anyone taking the life of a Riverlander without authorization. As a result, the Hanzhong population emerged from the walled towns and welcomed the invaders. Zhong Hui reassured each surrendering town of its safety and consequently experienced no opposition whatever. A poet of later times left these lines of praise:

The ghostly myriads circling Mount Dingjun
Made Zhong Hui pay due homage to its potent god,
Who guided—in life—the fortunes of the Liu,
Whose word—from beyond—will save the folk of Shu.

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Meanwhile, in Tazhong, Jiang Wei had heard that a vast Wei army was approaching and had instructed Liao Hua, Zhang Yi, and Dong Jue to rally their troops and meet the threat. He also arrayed a portion of his own force to await the enemy. When the arrival of the Wei army was announced,

Jiang Wei advanced to meet it. The commanding general in the Wei ranks was the governor of Tianshui district, Wang Qi, who rode forth and shouted, "I have one million troops and a thousand top commanders. We are moving in twenty field armies and have already reached Chengdu. If you refuse a timely surrender and try and resist, it will prove your ignorance of Heaven's Mandate." In great anger Jiang Wei raised his spear and raced into the field, straight for Wang Qi. After a brief clash Wang Qi fled in defeat, and Jiang Wei pushed his forces twenty *li* in pursuit. Suddenly he heard metal gongs as a contingent of soldiers fanned out before him under a banner inscribed "Longxi District Governor Qian Hong."

With a smile Jiang Wei said, "Those rats are no match for me," and urged his soldiers on. After another ten *li* he encountered Deng Ai's advance, and the two forces met in furious combat. Jiang Wei demonstrated his mettle and closed with Deng Ai more than ten times, but neither prevailed. Then behind him gong and drum sounded again, and he tried to retreat. But a report came from the rear army: "All camps at Sweet Pine have been destroyed by the Jincheng district governor, Yang Xin." Shocked at this loss, Jiang Wei swiftly ordered his lieutenant to fly decoy insignia and resume the struggle with Deng Ai while he himself rushed the rear army to the rescue of Sweet Pine. En route he encountered Yang Xin.

Yang Xin declined to engage and fled toward the mountain pathways. Jiang Wei pursued closely; but as he passed below a cliff, timber and rocks tumbled down and blocked his advance. By the time Jiang Wei made it halfway back, Deng Ai had taken a heavy toll of his Riverlands force. Wei troops moved up in full force and surrounded Jiang Wei. Breaking through the ring with a cohort of riders, Jiang Wei took refuge in his main camp, where he staged a stout defense while waiting for reinforcement. At that moment a mounted courier arrived and reported: "Zhong Hui has taken Yang'an Pass. The defending commander Jiang Shu has surrendered. Fu Qian perished in the fight, and Hanzhong is in Wei hands. The commanders at Yuecheng and Hanzheng, Wang Han and Jiang Bin, also surrendered on learning of the loss of Hanzhong. And Hu Ji, unable to offer further resistance, escaped to Chengdu to seek reinforcement."

Disheartened by the news, Jiang Wei ordered his men to break camp. That night, coming to a crossing of Boundary River, Jiang Wei's troops found a company of men spread out before them; the Wei commander at their head was Jincheng district governor Yang Xin. In great anger Jiang Wei galloped ahead and put Yang Xin to flight in a single passage-at-arms. Jiang Wei shot three arrows, but none found its mark. In frustration Jiang Wei broke the bow in two and gave chase with upraised spear, but his horse lost its footing and threw him to the ground. Yang Xin reversed course and charged his fallen pursuer; Jiang Wei sprang to his feet and with a single thrust drove his spear into the chest of Yang Xin's horse. Other northern troops raced to the scene and rescued Yang Xin. Jiang Wei remounted an accompanying horse and was about to resume pursuit when he was told that Deng Ai's forces were coming from behind. Fearful of the growing disorganization of his forces, Jiang Wei recalled his men for an attempt to retake Hanzhong.

Mounted scouts reported to Jiang Wei: "Imperial Inspector Zhuge Xu of Yongzhou has cut off the avenue of retreat." And so Jiang Wei occupied a strategic intersection in the hills and pitched camp. The northern troops then positioned themselves at one end of Yinping Bridge: Jiang Wei could neither advance nor retreat. Giving a prolonged sigh, he said, "Then Heaven dooms me!" His lieutenant Ning Sui said, "Even if northern troops have blocked Yinping Bridge, Yongzhou will be lightly defended. General, if we go through Konghan Gorge into Yongzhou, Zhuge Xu will have to pull his men out

of Yinping to save Yongzhou. And then you can beat them to Saber Gateway and hold it against them, General. That way Hanzhong can be retaken."

Adopting this plan, Jiang Wei sent his troops into Konghan Gorge to create the impression that he meant to capture Yongzhou. Spies soon carried word back to Zhuge Xu. Greatly alarmed, Xu said, "I share responsibility for the defense of Yongzhou, and if it is lost, the court will make me answer for it." So saying, Zhuge Xu quickly transferred his troops to Yongzhou by the southern route, leaving behind only a single contingent to hold Yinping Bridge. Jiang Wei marched some thirty *li* by the northern route. Then, judging that the Wei troops had begun to move, he halted and reversed course, making the rearguard the van, and headed back to Yinping Bridge. As he had expected, most of the Wei units had departed. Jiang Wei easily dispersed the few troops holding the bridge and went on to burn their fortifications. By the time Zhuge Xu had learned of the loss of the bridge and started back, Jiang Wei was beyond overtaking.

Jiang Wei crossed Yinping Bridge and marched straight ahead. He met up with General of the Left Zhang Yi and General of the Right Liao Hua. When Jiang Wei demanded an explanation for their arrival, Zhang Yi answered, "Huang Hao has refused to send out troops; he listens to everything a sorceress tells him. When I heard Hanzhong had fallen, I came with my own forces, but Yang'an Pass was already in Zhong Hui's hands. Then I heard that you were in straits, General, and came to offer my assistance." With that all three forces combined and advanced to White Water Pass.

Liao Hua said, "We face enemies on every side. Food supplies cannot get through. We should withdraw and hold Saber Gateway while we consider another strategy." Jiang Wei hesitated, unable to decide. Suddenly he was informed that Zhong Hui and Deng Ai were advancing with more than ten field armies. Jiang Wei wanted to split into three forces again and engage the invaders, but Liao Hua said, "White Water is confining terrain and many routes pass through it. It is not a good place for waging war. It would be better to withdraw and save Saber Gateway. If that is lost, we will have no escape." Jiang Wei adopted this plan and led the Riverlands forces to Saber Gateway. But as he approached the pass, drums and horns sounded in unison and hearty shouts filled the air. On all sides banners went up: a contingent of troops was holding the pass.³ Indeed:

The formidable terrain of Hanzhong was theirs no more;
And the storm had reached as far as Saber Gateway.

Where did these troops come from?

READ ON.



***Deng Ai Slips Through Yinping Pass;
Zhuge Zhan Fights to the End at Mianzhu***

SUPREME COMMANDER DONG JUE, Sustainer of the Dynasty, informed that more than ten Wei field armies had entered Riverlands territory, brought up twenty thousand troops to defend Saber Gateway. That day, watching the dust billowing up in the distance, Dong Jue rushed ahead to the pass, believing that northern forces were approaching. But as he rode on, Jiang Wei, Liao Hua, and Zhang Yi came into view instead. Overjoyed, Dong Jue welcomed them into the pass and, after the formalities, complained bitterly about the association of the Second Emperor with Huang Hao. Jiang Wei said, "Rest assured, while Jiang Wei lives, the Wei will never gobble up Shu. First, we must hold Saber Gateway; next, work out tactics for driving back the foe."

Dong Jue said, "This pass is defensible, of course, but the capital has no troops and will fall easily to an enemy surprise." Jiang Wei replied, "The arduous terrain around Chengdu should thwart any invaders. You need not worry." As they were speaking, Zhuge Xu was reported to be at the pass with his forces. Eager for combat, Jiang Wei rushed to the spot with five thousand and struck directly at the Wei ranks. Driving and thrusting left and right, he routed Zhuge Xu and claimed the life of many a northerner. The survivors fled and pitched camp some distance away. After the Riverlands troops had seized quantities of horses and weapons, Jiang Wei recalled his forces and returned to the pass.

Zhong Hui was camped some twenty *li* from Saber Gateway. Zhuge Xu came before him there to acknowledge his failure. Zhong Hui said hotly, "You failed to hold Yinping Bridge and block Jiang Wei's retreat as ordered. Then you took it upon yourself again to advance on your own authority. The result is this defeat." Zhuge Xu answered, "Jiang Wei is a man of infinite cunning. His feint toward Yongzhou deceived me into going there to defend it, thereby giving him the opportunity to escape. I pursued him to the pass never expecting to suffer a second defeat there." Zhong Hui angrily ordered the commander executed. Army Supervisor Wei Guan said, "Despite his offense, he was under the direction of General Deng Ai, Conqueror of the West. Putting Xu to death, General, will only damage your relations with Deng Ai."

Zhong Hui replied, "I hold a clear mandate from the Son of Heaven, Cao Huan, supported by the weighty charge of the lord-patriarch of Jin, Sima Zhao, to lead this punitive expedition against the Riverlands. Even if Deng Ai himself were responsible, I would have to execute him!" Despite the commanders' strenuous protests, Zhong Hui had Zhuge Xu moved to Luoyang in a cage-cart and placed in the hands of the lord-patriarch. Afterward he transferred all of Zhuge Xu's troops to his own command.

Outraged by Zhuge Xu's punishment, Deng Ai cried, "I hold a rank as high as Zhong Hui's and have long rendered service in policing these borders. How dare he take it upon himself to act so high and mighty?" Ai's son, Deng Zhong, urged him to forbear, saying, "Intolerance for trifles ruins great

plans. "Father, if you fall out with him, you will fail the dynasty. I hope you can restrain yourself for the time being." Deng Ai allowed himself to be guided by his son's advice, but his resentment was not allayed. He led a dozen riders to see Zhong Hui.

Zhong Hui queried his advisers about Deng Ai's visit: "How many troops are coming?" When they answered, "Only a dozen," Zhong Hui ordered a few hundred guards to take up positions inside and outside his tent. Deng Ai dismounted and entered. Zhong Hui welcomed him in. Deng Ai observed that Hui's troops were well disciplined, and he became uneasy. He said pointedly, "General, your capture of Hanzhong was a great boon to the government. Now we must decide on a plan for the swift capture of Saber Gateway." Zhong Hui responded, "What is your own view, General?" Deng Ai claimed he lacked the ability to make a suggestion, but Zhong Hui insisted, so he said, "In my humble view, we should lead a company through Yinping and out of Hanzhong's Deyang precinct along the lesser routes, then use special forces to capture Chengdu directly. Jiang Wei should pull back to save the capital, leaving Saber Gateway exposed to your attack, General. You would win the day." Well pleased, Zhong Hui said, "A marvelous plan, General! Take troops at once. I will stay here awaiting word of your victory." The two men feasted and parted company.

Zhong Hui returned to his tent and said to his commanders, "Everyone says how able Deng Ai is; however, I saw in him today but a mediocre talent." The commanders asked him why, and Zhong Hui said, "The side and back roads around Yinping all run through high hills and steep ranges. If Shu has a hundred or so men guarding the strongpoints who can cut off his retreat, Deng Ai's troops will starve to death. I will go only by the main road, for I have no doubts: the land of Shu will fall." And so he readied scaling ladders and trebuchets for the assault on the pass at Saber Gateway.

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Deng Ai came forth from the entrance to Zhong Hui's camp and mounted. Turning back to his followers, he asked, "What sort of man does Zhong Hui consider me to be?" His followers said, "Judging by his words and expression, he strongly disagreed with what you said but forced himself to appear to agree publicly." With a smile Deng Ai said, "He thinks I can't take Chengdu. But I'll show him."

Back at camp Shi Zuan, Deng Zhong, and a group of high officers received Deng Ai and asked, "What decision have you and General Zhong Hui come to?" "I told him what was really on my mind," Deng Ai answered, "but he still rates me as a commander of ordinary ability. He conquered Hanzhong—a major accomplishment in his eyes—only because I tied down Jiang Wei's forces at Tazhong. But I'll show him now by taking Chengdu itself!" That night he ordered all camps to break and all forces to advance to Yinping by side and back roads. Seven hundred *li* distant from Saber Gateway Deng Ai halted and pitched camp. "Deng Ai means to take Chengdu," someone reported to Zhong Hui, who simply ridiculed Deng Ai's folly.

Meanwhile, Deng Ai dispatched a secret letter to Sima Zhao and then convened his commanders. He put the question to them: "We have a chance to take Chengdu and establish undying fame. Are you willing to follow me?" The commanders responded, "We will honor your command, undaunted even by death." Deng Ai sent his son, Zhong, in the lead with five thousand crack troops. They wore no armor but carried tools for hewing and boring so they could cut across hills, open roads, and throw up bridges to facilitate the main army's advance.

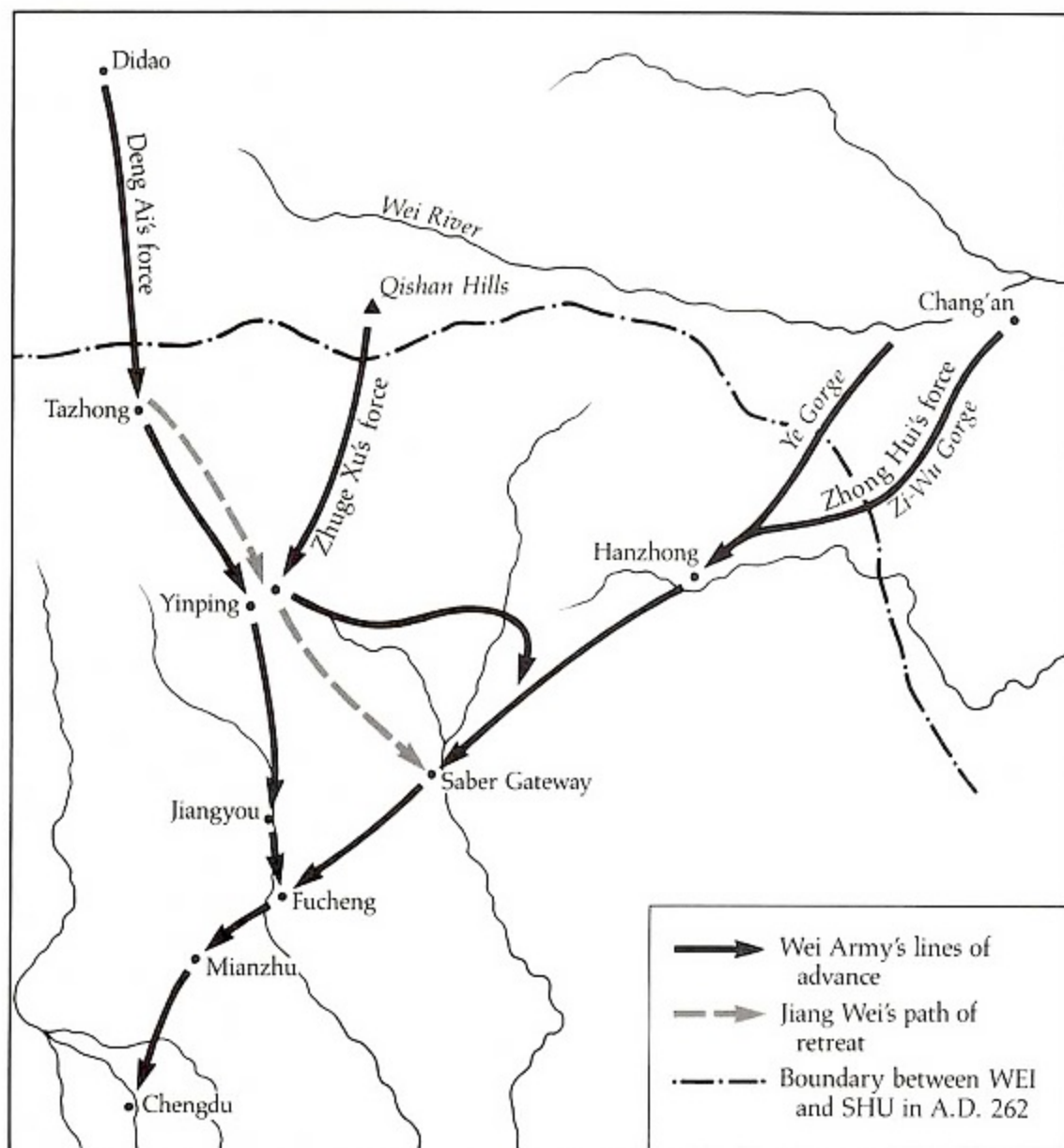
Next, Deng Ai selected thirty thousand men, who took dry provisions and ropes and set out. After about one hundred *li*, Deng Ai selected three thousand men and had them make camp. Then he led the whole body of troops another one hundred *li*. Again he selected three thousand more and had them make camp. Twenty days after they had begun marching from Yinping in the tenth month of that year (A. D. 263), they found themselves in the midst of towering cliffs and sharp gorges; they had traveled through seven hundred *li* of uninhabited territory. As they proceeded, the Wei soldiers had set up a number of camps, and now a mere two thousand men and horses remained for the last stages.

Before them lay the Heaven-Scraping Mountains, too arduous for horses to cross. Deng Ai advanced on foot until he saw Deng Zhong and his squad of earthmoving warriors directly ahead, groaning and weeping. Deng Ai asked the reason, and Deng Zhong said, "West of these mountains rise sheer walls of rock and giant cliffs we cannot cut through. We have toiled for nothing, it seems, and therefore we weep." Deng Ai said, "We have already come seven hundred *li*. On the other side of these rocks is Jiangyou. To return is unthinkable." Calling the troops around him, he went on, "'To get the tiger's cubs, go inside her lair.' We have come this far together, and if we succeed, the wealth and honors will be shared by all." The troops responded, "We will follow your command."

Deng Ai ordered the men first to slide their weapons down the far side of the slope. He then wrapped himself in felt padding and rolled down the slope. His lieutenants, who had felt jackets, followed him. Those without felt jackets wound the rope they had brought with them around their waists and went down in a single line, grabbing at trees and hanging from shrubs. In this way Deng Ai, Deng Zhong, and the two thousand soldiers, along with the road-building brigade, made it over the Heaven-Scraping Mountains. Then, taking only the time to put their equipment in good order, they continued their march. By the side of the road they saw a stone engraved with the words "By the Martial Lord Zhuge, Prime Minister." The text read: "Two fires first spring forth; a man will cross. Two warriors contend; soon they will die."¹ Deng Ai, astonished to find this stone, hurriedly prostrated himself before it. "The Martial Lord was more than human," he said. "How sad that I was never meant to serve him." Later someone left this verse:

Yinping's steep-pitched peaks reach heaven-high;
Even the sky crane reels before such height.
Yet Deng Ai wrapped in felt went hurtling down,
Marveling at Zhuge Liang's foresight.

Deng Ai had slipped through Yinping. Subsequently resuming his march, he noticed a large vacant campsite. His advisers told him, "People say the Martial Lord once deployed a thousand men to hold this point. But the Riverlands ruler, Liu Shan, has evacuated it." Deng Ai could not suppress his astonishment. "There is no going back now," he told his men. "Jiangyou ahead has food enough. Advance and survive; retreat and perish. We must redouble our efforts and attack it!" "We will fight to the death," they responded. And so Deng Ai, on foot, led a cohort of two thousand on a forced march to seize the town of Jiangyou.²



MAP 11. Deng Ai and Zhong Hui subdue Shu. Source: Liu Chunfan, *Sanguo shihua* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981), p. 204.

Jiangyou's defending commander, Ma Miao, had heard that Dongchuan³ had fallen to the enemy. Though he made some preparations, Ma Miao fortified only the main route and did not attach especial importance to the report, particularly with Saber Gateway defended by Jiang Wei's whole army. That day Ma Miao had returned from field exercises and was dining with his wife, Lady Li, by the warmth of a stove, when she asked, "With so many urgent reports from the border, General, why do you seem so calm?" "Our security is in Jiang Wei's hands; it's not my responsibility," Ma Miao replied. "Nevertheless," his wife went on, "the town you defend is not unimportant." "The Son of Heaven listens to no one but Huang Hao," Ma Miao answered. "He is steeped in depravity and his end is near. If Wei troops arrive, we will do best to surrender. So why concern ourselves?" In great anger Lady Li spat on Ma Miao's face and cried, "It is wrong for a man with such disloyal and dishonorable thoughts to accept rank and office from his liege. For the sake of my own dignity, I shall not see you again!" Ma Miao was too ashamed to reply.

Unexpectedly a household servant dashed in and reported, "General Deng Ai of the Wei—no one knows from where—has forced his way into the town with two thousand soldiers." Ma Miao rushed out in panic and offered to surrender. Throwing himself to the ground before the main government building, he cried out tearfully, "I have intended to give my allegiance to the north for a long time and wish to call forth the townspeople and our military to submit to you, General." Deng Ai accepted the surrender and integrated the Jiangyou defense unit into his own forces; then he appointed Ma Miao his guide. At that moment it was reported that Ma Miao's wife had hanged herself. Deng Ai asked for an explanation, and Ma Miao told him the truth. Moved by the woman's integrity, Deng Ai had her buried with full ceremony and personally went to offer the sacrifice. The northerners sighed deeply when they heard of this. Later someone left these lines in praise of Lady Li:

Han's rites o'erthrown, Liu Shan gone astray,
Heaven sent Deng Ai to seize the west:
More than all its captains of renown,
Jiangyou's Lady Li proved worthiest.

Having taken Jiangyou, Deng Ai welcomed the rest of his troops arriving from Yinping by side and back paths. Deng Ai's attack forces converged at Jiangyou and marched directly to Fucheng. A subordinate commander, Tian Xu, said, "Our troops have come through rough terrain. They're numb with fatigue and could do with a few days' rest before pressing on." "In war nothing takes the place of surprise. Are you trying to undermine morale?" Deng Ai answered hotly. He ordered Tian Xu removed and executed, relenting only after his commanders pleaded strenuously for mercy. Then Deng Ai took direct command and marched his men to Fucheng. Within the town officials and officers, soldiers and commoners thought that the northerners had dropped from the sky, and to a man they surrendered.

. . . .

News of these losses reached Chengdu swiftly. The Second Emperor hurriedly summoned Huang Hao and asked his advice. Huang Hao petitioned him: "These reports are false. The gods would never deceive Your Majesty." The Emperor called again for the sorceress, but she could not be

found. Meanwhile, urgent appeals from near and far piled up as thick as snowflakes; and envoys bearing news streamed back and forth. The Emperor held court to formulate a plan, but his officials only eyed one another knowingly and said nothing. Xi Zheng stepped forth from the ranks and petitioned the Emperor: "The crisis is upon us. Your Majesty must summon the son of the Martial Lord to advise us on repelling the invaders."

The son of the Martial Lord was Zhuge Zhan (Siyuan). His mother, from the house of Huang (she was the daughter of Huang Chengyan), had been a woman of undistinguished looks but rare ability who could interpret the constellations and the contours of the terrain. Moreover, she had thoroughly understood the various texts of military strategy and the arts of prognostication. While still in Nanyang, the Martial Lord had heard of her ability and won her hand. And the Lady Huang had played a part in her husband's quest for knowledge. She passed away soon after the Martial Lord. On her deathbed she bequeathed to her son, Zhan, a single teaching: strive to be loyal and to be filial.

From his youth Zhuge Zhan had been perceptive and intelligent. He took to wife a daughter of the Second Emperor and as an imperial son-in-law served as a military commander. Later he succeeded to his father's rank as lord of Wuxiang. In the fourth year of Jing Yao (A. D. 261) Zhan was promoted to acting supervisory general. But when the eunuch Huang Hao became employed by the Emperor, Zhuge Zhan had stopped attending court on pretext of illness.

Adopting Xi Zheng's advice, the Second Emperor issued three edicts summoning Zhuge Zhan to the imperial quarters. Tearfully, the Second Emperor stated the problem: "Deng Ai has occupied Fucheng, and Chengdu stands in grave danger. For the sake of your late father, come to my rescue." Also in tears Zhuge Zhan petitioned: "As servants of your house, my father and I enjoyed many kindnesses from your late father as well as Your Majesty's special favor—debts no sacrifice could repay. I would like Your Majesty to send forth all the troops in Chengdu under my command for a fight to the finish." At once the Second Emperor placed seventy thousand soldiers and their commanders under Zhuge Zhan.

Zhuce Zhan took leave of the Emperor, marshaled his forces, and gathered his commanders around him. "Who dares take the van?" he asked. A young commander promptly stepped forward. "Since my father wields great power," he said, "his son volunteers for the van." All eyes turned to Zhuge Shang, eldest son of Zhuge Zhan, age nineteen. He was widely read in military texts and skilled in the martial arts as well. Well pleased, Zhuge Zhan assigned Shang to the van. That day the army left Chengdu to confront the invaders from Wei.

Upon surrendering, Ma Miao had presented a volume of maps to Deng Ai for the three hundred and sixty *li* stretch from Fucheng to Chengdu. The maps clearly and completely indicated land and river routes plus dimensions and difficult points. Deng Ai examined the maps in a mood of rising apprehension. "If we simply hold Fucheng," he said, "and the enemy holds the hills ahead, what hope of success do we have? If the days drag on and Jiang Wei's force arrives, hope will be slim." He summoned Shi Zuan and his own son, Zhong, and instructed them: "Lead a company straight to Mianzhu to check the western troops. I will be coming right behind. Make all haste. If they take the strongpoints before you, I'll have your heads."

Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong led their troops to Mianzhu, where they encountered the Riverlands force. Both armies assumed battle formation. As they drew up their horses at the entrance to their position, Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong saw that the Riverlands troops had assumed the Eight Ramparts formation. When the war drums ceased, the Riverlands entrance opened and dozens of commanders

rode forth escorting a four-wheeled carriage bearing a single figure: a silk band binding his hair, he gripped a feather fan and wore the crane-plumed robe that immortals often wear. Alongside the carriage hung a yellow banner inscribed "Prime Minister of Han, the Martial Lord Zhuge." At the sight, Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong burst into sweat and, turning back toward their officers, said, "So Kongming still lives! We are done for." They tried desperately to turn about, but the western troops stormed forward and drove the northerners back in defeat. The Shu force rode the enemy down for some twenty *li* until Deng Ai appeared with reinforcements; then both sides recalled their troops.

Deng Ai seated himself in his command tent and called Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong before him. "Why did you retire without putting up a fight?" he asked accusingly. Deng Zhong replied, "We ran when we saw Zhuge Kongming in the Shu battle lines guiding their army." Angrily Deng Ai said, "Even if Kongming has come back to life, I fear him not. For retreating without good reason and losing the day you shall be executed at once." The commanders pleaded strenuously, and Deng Ai's fury finally subsided. He sent out scouts, who reported back that Kongming's son, Zhuge Zhan, was the commanding general and Zhan's son, Shang, was leading the van. The figure seated in the carriage was a wooden statue of Kongming.

After receiving this report, Deng Ai said to Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong, "Today's action will decide all. You must prevail or be executed." The two commanders led ten thousand men into battle. Zhuge Shang, a lone mounted spearman, drove the two back in a show of martial prowess, and Zhuge Zhan directed his soldiers on either side to charge forth. They plunged into the enemy battle lines, striking and thrusting to the right and left, moving back and forth across the field scores of times. The Wei force was defeated, their losses beyond calculating. Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong, though wounded, escaped. Zhuge Zhan rode down the retreating foe for twenty *li* and then took up positions to parry a counterattack.

Shi Zuan and Deng Zhong came before Deng Ai, who, in consideration of their wounds, refrained from imposing punishment. Ai said to his commanders, "The Riverlands has a true heir to Zhuge Liang's cause in Zhuge Zhan. Twice he has defeated us, killing over ten thousand. If we do not crush the westerners quickly, the end will be near for us." Army Supervisor Qiu Ben said, "Why not send a letter to lure them out?" Deng Ai approved the suggestion and sent a letter to the Riverlands camp. The gate guard brought it to the command tent, where Zhuge Zhan unsealed it. It read:

From General Deng Ai, Conqueror of the West, to General Zhuge Zhan, supervisory general: scrutinizing the talents of the present age, we find none to compare with your late honored father. Years ago he left his thatched dwelling, predicting the three kingdoms. He conceived the conquest of Jingzhou, then the Riverlands, and the establishment of Liu Bei's patrimony. In history such accomplishment is rarely found. Later, he directed six expeditions from the Qishan hills; he failed to defeat Wei only because Heaven did not ordain it, not because his wisdom and strength were deficient. But the present sovereign, the Second Emperor, is muddleheaded and incompetent; his kingly spirit is gone. I, Deng Ai, hold a mandate from the Son of Heaven to lead this well-armed mass of troops in a punitive expedition against the Riverlands; most of its territory we have taken already. Chengdu stands in imminent danger. Sir, comply with the will of Heaven and man and accept service under Wei for honor's sake. I, Deng Ai, will petition to have you named prince of Langye for the greater glory of your ancestral line—no empty promise, this. Favor us with your considered reflection.

Zhuge Zhan exploded in anger; he tore the letter to shreds and executed the bearer. On Zhan's order the northern escort carried the severed head back to Deng Ai in the Wei camp. The enraged Deng Ai wanted to attack in force at once, but Qiu Ben argued, "Do not risk it yet, General. A surprise attack will win the day for us." Deng Ai approved and ordered the governor of Tianshui district, Wang Qi, and the governor of Longxi district, Qian Hong, to place their forces in hiding to the rear while he led his troops forward.

Just as Zhuge Zhan was preparing to challenge the enemy, his men reported the approach of Deng Ai. Zhan led his men directly into the enemy lines. Deng Ai fled, and Zhan bore down upon him. Suddenly from either side the ambushers came out fighting and dealt the Riverlands troops a stunning blow, forcing them to withdraw. They retreated to Mianzhu, to which Deng Ai laid siege; the northern troops, shouting high-spiritedly, sealed Mianzhu tight as a steel drum.

The town felt the mounting pressure. Zhuge Zhan ordered Peng He to fight his way out in order to take a letter to the Southland appealing for relief. Peng He reached the Southland and presented the request. After reading it, the ruler Sun Xiu proposed a policy to his courtiers. "How can I sit back during an emergency in the Riverlands?" he asked and ordered the veteran general Ding Feng to lead a rescue force of fifty thousand to the west: Ding Feng was the chief commander, Ding Fung⁴ and Sun Yi his subordinate commanders. Ding Feng took the field and dispatched his two lieutenants, Ding Fung and Sun Yi, to Mianzhong with twenty thousand men; meanwhile, Ding Feng himself marched to Shouchun with thirty thousand. The southern force consisted of three field armies.

Zhuge Zhan, however, seeing no relief on the way, said to his commanders, "Prolonging our defense is poor policy," and left his son Shang and the Secretariat's Zhang Zun (Zhang Fei's grandson) to guard Mianzhu. Then Zhan took to horse and led his army out of the city's three gates to take on the besiegers. Deng Ai watched the Riverlands troops rush forth, and he withdrew quickly. Zhuge Zhan gave vigorous chase. Suddenly a bombard sounded and from four sides northern troops closed in. Zhuge Zhan fought furiously, killing hundreds of northerners, but when Deng Ai had his archers rake them with bolts, the Riverlands soldiers dispersed.

One arrow struck Zhuge Zhan and knocked him from his horse. "I can fight no more; I give my life for my kingdom," he cried and slit his throat with his sword. His son, Shang, saw his father perish on the battlefield and leaped to his horse in a burst of anger. Zhang Zun cautioned him: "Young general, do not act recklessly." With a sigh Zhuge Shang replied, "For three generations my family has enjoyed the generosity and kindness of this kingdom. Now that my father has fallen on the field, what have I to live for?" Lashing his horse, he plunged fighting into the fray and perished. Later someone left these lines in praise of Zhan and Shang, father and son:

Think not Shu's vassals failed in policy!
Heaven ended Liu's reign, fire-signed,
Though Zhuge Liang left worthy heirs to Shu
To carry on the Martial Lord's design.

Deng Ai, moved by their loyalty, had father and son buried together. He then proceeded to attack the weakly defended town of Mianzhu. Three Riverlands commanders—Zhang Zun, Huang Chong, and Li Qiu—each led forth a company, but the invading northerners overwhelmed them with their numbers, and all three died in battle. Deng Ai took possession of Mianzhu. After rewarding his

fighting men, he began the march on Chengdu. Indeed:

The last days of the Second Emperor recall
The time Liu Bei coerced Liu Zhang's surrender.

Would Chengdu fall or stand?

READ ON.



*Weeping at the Ancestral Hall, a Filial Prince Dies;
Entering the Riverlands, Two Warriors Vie for Glory*

To Chengdu came word that Deng Ai had occupied Mianzhu and that Zhuge Zhan and his son, Shang, had fallen in battle. Shocked, the Second Emperor summoned his civil and military officials to an urgent conference. A privileged attendant petitioned: "The common folk flee the city for their lives, taking their young and old; the ground trembles with their cries." The Emperor was too flustered to act. Suddenly mounted scouts arrived and reported the approach of northern troops and commanders. The assembly of officials recommended, "We have neither the men nor the commanders to resist. The passes must be held while we flee to the seven southern districts.¹ There we can borrow troops of the Man nations and try to recover the northern part of our kingdom."

Director of Palace Bureaucracy Qiao Zhou² said, "That will never work. The southern Man are inveterate rebels who have never shown us kindness. If we seek refuge with them, it will end in disaster." The officials then petitioned: "Wu is still an ally. Our situation is critical. We can take refuge there." Again Qiao Zhou urged the sovereign to reject their proposal: "There is no historical precedent for a Son of Heaven seeking sanctuary in another kingdom. And Wei seems far more likely to devour Wu than the other way around. Declaring allegiance to the Southland would be only the first disgrace. If the south falls to Wei, will Your Majesty suffer disgrace a second time by declaring allegiance to Wei? Why not submit directly to Wei, which will endow Your Majesty with some fief land to maintain your ancestral temple and provide for your people? I beg Your Majesty, consider this carefully." Undecided, the Emperor withdrew into the palace.

Conflict marked court discussion the following day. Qiao Zhou, sensing the urgency of the situation, submitted another advisory to the sovereign advocating surrender. The Emperor accepted Qiao Zhou's suggestion and was preparing to implement it, when a man stepped forward from behind a screen and denounced Qiao Zhou in a harsh voice: "Miserable pedant! Irresponsibly arguing the fate of our sacred grain altars just to save your miserable skin! What Son of Heaven has ever surrendered?" The Emperor regarded the speaker, Liu Chan, the prince of Beidi, his fifth son.

The Second Emperor had seven sons. They were, in order of birth: Liu Rui, Liu Yao, Liu Zong, Liu Zan, Liu Chan (the prince of Beidi), Liu Xun, and Liu Ju. Of the seven, only Chan had shown superior intelligence—even as a child—and splendid aptitudes none could match; his six brothers were ineffectual sorts. The Emperor said to Liu Chan, "My principal ministers counsel surrender. You alone, confident in the hot courage of your youth, would see the city run with blood?" Liu Chan responded, "While your father lived, Qiao Zhou never dared meddle in government policy. Now he rashly offers counsel in matters of state, presuming to give voice to subversive opinions, which have neither reason nor justification. Why, we have tens of thousands of troops in the capital, and Jiang Wei's army is intact at Saber Gateway. If Wei forces breach our outer perimeter, Jiang Wei will

come to our aid the moment he hears of it. Then we can attack the enemy at the same time from the front and carry all before us. Why heed these miserable pedants and casually cast aside the late Emperor's patrimony?"

The Second Emperor rebuked Liu Chan: "You little boy who knows nothing of Heaven," he said. Liu Chan struck his head to the ground and said, weeping, "If we have no way out, if our strength is spent and disaster threatens, then let us two, father and son, liege and vassal, fight our last fight, backs to the city walls, and die together for the sake of the sacred shrines. Then we can present ourselves before the late Emperor. What good is surrender?" The Emperor would not agree. Liu Chan cried out tearfully, "At what expense and sacrifice did the late Emperor establish this patrimony! Give me death, not the humiliation of throwing our land away without a fight!" The Emperor had his attendants force Liu Chan out of the palace gates and ordered Qiao Zhou to prepare the documents of surrender. Next, he dispatched his personally appointed privy counselor, Zhang Shao, and Imperial Son-in-Law and Military Commander Deng Liang to accompany Qiao Zhou to Luocheng with the imperial seal and cord and the request for permission to surrender.³

At this time Deng Ai had hundreds of armored cavalry scouts near Chengdu who saw the flag of surrender go up and reported it to him. Deng Ai was well pleased. Soon Zhang Shao and his delegation arrived, and Deng Ai sent men to receive them. The three Riverlands representatives bowed low before the stair leading to Deng Ai's seat, then they presented the jade seal of state and the offer of surrender. Deng Ai unsealed the surrender petition and studied it. Satisfied, he accorded Zhang Shao, Qiao Zhou, and Deng Liang appropriate protocol and sent them back to Chengdu with a reply, reassuring all parties of his peaceful intentions.

The three took their leave and returned to Chengdu directly. They came before the Emperor, presented Deng Ai's response, and described how well they had been treated. The Second Emperor, pleased with the contents of the reply, ordered a court steward, Jiang Xian, to carry the order of surrender to Jiang Wei; he also sent Li Hu of the Secretariat to deliver the appropriate official documents to Deng Ai. According to these documents, the Riverlands had two hundred and eighty thousand households and a population of nine hundred and fourteen thousand; armor-bearing soldiers and commanders numbered one hundred and two thousand, civil officials, forty thousand; stored grain, more than four hundred thousand measures; gold and silver, two thousand cat-ties of each; damasked glossy silk and dyed silk, two hundred thousand bolts of each; other items in the treasury, because of a lack of time, were not enumerated. The date selected for the surrender of the Second Emperor and his vassals was the first day of the twelfth month.

Liu Chan, prince of Beidi, informed of this decision, shook with indignation. Sword at his side, he entered the palace. His principal wife, Lady Cui, asked him, "Why do you look so strangely today, Your Highness?" "The troops of Wei are almost here," he replied. "My royal father has already conveyed the instruments of surrender to Wei and will confirm the surrender in person tomorrow, thus consigning our sacred altars to oblivion. But before I kneel to a stranger, I'll die and present myself unstained before the late sovereign in the land below." Lady Cui said, "You are noble, indeed, to seek so fitting a death. Let me precede Your Highness." "Why need you die?" Liu Chan asked. "Your Highness will die for your father, I for my husband. We will thus both fulfill our duties. When the husband has perished, the wife dies. Need you say more?" So saying, she rammed her head against a pillar and killed herself.

Liu Chan killed his three sons with his own hands and severed his wife's head, which he carried

to the ancestral temple of Emperor Zhao Lie. Bowing to the ground, he said through his tears, "I am disgraced, seeing our heritage handed over to strangers. I have killed therefore my wife and children to free myself of care, and now I offer this life to you, Grandfather. If you can see and hear still, you must know what I feel." Blood oozed from his weeping eyes as he slit his throat and died. The Riverlanders grieved at the news, and a man of later times left these lines in Liu Chan's praise:

Liege and men were glad to bend the knee;
For him alone the anguish was too keen.
Remote in time—that kingdom in the west—
But what a hero, Beidi's prince, Liu Chan!
He gave his life in tribute to Zhao Lie,
Fortune-vexed, weeping at the arched blue sky.
His awesome presence seems among us still.
Who can say the Han has gone for aye?

On hearing of the suicide of the prince of Beidi, the Emperor ordered him buried.

The next day the Wei army arrived in force. The Second Emperor led his heir apparent together with the remaining princes and a court retinue of more than sixty officials a distance of ten *li* outside the north gate of Chengdu. Facing the victor, his hands bound behind his back, the Emperor walked beside a carriage bearing a coffin.⁴ Deng Ai rose to support the Emperor and personally untied his bonds, then he burned the coffin and rode back into the capital with the Emperor beside him. A man of later times was moved to write these lines:

The northern host came marching into Shu;
The king held life too dear to sacrifice.
How willfully Huang Hao betrayed his liege;
For what did Jiang Wei strive to save the land?
Inspiring, that great captain loyal and true!
How sad for the heir who did not fail his trust.
Though Zhao Lie led the realm through many trials,
His proud estate turned instantly to dust.

With incense and flowers the people of Chengdu came forth and welcomed the northerners. Deng Ai honored the Second Emperor with the generalship of the Flying Cavalry; other civil and military officials were granted rank in keeping with their status. The Second Emperor was invited to return to his palace. A proclamation was issued to calm the populace; and possession of the granaries, arsenals, and treasuries was transferred to the conquerors. In addition, the Second Emperor ordered Master of Ceremony Zhang Jun and the lieutenant governor of Yizhou, Zhang Shao, to call on the soldiers and people of the Riverlands districts to support the new regime. Finally, one envoy was sent to persuade Jiang Wei to surrender and another was sent to Luoyang to announce the victory. Deng Ai, on the basis of information about Huang Hao's treachery, had intended to have the eunuch executed. But Deng Ai's assistants, bribed with gold and precious gems, helped Huang Hao evade punishment. And so the Han ceased to exist. A man of later times wrote this memorial ode to the

Martial Lord in connection with the Han's end:

Even fish and fowl must heed his battle writs,
And the rains and winds protect his battlements.
But all for naught, the leader's penned commands,
When his fallen king was carried to the foe.
He lived up to his idols, Guan Zhong, Yue Yi,
But once the brothers died, what could he do?
Some other year we'll pass his Jinli shrine—
Our Liangfu songs shall end; our sorrow, no.⁵

Court Steward Jiang Xian reached Saber Gateway and, to a shocked and speechless Jiang Wei, delivered the Second Emperor's command and described the surrender to the north. The news made Jiang Wei's commanders indignant to a man: gnashing their teeth and glaring, their beards stiffened, they drew their swords and cut through stones shouting, "Let us all fight to the death. Why should we submit?" The wails of the troops traveled for many *li*. Seeing how his men yearned for the Han, Jiang Wei soothed them with comforting words. "Have no fear," he said. "I have a plan to restore the house of Han." At the urging of all assembled, Jiang Wei whispered something to his commanders.

Immediately flags of surrender went up around Saber Gateway, and a courier was sent ahead to Zhong Hui's camp to announce that Jiang Wei would be leading Zhang Yi, Liao Hua, and Dong Jue to offer their surrender. Zhong Hui, well pleased, had Jiang Wei welcomed into his command tent. "Why has it taken you so long to get here?" Zhong Hui asked. With a formal expression but crying freely, Jiang Wei responded, "The dynasty and the whole army are represented in my person. My arrival today may be sooner than expected."⁶ Surprised by the remark, Zhong Hui stepped down from his seat and bowed. He treated Jiang Wei like an honored guest.

Jiang Wei plied his powers of persuasion on Zhong Hui. "General," he said, "they say that from the time of your Huainan campaigns until the present, every one of your stratagems has worked. The rise of the house of Sima owes everything to your efforts. That is why I am content now to bow my head in surrender. Had it been Deng Ai, I would have fought to the finish. Surrender? Out of the question!" Zhong Hui proceeded to break an arrow, swearing brotherhood with Jiang Wei. The two men became warmer friends than ever, and Zhong Hui let Jiang Wei command troops as before. Jiang Wei, inwardly pleased, sent Jiang Xian back to Chengdu.⁷

Meanwhile, Deng Ai had appointed Shi Zuan imperial inspector of Yizhou.⁸ District governorships in Yizhou also went to Qian Hong, Wang Qi, and other leading commanders. Next, to publicize the victory, Deng Ai erected a grand dais and hosted a general meeting of Riverlands officials at a banquet. When the company was well warmed with wine, Deng Ai pointed to the assembly and said, "You were lucky to have me to deal with and to live to see this day. Another general would have put the lot of you to the sword." The officials rose from their places and prostrated themselves in gratitude.

Suddenly Jiang Xian arrived and reported Jiang Wei's surrender to Zhong Hui, Queller of the West. The news made Deng Ai bitterly jealous of Zhong Hui, and he drafted a letter that was carried to the lord patriarch of Jin, Sima Zhao, in Luoyang. Sima Zhao received Deng Ai's letter, which said:

I hold that in warfare an army's reputation should precede its appearance in force. Now, having subdued Shu we are in a position to dominate Wu. The time has come to gather up the empire in our hands like a mat. Now, however, after major action our commanders and troops are too fatigued to resume combat at once. It would be preferable to leave in place twenty thousand Longyou soldiers and another twenty thousand Shu soldiers to produce salt and iron and to build warships. In that way our plans will proceed step by step until we are in a position to dispatch an envoy with our ultimatum to the south and subdue it without armed conquest.

The thing to do now is to draw Sun Xiu to us by honoring Liu Shan. If Liu Shan is taken to Luoyang, the southerners will suspect our intentions toward them, making it difficult to convince them to accept northern rule. Let us instead leave Liu Shan in the Riverlands and not bring him to the capital until the winter of next year. Meanwhile, let us honor him as prince of Fufeng, grant his retinue sufficient means, and ennoble his sons. This will make manifest the favor we show to those who submit. The southerners will fear our might yet cherish hopes of our kindness, and sensing the way the wind trends, they will become our followers.

This letter produced in Sima Zhao a suspicion that Deng Ai meant to arrogate authority in the Riverlands to himself. Therefore, he sent a handwritten letter to Wei Guan, followed by an edict enfeoffing Deng Ai. The edict read:

To General Deng Ai, Conqueror of the West: Thanks to your brilliant prestige and vigorous campaigns deep in enemy territory, the usurping Riverlands ruler has publicly surrendered. Your troops have completed their mission in good time, leaving the skies clear of war clouds and the western territories, Ba and Shu, purged and stabilized. Your achievement surpasses Baiqi's victory over the stronger kingdom of Chu as well as Han Xin's conquest of the hardy kingdom of Zhao. Therefore shall Deng Ai be grand commandant with a city of twenty thousand households added to his fief, and his two sons shall be honored as precinct lords with revenue from a thousand households each.⁹

After Deng Ai had received this edict, Army Supervisor Wei Guan handed Deng Ai Sima Zhao's handwritten letter. It said that Deng Ai's recommendations on the disposition of Liu Shan would have to wait for the petitioning process to be completed and could not be precipitately acted upon. Deng Ai said to Wei Guan, ' " A general in the field may refuse the king's command. ' Why should he reject my proposal when I have the authority of an imperial edict for my expedition? " Deng Ai wrote another letter, which the bearer took back to Luoyang.

By this time everyone at court was saying that Deng Ai must intend to revolt, and Sima Zhao was becoming increasingly mistrustful. Suddenly the bearer returned and presented Deng Ai's letter, which Sima Zhao unsealed. It read:

I, Deng Ai, campaigning in the west under your mandate, have subdued the principal malefactor. It is now fitting to take expedient measures to reassure those of our former enemies who first joined with us. Were I to wait for a mandate from the court, the exchange of documents could consume many months. As the *Spring and Autumn* teaches, beyond the

borders a high official may act on his own authority if the purpose is to secure the dynastic altars and benefit the kingdom.

At this time the Southland has yet to acknowledge our sovereignty and remains an ally of the Riverlands. The opportunity to win them over must not be lost by clinging to accepted practice. According to the canon of war, the ideal general advances with no thought for fame and retreats regardless of blame. Surely I cannot match the integrity of those ancients, but I shall never demean myself by injuring the government's interests. Let my previous recommendations be put into effect.

Shocked by this letter, Sima Zhao hurried to confer with Jia Chong. Zhao said to him, "Deng Ai's merits have made him arrogant. He acts as he pleases, and I can see a revolt in the making. What are we to do?" Jia Chong replied, "My lord, why not promote Zhong Hui and use him to control Deng Ai?" Sima Zhao adopted this suggestion and sent an edict honoring Zhong Hui as minister of the interior. Immediately after this Sima Zhao ordered Wei Guan to take command of the two field armies and empowered him and Zhong Hui by private letter to keep Deng Ai under surveillance and forestall any untoward act on his part. Zhong Hui read the public edict, which said:

To General Zhong Hui, Queller of the West, whom none dares oppose, whose strength prevails over all, master of a multitude of cities and captor of fugitives, whose commands have brought low the Riverlands' mighty leaders, whose plans never miscarry, and whose actions never fail: You shall be minister of the interior and lord of a county with an increase in revenue of ten thousand households. Your two sons shall be precinct lords with revenues of a thousand households each.

Upon receiving this fief, Zhong Hui immediately conferred with Jiang Wei. Hui said, "Deng Ai's merit is rated above mine, and he has been honored with the office of grand commandant. But Lord Sima now suspects the motives of Deng Ai and therefore has ordered Wei Guan to supervise the army and authorized me to control Ai. What is your esteemed view?" Jiang Wei answered, "I have heard that Deng Ai is a man of humble origins. As a youth he tended calves for a farming family. Now by mere chance his startling dash from Yinping Pass, vaulting the treetops and scaling sheer cliffs, has resulted in a great achievement—not from any superior strategy of his own but simply by depending on the great good fortune of the ruling house. Had not you and I, General, held each other in check at Saber Gateway, could Deng Ai have achieved so much? But now he wants to enfeoff Shu's former ruler, Liu Shan, as prince of Fufeng to bind the hopes of the Riverlanders. His inclination to revolt is evident. Sima Zhao, lord of Jin would be well advised to distrust him."

This explanation satisfied Zhong Hui fully. Jiang Wei then continued, "Would you excuse your attendants? I must say something to you privately." When they were alone, Jiang Wei took a map from his sleeve and handed it to Zhong Hui, saying, "Long ago, when the Martial Lord left his rush-thatched dwelling, he presented this map to the late Emperor and said, 'Yizhou—with thousands of acres of fertile land—is a prosperous kingdom with a productive population, an ideal place to establish hegemony.' On the basis of this advice, the late Emperor founded his dynasty at Chengdu. When Deng Ai gets here, he will be all too apt to do something outrageous himself." Well pleased with this counsel, Zhong Hui asked to have the geography of the kingdom explained in detail, and Jiang

Wei did so.

Next, Zhong Hui asked, "How can we get rid of Deng Ai?" "We will have our opportunity," Jiang Wei answered. "The lord of Jin suspects him, so let us lose no time submitting a memorial now detailing Deng Ai's subversive conduct. The lord of Jin will dispatch you, General, to punish him. One stroke will deliver him into our hands." Zhong Hui agreed and sent a memorial to Luoyang charging that Deng Ai would stage a revolt sooner or later, for he had assumed powers not rightfully his and made decisions on his own authority in order to win favor with the defeated Riverlands leadership.¹⁰ The memorial caused great consternation among the civil and military officials at court. In addition, to strengthen his accusation, Zhong Hui had a man intercept Deng Ai's memorial, to which he added a few presumptuous phrases in an expert imitation of Deng Ai's handwriting.

The memorial from Deng Ai angered Sima Zhao, and he sent an order to Zhong Hui to arrest Ai. Sima Zhao also sent Jia Chong into Ye Gorge at the head of thirty thousand men, and Zhao himself along with the Wei ruler, Cao Huan, personally joined in the expedition. Shao Ti, an officer at the West Bureau, urged in opposition, "Zhong Hui's forces are six times larger than those of Deng Ai. Having Hui arrest Ai is all that needs to be done. What need, my lord, for you to go yourself?" Smiling, Sima Zhao responded, "Have you forgotten what you once said to me, that Zhong Hui himself would revolt one day? It is for Hui, not for Ai, that I march today." With a smile Shao Ti answered, "I put the question only because I thought Your Lordship might have forgotten. Since you are resolved, it is essential to keep your intentions absolutely secret." Sima Zhao agreed; then he began the expedition.

Jia Chong also had his suspicions concerning Zhong Hui, which he shared privately with Sima Zhao. But Sima Zhao dismissed them saying, "Had I sent you, should I be doubting you? When I get to Chang'an, all will become clear." Meanwhile, spies had already informed Zhong Hui that Sima Zhao had reached Chang'an. Zhong Hui called Jiang Wei hurriedly to confer with him on a plan for arresting Deng Ai. Indeed:

No sooner did Zhong Hui accept Jiang Wei's surrender
Than Sima Zhao advanced to Chang'an in force.

How did Jiang Wei destroy Deng Ai?

READ ON.



*The False Surrender Proves a Futile Ploy;
An Imperial Abdication Copies the Pattern*

ZHONG HUI SOUGHT JIANG WEI'S ADVICE on arresting Deng Ai. "First send Army Supervisor Wei Guan to make the arrest," Jiang Wei advised. "If Deng Ai kills Wei Guan, his defection must be real. And you, General, may then send troops to punish him." Well pleased, Zhong Hui ordered Wei Guan to Chengdu with several dozen troops to arrest Deng Ai and his son, Zhong. But a subordinate cautioned Wei Guan: "This is Minister Zhong Hui's way of testing General Deng Ai's defection—by having him kill you, General. Do not go under any circumstances." "I have a counterplan of my own," Wei Guan replied, and he proceeded to issue twenty or thirty written directives that read, "I am authorized by edict to arrest Deng Ai. All other commanders are under no suspicion and are welcome to tender allegiance in good time to keep their rank and reward unchanged. Whoever fails to come forth will suffer execution with his whole clan." Next, Wei Guan prepared two cage-carts and set out for Chengdu.

By cockcrow Deng Ai's lieutenant commanders had received their directives, and all had submitted to Wei Guan. While this was happening, Deng Ai lay abed in his quarters. Bursting into Deng Ai's rooms with several dozen men, Wei Guan shouted, "I hold an edict to arrest Deng Ai and his son, Zhong." Startled, Deng Ai slid down from the bed. Wei Guan ordered Deng Ai tied and caged. Deng Zhong appeared and was also swiftly seized, tied, and caged. The astounded commanders and officials in Deng Ai's official residence started preparing an armed rescue, when they saw dust billowing in the distance: spies reported the arrival of Minister of the Interior Zhong Hui with a large force of men. Deng Ai's followers fled in all directions.

Zhong Hui and Jiang Wei dismounted and entered Deng Ai's official residence, where they found Deng Ai and his son already in bonds. Zhong Hui beat Deng Ai about the head with his whip and denounced him: "Calf-tending urchin! How dare you try what you tried!" Jiang Wei added his own curses: "A low-down adventurer finally has his due!" Deng Ai returned the curses. Zhong Hui had Deng Ai and Deng Zhong transported to Luoyang.

Zhong Hui entered Chengdu and took command of all Deng Ai's forces. His power was now felt everywhere. To Jiang Wei he said, "This day fulfills a lifelong ambition!" Jiang Wei replied, "When the Han dynasty began, Han Xin ignored Kuai Tong's counsel to establish an independent kingdom. The result was the disaster at the Weiyang Palace, where he was arrested and executed.¹ Then there was the case of Wen Zhong, high official to the king of Yue, Gou Jian. He ignored the advice of his colleague Fan Li, who urged Zhong to leave Yue with him to live as hermits in the lake district. The result was that the king of Yue forced Wen Zhong to fall on his sword.² Both Han Xin and Wen Zhong had the most glorious achievements to their credit. Yet they failed to see the latent danger ahead. Now, my lord, your own merits have reached the highest level, as your sovereign is all too keenly

aware. Why not 'float downriver and efface your tracks, ' or 'climb the heights of Mount Emei' and travel on with the Taoist immortal Master Red Pine as your life's companion, as Zhang Liang did?"³

To this suggestion Zhong Hui laughed and said, "I believe you misjudge me. I am not yet forty; I am at an age for advancing and conquering, not for retiring into inactivity like those ancients." "In that case," Jiang Wei responded, "plan well for yourself—and early. Here are things you have the mind and the strength to achieve. There is no need for an old man's advice." "Well you know my mind," Zhong Hui said to Jiang Wei, smiling and rubbing his hands.

Thenceforth the two men conferred daily on their seizure of power in the Riverlands. Secretly Jiang Wei wrote to the Second Emperor: "Bear the unbearable a few days more, Your Majesty. I will bring our sacred shrines out of danger yet, and the sun and moon will once again shine forth. Never will I permit the house of Han to perish."

Zhong Hui and Jiang Wei were continuing to plot against Sima Zhao, when a letter from Zhao arrived. Zhong Hui received it and read the text: "Fearing you might have trouble arresting Deng Ai, Minister, I stationed my own troops in Chang'an. We will be meeting shortly; I write to inform you beforehand." Zhong Hui was shocked. "I had many times the troops Deng Ai had," he cried. "Sima Zhao knew perfectly well I could manage Deng Ai alone, if that was all he wanted of me. To have brought his troops here must mean he does not trust me." Zhong Hui went again to confer with Jiang Wei, who said, "If the liege mistrusts his man, the man must die. Isn't that what happened to Deng Ai?" "Then I am resolved," Zhong Hui declared. "If I succeed, the empire will be mine. If not, I will withdraw into the Riverlands and become at least another Liu Bei."

Jiang Wei said to Zhong Hui, "I have heard that Queen Mother Guo died recently. If you pretended that she had left an edict ordering you to punish Sima Zhao for his crime of regicide, Your Lordship could use your talent to bring the northern heartland under control with little trouble." Zhong Hui replied, "Jiang Wei, you take the vanguard. After our success you will share wealth and honors with me." "I will toil for you like a lowly beast—but I am unsure of the commanders' allegiance." "Tomorrow is the festival marking the middle of the first month," Zhong Hui said. "There will be a grand lantern display in the former palace. Call the commanders to a banquet there and execute whoever fails to follow us." Jiang Wei was secretly delighted with these developments.

The next day Zhong Hui and Jiang Wei feasted the commanders. After the wine had been passed around several times, Zhong Hui raised his cup and uttered a loud cry. The startled commanders asked the reason, and Zhong Hui said, "As the end neared, Queen Mother Guo left this edict charging Sima Zhao with the murder of his sovereign in the palace and the high crime of preparing to usurp the Wei dynasty. The late queen mother commanded me to bring Sima Zhao to justice; and I want all of you to pledge yourselves to this task." The astonished commanders eyed each other uneasily. Zhong Hui drew his sword from its scabbard and said, "Death to him who disobeys!" The terrorized assembly could only comply. When all the commanders had finished pledging, Zhong Hui had them held inside the palace under strict guard.

Jiang Wei said, "Obviously the commanders are not inclined to obey us. Let us bury them alive." Zhong Hui replied, "I have already had a deep trench dug in the palace and placed several thousand truncheons alongside it. Those who resist will be beaten to death and buried."

Beside Zhong Hui was Qiu Jian, one of the commanders he trusted most. But Qiu Jian was also a long-time lieutenant of General Hu Lie, one of the detained commanders, and he got word of Zhong Hui's plan to Hu Lie. The astonished Hu Lie appealed frantically to Qiu Jian: "My son Hu Yuan has

an outside command. How could he know the depths of Zhong Hui's schemes? If our old friendship still means something to you, get word to my son, and then if I die, I will die bearing no grudge against you." Qiu Jian answered, "Let my generous benefactor rest assured. I shall think of a way to do it."

Emerging from where the commanders were being held, Qiu Jian told Zhong Hui, "To relieve the present discomfort of the confined commanders, Your Lordship should assign one man to provide food and drink for them." Zhong Hui, who always listened to Qiu Jian, assigned him to oversee the arrangements, warning him, "I have given you a grave responsibility. See that no information gets in or out." "Have no fear, Your Lordship," Qiu Jian answered. "I have my ways of maintaining strict security." But secretly he sent a trusted follower of Hu Lie's inside, and that man carried Lie's confidential letter out with lightning speed to Hu Yuan's camp.

The man explained the situation to Hu Yuan and presented the letter. Astonished, Hu Yuan showed it around the various camps. The commanders were indignant and gathered at Hu Yuan's camp to confer. "We may lose our lives," they said, "but how can we follow a vassal in rebellion?" Hu Yuan replied, "Today is the eighteenth of the first month. Let us charge into the palace and put an end to this." Army Supervisor Wei Guan, well pleased with Hu Yuan's plan, put his forces in good order; then he sent Qiu Jian to inform Hu Lie, who in turn informed the various commanders.

Meanwhile, Zhong Hui had posed a question to Jiang Wei: "Last night I dreamed that several thousand serpents were biting me. What good or ill does the dream signify?" Jiang Wei replied, "All dreams of dragon-serpents augur the best of fortune." Zhong Hui was satisfied. He said to Jiang Wei, "The equipment is ready. Shall we bring the commanders forth for questioning?" Jiang Wei answered, "This group has no mind to obey. In time they will murder you. It would be better to eliminate them sooner than later." Zhong Hui agreed and ordered Jiang Wei to lead the guard in to kill the Wei commanders.

Jiang Wei had begun to carry out his assignment when he collapsed with sudden pains in his chest. His attendants helped him up, and after a time he regained his senses. Suddenly an uproar outside the palace was reported. Zhong Hui sent someone to investigate the tumult. The noise shook the ground. From all directions a large number of soldiers arrived. Jiang Wei said, "The commanders must have begun a revolt. Have them executed at once." A fresh report told of troops' having penetrated the palace grounds. Zhong Hui ordered the gates to the royal hall sealed and sent his guards to the rooftops to bombard the attackers with tiles. Several dozen were killed on either side.

Outside the palace flames shot up on all sides. Soldiers hacked through the gates and forced their way into the royal hall. Zhong Hui himself seized his sword and slew several men on the spot, but a stray arrow struck him down. The commanders severed his head and put it on display. Sword drawn, Jiang Wei entered the royal hall and put up a fierce fight, but the pain in his chest struck again. Jiang Wei raised his head and shouted to the heavens, "My plan has failed. Such is Heaven's decree." So saying, he cut his throat and perished. He had reached the age of fifty-nine.

Inside the palace several hundred lay dead. Wei Guan said, "All troops return to their camps and await the king's command." The northern soldiers, vying to take revenge on Jiang Wei's corpse, cut open his stomach and exposed his gall, which was found to be larger than a chicken's egg. The soldiers also seized and executed all members of Jiang Wei's family.

When Deng Ai's lieutenants saw that Zhong Hui and Jiang Wei were both dead, they hastened to spirit Deng Ai away from his captors. This move was reported to Wei Guan, who said, "I am the one

who arrested Deng Ai. If they spare him, I will die, and no man will bury me." Guardian General Tian Xu said, "When Deng Ai captured Jiangyou, he wanted to kill me; only the officers' pleas got me off. Today I would like my revenge on Deng Ai." Well pleased, Wei Guan dispatched Tian Xu with five hundred troops to Mianzhu. There they encountered Deng Ai and Deng Zhong, just released from their cage-carts and trying to get back to Chengdu. Deng Ai assumed the troops were his own and was off his guard when he started to question Tian Xu. Xu killed him with a swordstroke. Deng Zhong was killed at the same time. A poet of later times has left these lines in remembrance of Deng Ai:

From boyhood on he fashioned shrewd designs;
Inventive, he excelled in waging wars.
His steady gaze could read the lay of land
Or tell the secrets hidden in the stars.
The hills would part to let his riders pass,
And paths would form to let his marchers by.
But, merit won, he fell to treachery;
His soul now sails the rivers in the sky.

Another verse, in remembrance of Zhong Hui, goes,

In tender years a genius he was hailed;
As counselor he came to serve the throne.
His stratagems defeated the Simas:
Another Zhang Zifang they called him then.
Zhong Hui won his laurels at Shouchun;
At Saber Gate his feats of arms won fame.
He would not hide for safety like Fan Li,
But now, a roaming soul, he pines for home.

Another verse remembers Jiang Wei:

Proud be the district where he was born, Tianshui,
The province of Liangzhou, for such a man!
Who stood in the line of Jiang Ziya
And owed his skill in war to Zhuge Liang.
So great in courage, what had he to fear?
His hero's heart was pledged to hold the field.⁴
In Chengdu on the day he lost his life
The generals of Han sat sorrow-filled.

Apart from Jiang Wei, Zhong Hui, and Deng Ai, Zhang Yi had also died in the fighting. In addition, the Wei soldiers had killed the heir apparent, Liu Rui, as well as Guan Yi, lord of Hanshou precinct.⁵ The Shu-Han forces were in utter disarray and countless soldiers had died in the panic and confusion. Ten days later Jia Chong arrived from Wei and circulated announcements to reassure the

population. Calm was finally restored. Wei Guan was left to defend Chengdu, and the Second Emperor was moved to Luoyang. A small retinue followed the Emperor, including Secretary Fan Jian, Privy Counselor Zhang Shao, Director of Palace Bureaucracy Qiao Zhou, and Imperial Archivist Xi Zheng. Liao Hua and Dong Jue remained behind on the pretext of ill health; shortly after, both died, heartbroken.

It was the fifth year of Jing Yuan by the calendar of Wei—later changed to Xian Xi, "Universal Glory," year 1 (A. D. 264). In spring, the third month of the year, the Southland general Ding Feng took his army home when he learned that the kingdom of Shu had fallen. At the time, the deputy imperial executive,⁶ Hua Jiao, petitioned the ruler of Wu, Sun Xiu: "Wu and Shu depend on one another as lips and teeth. 'Without the lips, the teeth grow cold.' My guess is that Sima Zhao will attack momentarily. I pray Your Majesty to prepare the most thorough defense." Sun Xiu followed this advice. He appointed Lu Xun's son, Kang, Supreme Commander Who Controls the East and protector of Jingzhou, and ordered him to defend the Great River's main crossings. Sun Xiu also ordered General of the Left Sun Yi to defend the various strongpoints around Nanxun. Lastly, up and down the Great River the Southland ruler set up hundreds of military camps under the command of the veteran general Ding Feng to check any northern invaders.

Huo Yi, governor of Jianning district, on learning of the fall of Chengdu, dressed himself in mourning, and for three days he faced west and cried aloud. His commanders said, "Since the ruler of Shu-Han has lost his throne, why not submit to Wei at once?" Huo Yi replied tearfully, "All communication is cut off. I have no idea whether our sovereign, Liu Shan, is safe or not. If the Wei ruler treats him with due courtesy, I will deliver this city in good time. But if by any chance they have done my ruler wrong, I will die with him and submission will be out of the question!" Huo Yi's followers approved and sent a man to Luoyang for news of the Second Emperor.⁷

When the Second Emperor reached Luoyang, Sima Zhao had already returned from Chang'an. Sima Zhao condemned the Second Emperor to his face: "For your ungoverned self-indulgence and rampant immorality, as well as for your maltreatment of worthy men and misgovernment of the kingdom, you deserve public execution." The Second Emperor turned ashy pale and lost his composure. The civil and military officials petitioned Zhao: "Since losing control of his kingdom, the ruler of Shu has fortunately tendered us his allegiance in timely fashion. It behooves us to spare him." Accordingly, Sima Zhao enfeoffed Liu Shan as lord of Anle and granted him a suitable dwelling, a monthly allowance, ten thousand bolts of silk, and one hundred servants, male and female. Liu Shan's son Yao, as well as his liege men, Fan Jian, Qiao Zhou, Xi Zheng, and others, were awarded lordships and titles. The Second Emperor expressed his gratitude for this generosity and left the audience. Sima Zhao then condemned the eunuch Huang Hao to a lingering death on public ground because he had poisoned the kingdom and done grievous harm to the people. At this time Huo Yi found out that the Second Emperor had accepted a fief, and so he led his subordinates and armed guards in surrender.

The next day the Second Emperor presented himself at the official residence of Sima Zhao, where he paid his respects and again expressed his gratitude. Sima Zhao held a feast that began with a performance by Wei musicians and dancers. The Riverlands officials were deeply affronted; the Second Emperor alone wore a look of pleasure. Sima Zhao also had men of Shu dress as Shu musicians. While they performed, the Riverlands officials wept but the Second Emperor laughed with amusement quite unembarrassed. As the wine went around and warmed the company, Sima Zhao said

to Jia Chong, "How heartless he is! Not even Kongming—had he lived—could have kept the ruler safe for long. Not to speak of Jiang Wei!" Turning to the Second Emperor, Sima Zhao said, "Do you think of Shu at all?" The Emperor replied, "With such entertainment before me, not at all." Shortly afterward, the Emperor excused himself and withdrew, accompanied by Xi Zheng, who asked him, "Why did Your Majesty say you do not think of Shu? If he asks again, it would be preferable to answer tearfully, 'My father's grave is far off in Shu, and my heart yearns for the west; I think of the Riverlands every day.' The lord patriarch of Jin, Sima Zhao, will be sure to let you return if you do so." The Second Emperor committed this speech firmly to memory and rejoined the banquet.

The Second Emperor was slightly drunk when Sima Zhao asked him again, "Do you think of Shu at all?" The Second Emperor answered according to Xi Zheng's instruction. He tried to cry, but no tears came, so he shut his eyes tight. Sima Zhao said, "So you are only mouthing Xi Zheng's words!" The Second Emperor opened his eyes and stared in astonishment. "Truly such is the case," he admitted. Sima Zhao and his attendants laughed at him. Because of this, Zhao appreciated the Emperor's simplicity and never mistrusted him. A poet of later times wrote this verse to express his pity for the Second Emperor:

A pleasure-seeker, his face alight with smiles,
No hint of sorrow for the world now gone,
Makes merry in a foreign land, the old one out of mind—
How little character Liu Shan has shown.

At the Wei court the great vassals petitioned the ruler Cao Huan to honor Sima Zhao as king in recognition of his achievement in conquering the Riverlands. Huan, Son of Heaven in name alone, had no influence at all and dared not oppose Sima Zhao, who held all power of decision. Huan therefore enfeoffed Sima Zhao, lord patriarch of Jin, as king of Jin⁸ and posthumously honored Zhao's father, Sima Yi, as King Xuan. Zhao's elder brother Sima Shi was honored as King Jing.

Sima Zhao's wife was the daughter of Wang Su; she had borne Zhao two sons. The elder, Sima Yan, was a man of imposing stature, with hair so long that it touched the ground and arms so long that they hung below his knees. He was a man of quick mind and a brilliant warrior of surpassing courage. The second son, Sima You, mild and genial of temper, was respectful, reserved, filial, and brotherly. Sima Zhao was especially fond of him and had provided him to Sima Shi as an heir-son. Sima Zhao had often said, "The empire is for my elder brother." And so when Sima Zhao was honored as king of Jin, he was disposed to make Sima You his heir. Shan Tao objected; he said, "To replace an elder with a junior is an ominous violation of traditional practice." Jia Chong, He Zeng, and Pei Xiu all seconded this opinion, saying, "The elder son is keen of mind and skilled in arms. His talents are extraordinary. He has the confidence of men and the marks of Heaven's favor and, judging by his appearance, is more fit to rule than to serve." Sima Zhao remained undecided. Grand Commandant Wang Xiang and Minister of Works Xun Kai said, "The previous dynasty was undermined by the instatement of the cadet son.² We pray Your Lordship, consider carefully." In the end, Sima Zhao established his elder son, Sima Yan, as heir apparent.

An important vassal declared in a petition: "Some time ago in Xiangwu county a man descended from the heavens. He was more than twenty spans tall and his feet measured three spans, two inches. He had white hair and a greyish beard and wore a simple yellow robe. He had a yellow scarf around

his head and walked with a cane of goosefoot wood. 'I am a people's king, ' he proclaimed, 'come to announce that the ruler of the realm is soon to be changed and the millennium established for all. ' He made the rounds of the market for three days this way before disappearing. The man is an auspicious sign for Your Lordship. Your Lordship should put on the royal headdress with twelve beaded strings, and raise high the banner of the Son of Heaven. And have all traffic cleared from your path when you go forth from the palace or return, seated on the golden royal chariot drawn by six horses. Your Lordship should also advance your consort to the rank of empress, establishing your heir-son as crown prince."

Secretly gratified by this counsel, Sima Zhao returned to his palace. When he was preparing to partake of his dinner, however, he suffered a severe stroke and as a consequence lost his power of speech. The next day his condition worsened. Grand Commandant Wang Xiang, Minister of the Interior He Zeng, and Military Counselor Xun Kai, joined by various high officials, entered the palace to inquire of the king's condition. Sima Zhao, still unable to speak, pointed to the crown prince, Sima Yan; then he died. It was the eighth month of the year, twenty-eighth day of the cycle.¹⁰ He Zeng said, "The fate of the empire now rests with the king of Jin. Let the first son be established as the new king; the sacrifices and interment can then be performed." That day Sima Yan assumed the position of king of Jin and honored He Zeng as prime minister, Sima Wang as minister of the interior, Shi Bao as general of the Flying Cavalry, and Chen Qian as general of Cavalry and Chariots. Sima Yan's father, Zhao, was posthumously titled King Wen.

The burial complete, Sima Yan summoned Jia Chong and Pei Xiu to his palace and asked, "Is it true that Cao Cao once said, 'Had Heaven's Mandate rested in me, would I have played the honest regent's part of the Duke of Zhou?'" Jia Chong answered, "Cao Cao meant that he feared being denounced as a usurper since the Han had employed members of his clan for generations. Instead, he wisely arranged for Cao Pi to become Son of Heaven." Sima Yan asked, "How does my father, the late king, compare with Cao Cao?" Jia Chong replied, "Cao's accomplishments were known throughout the northern heartland. The masses feared him for his power more than they loved him for his virtue. But after his son Pi succeeded to power, his punishing corvee and military service requirements drove the people hither and yon without respite. Subsequently, King Xuan and King Jing both compiled records of great achievements, and the benefits thereof spread through the realm, so that early on they won the love of the people of the empire. And King Wen incorporated Riverlands territory into our realm—a towering achievement that surpasses all that Cao Cao did."

Sima Yan said, "Cao Pi made the rule of Wei continuous with that of Han by receiving its last emperor's abdication. How could I not similarly preserve the continuity of the rule of Wei?"¹¹ Jia Chong and Pei Xiu prostrated themselves over and over before offering this petition: "That indeed is a precedent Your Lordship could properly follow: building another altar to receive the abdication of the Emperor and announcing to the world your assumption of the throne."¹²

Delighted, Sima Yan took his sword and entered the palace the next day. For several days during this period Cao Huan, ruler of Wei, had held no court. His thinking was unclear, his behavior erratic. Sima Yan went directly to his rear chamber. Cao Huan hastened down from his platform seat to welcome him. Sima Yan seated himself, then he asked, "Whose efforts have maintained the empire for Wei?" "We owe everything to the father and grandfather of the king of Jin," Cao Huan responded. With a smile Sima Yan went on, "In my judgment Your Majesty has proven ill informed as to the true way of government and is unable to defend the kingdom militarily. Should you not step aside for a

ruler with the necessary talent and virtue?"

Cao Huan was dumbfounded. Beside him was Zhang Jie, a courtier from the Inner Bureau, who shouted, "The king of Jin speaks false! Our Martial Ancestor Cao Cao led sweeping conquests in the four directions; it was no easy task for him to win the empire. The present Son of Heaven has his virtue and is guilty of no crime. Why should he yield his reign?" Wrathfully, Sima Yan responded, "The dynastic altars belong to the great Han. Cao Cao coerced the Son of Heaven as a means to control the lords of the realm. He made himself king of Wei, then he usurped the house of Han itself. My father and his father before him guided and supported the Wei dynasty, which possessed the empire by the strength of the house of Sima, not of Cao—as the world well knows. Why should I not inherit the reign of Wei?" Zhang Jie retorted, "If you carry it through, it will be treason by usurpation!"

Sima Yan exploded in anger. "I am avenging the house of Han," he cried. "Is something wrong with that?" So saying, Sima Yan ordered his guards to beat Zhang Jie to death in the throne hall with the golden ceremonial mace. Cao Huan kneeled and pleaded desperately, but Sima Yan rose and left the throne hall. Cao Huan said to Jia Chong and Pei Xiu, "We have reached the crisis. What is to be done?" Jia Chong responded, "The Heavenly-ordained time has expired. Your Majesty should not defy Heaven, but rather follow the precedent of Emperor Xian and have another Altar for the Acceptance of the Abdication erected for the transfer of the imperial seal to the king of Jin with full ceremonial splendor. Such an act would coincide with the wish of Heaven and conform to the people's mood while ensuring Your Majesty's security and peace of mind."

Cao Huan accepted this advice and ordered Jia Chong to construct the altar. On the first cyclical day in the twelfth month¹³ Cao Huan, the seal of state held high in both hands, ascended the altar in front of a grand congregation of civil and military officials. A poet of later times was moved to write:

Wei swallowed Han, and then Jin swallowed Wei;
From Heaven's turning wheel no man can hide.
Shed a tear for Zhang Jie's loyal demise,
One man against the towering Mount Tai.

Next, Sima Yan, king of Jin, was requested to ascend the altar and accept the abdication. Cao Huan descended and stood at the head of the court wearing garb appropriate to a court official. Sima Yan seated himself squarely upon the altar, flanked by Jia Chong and Pei Xiu, who held swords. They ordered Cao Huan to reascend, prostrate himself, and receive the new Emperor's command.

Jia Chong said, "Since the twenty-fifth year of the last Han reign period, Jian An, when Wei received the abdication of Han, forty-five years have passed. Today Heaven's endowment has finally ended, and its Mandate newly rests on Jin. The ever-burgeoning merit and virtue of the Sima reaches to the limits of Heaven and earth. The clan leader may rightfully assume the imperial throne and preserve the continuity with Wei. You shall be enfeoffed as the prince of Chenliu. Go now to the city of Jinyong and dwell there. Depart at once and do not return to the capital without the throne's express edict." Cao Huan wept and departed, expressing his appreciation.

Imperial Guardian Sima Fu prostrated himself tearfully before Cao Huan and said, "A vassal of Wei all my life, I could never turn against your house." Out of respect for Sima Fu's devotion, Sima Yan wished to enfeoff him as prince of Anping, but Sima Fu retired without accepting the honor. That

day the entire body of officials prostrated itself once and again below the Altar for the Acceptance of the Abdication, shouting mightily, "Long live the new Emperor!" After the transfer was completed, Sima Yan named the new dynasty Great Jin and changed the reign period from Xian Xi, year 2, to Tai Shi, "Magnificent Inception," year 1 (A. D. 265). A general amnesty was declared. The Wei dynasty was no more. A poet of later times expressed his sadness thus:

Jin's model was Cao Cao, king of Wei.
And the prince of Chenliu recalls Lord Shanyang.¹⁴
Again the rite of transfer on the stage—
He thinks back to the time and grieves.

Sima Yan, Emperor of Jin, posthumously honored Sima Yi as Emperor Xuan; his uncle, Sima Shi, as Emperor Jing; and his father, Sima Zhao, as Emperor Wen. He built seven ancestral temples to glorify his line back to its founder. Who were the seven to whom the temples were dedicated? General Sima Jun, Conqueror of the West for the Han; Jun's son, Sima Liang, governor of Yuzhang; Liang's son, Sima Jun, governor of Yingchuan; Jun's son, Sima Fang, governor of Jingzhao; Fang's son, Sima Yi, Emperor Xuan; Yi's sons, Sima Shi and Sima Zhao, Emperors Jing and Wen. These were the seven. The change of dynasty complete, daily consultations began on how to conquer the Southland. Indeed:

The towns and walls of Han were in new hands;
The hills and streams of Wu would soon change hands.

How did the conquest take place?

READ ON.



***With the Recommendation of Du Yu, an Old General Offers a New Plan;
With Sun Hao's Surrender, the Realm Is United***

THE SOUTHLAND RULER, SUN XIU, sick with worry that a southern invasion would soon follow Sima Yan's usurpation, remained in bed. He summoned his prime minister, Puyang Xing, whom he had the heir apparent, Sun Wan, duly welcome into the royal chamber. With one hand Sun Xiu grasped the minister's arm; with the other he pointed toward Sun Wan. That moment he died.¹ Prime Minister Puyang Xing emerged from the chamber and, after conferring with the assembled vassals, proposed instating the heir apparent. Left Army Superintendant Wan Yu said, "The heir-son is too young to control the government. It would be better to choose the lord of Wucheng, Sun Hao." General of the Left Zhang Bu added, "Sun Hao has the talent, the insight, the intelligence, and the decisiveness to take the throne." Still undecided, Puyang Xing went before Queen Mother Zhu with the question. She responded, "A poor widow like me knows nothing of such matters as the sacred shrines. The senior lords and ministers should act at their own discretion." And so Puyang Xing welcomed Sun Hao as the sovereign of Wu.

Sun Hao (Yuanzong) was the son of Sun He, Sun Quan's heir apparent. In the seventh month of the year Sun Hao assumed the throne and changed the reign year to Yuan Xing, "Primary Prosperity," year 1 (A. D. 264).² Hao enfeoffed Sun Wan as prince of Yuzhang and honored his own father, Sun He, with the posthumous title August Emperor Wen. His mother, of the house of He, became queen mother. Ding Feng was made grand marshal of the Right.

The following year the reign year was changed to Gan Lu, "Sweet Dew," year 1 (A. D. 265). Sun Hao became unbearably cruel and violent, sinking deeper and deeper into vice and luxury. He made the eunuch Cen Hun the special object of his favor. When Puyang Xing and Zhang Bu remonstrated with the ruler, Hao, in a fit of anger, had them executed along with their clans. Thenceforth the vassals sealed their lips, and no one dared remonstrate.

Sun Hao changed the reign year to Bao Ding, "Precious Tripod," year 1 (A. D. 266), and made Lü Kai and Wan Yu left and right prime ministers, respectively. At the time Sun Hao was in Wuchang. By exacting excessive tribute from the people of Yangzhou he had caused extreme distress.³ Sun Hao's court indulged in extravagance that emptied the private as well as the public purse. Lü Kai submitted a written remonstrance:

No calamity has struck, yet the people's lives are drained. Nothing has been undertaken, yet the state treasury stands empty. How keenly I deplore it. Long ago the house of Han declined, and three houses established separate power. But the clans of Liu and Cao failed to govern well, and their kingdoms passed into the domain of Jin. Their example is plain to all. I, your humble vassal, seek but to spare Your Majesty's rule a like fate. The terrain around Wuchang

is difficult and unproductive, no place for a royal capital. Further, a recent children's jingle goes: "Better Jianye water than Wuchang fish to eat; / Better dead in Jianye than alive in Wuchang seat." This rhyme shows the mood of the people and the mind of Heaven.

The kingdom has less than one year's reserves. A crisis is in the making. Our officials and officers make onerous exactions and gain wide disfavor. The harem of less than one hundred imperial concubines at the time of the Great Emperor, Sun Quan, has grown to more than a thousand since the time of Emperor Jing, Sun Xiu—an unconscionable waste of resources. Furthermore, unfit royal attendants, a multitude of contending factions, and assassinations and plots against the loyal and worthy subvert the government and plague the people. I appeal to Your Majesty to reduce the people's burden of military service and corvee labor, remove onerous exactions, limit the number of women in the palace, and selectively purge the officials so that the kingdom will know peace, Heaven will rejoice, and the people will commit themselves to Your Majesty.

Sun Hao was most displeased by this memorial. He began another large-scale luxury project, building the Palace of Reflected Light, and sent all officials into the hills to gather wood for the construction. He also summoned Shang Guang, a diviner, to cast his yarrow stalks and discover for him how to conquer the empire. Shang Guang reported to the Emperor, "The divination has produced a fortunate answer for Your Majesty: in the next *gengzi* year,⁴ the thirty-seventh year of the cycle, a blue canopy will enter Luoyang." Well pleased, Sun Hao said to Hua He, the deputy treasurer, "Upon your advice, the late Emperor, my father, had his commanders extend a line of hundreds of camps along the banks of the Great River, and he placed them under the overall command of Ding Feng, the veteran general. It is now our intention to bring all the territory of Han under our control and avenge the ruler of the Riverlands. With what region should we begin?"

Hua He remonstrated with Sun Hao: "Now that Chengdu has fallen and the Liu dynastic shrines are overthrown, Sima Yan will aim to swallow Wu. It would behoove Your Majesty to develop your virtue and bring security to the people of the Southland. That would be the soundest plan. If we were to mobilize at this time, we would be like the proverbial firefighter who tried to beat out flames with dry hemp and got himself burned. I beg Your Majesty to consider this."

Sun Hao cried in anger, "It is the royal wish to use this opportunity to restore our patrimony. Why such ill-omened words? Were it not for your long years of honorable service, I would have you beheaded as a warning to all." So saying, he had Hua He removed.

Hua He left the court and uttered a deep sigh. "Alas," he said, "these hills and streams that nature made so lovely are soon to pass to another's hands." After that Hua He remained in his residence and did not stir. Sun Hao ordered General Lu Kang, Queller of the East, to station forces at Jiangkou, the main crossing point of the river, with the objective of seizing Xiangyang.

These movements were swiftly reported in Luoyang, and a privileged attendant informed the ruler of Jin, Sima Yan, by petition. On learning that Lu Kang intended to make a military attack on Xiangyang, the ruler of Jin conferred with his advisers. Jia Chong stepped forth from the ranks and petitioned: "It is known that Sun Hao of the Southland has not maintained a virtuous government and is given to immoral conduct. Your Majesty might issue an edict to Field Marshal Yang Hu to lead the army against the south. A coup is likely there, and that will give us the chance to attack. The Southland can be taken with the ease of turning one's palm."

Delighted, Sima Yan sent an edict to Xiangyang with instructions for Yang Hu. The edict received, Yang Hu put his forces into fighting condition and prepared to engage the enemy. During his tenure as their defender, Yang Hu had won the confidence of the Xiangyang populace. He had permitted all Southlanders who had surrendered but desired to leave to do so, and he had reduced the number of soldiers on patrols, using them to cultivate some five thousand hectares of land. Consequently, the grain supply for the army, which was less than one hundred days' when Yang Hu first came to Xiangyang, grew by year's end into a ten-year reserve. When with the troops Yang Hu wore no armor, only a light fur jacket cinched with a broad belt. The guard at his command tent never exceeded ten men.

One day a subordinate commander entered with a petition for Yang Hu: "Scouts have reported that the Southland soldiers seem lax and lazy. Since they are unprepared, a surprise attack should defeat them." With a smile Yang Hu replied, "Aren't you and the soldiers underrating Lu Kang? He is a man of high intelligence and productive plans. Some time ago when the ruler of Wu ordered him to attack and seize Xiling, he killed Bu Chan and several score of the defending officers before I could rescue them. If he is the Southland commander, we can do no better than to defend ourselves and wait for a change in their internal situation before aiming for a conquest. If we act recklessly without carefully considering the time and circumstances, we will end up defeated ourselves." The commanders, won over by Yang Hu's logic, confined themselves to the defense of Xiangyang.

One day Yang Hu was leading a few commanders on a hunt when he came upon Lu Kang accompanied by a like party. Yang Hu had instructed his commanders not to cross into Southland territory, and as ordered they hunted only within Jin territory. Watching from afar, Lu Kang said with a sigh, "What discipline General Yang has! We must not violate his boundary." As the day ended, both parties withdrew.

Returning to his quarters, Yang Hu inspected the day's kill and sent back to the southerners all game shot with their arrows. The delighted southerners reported this to Lu Kang, who summoned the Jin envoy into his presence and asked, "Does your chief commander enjoy meat and wine?" The envoy replied, "Only if the wine is finely brewed." Lu Kang smiled and said, "I have a gallon that is well aged. Take it for the field marshal with my compliments. Tell him I fermented it for my own use and offer him this measure now to show my gratitude for his courtesy to our hunters." The envoy accepted the gift and carried it back to Yang Hu. Lu Kang's attendants asked, "What was the purpose of that?" "I could not fail to reciprocate the courtesy he extended to us," Lu Kang answered, to the astonishment of his followers.

The envoy recounted to Yang Hu all that Lu Kang had said and described the gift of wine. With a smile Yang Hu responded, "He, too, knows my capacity for drink!" He ordered the wine vessel opened and poured some out. His subordinate Chen Yuan said, "There could be something in it. Perhaps the field marshal should wait before drinking." "Don't worry. Lu Kang is no poisoner," Yang Hu said and tipped the vessel into his mouth. Thenceforth messengers passed regularly between the two men.

One day Lu Kang sent a man to convey his regards. Yang Hu asked, "How is General Lu?" "The field marshal has been ill for several days and confined to his bed," was the reply. "I would guess," Yang Hu went on, "that we both suffer from the same thing. I have compounded a tonic for it; you can take some back to him." The messenger carried the potion back to Lu Kang. Kang's commanders said, "Yang Hu is an enemy. This medicine cannot be safe." But Lu Kang answered, "Yang Hu would not

give me tainted drugs. Rest assured," and he drank the tonic. The next day his condition improved, and his commanders came to wish him well. Lu Kang said, "If their methods are virtuous and ours are violent, then they will subdue us without fighting. Let every commander confine himself to protecting our boundaries. Seek no trifling advantage from them." The commanders accepted this order.

At this moment a messenger from the ruler of Wu arrived. After being received by Lu Kang, he said, "The Son of Heaven transmits this command to his general: advance with all speed; do not permit the men of Jin to strike the first blow in our territory." Lu Kang told the messenger, "You go on back. My written petition will follow." The messenger departed, and Lu Kang drafted the petition and sent it on to Jianye. The ruler's privileged attendants submitted it to Sun Hao, who read the document. It explained in detail why Jin could not be successfully attacked, and it entreated the ruler to develop his virtue and apply punishment with great caution, adding that military adventures should be avoided for the sake of domestic security.

When he had finished reading the petition, the ruler of Wu was furious. "I have heard that Lu Kang fraternizes with the enemy at the border," he cried. "And that's exactly what this means!" The ruler dispatched an envoy to terminate Lu Kang's command and reduce his rank to commanding officer, and he assigned General of the Left Sun Ji to replace Lu Kang. None of his vassals dared remonstrate.

The ruler of Wu, Sun Hao, changed the reign period to Jian Heng, "Established Balance" (A. D. 269-71). For the next three years, until the succeeding reign period, Feng Huang, "The Phoenix" (A. D. 272-74), the ruler acted on his impulses. He exhausted military strength in policing actions so that courtiers and commoners everywhere groaned with discontent. Prime Minister Wan Yu, General Liu Ping, and Minister of Agriculture Lou Xuan all recognized the evils of his administration. They spoke frankly and remonstrated earnestly with him, but in the end they were killed for their pains. More than ten years passed. The number of loyal vassals killed rose to over forty. In his comings and goings Sun Hao was accompanied by an armored guard of fifty thousand riders. The mass of vassals lived in fear, but none dared attempt to change things.

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Meanwhile, Yang Hu had kept informed of Sun Hao's loss of virtue after the removal of Lu Kang. Realizing that the time to attack the Southland had come, he petitioned the court in Luoyang to authorize the invasion. The text of his memorial read in essence:

Heaven may ordain, but men must achieve. The Southland's terrain is far less arduous than the west's. The tyranny of Sun Hao far exceeds Liu Shan's. Wu's people face problems far worse than Shu's. And Jin is militarily stronger now than ever before. Our reign will not long endure unless we restore order throughout the realm at this critical hour, for to allow the confrontation of armies to go on, taxing the empire with endless campaigns, will quickly lead us from prosperity to ruin.⁵

Delighted with Yang Hu's memorial, Sima Yan ordered his forces to mobilize. But Jia Chong, Xun Xu, and Feng Dan objected strenuously and succeeded in preventing the invasion.

When Yang Hu learned his petition had been denied, he sighed and said, "How rarely things go one's way in this world! A Heaven-sent opportunity will pass untaken. What could be more lamentable?" In the fourth year of Xian Ning, "Universal Tranquility" (A. D. 278), Yang Hu went to

court and begged permission to retire to his home village to restore his health. Sima Yan asked him, "Have you any recommendation for the security of our kingdom?" Yang Hu answered, "Sun Hao's tyranny has reached the extreme of violence and cruelty. He can be conquered without a battle. But if Sun Hao should pass from the scene and a capable sovereign come to the throne, Your Majesty may find the Southland difficult to conquer." Sima Yan, inspired by these words, asked, "Would you be willing to lead the invasion now?" "My years are many and my health is poor," Yang Hu answered. "I doubt I could undertake the mission. But if Your Majesty could find someone else—some shrewd, bold warrior—it could be done." So saying, Yang Hu took leave of Sima Yan and returned to his home village.

In the eleventh month of that year Yang Hu's condition worsened, and Sima Yan made a personal visit to his home to express his concern. As he came near the sickbed, Yang Hu said tearfully, "Ten thousand deaths could not repay all I owe Your Majesty." Sima Yan cried too. "How sorely we regret our failure to adopt your plan to invade Wu," he said, "for who today can bring your purpose to fulfillment?" Choking back his tears, Yang Hu replied, "As death approaches, I must fulfill my humble fealty. Du Yu, general of the Right, is the one to entrust with the task. He is the man to lead the attack on Wu." Sima Yan responded, "Recommending the worthy and able is something to be proud of. Why did you burn your memorials of recommendation and prevent anyone from learning of them?" Yang Hu said, "To recommend someone in open court so that later he could show his gratitude to me privately was something I chose to avoid." And with those words Yang Hu passed away.

Sima Yan loudly lamented Yang Hu's death all the way back to his palace. There he issued an order posthumously naming Yang Hu imperial guardian and lord of Juping. In Nanzhou, when the common people heard of Yang Hu's death, they closed their markets and mourned for him. The soldiers guarding the Southland borders also wept and mourned. People in Xiangyang remembered that when he was alive Yang Hu had often ridden in the Xian Hills, and so they erected a temple and a tablet there and sacrificed to his memory every season. Without exception, passersby who read the engraved text shed tears, and so the stone was called the "Tablet of Falling Tears." A poet of later times was moved to write these lines:

A morning climb—the temple—Yang Hu's moving tale
On old stone shards, one spring in Xian Hills.
The constant fall of dewdrops through the pines—
Are they the tears of those who mourned him then?

On Yang Hu's recommendation, the ruler of Jin honored Du Yu as chief commander, Queller of the South, with authority over Jingzhou province. Du Yu was worldly-wise, at once experienced and prudent. He never tired of his studies. His favorite book was Zuo Qiuming's commentary to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Zuo zhuan*, which he kept beside him day and night. Even when he rode out, he always had his man carry a copy of it, so that his contemporaries called him "the *Zuo zhuan* addict." When the mandate of the ruler of Jin arrived, Du Yu was in Xiangyang reassuring the populace and developing his military strength for the invasion of the Southland.

By this time both Ding Feng and Lu Kang of the Southland had died. Whenever the ruler of Wu, Sun Hao, feasted his vassals, he would order them to get themselves drunk. He had also given ten officers of the Inner Bureau the power to impeach officials. After the banquets these Inner Bureau eunuchs would present cases against various offenders to the throne. Those found guilty were punished by having the skin peeled from their faces or their eyes gouged out. This struck terror into the hearts of the people.

Wang Jun, imperial inspector for Yizhou under Jin, petitioned for an invasion of the Southland. His statement read:

Sun Hao's wild depravity and vicious perversity demand swift punishment. First, if Sun Hao dies and a worthy ruler comes to power, the enemy will then be too strong. Second, I, your vassal, began building warships seven years ago, and some of them are deteriorating. Third, I myself at age seventy have little time left. Any change in these three factors could frustrate our plans. I beg Your Majesty not to lose this critical moment.

The ruler of Jin perused the memorial and consulted with his officials. "Wang Jun's views coincide with what Yang Hu once proposed," he said. "We are therefore resolved." However, Privy Counselor Wang Hun petitioned: "I, your vassal, have heard that Sun Hao has already organized his ranks for a move on the north. To engage them at the peak of their readiness could mean trouble; but if we delay another year until they have grown fatigued, success will be more likely." The ruler of Jin approved this petition and issued an edict halting the advance of his troops.⁶

The ruler of Jin had retired to his private quarters and was passing the time playing chess with Zhang Hua, his deputy of the Household Secretariat, when a privileged attendant announced the arrival of a memorial from the border. The ruler of Jin opened and read it. The author was Du Yu. It said:

Previously Yang Hu failed to consult widely with the court officials and laid plans with Your Majesty in secret. As a result, the officials came to no consensus. The merits of every decision need to be debated fully. In my judgment, the benefits of a southern offensive outweigh the drawbacks by a ratio of eight or nine to one, while the only real danger is failing to accomplish our goal. Since autumn it has become increasingly clear that we will have to conduct a punitive expedition against the south. If we delay now, midway in our course, Sun Hao will have been sufficiently alarmed to shift the capital to Wuchang and to fortify the various towns along the Great River, transferring their populations elsewhere. If the southern river towns are fortified and the countryside offers nothing to plunder, then a year's delay will prove too long.

The ruler of Jin had hardly finished reading Du Yu's memorial when Zhang Hua sprang to his feet, pushed aside the chessboard, and said, hands clenched, "Your Majesty is wise in military affairs, our kingdom is wealthy, and our people are strong. The Southland ruler's depraved cruelty has weakened his kingdom and made the people anxious. If we move to smite them now, rest assured that we will establish a new order with little effort."

The ruler of Jin said, "Your penetrating insight has banished all doubt." With that he left his chambers and ascended to the royal hall, where he ordered Chief Commander Du Yu, Queller of the South, to assume the position of first field marshal and lead a force of one hundred thousand against

Jiangling; Supreme Commander Sima Zhou, prince of Langye and Queller of the East, to go forth against Tuzhong; Supreme Commander Wang Hun, Pacifier of the East, to go forth against Hengjiang; General Wang Rong, Es-tablisher of Prestige, to go forth against Wuchang; and General Hu Fen, Restorer of Order to the South, to go forth against Xiakou. Each general, under the overall direction of Du Yu, commanded fifty thousand. The ruler of Jin also dispatched Prancing Dragon General Wang Jun and Extender of Warfare General Tang Bin to move east down the river. The land and marine forces together numbered more than two hundred thousand; warships numbered in the tens of thousands. Lastly, the ruler of Jin assigned Champion General Yang Ji to occupy Xiangyang and control the several field armies.

Word of these moves soon reached Sun Hao. In alarm he summoned his prime minister, Zhang Ti, his minister of the interior, He Zhi, and his minister of works, Teng Xun, to a conference on how to repel the enemy. Zhang Ti petitioned: "General of Chariots and Cavalry Wu Yan could be made field marshal with orders to engage Du Yu at Jiangling. And Flying Cavalry General Sun Xin could be ordered to defend Xiakou and other river points. I, your vassal, could then serve as director general with command over General of the Left Shen Rong and General of the Right Zhuge Xing to lead a force of one hundred thousand through Niuzhu and reinforce the various field armies as necessary." Sun Hao approved this plan and ordered Zhang Ti to depart with his army.

When Sun Hao retired to his private quarters, deep anxiety was written on his face. His favorite, the eunuch Cen Hun, asked why, and Sun Hao replied, "The armies of Jin are coming. Our own have gone forth to meet them. But how will we cope with the strong thrust from Wang Jun, who is leading tens of thousands of troops downriver in his well-equipped fleet? That is the question that most perturbs me." Cen Hun said, "I have a plan to cut Wang Jun's fleet to pieces." Sun Hao was delighted and asked the details. Cen Hun resumed his petition: "The Southland is rich in iron. Let us forge a hundred lengths of chain, each chain several hundred spans long and each link weighing some twenty or thirty catties. Lay the chains across the vital points up and down the river to block the warships' advance. Next, make tens of thousands of ten-span iron stakes and set them in the riverbed; if the warships of Jin sail downriver, they will strike the stakes and break apart. They will never get across the Great River." Well pleased, Sun Hao had all ironworkers assemble at the river's edge in order to work day and night making the chains and stakes and setting them up in the right way.

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The first field marshal of the Jin forces, Du Yu, moved his army out toward Jiangling and ordered Garrison Commander Zhou Zhi, "Quietly lead eight hundred sailors across the Great River on small boats and take Yuexiang by night, then raise flags and banners all over the surrounding country. By day shoot your bombards and roll your drums; by night start fires at various points." Zhou Zhi accepted his assignment and took his men across the river and into hiding on Ba Hill.

The next day Du Yu led the general advance on land and sea. Scouts informed him: "The ruler of Wu has sent three armies to oppose us—Wu Yan on land, Lu Jing on water, and Sun Xin in the vanguard." Du Yu continued ahead until he encountered Sun Xin's advance ships. The two forces engaged; Du Yu retired. Sun Xin led his men ashore and tracked the northerners' tortuous flight. Before he had gone twenty *li*, however, a bombard sounded and the troops of Jin fell upon Sun Xin from all sides. Pressing his advantage, Du Yu slew the southern troops in numbers past reckoning as

they struggled to turn back.

Sun Xin fled back to the outskirts of Xiakou, but Zhou Zhi's eight hundred sailors had mingled among them and entered the city undetected. Once inside, they started fires atop the city walls. Alarmed, Sun Xin cried, "Has the enemy flown across the river?" Xin started to retreat from the city when, at a shout from Zhou Zhi, he was hacked down and fell from his mount.

From his ship the southern naval commander Lu Jing saw a stretch of fires along the south bank and a square banner waving atop Ba Hill, inscribed "General Du Yu of the Jin, Queller of the South." In a panic Lu Jing tried to land and save himself; but as he clambered ashore, the Jin commander Zhang Shang intercepted him and cut him down. Wu Yan, seeing that the field was lost, abandoned Jiangling and fled but was arrested by soldiers in ambush and brought in bonds before Du Yu. "What's the good of sparing him?" Du Yu said and ordered him executed.

And so Jiangling fell. Soon after, throughout the Yuan and Xiang river region—even in certain districts in Guangzhou—governors and magistrates, sensing the course of events, tendered their credentials under Wu and surrendered. Du Yu authorized his men to reassure the populations in these areas and to avoid even the slightest encroachment on their interests. Wuchang was the next to fall before the Jin onslaught.

His prestige felt far and wide, Du Yu convened a grand conference of commanders to plan the taking of the Wu capital, Jianye. Hu Fen said, "Rebels for a hundred years are unlikely to submit fully. Now that the spring floods are at their height, we cannot easily stay here for long. Let us put off this great move until next spring." Du Yu said, "In ancient times Yue Yi annexed the mighty state of Qi in the single battle of Jixi. Now when our might is feared by all, we can take the south as easily as a knife splits bamboo: after a few sections have been cut through, the bamboo comes apart as soon as it meets the blade till there's nothing left to deal with." Du Yu circulated a bulletin summoning all commanders to a general attack on Jianye.

At this time Prancing Dragon General Wang Jun was leading his northern sailors downstream when scouts reported to him, "The southerners have forged iron chains and strung them along the river. They have also embedded iron stakes in the riverbed to stop our ships." Wang Jun laughed aloud. He had several score of large rafts constructed and put on them straw figures resembling armored men holding spears; then he sent the rafts downstream. The southern soldiers thought they were seeing real men aboard the rafts and fled. The hidden stakes got stuck in the rafts and were pulled out of the riverbed. On the rafts large torches had been placed, more than ten spans high and ten arm-lengths around and fueled with hemp oil. When these fiery torches came in contact with the chains across the river, the metal melted and the chains quickly separated. Wang Jun's two armies came ashore and overcame the southerners at every point.

Meanwhile, Southland prime minister Zhang Ti had ordered the generals of the Left and Right Shen Rong and Zhuge Xing to meet the Jin troops. Shen Rong said to Zhuge Xing, "Our forces upstream are not prepared. My guess is that the Jin armies will come; and we must do all we can to oppose them. If the fortunes of battle favor us, the south will be safe. If the enemy gets across, all is lost." "What you say is correct," Zhuge Xing replied. At that moment they were informed that Jin warships were moving downstream in irresistible force.

The two commanders hurried to consult with Zhang Ti. Zhuge Xing said to Zhang Ti, "The Southland stands in peril. Should we not avoid disaster ourselves?" His tears falling, Zhang Ti replied, "The Southland is undone, as any fool can tell. But if liege and liege men surrendered

together without a single man dying for the kingdom in its final hour, how unbearable the shame would be!" Zhuge Xing wept too; then he left. Zhang Ti and Shen Rong directed the defense as the northern troops encircled them. Zhou Zhi was the first to cut his way into the southern camp. Zhang Ti, struggling virtually alone, perished in the turmoil of battle. Shen Rong was slain by Zhou Zhi. The southern troops dispersed and fled the field. A poet of later times has left these lines in praise of Zhang Ti:

As Du Yu's banner flew atop Ba Hill,
Zhang Ti of the south died for his liege.
The realm was now bereft of kingly guise,
And yet Zhang Ti refused to compromise.⁷

The Jin troops took Niuzhu and penetrated Southland territory. Wang Jun sent news of the victory by swift messengers, and the ruler of Jin, Sima Yan, received it with delight. Jia Chong petitioned: "Our troops have endured hardship away from home for too long. The hostile climate will ruin their health. Let them be recalled while we plan future moves." Zhang Hua said, "Our main force is deep in their lair. The southerners have lost heart, and Sun Hao will be ours within a month. To recall our forces now and squander all we have achieved would be a pity indeed." Before the ruler of Jin could respond, Jia Chong denounced Zhang Hua: "You take no cognizance of the time or the setting, but in a wanton quest for glory would ruin our fighting men. Your execution would not suffice to satisfy the empire." Sima Yan said, "It is our view as well. Zhang Hua is merely agreeing with us. Is this debate necessary?" At that moment Du Yu's bulletin arrived. The ruler of Jin studied it and then approved the swift completion of the invasion. The ruler of Jin, having no further doubt, issued the invasion order. Wang Jun and the other commanders received the mandate and advanced in force by land and sea to thunderous volleys of drums. The southerners surrendered at the sight of the banners of Jin.⁸

Informed of the surrenders, Sun Hao turned pale with fright. His officials said, "The northern troops draw nearer every day. Soldiers and commoners are giving up without a fight. What shall we do?" "Why won't they fight?" Sun Hao asked. The officials responded, "Today's disaster is wholly the fault of Cen Hun. We appeal to Your Majesty to execute him. We will leave the city and fight the foe to the finish." Sun Hao said, "How can a single palace favorite ruin a kingdom?" "Has Your Majesty not seen what Huang Hao did to the Riverlands?" the officials cried. Without waiting for the ruler's command, they stormed into the royal quarters, hacked Cen Hun to pieces, and fed on his raw flesh.⁹

Tao Jun petitioned the ruler: "The warships in my command are too small. I need twenty thousand men on large ships to break the enemy." Sun Hao approved and selected troops from the Royal Guard to follow Tao Jun and meet the invaders upstream. Sun Hao also chose Forward Army General Zhang Xiang to move sailors downstream. As these two commanders were assigning men to their boats, a storm broke from the northwest, throwing the southern flags and banners down into the holds. The men refused to embark and fled on all sides, leaving Zhang Xiang and a few score of soldiers to face the enemy.

The Jin general Wang Jun hoisted sail and came downriver. Passing Three Mountains, the boatmaster said, "The wind and current are too strong against us. Let's wait until the wind spends itself." Wang Jun drew his sword and demanded, "The City of Stones is within our grasp. Why stop now?" He ordered the drums to roll and the fleet to sail on.

The Southland general Zhang Xiang led his troops forth and requested permission to surrender. Wang Jun said, "If your surrender is genuine, then serve as my vanguard and do what deeds of merit you can." Zhang Xiang returned to his ship and proceeded directly to the City of Stones, where he demanded that the gates be opened to the army of Jin.

When Sun Hao heard that Jin troops had entered the City of Stones, he prepared to cut his throat. His private secretary, Hu Zhong, and the director of the palace officials, Xue Rong, petitioned: "Perhaps Your Majesty should follow the model set by Liu Shan, now lord of Anle." Sun Hao approved the suggestion. Accompanied by a coffin, his hands tied behind him, Sun Hao led his civil and military officials into the presence of Wang Jun, and there before the army he tendered his allegiance in surrender. Wang Jun freed him, burned the coffin, and accorded him the treatment of a prince. A Tang poet was moved to write these lines:

Jin's tall ships subdued the Riverlands;
The kingly air of Jinling ebbed away.¹⁰
The thousand links sank to the riverbed;
One flag of surrender rose above Stone City.
How often man must grieve for what has passed;
The cold streams run below the changeless hills.
Today the king has no home but the world,
His battlements forlorn in a reed-bare autumn.

And so the Southland was transferred to the realm of Jin: transferred to Jin were its four provinces, forty-three districts, three hundred and thirteen counties, five hundred and twenty-three thousand householders, thirty-two thousand officials, two hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, two million three hundred thousand children and elders, two million eight hundred thousand bushels of grain, more than five thousand ships, and more than five thousand women of the royal harem. The transfer of power completed, circulars were issued to reassure the population, and the granaries, treasuries, and armories were sealed.

The next day Tao Jun's army disintegrated without having joined battle. The prince of Langye, Sima Zhou, and Wang Rong's main force both arrived and celebrated the achievement of Wang Jun. The following day Du Yu himself arrived and rewarded the armies lavishly. He also unsealed the granaries to relieve the southern population. As a result, the southerners settled down into their occupations—with one exception. The governor of Jianping, Wu Yan, refused to submit and defiantly defended his city. But finally, hearing of the fall of the Southland, he too submitted.

Wang Jun sent a memorial to the capital announcing the victory. At court, learning that the Southland had been recovered by the empire, liege and liege men drank one another's health in a general celebration. The ruler of Jin grasped the cup and said, tears flowing, "The credit for this day goes to Imperial Guardian Yang Hu. If only he had lived to see it!"

Southland Flying Cavalry Commander Sun Xiu withdrew from court. Facing south, he wept and said, "Long ago when Sun Ce was in his prime, he founded this estate though he was a mere commandant. Today Sun Hao has thrown it away with his own hands. True, indeed, the words,

The blue sky has no end, no end;

What kind of a man has done this!"¹¹

Meanwhile, Wang Jun had brought his forces home to Luoyang and had the former ruler of Wu, Sun Hao, moved there so that he could come before the sovereign of Jin. Sun Hao ascended the royal hall and touched his head to the ground to acknowledge his loyalty. The Emperor granted him a seat and said, "This seat has been waiting for you for some time." Sun Hao replied, "I, your vassal, had a similar seat waiting in the south for Your Majesty." The Emperor laughed. Jia Chong asked Sun Hao, "They say that when you ruled the south, you often gouged out men's eyes and peeled the skin from their faces. What kind of a punishment is that?" Sun Hao answered, "It is for vassals who assassinate their lieges or for malicious liars and renegades." Jia Chong sat silent and chagrined. The Emperor enfeoffed Sun Hao as lord of Guiming and invested his descendants as palace courtiers; all high ministers surrendering with Sun Hao were made honorary lords. Prime Minister Zhang Ti having died in battle, his descendants received fiefs. Wang Jun was made Commanding General Who Guides the Kingdom. The remaining commanders were duly elevated and rewarded.

Thereafter, the three kingdoms came under the rule of the Jin Emperor, Sima Yan, who laid the foundation for a unified realm, thereby fulfilling the saying, "The empire, long united, must divide, and long divided, must unite." Liu Shan, the Illustrious Emperor of the Eastern Han, had passed away in the seventh year of the Jin reign period Tai Shi, "Magnificent Inception" (A. D. 271). Cao Huan, ruler of Wei, passed away in the first year of Tai An, "Magnificent Peace" (A. D. 302). Sun Hao, ruler of Wu, passed away in the fourth year of Tai Kang, "Magnificent Prosperity" (A. D. 283).¹² All died natural deaths.

A poet of later times wrote this ballad in the old style marking the highlights of the era:

As Gao Zu entered Xianyang, sword in hand,
Han's fiery sun climbed the Tree of Dawn.
Then dragonlike Guang Wu restored Han's rule,
And the solar crow soared to the noon of sky.
But when this great realm passed on to Xiandi,
The fiery disc set in the Pool of Night.
He Jin's folly sparked the eunuchs' coup,
And Dong Zhuo came and seized the halls of state.
Wang Yun formed a plan and struck the rebel down,
But Li Jue and Guo Si rose up in arms.
Across the land rebellions seethed and swarmed
As vicious warlords swooped down on all sides.
The house of Sun emerged beyond the Jiang.
In the north the clan of Yuan held sway.
To the west Liu Yan and Zhang ascended.
Liu Biao's legions camped in Jing and Xiang.
Zhang Yan and Lu were Hanzhong's overlords;
Defending Xiliang, Ma Teng and Han Sui.
Tao Qian of Xu, Zhang Xiu, and Gongsun Zan
Cut bold figures in their several *zhou*.

Cao Cao took power, Xiandi's minister,
Drawing valiant men with arts of peace and war.
Xiandi in his thrall, Cao ruled the lords
And with his martial hosts controlled the north.
"Twin Mulberry" Xuande, descendant of the throne,
Leagued with Guan and Zhang to save Xiandi.
He scrambled round the realm (he had no home),
His forces scant, a stranger wandering.
Thrice Xuande's ardent quest led to Nanyang,
Where Sleeping Dragon unveiled Han's partition:
"First take Jingzhou, next the Riverlands;
On that rich region, base your own royal stand.
"Near death in Baidi, having reigned three years,
Bei sadly placed his son in Kongming's care.
By six offensives from the hills of Qi
Kongming sought to change Han's destiny.
But the time of Han had run—could he not tell? —
That night his master star fell past the hills.
Jiang Wei alone still strove with might and main:
Nine times more he fought the north—in vain.
Zhong Hui and Deng Ai next led armies west:
And to the Cao, Han's hills and streams now passed.
Cao Pi, Cao Rui, Fang, Mao, and briefly, Huan—
The Sima took the empire in their turn.
Cao's abdication changed the face of all;
No mighty battles marked the Southland's fall.
Three kings no more—Chenliu, Guiming, Anle.¹³
The fiefs and posts must now be filled anew.

The world's affairs rush on, an endless stream;
A sky-told fate, infinite in reach, dooms all.
The kingdoms three are now the stuff of dream,
For men to ponder, past all praise or blame.¹⁴

FINIS

AFTERWORD: ABOUT *THREE KINGDOMS*

Moss Roberts

HISTORICAL ORIGINS: THE PERIOD AND THE NOVEL

If any literary work captures the drama of Chinese history, it is *Three Kingdoms*. This historical novel, dating from the early or mid-Ming period, tells the story of the fall of the Han dynasty and the division of its empire into three warring states at the turn of the third century, A. D. The Chinese of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), having ended Mongol rule, looked back to the Han, China's longest and mightiest dynasty, as a model of imperial order. The Han had stability in its ruling house, a powerful, centralized bureaucracy, and cohesive organization of its territory. The Ming founder had for these and other reasons publicly lauded the Han founder. However, the fall of the Han also held important lessons for the Ming; foremost among them, perhaps, was that disunity invites conquest.

In China *Three Kingdoms* has given mythic status to the century it chronicles (A. D. 168-280). In a somewhat similar way, Shakespeare's historical plays chronicling the reigns of Richard II to Richard III have transformed the century from 1377 to 1485 for Western audiences. During the Ming *Three Kingdoms* must have attracted many readers. The 1494 preface to the first printed edition of 1522 says that "when the text was completed, gentlemen and scholars with a keen interest [in the subject] competed in transcribing copies for the convenience of readers." During the following centuries the novel grew in popularity even though it did not always have official approval. In the twentieth century *Three Kingdoms*, despite its length and chronologically remote subject matter, commands a universal audience in China; thus the novel has become an integral part of Chinese culture. Moreover, *Three Kingdoms* has been widely read in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. In part, its popularity is due to the fact that in the four nations of Asia directly influenced by Confucianism, history is the main concern of the respective cultures.

Three Kingdoms describes China's traditional political culture and its struggle to define its political form, transporting the reader from the highest councils of dynastic power to the lowest fringes of society, from the capital and key provinces to the edges of the empire and beyond. It is a tale of China itself in its infinite variety, a tale peopled with kings and courtiers, commanders and scholars, magicians and peasant rebels. Women seem to play a small part, but their roles have the utmost significance. The novel offers a startling and unsparing view of how power is wielded, how diplomacy is conducted, and how wars are planned and fought; and the novel has in turn influenced the ways the Chinese think about power, diplomacy, and war. *Three Kingdoms*, like all of China's major novels, offers Western readers an understanding of China from the perspective of the Chinese themselves.

Three Kingdoms tells of one epoch-marking dynastic cycle: the fall of the Han dynasty, the subsequent division of its empire into three kingdoms—Wei, Wu, and Shu—in A. D. 220, and the reunification of the realm in A. D. 280 under a new ruling house, the Jin. The novel covers one hundred and thirteen years, from A. D. 168 to A. D. 280, a time of crisis and dissolution in Western history that spans the end of the Roman era under Marcus Aurelius and the beginning of the Byzantine under Diocletian and then Constantine. But the novel's main concern is the reign of the last Han emperor, Xian (r. A. D. 189-220). To this period the author devotes two-thirds of his work, the first eighty

chapters; he describes in rich detail the final crisis of the four-hundred-year Han dynasty culminating in the displacement of its ruling house (*guojia*), the Liu, by the Cao family. The last third of the novel, the final forty chapters, deals with the subsequent Three Kingdoms or Three Dynasties (Sanguo) period; the founding of the Jin and the reunification of A. D. 280 is recounted in chapter 120.¹

This "dynastic cycle," the pattern of many eras in Chinese history, is epitomized in *Three Kingdoms'* opening line: "The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide." One hundred and twenty chapters later the tale ends with the line reversed: "The empire, long united, must divide; long divided, must unite." The history of this period of crisis and resolution is both unique and universal—unique for the heroic figures that dominate it, universal for the questions it must address. How is dynastic rule established and maintained? How and why does it fail? What are the qualities of an ideal emperor (*di* or *tianzi*, Son of Heaven), an ideal minister (*xiang*), an ideal vassal (*chen*)? What is the relation between the ruling house and the empire? If the empire loses its unity, how is it regained?

Some twelve hundred years after the historical events, the novel *Three Kingdoms* was written. In Chinese the title is *Sanguozhi tongshu yanyi*. The significance of this title and its variants will be taken up shortly. Scholarly attempts to date the work have produced various suggestions, ranging from as early as the Northern Song to as late as the mid-Ming.² The oldest complete printed edition, published in 1522, has a preface dated 1494 in addition to its own preface. The author of the later preface says that "the text was so voluminous and a good edition of it so hard to find that I had requested that it be put in print and widely made public." This suggests the possible existence of an earlier printed edition but more probably refers to manuscript copies, of which there must have been many. The 1494 preface cited above says, "Gentlemen and scholars... competed in transcribing copies for the convenience of readers." Furthermore, interlinear notes accompanying the 1522 edition seem to postdate the text itself; this too suggests an earlier date for the text. The question is, how much earlier?

The dating problem is complicated by the problem of authorship. The novel has been traditionally assigned to the late Yuan-early Ming (say, 1350-90), and many accept this approximation, if only because the presumed author, Luo Guanzhong, lived at that time. Luo Guanzhong is the author named in the 1522 edition, and his accepted dates are 1330? -1400? —though recent research has convincingly limited his date of birth to the period 1315-18.³ Thus, there is a gap of about one hundred years between the presumed date of Luo Guanzhong's death and the 1494 preface. And there is no record prior to this preface connecting Luo and *Three Kingdoms*. To establish Luo Guanzhong's authorship therefore requires postulating an earlier text that has been lost. Put another way, those who argue that the 1522 text is the earliest version as well as the earliest printed edition of the novel cannot accept Luo Guanzhong as the real author.⁴

A number of modern and contemporary Chinese scholars who tie the work to the end of the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty or the early Ming see it as a product of the great Han nationalistic movement that drove the Mongols from the northern heartland (*zhongyuan*) and in 1368 established the first Chinese dynasty—the Ming—to occupy the heartland since the fall of the Northern Song in 1127. In this view the novel culminates a tradition, which goes back to the Song, of using the Han dynasty to symbolize Han nationality in periods of conflict with the non-Han nations of the north, such as the Mongols and their predecessors. This important issue, mentioned here only in connection with the dating problem,

will be taken up later in this essay.

At the present time, a Ming author and a Ming audience—either "early" or "mid" — seems likeliest. Hence, *Three Kingdoms* may be called a Ming novel whose subject matter is Han. Its Ming aspect is literary; its Han aspect is historical. Everything about the novel may be considered from these two angles. As a literary work, *Three Kingdoms* spans three genres, epic, drama, and novel: it has the scale and mythic atmosphere of the epic; the action and dialogue of the drama; and the texture and design of the novel. If comparison to Western literary works is attempted, it may be said that *Three Kingdoms* bears some resemblance to parts of the *Iliad*, to certain of Shakespeare's historical plays (perhaps the Henry VI trilogy), and to Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* or certain novels by Sir Walter Scott. As a history, however, *Three Kingdoms* has a large body of nonliterary material taken from various historical sources. The twofold nature of the novel prompted the Qing scholar Zhang Xuecheng to remark that if *Journey to the West* (*Xiyou ji*) was purely imaginative and the *Chronicles of the Kingdoms* (*Lieguozhi*) purely factual and historical, then *Three Kingdoms* was "seven parts fact and three parts fiction."⁵ The present translator used the subtitle *China's Epic Drama* in an earlier abridged edition, but perhaps "historical novel" is a better description as it combines the Ming and Han aspects of the work; the phrase may also serve as a translation of the term *yanyi*.⁶ (In his 1925 translation of the novel, C. H. Brewitt-Taylor interpreted *yanyi* as "romance." This word has not been used in this translation because it denotes a world removed from reality.)

When we speak of "the novel," another complication arises. There are two different texts: the 1522 version mentioned above and the mid-1660s version—the Mao edition—which eclipsed the earlier version and was exclusively circulated in China for three centuries. The 1522 version had fallen into oblivion and remained undiscovered until early in the twentieth century; a popular edition of it was published in 1975 and again in 1980 by the Guji chubanshe in Shanghai. In the notes and afterword to this translation the 1522 edition is usually referred to as the *Tongsu* (TS); at times "the novel" or *Three Kingdoms* refers to both versions together.

This is a translation of the Mao edition. It was chosen in order to present to the reader the novel as it has been (and presently is) best known in China. Among scholars each version has its advocates. Some prefer the *TS* because it is richer in historical documents and information as well as franker and less moralistic about political power. Others praise the Mao edition as smoother and more effective as literature. Some regard the differences as minor; others hold them to be significant.⁷ This translation affords the reader some opportunity for comparing the *TS* and the Mao edition by translating in the notes many passages from the *TS* that were deleted or changed in the later text. A short discussion of the two versions may be found in the second part of this essay.⁸

A second category of notes to this translation contains interpretive comments by the editors of the mid-1660s edition, Mao Lun and his son Mao Zonggang. An influential piece of literary criticism and analysis, the Mao commentary has been an integral part of many editions and is still widely known today. The commentary is of great value in helping the reader keep his bearings in a complex narrative; it also offers interesting interpretations of the author's literary methods. Some readers, of course, will prefer to bypass these notes and plow straight through the main text.

The third kind of note contains historical rather than literary information: notes on Han geography, personages, the bureaucracy, and so forth. These notes are drawn from various sources, but most important among them are Chen Shou's *Sanguozhi* (*SGZ*) and the *Zizhi tongjian* (*ZZTJ*) of Sima Guang (1019-86). To the Chinese reader—who has grown up with *Three Kingdoms* tales in stage and

radio performances and even comic books—names of persons, places, titles, and battles are household words, words that have also been incorporated in scores of proverbs. But the Western reader, coming to this novel for the first time, is unlikely to find much that is familiar. I hope that the historical notes will provide the background to make the novel somewhat more accessible.

VIRTUE, LINEAGE, AND LEGITIMACY

In *Three Kingdoms'* vast world nearly one thousand characters cross the stage. The action, moving on several planes at once, encompasses the four corners of the realm. And the novel's themes are varied and complex. In lively discussion over the past decade Chinese scholars have attempted to identify a single main theme in *Three Kingdoms*. Some say it is the theme of ideal liege finding ideal minister, their rise to power, and their tragic end. Some consider the struggle of ideal liege and ultimate villain to be the principal theme. Some see in the novel an expose of the cruelties and injustice of feudal (i. e., dynastic) government itself. Others attach less importance to character and values; they emphasize the larger, impersonal theme of the restoration of national unity after a period of civil wars. Still others see the book primarily as military history, a dramatic record of personal combat, raids, surprises, offensives, sieges, pitched battles, and protracted campaigns, by an author well versed in the art of war. All of these themes or general topics are important in *Three Kingdoms*; yet all of them are engaged by a single conflict that dominates the first two-thirds of the novel, the conflict between Liu Xuande and Cao Cao. Moreover, when Cao Cao and Liu Xuande pass from the scene, their rivalry continues, as the kingdoms they have founded, Wei in the north and Shu-Han in the west (the Riverlands) exhaust themselves in civil war.

Liu Bei (Xuande) and Cao Cao (Mengde) both appear in the opening chapter.⁹ Cao Cao's father, a high military minister, provided the backing that enabled his son to rise in the bureaucracy. But however privileged, Cao Cao is a leader of Napoleonic genius, committed to advancing men on the basis of ability rather than family influence. He has a sardonic streak and keeps his own counsel. His characteristic gesture is a laugh or a smile, but without warmth. He seems isolated from even his closest advisers and kinsmen. Liu Xuande has no family backing, though he claims a remote kinship to the imperial house, whose surname he bears. His immediate circumstances are humble, and he is devoted to his mother. His virtues being greater than his talents, he seeks able and honorable men to aid him and is usually in the company of his closest companions; he rarely appears alone. His biography says that "he won the hearts of men."¹⁰ His characteristic gesture is weeping. The twentieth-century writer and literary historian Lu Xun has shrewdly described him as "paternalistic and benevolent, though somewhat dissembling."¹¹

In chapter 1 we find Cao Cao and Liu Xuande serving the Han emperor Ling on the battlefield as they conduct operations to suppress peasant uprisings led by the Yellow Scarves. In the following chapters the focus shifts to the Emperor. In A. D. 189 Ling dies, and his successor, Shao, reigns briefly. A warlord named Dong Zhuo deposes Shao and places Shao's younger brother Xian on the throne. Emperor Xian will reign until the dynasty ends in A. D. 220. Cao Cao and Liu Xuande appear intermittently until chapter 20, when Cao Cao presents Liu Xuande to Emperor Xian. At this point Cao Cao has command of the armed forces and holds the Emperor in thrall. But like a shogun careful to preserve the facade of imperial rule, Cao Cao refrains from usurping the throne and founding his own ruling house. The Emperor, in an effort to limit Cao Cao's control, tries to make an ally of Liu

Xuande. He confirms Liu Xuande's claim to royal lineage by naming him imperial uncle and in A. D. 199 issues an edict written in his own blood and calling for action against the traitor Cao Cao. Liu Xuande joins a group of court loyalists who, inspired by the edict, vow to rescue the Emperor. This intrigue fails, and Liu Xuande leaves the court and the capital.

Henceforth Liu Xuande as well as Cao Cao—but no one else—can legitimately claim to act under imperial sanction, and so they become rival loyalists. Emperor Xian is always at the center of their calculations, and his survival is therefore assured. Cao Cao remains the dominant figure at court; Liu Xuande goes to seek his fortune in the wide world, the "rivers and hills" of China, by proving his virtue (*de*) or worthiness to rule.

The Cao Cao-Liu Xuande struggle, which begins as a court conflict, becomes an empire-wide crisis in chapter 38; the crisis culminates in chapter 50. These thirteen chapters form the novel's first peak; the narrative runs from the meeting of Liu Xuande and his ideal minister, Zhuge Liang (Kongming), in A. D. 207 to the battle at Red Cliffs in A. D. 208. After this pivotal battle, Cao Cao abandons his effort to unify the empire by conquest and proceeds to develop his position in the north; in A. D. 220, with the establishment of the Wei dynasty of the house of Cao, the formal partitioning of the empire begins.

As their influence grows, Liu Xuande and Cao Cao increasingly appear not merely as supporters of the Han emperor but as potential emperors in their own right, though neither one can afford to take any action that would expose him to the charge of treason by the other. Normally, of course, a son of Emperor Xian or Emperor Ling would stand in the line of succession. But Cao Cao neutralizes all the imperial sons by demoting them to minor princes. (This information comes from historical sources, not the novel.) And he murders the one consort permitted to Emperor Xian, Empress Fu, along with her two sons. Finally, Cao Cao marries his sister to Emperor Xian. The care Cao Cao takes to eliminate possible heirs to Emperor Xian only makes Liu Xuande's place in the royal Liu clan, however remote or dubious, all the more significant. He, like Cao Cao, awaits the next generation. For Cao Cao or for one of his sons to become emperor would constitute a change of the ruling house. What principle could justify a nonfamilial succession? This question raises what is commonly known as the issue of legitimacy (*zhengtong*).

Cao Cao himself never takes the final step of usurpation; he always casts himself in the role of regent to Emperor Xian. Accordingly, he often compares himself to the regent of the first reign of the Zhou dynasty (late eleventh century B. C.), the Duke of Zhou (Zhougong), celebrated for fulfilling his custodial office and then returning power to the child-king in his trust when the ruler came of age. By taking the Duke of Zhou as his model, Cao Cao makes it known that he will not depart from his custodial role and depose the Emperor. Cao Cao claims that his regency preserves civil order by restraining a multitude of contenders who, in pursuit of their ends, would plunge the empire into civil war. There is some truth in Cao Cao's claim: Liu Xuande declares himself emperor in Shu-Han only after Cao Cao has died and his son, Cao Pi, has usurped the throne of Han.

If Cao Cao preserves Emperor Xian's position, he also builds his own kingdom and thus lays the foundation for his heirs to found a new dynasty. His first step is to proclaim himself duke of Wei (Weigong), a title last used by Wang Mang, the usurper of the Former Han dynasty. Cao Cao's second step is to proclaim himself king of Wei (Wei-wang) and to name an heir. As king he becomes a dynast. And rivalry between two of his sons, Pi and Zhi, swiftly brings home to the house of Cao the curse of dynastic government. Cao Cao dies in A. D. 220, and Cao Pi succeeds him as king of Wei.

Within the year Cao Pi demands and receives the abdication (*shan*) of Emperor Xian and establishes himself on the throne of the Wei dynasty. The Han is no more.

To legitimate his usurpation, Cao Pi resorts to another ancient legend, that of the sage-kings Yao and Shun. Yao passed over his son and chose a commoner of virtue, Shun, to succeed him. As an apprentice sovereign, Shun ruled alongside Yao. Then, while still possessed of his power, Yao abdicated to Shun. Cao Pi casts himself in the role of Shun in order to portray his enthronement as a reenactment of the hallowed myth that justifies transferring the throne to a man of virtue rather than waiting for inheritance by a son.

On the interkingdom front, Cao Pi's declaration of a new dynasty frees Liu Xuande to take the Riverlands' throne as Han's true heir. Hence the kingdom is called Shu-Han. These events (chapter 80) mark the official beginning of the era called Three Kingdoms. The third king, Sun Quan, who rules Wu, or the Southland, waits until A. D. 229 before proclaiming his own dynasty.¹² From the novel's point of view neither Cao Pi nor Sun Quan deserves to rule all China.

The novel, since the opening chapter, has been developing Liu Xuande's claim to succeed Emperor Xian. This claim rests on two bases, his lineage and his virtue. Liu Xuande bears the imperial surname, but so do other leaders. To reinforce his claim to legitimacy, Xuande traces his ancestry back to Emperor Jing of the Former Han, the emperor from whom the first Later Han emperor, Liu Xiu (posthumously called Guang Wu), claimed descent. Liu Xuande's link to the royal house opens the way to his advancement, especially after Emperor Xian acknowledges him as imperial uncle. In addition, Xuande has his own leadership qualities: his natural charisma or magnetism, called *de* in Chinese and translated "virtue." The force of his persona attracts and holds the allegiance of his associates, his armies, and the populations he governs. He wins men's hearts. Xuande's virtue is the higher reason why he deserves to rule, a reason transcending lineage or possession of territory. Cao Cao of the novel lacks this quality of virtue.

Virtue, a *sine qua non* of rule, is ascribed to every emperor, but the word describes his character rather than the manner of his accession. If he comes to power by filial right or by election within the royal family—that is, normally rather than by dynastic change—he will claim that his predecessors' virtue flows on in him. If he comes to power by abdication, usurpation, or conquest, his spokesmen will contend that he possesses his own virtue and is entitled thereby to found a new dynasty because the sovereign he is supplanting has lost his virtue. In such a case the genetic flow of virtue within a single lineage is disrupted, and it becomes necessary to turn to the ultimate source of virtue to legitimate the new house. That ultimate source is Heaven. Virtue is thus tied to another primary concept of ancient Chinese political science, the Mandate of Heaven, which should now be considered in order to bring out the full meaning of "virtue."

The mandate uses the authority of Heaven to override the claim of lineage and thus justify a change to a new ruling house. The Mandate of Heaven "finds" a man of virtue who establishes a new dynasty. To appreciate the revolutionary potential of the concepts of virtue and mandate, one may look to traditional Japan, which despite its deep absorption of Chinese influences, does not accept any limitations on the imperial birthright. Officially, Japan has been ruled throughout its history by a single dynasty; no new dynasty can be recognized. The lineage of the royal house, an uninterrupted continuum, is absolutely sacred. But the Chinese, as early as about 1000 B. C., worked out a means for rationalizing a change of dynasty through the concepts of virtue and mandate. In this way the Chinese made the dynasty relatively, not absolutely, sacred. The canonical authority for the Chinese view,

apart from the "Zhou Texts" of the *Book of Documents*, is found in *Mencius* (5A. 6. 7): "Confucius said, 'For Yao and Shun, abdication; for Xia Shang, and Zhou, inheritance. In principle there is no difference. '"

The Mandate of Heaven comes to the fore in times of transition. It is a concept less active in times of stability, though it is always a useful reminder to the ruler of the penalty for misgovernment. Changes of dynasty are relatively infrequent; they are the exception, not the rule. Most of Chinese history has to do with regimes continuing in power. During such times of continuity the throne—and the mandate with it—passes from father to son, and occasionally to a brother or to some other imperial kinsman by election. The ruling house does not change, and the mandate-holding emperor is assumed to have the virtue of the dynastic founder flowing on through him. In this way lineage subsumes virtue. It is only in a transition crisis that lineage and virtue may separate into opposed principles.

In the final analysis, virtue can itself be seen as a higher form of lineage, and Heaven as universal ancestral authority. Heaven is the universal progenitor as well as the collective dwelling place of the many royal ancestors of the many different past dynasties; it is a quintessence of the ancestors; it must have descendants. Just as ancestors of one line are thought to confer favor on their living representatives, the Great Ancestors through Heaven mandate the living emperor. This is why Son of Heaven (*tianzi*) is another name for the emperor (a name the Japanese did not favor); the term implies transcending lineage and linking the emperor to the Great Ancestors. But it is not enough *only* to be the Son of Heaven. It is not enough *only* to have virtue. The two—virtue and lineage—must recombine. The Mandate of Heaven continues to be the highest legitimation, even after the transition crisis has passed, because it recombines the sanction of a sovereign's lineal ancestors with the sanction of the Great Ancestors, making him *di* (emperor) as well as *tianzi*.

Regardless of how he comes to power, every Son of Heaven for the past thirty centuries (until modern times) has claimed the mandate. The reason, to restate the point a little differently, is that the mandate proclaims the holder's "sonship" both in the larger sequence of dynasties and in the line of his own house. Every Han emperor after Liu Bang has the word *xiao*, "filial," in front of his posthumous title. Emperor Xian is officially named Xiao Xian Huangdi, Emperor Xian the Filial.

The blessing of sonship is sought as well by dynastic founders when they convert their ancestors into pseudo-emperors. Cao Pi, for example, honors his father Cao Cao as Emperor Wu even though Cao Cao never took the throne. Similarly, the first Jin emperor, Sima Yan, creates a royal "back line" out of his ancestors for several generations, though they were but vassals of the house of Cao (end of chapter 119). Even the Zhou founder King Wu (Wuwang) had to posthumously recast his father Wenwang—who in fact had remained loyal to the Shang—as a dynastic founder. King Wu strengthened his own claim to rule the empire by anchoring his Mandate from Heaven in his father's purpose. (King Wen's support for the Zhou conquest of Shang is duly glorified in the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of Documents*.) And Cao Pi's purpose in posthumously naming Cao Cao Emperor Wu is to authorize his own usurpation; Cao Pi is posthumously called Emperor Wen. In both cases—Zhou and Wei—the actual military conqueror is called Wu.

The family nature of the dynastic form displays itself in the fact that the ruling house is the dynasty: the Liu are the Han, the Cao are the Wei, and the Sima are the jin, one and indivisible. If a new clan comes to power, it must establish its own dynasty.

Since *Three Kingdoms* is placed in a time of dynastic transition, "virtue" comes to the fore in the

novel as the main qualification of a new ruler. This is made clear by a motif in the 1522 edition: "The empire belongs to no one man but to all in the empire; he who has virtue shall possess it."¹³ Mao Zonggang drops this recurring phrase because of its too-explicit slighting of lineage, but in his edition he basically preserves the theme of "virtue qualifies for rule." The following remarks, therefore, apply to both editions of the novel unless otherwise specified.

As a royal kinsman and also a man of virtue, Liu Xuande has a twofold claim to the Han throne. The value of the surname is shown, for example, in chapter 11 when Imperial Inspector Tao Qian of Xuzhou turns the province over to Xuande. This gives Xuande his first chance to exercise major political authority. Explaining his choice, Tao Qian says, "Lord Liu, a scion of the royal house, a man of broad virtue and high ability, is fit to govern." But virtue and lineage do not after all weigh equally. What distinguishes Xuande in the novel is his virtue. For if his virtue can attract men to serve him, it may ultimately attract the Mandate of Heaven itself.

To have virtue is to gain men's confidence, to win their allegiance. In his first appearance in the novel Liu Bei spontaneously forms a brotherhood with two strangers, Guan Yu (Yunchang), a fugitive, called Lord Guan in this translation; and Zhang Fei (Yide), a butcher. The three brothers pledge in faith and honor (*jieyi*) to live and die as one, and they consecrate their oath in a peach garden—the peach is a symbol of fidelity—by sacrificing a horse and a bull. Liu Bei is acknowledged as the elder brother (for his virtue, not his seniority, according to the Yuan drama *Taoyuan jieyi*), and they quickly recruit a *Shuihu* or outlaw type of band. A fraternal tie among the three is mentioned once in the SGZ, but the novelist has added oath and sacrifice and made the bonding of brotherhood the overture to his tale. Accordingly, the second brother, Lord Guan, and the third, Zhang Fei, are transformed from sparsely sketched figures in the SGZ into fully developed fictional characters. The brotherhood plays a major role in the novel, and the oath haunts the narrative until the pledge "to die for one another" is invoked by Lord Guan's death. Liu Xuande's fidelity to the oath becomes a trial of his worth as a brother and as a king, and the plot turns on his decision.

For what purpose is the brotherhood formed? To combat peasant uprisings led by the Yellow Scarves. What has caused the uprisings? Corruption at court. The court, too weak and divided to cope with the threat to its power, sends out a general call for militia forces to organize and come to the aid of the throne. The brotherhood is formed in response to this call. The rivalry at court takes the form of a family struggle over the succession to the throne. The brotherhood is a kind of egalitarian fraternity with an "underworld" tinge. In its solidarity, based on the principle of honor (*yi*), the brotherhood contrasts with the divided ruling family and also with the great regional families being torn apart by fraternal strife. As the crisis unfolds, the family itself as the dominant political institution is implicitly questioned through comparison with the brotherhood, anti-dynastic in form because it is hostile to filial right. Liu Xuande as elder brother is not a father figure, but *primus inter pares*. The Qing historian mentioned above, Zhang Xuecheng, expressed his misgivings about celebrating the fraternal bond when he wrote, "The most unedifying thing about the novel *Three Kingdoms* is that in the peach garden the oath-brothers go so far as to forget the lord-vassal [*junchen*] relation and simply proclaim the fraternal relation."¹⁴

The brotherhood, first formed to aid the ruling house, later becomes a means to further Xuande's ambition. Like Xuande, the younger brothers, Lord Guan and Zhang Fei, are brave and gallant heroes, but their fortunes have been mixed. After the failure of the coup against Cao Cao, Xuande leaves the imperial court and in A. D. 200 takes refuge with Yuan Shao. The next year he takes refuge with Liu

Biao, protector of Jingzhou, but he is not safe. Liu Biao's wife (Lady Cai) and her brother (Cai Mao) threaten him from within, while Cao Cao, who covets Jingzhou, remains a threat from without.

In A. D. 207 Cao Cao marches on Jingzhou, hoping to annex it; Xuande is about to be overwhelmed. Xuande has come to understand that neither he nor his brothers are able to master the rapid changes in the empire, and that to become a major contender for power he needs diplomatic and military guidance. At this point Kongming enters the scene, both in history and in the novel. For many he is the protagonist of the novel, and his decision to serve Xuande as chief adviser confirms Xuande's virtue: Xuande has won his heart. Kongming appears in chapter 36. He is a young man of twenty-seven by Chinese count, twenty years Xuande's junior. He dies in A. D. 234 (chapter 104). These sixty-nine chapters form the heart of the novel.

Despite his youth Kongming proves to be shrewd and erudite as both a diplomat and a strategist. In his first interview with Xuande, Kongming presents his three-part project for restoring the Han dynasty. His immediate goal is for Xuande to join forces with the Southland in order to save Xuande from Cao Cao and to inspire the south to resist him. His intermediate goal is for Liu Bei to establish an independent kingdom in the west, the Riverlands, and to maintain the alliance with the south against the north. His ultimate goal is to reconquer the northern heartland and place Liu Bei on the Han throne. As events unfold, southern resistance to Cao Cao leads to the division of the Han empire into three warring kingdoms. Thus, at the outset Kongming's career becomes bound up with the central issue of his time.

To the forward-looking Kongming, the brotherhood is no more than a military expedient—something to utilize, not an end in itself. His larger ambition of dynastic restoration revolves around the virtuous ruler whom he serves and the orderly succession by the son of that ruler when the time comes. Thus, he values filial over fraternal love, loyalty to higher authority (*zhong*) over honor among equals (*yi*), and Xuande the benevolent patriarch over Xuande the sworn elder brother. Kongming acts for these values because he believes that the relation of emperor to crown prince (*taizi*) is at the core of dynastic rule and that an orderly transition depends on the security of this relation. The security of this relation ensures continuity of rule through the ruling house (*guojia*) and control over the forces that lead to division, independent kingdoms, and civil war—the troubles that plagued the empire during Kongming's formative years.

Thus, Kongming countenances no intervention in the father-son relation—not by the brothers, not by himself. The true vassal must never exceed his place by supplanting the son. If the worthiest minister supplants the most unworthy ruler, it will lead to disorder. Kongming's role may seem similar to that of the regent Cao Cao, but the two men stand for opposite principles. Unlike Cao Cao, Kongming never promotes his own family's position and never creates a kingdom-fief as a means for his son to supplant the house of Han. (For Kongming's refusal of the Nine Dignities of kingship, see chapter 91, n. 16.) Following the same principle, Kongming does not want the brotherhood to take precedence over the father-son relation. Patriarchal benevolence and filial devotion—the essence of Confucian political philosophy—and not the brotherhood provide the answer to the corruption of the imperial house. But Kongming cannot teach this lesson to Xuande.

In the novel, the tension between Xuande's opposing roles of brother and emperor, between the opposing organizational forms of fraternity and *guojia*, between the values of loyalty and honor, and between Kongming and the brothers charges the narrative with thematic force and drives the tale to its tragic conclusion.

THE NOVEL'S USE OF SOURCES

The novel presents two paths for the Han empire to follow after the Han falls: the abdication of the last emperor to Cao Pi, who founds a new house; or the restoration of the *guojia* through Liu Xuande and his son Shan. In history, the house of Cao prevails. The question is, why does the novel favor the claim of Xuande? Earlier texts favored the claim of the Cao-Wei dynasty, above all the first history, Chen Shou's *SGZ*. Luo Guanzhong took Chen Shou as his model; why then did he not follow him on this crucial matter? The *TS* describes itself as "compiled and arranged [i. e., authored] by Luo Guanzhong, Chen Shou's student-follower of later times." Yet Luo Guanzhong chose not to accept Chen Shou's verdict that the Wei dynasty legitimately succeeded the Han, and then went on to depict Cao Cao as the moral as well as the political opponent of Han's rightful heir, Liu Xuande. Why?

Much as Xuande and Cao Cao take certain mythic and historical heroes as models, Xuande and Cao Cao themselves became models—two of the most important—for the post-Three Kingdoms dynasties. At different points in the twelve hundred years between the events and the novel, various dynastic historians, officials, philosophers, and poets sided with one or the other, with Cao Cao or Liu Xuande. On what basis did they make their choices? How did such interpretations of the Three Kingdoms heroes influence Luo Guanzhong?

These questions call for discussion of the sources on the Three Kingdoms period, and also of the political situation in China during the centuries leading up to the time the novel was written. As a rule, pre-Ming northern dynasty writers tend to treat Wei as the legitimate heir to Han, while southern dynasty writers treat Liu Xuande as the true con-tinuator of Han, and Cao Cao as a usurper.

The basic source for the period is the *Sanguozhi* (*SGZ*), or *Records of the Three Kingdoms*. The author, Chen Shou (d. A. D. 297), served the Shu-Han kingdom and later the Jin dynasty. In A. D. 274 he collected the writings of Kongming (still extant). Then some time after A. D. 280, the year Jin reunified the empire, Chen Shou wrote the *SGZ* in sixty-five chapters, which consist of single or multiple lives (*zhuan*) of the leading figures of the age. Wei is presented in the first thirty chapters, Shu in the next fifteen, Wu in the final twenty.

The first biography is in the form of imperial annals for Cao Cao titled "Wudi ji," or "Imperial Annals of the Martial Emperor." By using the term *ji* instead of *zhuan* for Cao Cao, Chen Shou indicates, at least formally, that Wei is to be regarded as the legitimate successor.¹⁵ In contrast, Chen Shou calls Liu Xuande Xianzhu, or First Ruler (of Shu-Han), a posthumous honorific that suggests regional rather than empire-wide authority. In the "Wudi ji" Cao Cao is given his imperial temple name, Tai Zu, but in the "Xianzhu zhuan" Xuande is not called by his temple name, Zhao Lie. Otherwise, as the title *Three Kingdoms* suggests, the historian is basically impartial among the three kingdoms and unwilling to elevate the name of any of them as the name of the period. Chen Shou presents the least material on Shu-Han, though the figure of Kongming is well developed. Wei and Wu are treated more fully; the leader of Wu, Sun Quan, is also called *zhu*.

Chen Shou's approach is bureaucratic. He gives essential facts, always in the context of individual lives. But, unlike the novelist, he does not seek to move the reader by tying the fate of China to any particular character or kingdom, nor does he invest any one character or kingdom with positive or negative moral significance. Luo Guanzhong uses the *SGZ* for its scope and periodization as well as its information, and he acknowledges his debt by incorporating the title of the history, *Sanguozhi*, in the title of his novel. But he does not follow the history's method of organization, the

biographical series (*liezhuan*). Luo Guanzhong chooses instead chronological narrative, a form best represented in China's history-writing tradition by such works as the *Zuo zhuan* and *Zizhi tongjian*.

About ninety years after Chen Shou's death, Pei Songzhi (A. D. 372-451), a scholar-official of both the Eastern Jin and Liu-Song dynasties, added a vast quantity, some say an overabundance, of material to Chen Shou's *SGZ* in the form of notes drawn from more than two hundred sources. Pei undertook this project at the behest of the Liu-Song emperor. His memorial to the Liu-Song emperor (included in *SGZ*, p. 1471) called the *SGZ* "a superb history for its organization and its judgments and for furnishing the reader with a glorious gardenlike preserve," but he criticized it for "brevity and occasional omissions." Some of the notes with which Pei supplemented the *SGZ* are of historical value, some are anecdotal and colorful though of uncertain authenticity. It might be said that Pei Songzhi became the first to attach some fictional material to the *SGZ*.

The Liu-Song emperor accepted Pei Songzhi's work with high praise, and in A. D. 429 an integrated text—the *SGZ* combined with the notes (*zhu*)—was established; this became the official history of the Three Kingdoms period.¹⁶ In Chinese the title is *Sanguozhi zhu*. These notes created a text three times longer than the original; and as they cite many works lost after the Tang dynasty, their value is inestimable.

Here is a brief example of Luo Guanzhong's use of the *SGZ* notes. In his *SGZ* biography, Liu Xuande is rewarded for his service against the Yellow Scarves with a post as prefect of Anxi county. Soon after he takes office, a district inspector visits the county seat on unexplained business. The inspector's henchmen bar Xuande from the government building, so he barges in and thrashes the inspector. Afterward, Xuande goes into hiding. The novel (chapter 2) follows this account, except that in the novel Zhang Fei commits the battery. The novel also explains that the inspector came to carry out an edict ordering a purge of all recent appointees. This explanation comes from Pei's notes. Another contribution of the notes is the character of Shan Fu, who plays a small but crucial role in the novel. He is Liu Xuande's first military adviser and the man who arranges for him to meet Kongming. Chen Shou barely mentions Shan Fu in Kongming's biography, but the notes provide the material for Luo Guanzhong's telling cameo portrait.

Turning to the question of legitimacy, we find that one of the notes' key sources, Xi Zuochi's *Han jin chunqiu* (The Han-Jin spring and autumn), denies the legitimacy of the Wei succession. The very title of this work excludes Wei from the great line of dynasties, deriving Jin directly from Han. Xi Zuochi treats the two emperors of Shu-Han, Liu Bei and Liu Shan, as a bridge between Emperor Xian and Sima Yan, the first Jin emperor: "Jin should bypass the intervening Wei and take its succession from the Han."¹⁷ Xi Zuochi is considered the first historian to treat the Shu-Han kingdom openly as the legitimate heir of Han. In keeping with this purpose, his work dates events by the Shu-Han reign years, which are presented as extensions of the Han up to the first reign of the Jin.¹⁸ Since the emperor functions as a personified calendar, the reign title (*nianhao*) projects his Heavenly authority. This is why each of the three kingdoms historically used its own reign titles.

In addition to using Shu-Han reign titles to affirm Liu Xuande's legitimacy, the *Han Jin chunqiu* provides an important description of Liu Bei that anticipates the Liu Xuande of the novel: "The First Ruler's trustworthiness and sense of honor shine only more brightly as he is tossed from peril to peril, never forsaking—even under the direst pressure—the true path.... He had compassion for the army... and was content to share defeat with men dedicated to honor."¹⁹ As for Cao Cao, Xi Zuochi did not, so far as we know, paint him particularly black. One negative comment of Xi's preserved in the *ZZTJ*

concerns Cao Cao's arrogance: "The empire split into three as a result of Cao Cao's displays of arrogance."²⁰ Another source cited in Pei's notes, the *Cao Man zhuan*, makes Cao Cao more of a villain, with anecdotes testifying to his cruelty and caprice. And the *Shishuo xinyu* of Liu Yiqing also contributed a number of stories villifying Cao Cao. Thus, by the early fifth century the Three Kingdoms tradition had a southern branch divergent from Chen Shou's history, and certain key elements of the novel's characterization of Liu Xuande and Cao Cao reflected that new tradition.²¹

Sympathy for Shu rather than for Wei was a political touchstone for these southern writers. Xi Zuochi is a notable example; he lived during the Eastern Jin, a dynasty that, like Shu-Han, was confined to the southeastern sector of the realm and threatened with extinction by an enemy dynasty occupying the northern heartland. In fact, every southern dynasty between Han and Sui faced a similar danger, until the Sui unification of the late sixth century and the imperium of Tang restored something of the grandeur and glory that was Han.

In the early reigns of the Tang dynasty the ruling house expressed pro-Cao sentiments. The second emperor, Li Shimin (Tai Zong, r. 627-49), who looked back to the Wei dynasty for certain institutional models, made a formal address to the spirit of Cao Cao, praising him as a "sage" who "faced a difficult destiny with heroic demeanor... [and who stood] on a par with the great ministers of antiquity." Emperor Xuan Zong (r. 713-56) referred to himself on one occasion as "Ah Man," one of Cao Cao's names. However, the noted historian Liu Zhiji (661-721) disagreed with the respectful treatment Cao Cao usually received.²² A sharp critic of Chen Shou, Liu Zhiji did not share the view that the kingdom of Wei was legitimate, and he said that the SGZ did not do justice to Kongming.

In the eighth century, the An Lushan rebellion created a split in the Tang empire that reminded many of the time when the Shu-Han kingdom struggled to recapture the northern heartland (*zhongyuan*) from the Wei dynasty. *Zhongyuan*, a term used by Kongming, refers to the two Han capitals, Chang'an and Luoyang, and the territory around them, which was known in the Han as the *sili*, the capital (or administrative) districts. The "inner" region of the Yellow River Basin is China's traditional political and military center. In A. D. 756, rebel forces occupied the heartland. The Tang emperor was driven westward "covered with dust" (i. e., in exile). He occupied briefly what had been in Han times the kingdom of Shu; the heartland, however, remained in turmoil for many years. Du Fu, who later became China's national poet, began to use elements of Han history to symbolize the *guojia's* plight. When Chang'an and Luoyang fell to the rebels and An Lushan was killed by his own son, Du Fu compared An to Dong Zhuo, who deposed Emperor Shao and was later killed by his adopted son, Lü Bu (see chapters 4 to 9 of the novel). Du Fu made his way to Chengdu and in A. D. 759 wrote a ballad called "Chengdu fu," in which he speaks of "the heartland fading away into darkest oblivion." And in another poem of this time he speaks of "gazing northward brokenhearted." In A. D. 760 Du Fu composed one of his most famous pieces, "Shu xiang" (The prime minister of Shu), to commemorate his visit to the abandoned shrine of Kongming. The poem's closing lines,

To die, his host afield, the victory heralds yet to come—
Weep, O heroes! Drench your fronts, now and evermore!

proved prophetic and gave heart in future times to Chinese who had been driven south by northern invaders. Historically, the victory heralds never arrived, but Du Fu imagines Kongming dying

confident of victory. Thus the poem immortalizes the moment when his spirit of determination to recover the heartland, restore the Han, and reunify the empire ran high.

Luo Guanzhong placed this poem in the 1522 edition (it is in chapter 105 of the Mao edition) to mark Kongming's interment and honor his memory. Du Fu wrote a number of other poems celebrating Liu Xuande and Kongming; a few are added in the Mao edition. Long before the novel in any form, these poems had contributed much to the development of Liu Xuande, Kongming, and others as defenders of an imperiled royal house; in later dynasties they were to become nationalistic symbols in the collective imagination of the Chinese. However, Du Fu did not portray Cao Cao as a villain; and the Tang did not fall. Indeed, about 764 Du Fu composed a poem, "Danqing yin," honoring the painter General Cao Ba and praising him for reflecting the greatness of his ancestor Cao Cao.

The development of Liu Xuande and Cao Cao as symbolic figures entered a new stage in the Song dynasty (A. D. 960-1279). The Song suffered a trauma more severe than the An Lushan rebellion, and comparable to the fall of the Han and rout of the Jin in A. D. 317. In A. D. 1115 the Jurchen nation, northern rival of the Song, established a dynasty called Jin ("Golden," hereafter spelled Jin to distinguish it from the Jin that followed the Wei). In A. D. 1127 Jurchen armies seized the capital, Kaifeng, and captured the emperor (Hui Zong) and his son, thus extinguishing the imperial line. Another son of Hui Zong fled to southern China, covered with the dust of exile. There, under the guidance of Zong Ze and other advisers, he reestablished a southern Song capital. The new emperor, Gao Zong, proclaimed the new dynasty as the Jurchen were assuming control of the northern heartland. The year 1127 divides the Northern Song from the Southern Song, two periods of markedly different attitudes toward late Han-Three Kingdoms history.

During the Northern Song, between the years 1066 and 1084, the historian Sima Guang produced a continuous history of China covering 1,362 years (403 B. C. to A. D. 959). He called his work the *Zizhi tongjian* (ZZTJ), or *General History for the Aid of Government*. Its rich and accessibly organized data as well as its accuracy and cogent style made the ZZTJ quite readable, and it quickly became a classic. Its narrative is basically chronological in structure but with an occasional shift backward in time to reveal the origin of a particular development. The ZZTJ's sections on the late Han-Three Kingdoms period, while based mainly on the SGZ and the *Hou Han shu* (HHS), may be considered ancestor to the format of the novel, just as the SGZ may be considered ancestor to its source material.²³

Sima Guang's view of dynastic legitimacy, like Chen Shou's, is "northern," not "southern," "acknowledging the Wei—a view other Northern Song historians such as Su Dongpo and Ouyang Xiu share. To construct an orthodox line of dynasties, Sima Guang adopts two standards: territorial control and lineal descent. The six major dynasties—Zhou, Qin, Han, Jin, Sui, and Tang—are credited with unifying the realm and establishing their lines. Thus, they form the main tradition; that is, they enjoyed unchallenged rule. Conversely, Sima Guang holds that those who were unable to bring the "nine provinces [i. e., the empire] under a single rule were Son of Heaven in name only, not in reality. "Sima Guang fills out the spaces between these six major dynasties with another list, a list of dynasties that held less than the whole empire but dominated their time, starting with the Wei and ending with the Later Zhou (the nine-year dynasty—A. D. 951-60—immediately preceding the Song).

Explaining his method, Sima Guang writes: "The purpose is not to honor one and denigrate another, or to distinguish legitimate [*zheng*] from transitional [*run*], but in times of division in the empire we have to have reign titles covering the years, months, and days in order to chronicle the

sequence of events." Thus, Sima Guang uses the reign titles of certain emperors and not of others merely to standardize the chronology of a transdynastic account and not to suggest a moral judgment; no "Spring and Autumn" inferences should be drawn from what he includes or leaves out. Sima Guang explicitly excludes the claims to legitimacy of Liu Bei: "As for the relation between the Zhao Lie Emperor [Bei's temple title] and [Shu-]Han, despite his alleged descent from Prince Jing of Zhongshan, his clan affiliation is quite remote.... Indeed, it would be unthinkable to make him the heir to Han rule as if he were on a par with the founder of the Later Han or the Eastern Jin."²⁴

This Northern Song consensus changed dramatically after Jurchen armies drove the dynasty south and forced it into a defensive position similar to that of Shu-Han nine hundred years earlier. Southern Song poets, philosophers, and statesmen drew on the Eastern Jin and mid-Tang traditions of championing the cause of Shu-Han. (The opportunistic Southland was never so appealing a model as the militant Riverlands.) The renowned general Zong Ze, a key figure in establishing the Southern Song, pleaded with the new emperor not to abandon the fight to recover the lost northern capital. Zong Ze's appeals were met with hostility and indifference at court, and according to his *Song shi* biography he expressed his despair with the closing lines of Du Fu's "Shu xiang" cited above:

To die, his host afield, the victory heralds yet to come—
Weep, O heroes! Drench your fronts, now and evermore!

The famed poet Lu You, who grew to manhood in the first generation of the Southern Song, began his "Jiannan" (South of Saber Gateway) with the oft-quoted couplet:

Our kingdom's mandate—restore the Han [i. e., Song];
Heaven's will—smite Cao Cao [i. e., the Jurchens].

Lu You's contemporary General Yue Fei had been an active opponent of the evacuation to the south. After the move, Yue Fei distinguished himself on the field by retaking a number of key cities from the Jin conquerors and added his voice to Zong Ze's in demanding a counterattack to regain the heartland. (In A. D. 1142 Yue Fei was accused of treason and murdered.) Like Zong Ze, Yue Fei invoked Three Kingdoms heroes to symbolize his ambition to clear the homeland of invaders. He is quoted as saying, "Why begrudge one's life? I want future generations to know my name from written history; I want to be glorified like Lord Guan and Zhang Fei."²⁵

Other Southern Song writers, struggling against the weak-willed court, enlisted Shu-Han heroes to represent their cause. In A. D. 1165 the poet Wang Shipeng visited the restored temples of Liu Xuande and Kongming. On his visit to the former, he wrote:

In the final phase of the Later Han, bandits fastened their covetous eyes on the sacred instruments of imperial rule, and the empire was divided into three as if it were a tripod shared by three men. But Liu Xuande was emperor still. He had the stature of the Supreme Ancestor, the marks and signs of Guang Wu [i. e., the founders of the Former and Later Han, respectively], and he had vassals fit to serve a true and virtuous king. But he lacked the northern heartland.... Had I the wine in my hand, I would make no offering to the Cao-Wei dynasty.

On his visit to Kongming's temple he wrote:

From the surviving fragments of the shrine one can glimpse Kongming's grand manner. Alongside him stand Guan and Zhang—one dragon, two tigers. Oh, where shall we find such men today to rid us of humiliation at the hands of outsiders?

Through the writings of Lu You and Wang Shipeng, Liu Xuande, Kongming, Lord Guan, and Zhang Fei were becoming popular symbols of Han nationalism, and Cao Cao was being treated as something more than a villainous vassal; he was being turned into a symbol of the foreign conqueror. At the same time, there is evidence that in the opposing Jin court the Shu-Han kingdom was associated with the fallen house of Song. Yang Weizhen's *Song Liao jin zhengtong bian* (Debates on legitimacy: Song, Liao, and Jin) refers to a discussion before the Jin emperor in 1202; in the discussion the last Northern Song emperor was called "a homeless, wandering soul like Zhao Lie [i. e., Xuande] in Shu." Moreover, some Jin rulers paid annual homage at Cao Cao's burial site.²⁶

The most important Southern Song champion of Liu Xuande's cause was the mold of neo-Confucian philosophy, Zhu Xi, another member of the generation of Lu You. In 1172 Zhu Xi completed an unusual project, one that directly influenced *Three Kingdoms*. He recast the *ZZTJ* in a slightly altered form, placing Sima Guang's text under a series of interpretive headlines which imposed a judgment on the events recounted. The *ZZTJ* was too important to ignore, and so Zhu Xi remade it for his own didactic purposes. He called the work *Zizhi tongjian gangmu*, or *General History to Aid Government with a Network of Headings*, adding the word *gangmu* to Sima Guang's title much as Luo Guanzhong added the word *yanyi* to the title of the *Sanguozhi*. Luo Guanzhong must have read both the *ZZTJ* and the *Gangmu* and must have used the sections on the Han and the Three Kingdoms in organizing his novel.

Zhu Xi treated Liu Xuande as the legitimate successor to Han; he rejected Sima Guang's technical acceptance of Wei as Han's heir. Zhu Xi changed the calendrical entries in his *Gangmu* to accord with those of Shu-Han and devised headings whose wording implied a pro-Liu Xuande, anti-Cao Cao judgment. Here is how Zhu Xi presents the crucial year A. D. 220, when Cao Pi proclaimed the new Wei dynasty. First he changes the initial year of Cao Pi's reign from the first year of Huang Chu back to the twenty-fifth year of Jian An, the reign title of the deposed Emperor Xian. Then in the heading for the tenth month, he writes, "The Wei king, Cao Pi, proclaims himself imperial majesty, deposes the [Han] emperor, and makes him [i. e., demotes him to] lord of Shanyang." The second year of the Wei, Zhu Xi names the first year of Liu Xuande's reign: "The imperial majesty of Han, Zhao Lie [i. e., Liu Bei]; Zhang Wu [Manifest Might], year 1.... In summer, the fourth month, the king of Hanzhong [i. e., Liu Bei] ascended the throne of the imperial majesty."²⁷ In this way Zhu Xi places himself in the tradition of the *Han Jin chunqiu*, treating the kingdom of Shu-Han as an extension of Han and denying the legitimacy of Wei.

Militant as a youth about reconquering the heartland, by the late 1160's Zhu Xi was becoming more inclined toward a policy of compromise and coexistence.²⁸ Zhu Xi's purpose in advocating the cause of Shu-Han was not to instigate military action by the south but rather to establish a tradition of dynastic sequence in which his own ruling house would take its rightful place. The Southern Song, much like the Eastern Jin, had to assert its "Chinese" (or Han) identity at a time when non-Han powers held the traditional dynastic base, the *zhongyuan*, and could not be dislodged. Zhu Xi did not

accept Sima Guang's criterion for legitimacy, control of a unified territory. He turned instead to other criteria, such as cultural continuity with the Zhou thinkers Confucius, Zisi, and Mencius, and the moral integrity of the ideal ruler and vassal, for defining legitimacy.

In fact, Zhu Xi was not a wholehearted advocate of the Shu-Han cause precisely because of its territorial ambition. His great admiration for Kongming is tempered by criticism of Kongming's capture of the Riverlands. He wrote, "Kongming... assisted a true king, but he was not completely identified with the Way.... A true king... would not commit an act of unrighteousness even if he could acquire an empire by doing so [citing *Mencius*, 2A. 2. 24]. Kongming was determined to achieve success and to capture Liu Zhang. A sage would rather not succeed [in such an undertaking]. Kongming should not have done it."²⁹ Because he did not favor aggressive military action to regain the north, Zhu Xi often looked to Mencius as an authority for placing virtue above power. Perhaps Zhu Xi saw the cultural tradition as a compensation for the unrecoverable heartland. Mencius, in the passage cited above, had said that men of virtue ruling even a tiny territory of one hundred *li* could win the homage of the lords of the realm.

In the novel, the relationship between territorial control and legitimacy is as important as the relationship between lineage and legitimacy or virtue and legitimacy. How to judge Liu Xuande's acquisitions of territory, especially Xuzhou, Jingzhou, and the Riverlands, is one of the novel's central questions. A related question is how to judge Xuande's conduct when he has no territory and after he has acquired territory (and a measure of feudal power).

The *ZZTJ* furnished Luo Guanzhong with a comprehensive chronological account of the century he wanted to cover. Perhaps one way to look at the word *yanyi* in the novel's title is to derive the *yan* (continuous development) from the *ZZTJ* and the *yi* (moral significance, message) from Zhu Xi's *Gangmu*.

In summarizing the various Three Kingdoms legitimacy debates the descriptive notice (*tiyao*) of the *Siku quanshu*, the great bibliographical encyclopedia of the Qing period, takes a matter-of-fact attitude that is a refreshing reminder of the ability of traditional Chinese scholars to see through the categories and artifices of dynastic propaganda:

From the viewpoint of the author's circumstances, it was only an instance of natural obedience for Xi Zuochi to acknowledge the imperial authority of Shu-Han. For Chen Shou such a position would have led to troublesome confrontations, but when Xi Zuochi wrote, the Jin house had already moved south and its circumstances rather resembled those of Shu. So Xi catered to the consensus of the day by claiming legitimacy for a dynasty that was territorially limited and not in control of the heartland. Chen Shou, by contrast, was in the service of Emperor Wu of the Jin; since Jin had succeeded Wei, to deny the legitimacy of Wei would have been to deny the legitimacy of Jin. How could [his history] have circulated [if he had denied Wei's legitimacy]? It was little different [for a historian then] than [for a historian] at the time of Tai Zu [the first Northern Song emperor], whose usurpation [of the Later Zhou] was much like the usurpation by Wei, while the Northern Han and Southern Tang courts bore resemblance to the court of Shu-Han.³⁰

Consequently, Northern Song Confucians avoided denying the legitimacy of Wei. Once the Song was driven south and confined below the Great River, however, and its own situation became more like that of Shu-Han, with Jin ruling the heartland as the Wei had once done, the

Confucians of the Southern Song, one after the other, stepped forward to proclaim the legitimacy of Shu. All these positions need to be evaluated according to the age and not measured by a single inflexible standard.³¹

Zhu Xi's contemporary and rival, the Southern Song philosopher and statesman Chen Liang (1143-94), advocated a militant anti-Jurchen policy, and this must have influenced his view of Zhuge Liang. Chen Liang's contribution to the evolving persona of Zhuge Liang is an important link between the historical and the fictional hero. In a paper on Zhuge Liang, "From Regional Hero to National Hero," presented at a panel of the 1991 convention of the Association for Asian Studies, Hoyt Cleveland Tillman cites Chen Liang's "Zhuge lun," an essay that emphasizes Zhuge Liang's political and moral virtues as well as his skill in warfare. Chen Liang contrasts Zhuge Liang to Sima Yi (rather than to Cao Cao, presumably because Chen Liang, unlike Zhu Xi, had little sympathy for Han legitimacy, and thus no animus toward Cao Cao): Sima Yi was treacherous, Kongming loyal; Sima Yi was selfish, Kongming public-spirited; Sima Yi was cruel, Kongming humane. Chen Liang then proceeds to praise Kongming as a military tactician. Tillman translates:

Kongming's eightfold formation... would not advance too quickly nor retreat too hurriedly. Shock brigades were unable to break through its front, and armies that seemed to come from nowhere would not be able to go round to strike its rear. An army in ambush could not isolate its wings, and pursuing troops could not surprise its rear. Spies would have no way to reconnoiter, and cunning tricks would have no facility [against this formation].

As Tillman observes, Chen Liang's claim that Kongming was good at schemes and surprises "is quite noteworthy given later portrayals in popular literature."

STORYTELLING AND FICTION IN THE YUAN

Some fifteen years after the death of Zhu Xi in 1200, Chinggis Khan began a series of conquests in Central Asia and China. In 1234 the Mongols accepted the capitulation of the Jurchen's Jin dynasty and occupied all of northern China. In 1260 Khubilai Khan proclaimed Zhong Tong (i. e., *Zhongyuan zheng*Tong, or "Unified/Legitimate Rule from the Heartland") the first reign title of the Yuan, as the Mongols called their dynasty in China. Khubilai went on to prosecute a five-year campaign (1268-72) against the principal forward positions of the Southern Song, Xiangyang and Fancheng.³² After the victory of 1272 the Mongols eliminated all Southern Song resistance, and in 1279 Khu-bilai Khan became emperor of a China reunified for the first time since 1127. Never before had all China been brought under non-Han rule. During the Yuan, Han resisters mainly demanded the restoration of the Song dynasty, but they had no substantial base.

Under the Yuan the legends of the Three Kingdoms developed and assumed new form. Popular fiction, dramatic recitation, and plays in particular molded and remolded the heroes into types quite removed from earlier traditions. These plays and narratives created a new, extremely fictionalized tradition—three parts fact, seven parts fiction, one might say. The two main genres—both popular—were storytelling and drama. Many scholars have said that these genres furnished Luo Guanzhong with the popular spirit he infused into his novel and that without this imaginative component the historical academic tradition could never have provided sufficient inspiration for the novelist. We

will consider the two genres—story and drama—separately, beginning with the *Sanguozhi pinghua*,³³ Some traditional Chinese historians have treated the Cao-Wei dynasty as legitimate and the Shu-Han dynasty as a rebellious entity. Some have described the achievements of Cao Cao objectively. There are even plays that treat Cao Cao sympathetically. But no significant popular literary tradition makes Cao Cao the hero and Liu Bei the villain. The popular tradition makes Cao Cao the villain and Liu Bei the hero. The novel culminates this tradition, and the primary fictions of the novel stem from the pro-Liu, anti-Cao view: making the peach garden sacrifice and the brotherhood oath the starting point; giving the brothers a dominant role in the story; and emphasizing Shu over Wu as Wei's antagonist.

The Yuan storytelling tradition, judging from trace remarks in various records, may go back to the Northern Song.³⁴ In the commercial centers of the Song there were public recitations of Three Kingdoms themes and ample audiences to support the raconteurs. According to the oft-cited remark of Su Dongpo,

A group of children from the alleys... hearing ancient Sanguo tales... knit their brows and weep if Liu Xuande is defeated, but shout with delight when Cao Cao is defeated.³⁵

But as for extant texts embodying that performance tradition, there is only one, the *San-guozhi pinghua* (*PH*) of 1321—23 and its earlier, almost identical edition, the *Sanfen shilüe*. The *PH* may be described as a storyteller's prompt book, and it is apparent that the author of *Three Kingdoms* was familiar with it. Dramas written on Three Kingdoms subjects developed particular incidents and characters and had a limited focus, usually a single episode, but the *PH* presents the events of the century (A. D. 184-280) in serial fashion, and its influence on the novel is primarily because of this.

The *PH* is crude and episodic; it numbers about 80, 000 words (less than one-tenth the length of the *TS*). It strings together more than eighty sparsely sketched incidents without developing much causal connection in their sequence. For the most part these incidents have some historical basis, but a number are sheer invention. Nevertheless, however crude they may be, the *PH's* techniques of composition—the serial presentation of events, the multiple-track narrative, the interaction of characters, the interplay of character and incident—foreshadow the novel; thus, the *PH* may be called a primitive blueprint for *Three Kingdoms*. Indeed, in the words of one scholar, "these structural features [of the *PH*] make it the foundation stone of the composition of China's [classic] novels."³⁶

The *PH* begins with the peach garden oath and the campaigns against the Yellow Scarves; it ends with the death of Kongming. The succeeding events (A. D. 234-80), which take up the last sixteen chapters of the novel, are passed over, though the reunification of A. D. 280 is touched on at the end. The first half of the *PH* is dominated by Zhang Fei—Lord Guan plays a lesser role—and Kongming dominates the second half. The author is friendly to Liu and hostile to Cao, though he is uninterested in the legitimacy question per se. Finally, the narrative includes such oddities as having Emperor Ling execute the Ten Eunuchs and deliver their heads to Liu Xuande (who has become a bandit) to entice him to serve the court (*zhao an*) by suppressing the Yellow Scarves. Another fanciful segment shows Cao Cao forcing Emperor Xian to abdicate to his son Cao Pi. The *PH's* interest in history is slight. Accordingly, Kongming's famous analysis of the state of the empire (the "Longzhong dui") is only partly introduced, and Kongming's petitions on taking the field (the first and second "Chushi biao") are not included at all. In general, Kongming is characterized more as a magician than as a strategist.

Some of the differences between the *PH* and the novel arc pointed out in the notes to the translation.³⁷

A striking difference between the *PH* and the novel is that the *PH* has a prologue and an epilogue that fall outside the time frame of the novel. The prologue is a supernatural tale in the *chuanqi* tradition and the epilogue is a quasi-factual account of the fall of the Jin in the early years of the fourth century. Apart from their relevance to the study of popular storytelling, the two sections throw an interesting light on the purposes of Luo Guanzhong precisely because he did not use them.

The prologue and epilogue extend the *PH's* time frame well beyond the novel's. The *PH* puts the genesis of the division of the empire into three kingdoms back to the first reign of the Former Han dynasty. The author manages this by using the following myth based on Buddhist concepts of reincarnation and retribution. During the first reign of the Later Han, Sima Zhongxiang (later reborn as Sima Yi, who laid the basis for the founding of the Jin) enters the imperial park with a book in hand. Reading in it of the dreadful rule of the Qin dynasty, Zhongxiang curses the first Qin emperor and declares that if he had ruled then the people of the empire would have been happy. Suddenly, a team of ghost-officials rushes him to the underworld, where he is outfitted like a monarch and empowered to judge the rights and wrongs of history. The first (and only) case to come before him concerns the founder of the Han, Liu Bang, and his Empress Lü. Three plaintiffs come forward to accuse them of betrayal.

First Han Xin appears and complains of his demotion and ambush. Han Xin was the single most important figure in Liu Bang's victory over Xiang Yu, his rival for the empire. When Liu Bang and Xiang Yu were at a standoff, Han Xin, newly king of Qi, had the opportunity to exploit the stalemate and declare Qi an independent kingdom. This course, which his adviser Kuai Tong urged on him, would have created three kingdoms: his own, Liu Bang's, and Xiang Yu's.³⁸ Han Xin rejected Kuai Tong's advice and threw his support to Liu Bang, who went on to defeat Xiang Yu and found the Han dynasty (hence his title Gao Zu, or Supreme Ancestor.) But after becoming Emperor of Han, Liu Bang moved against many of the veterans and comrades-in-arms who had helped him to power. Han Xin was the first victim, and this is why his wronged soul appears before Sima Zhongxiang. Zhongxiang rectifies the injustice by arranging for Han Xin to be reborn as Cao Cao so that he can take revenge on the Han. Zhongxiang arranges other reincarnations: Liu Bang as Emperor Xian, and Empress Lü as Lady Fu (Xian's only consort, whom Cao Cao puts to death), and Kuai Tong as Kongming.³⁹

In addition to Han Xin, two other plaintiffs present their grievances to the court of the netherworld, Peng Yue and Ying Bu. They, too, had suffered betrayal at the hands of the first family of the Han. To requite their ghosts, Sima Zhongxiang has them reborn as Liu Bei and Sun Quan, respectively. Thus, the *PH* introduces the fall of the Han and the division of the empire as supernatural retribution for Liu Bang's betrayal of his comrades.⁴⁰

The tendency among scholars has been to dismiss the prologue as superstition and to praise Luo Guanzhong for dropping it and getting down to history with the businesslike opening line of the *TS*: "On the death of Emperor Huan of the Later Han, Emperor Ling assumed the throne at the age of twenty." The prologue would hardly make an ideal introduction to the novel, it is true, but the novel is not entirely free of supernatural elements, of ghosts returning to protect or to warn. And the character of Kongming retains certain magical aspects. So something of the prologue's spirit survives in the novel.

Of greater importance is the survival of the theme of retribution in the novel and its use as an

organizing principle. Whether accomplished in a few moments' repartee or in the course of decades, secular retribution or cause and consequence is a question the novel pursues. The usurpation of Han by Wei (chapter 80) is the long-range consequence of the failure of Han to govern well, just as the rise of the Yellow Scarves is a more immediate consequence. And the usurpation of the Wei by the Sima clan is the long-range consequence of the Wei usurpation of Han, just as Liu Xuande's declaration that Han still reigns in Shu is the immediate consequence. The relentless movement from cause to consequence and the wavelike conversion of consequence to cause describes the dynamic of *Three Kingdoms*. It is likely that this narrative design owes something to the theme of retribution, announced by the prologue, that dominates the PH.⁴¹

One contemporary scholar who treats the prologue as thematically relevant to the *PH* sees the legend of Sima Zhongxiang's restitution of territory to the three wronged vassals of merit as a criticism of autocracy: "To write a tale of a *xiuca* who, though holding no office, rectifies historical injustices... is a fiction to delight the hearts of men in an age of sacred and inviolable monarchical power."⁴² In the novel Zhang Fei comes closest to representing so radical a view of status and authority (see the quatrain ending chapter 1).

Not only does the *PH* trace the cause for the breakup of the Han empire to a far earlier point than the novel, but it concludes a generation beyond the novel. The novel ends in A. D. 280 with the triumphant reunification of the empire under a new dynasty, the Jin, ruled by the Sima house. The *PH* ends with Liu Yuan's siege of Luoyang in A. D. 304 and the fall of the Jin dynasty in A. D. 316. What difference does the ending date make for the story of the Three Kingdoms?

Historically, the Jin reunification of A. D. 280 was nothing to boast about. The dynasty enjoyed twenty years of relative stability. Then in A. D. 300 a Jin prince tried to overthrow Emperor Hui, touching off a six-year fratricidal war called the Disorder of the Eight Princes. As a result, the Jin could not police its borders, and the fourth century began with a series of attacks by "barbarian" nations. Liu Yuan, a sinicized Xiongnu, became the leader of these invasions. Xiongnu pressure soon led to the evacuation of Luoyang and the capture of the emperor. Forced from the north, the Jin reestablished its dynasty in the Southland region in A. D. 317 under the name of Eastern Jin. The new dynasty asserted its "Han-ness" by its first reign title, Jian Wu, the same title used by the founder of the Later Han. The north, meanwhile, was occupied by a variety of non-Han (Hu) nations. The period, referred to by southern writers as the Disorder of the Five Hu, evolved into a three-century era of disunity known as Northern and Southern Dynasties, which lasted until the Sui reunification of A. D. 581.

Why does the *PH* end with an account of Liu Yuan and the fall of the Jin? Liu Yuan was a descendant of Mo Du (often read Mao Dun), the founder of the Xiongnu nation. Mo Du came to power in 209 B. C., shortly before the founding of the Former Han; his heirs adopted the Liu surname. The point the *PH* makes is that a branch of the Liu clan avenges the Han dynasty by destroying the Jin, thus completing the cycle of retribution. The *PH* says:

Liu Yuan addressed his army: "Han engaged the people's love during its long years of rule, and I, as a maternal nephew of the ruling house, must avenge my uncle, whom the Jin have captured." Then... he founded a kingdom that he called Han and, declaring himself king of Han, established the ancestral precedents. He changed the reign title to Yuan Xi, "Original Glory," and honored the late Liu Shan [second emperor of Shu-Han and son of Liu Bei] as His

Glorious Majesty Huai the Filial.... The third year he moved the capital to Pingyang and assumed the throne.... After Emperor Hui [of Jin, r. A. D. 290-306] died, Emperor Huai [of Jin] came to the throne. The king of Han [Liu Yuan] led an army of several hundred thousand against Luoyang, the Jin capital. The Jin emperor [Huai] met the enemy in the field but was defeated. [Liu Yuan's] Han soldiers seized his person and offered him in sacrifice at the temple of Liu Shan.

Next, Emperor Min [of Jin] assumed the throne in Chang'an [capital of the Former Han]. The king of Han [Liu Yuan] sent Liu Yao to conquer the city. Liu Yao captured Emperor Min and took Min's empress, Lady Yang, as his own wife. Liu Yao then escorted the Jin Emperor to Pingyang and extinguished the Jin dynasty. Liu Yao paid homage at the ancestral temple of the Supreme Ancestor [Liu Bang] and at the temple of Emperor Guang Wu [Liu Xiu, founder of the Later Han], Emperor Zhao Lie [Liu Bei], and Emperor Huai [Liu Shan]. Liu Yao made offerings and declared an empire-wide amnesty.⁴³

If we take Liu Yuan's claim of kinship to the royal family figuratively, this account is basically historical. The Xiongnu groups that Liu Yuan led, settlers "inside the [Han] border," had a history of ethnic integration (if not assimilation) with the Chinese, and Liu Yuan himself was versed in Chinese language and culture. So there is nothing absurd about his bid to restore the Han dynasty through his own line. Such a claim might have overawed internal opposition and neighboring Hu nations and thus served Liu Yuan well. Certain of his Xiongnu rivals wanted him to establish an independent Xiongnu nation, however, and not take the road to sinicization. Would he choose to be khan or emperor? His paternal grandfather, Liu Xuan, declared:

Long ago our forefathers bound themselves to the Han as brother to brother. After the fall of the Han, Wei rose [and fell] and was followed by Jin. Our khans have had empty titles but nary an inch of our land has been returned. Our people's status is as low as the registered [common farmers]. Now the Sima house is destroying itself from within, and the realm is a seething cauldron. The time to revive our nation's heritage has come.⁴⁴

Thereupon Liu Xuan and the various Xiongnu branches secretly made Liu Yuan khan. In A. D. 304 Liu Yuan began to organize a mighty host from his own, the Bingzhou Xiongnu, and associated Xiongnu nations. The eager response of these nations to Liu Yuan's leadership suggests their strong antagonism to the Jin, Wei, and late Han dynasties for the suffering caused by generations of civil war. The Disorder of the Five Hu dates from this moment.

Jin's end was swift and ignominious. In A. D. 309 Liu Yuan began an attack on Luoyang. In A. D. 311 he died, and his son Zong continued the siege until Luoyang fell that same year. Xiongnu troops sacked the capital and took Emperor Huai of the Jin captive. The Jin then moved the court to Chang'an under a new emperor, Min. After five more years of fighting, Liu Zong had reduced Chang'an and Emperor Min had surrendered. Jin power then vanished from northern China. Emperor Min was taken and killed together with Emperor Huai.

Liu Yuan accomplished these things as Han emperor, not as Xiongnu khan. In A. D. 309, the year he began the attack on Luoyang, he declared himself emperor of Han, reminding his followers how successful Liu Bei had been in waging war from an isolated province in order to regain the empire.

Liu Yuan said, "I am a maternal nephew of Han; we are bound as brother to brother. If the elder dies, should not the younger succeed him? Let us proclaim ourselves Han." Then he honored the memory of the Second Emperor [Liu Shan].⁴⁵

Liu Yuan's son, Zong, continued to claim the title emperor of Han until A. D. 318, the second year of Eastern Jin. Shortly thereafter Liu Yuan's house was extinguished.

Extending the story of *Three Kingdoms* to conclude with these events, the *PH* fulfills its theme of retribution (perhaps the dominant theme of Yuan drama as well). In the course of this final generation (A. D. 280-317), other symmetries emerge. For one, the sack of Luoyang aptly closes an era that began with Dong Zhuo's forced evacuation of Luoyang in A. D. 189. (Like Liu Yuan, Dong Zhuo had close non-Han ties.) Second, the return of Emperor Min to Chang'an reverses the shift of capitals from Former to Later Han. Third, the troubled ethnic and economic relationships between the Han and their northern neighbors reaches a kind of conclusion when Chinese dynastic power vacates the north, as if history had refuted Cao Cao's stunning victory over the Wuhuan people and Kongming's astonishing triumph over the Southern Man.

Compared to the *PH*, the novel appears as a work that seeks to restore something of Han's greatness in Jin's reunification, and concluding its narrative in A. D. 280 contributes to that effect. The novel begins with an end and ends with a beginning, leaving the reader with a sense of optimism (or at least renewal) about Chinese history: "The empire, long divided, must unite." But the *PH* begins with an end and ends with an end, and the implications are ominous. The Han—and a unified China—is lost. When will it return? The *PH* expresses a Southern Song or Yuan mood; the novel, a Ming mood. The Ming founder, Zhu Yuanzhang, had publicly and purposefully portrayed himself as another Supreme Ancestor, another founder of the Han, and had succeeded in 1368 in projecting Han power into the north for the first time since 1127. Thus, in reunifying China Zhu Yuanzhang fulfilled a long-frustrated ambition of Han nationalism. *Three Kingdoms* reflects something of Zhu's achievement.

We turn from the *PH* to consider some of the Yuan period *Three Kingdoms* plays. Drama as an art form thrived in Yuan China, and *Three Kingdoms* plays were a vital component. Traces of *Three Kingdoms* drama can be found as early as the Sui and Tang, but no texts survive. For the Jin and Song periods only a handful of titles remain out of hundreds (including non-*Three Kingdoms* plays) that are listed in early sources. Notices of *Three Kingdoms* shadow plays in the Northern Song have been found, but again no texts and only a few titles. For the Yuan period, however, the flourishing of *Three Kingdoms* drama is a striking fact, and the Riverlands heroes are the prominent figures. If whole and partial texts as well as titles (without texts) are counted, the number of Yuan and early Ming *Three Kingdoms* plays comes to between fifty and sixty, nearly 10 percent of the more than seven hundred (on all subjects) that we know of.

Ten dramatizations of *Three Kingdoms* tales (half by unknown authors), fragments of another six, and the titles of another eleven survive from the Yuan period.⁴⁶ The remaining plays are Ming or fall into the vaguer category of Yuan-Ming because no date can be established. Given the uncertainties about the novel's dating, it is not always possible to say whether a play influenced the novel or the other way around. But taking the sixty plays as a whole, it is striking how thoroughly they cover the novel's century from Dong Zhuo's sedition to the founding of the Jin. Ye Weisi and Mao Xin have drawn up lists showing the corresponding events in the plays, the *PH*, and the novel.⁴⁷ These lists

show the time span the plays cover and also how popular the legends and characters of the Three Kingdoms had become by the Yuan dynasty. In Yuan times so much fictional material was added to the existing historical base that Luo Guanzhong might well have called himself, as Confucius once did, "a transmitter, not a maker."

By and large, the plays continue the Southern Song tradition of taking the part of Liu Xuande against Cao Cao. Most of the extant plays feature Liu Bei or heroes devoted to him—Kongming, Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, Zhao Zilong, Ma Chao, and so on; the others deal with Cao Cao, Dong Zhuo, and Lü Bu. Among the plays there is a surprising tendency to treat not only the Wei but also the Southland leadership as enemies of Liu Bei. For example, in Guan Hanqing's *Lone Swordsman Attends the Feast (Dan dao hui)* Lu Su is the villain, with his plot to kidnap Lord Guan and retake Jingzhou. The same plot is found in chapter 66 of the novel, but it is set in a context that makes Lu Su more sympathetic by showing his deep commitment to the Shu-Wu alliance (even if he has to work against it in chapter 66). The novel with its fuller background explores the contradictions between the two kingdoms within the necessity of the alliance.⁴⁸

The novel corrects this as well as other fictional excesses in the dramatic texts, almost always working to bring its narrative into closer alignment with the historical texts, the *SGZ* and the *ZZTJ*. For example, the Southland founder Sun Jian is shown running from the field with a stomachache in *Three Heroes Battle Lü Bu at Tiger Trap Pass (San zhan Lü Bu)*, while the novel restores much of his courage and determination. (Still, the novel does Sun Jian the injustice of crediting his defeat of Hua Xiong to Lord Guan.)⁴⁹

At one crucial point in the story, however, the Southland general Lu Xun emerges as a hero in his own right, almost on a par with Kongming. When Liu Xuande defies Kongming and invades the Southland, Lu Xun executes a brilliant counterattack and wins the battle at Xiaoting (or Yiling). So humiliated militarily and politically that he cannot return to Shu, Xuande soon dies; the cause of Han restoration from a base in Shu is doomed. Though the *PH* and the Yuan drama virtually ignore Lu Xun, the *SGZ* treats him as a general of the utmost importance. And *Three Kingdoms*, guided here by the *SGZ*, depicts Lu Xun with unqualified admiration and never uses him as a foil to show a Riverlands figure to advantage. The novel treats no other Southland figure in this manner. If the novel has been unfair to other Southland heroes, its treatment of Lu Xun rebalances the scales and gives the Southland a share of its rightful historical glory.⁵⁰

The salient feature of the Yuan plays is that they are either entirely fictional or else fictional elaborations on traces of historical data. Working with a small cast of characters and within a time frame restricted to a few episodes, the plays develop their chosen subjects imaginatively. This was an inspiration to the novelist, who incorporated dramatic dialogue liberally into the narrative. In fact, if Luo Guanzhong is the author of the several plays attributed to him, he might have worked closely with Yuan and Ming dramatists and been familiar with the techniques of staging.⁵¹

The most striking creation of the dramatists is the character of Lord Guan. From a minor character in history—the *SGZ* devotes less than a thousand words to him—he became a dominant figure of Yuan dynasty Three Kingdoms drama, a pivot around which other parts of the tale were organized. This may be, as Liu Zhijian speculates, because there was a close connection between the cult of Lord Guan in the Yuan period and Three Kingdoms drama, performances of which may have been staged in temples dedicated to "King Guan."⁵² The *PH* was dominated by Zhang Fei and Kongming,

but the drama made the figure of Lord Guan paramount and in this respect decisively influenced the novel. The single play *The Lone Swordsman*, dealing with Lord Guan's solo visit to the Southland, makes reference to a surprising number of incidents, persons, and details found in the novel: the breakup of the Han empire; the relations between Emperor Xian and Dong Zhuo, as well as between Dong Zhuo and Lü Bu; the peach garden sacrifice and oath of brotherhood; the physiognomy of Lord Guan (phoenix eyes, red face, long beard); the battle at Tiger Trap Pass; the escape from Xuzhou (with Liu Xuande) to join Yuan Shao; the battle at Bowang; the killing of Che Zhou, Wen Chou, and Yan Liang; the killing of Cai Yang (by which Lord Guan proves his loyalty to his brothers); the Xiangyang banquet; holding off Cao Cao at Dangyang slope; the three trips to Sleeping Dragon Hill to find Kongming; the prelude to the battle at Red Cliffs (the beating of Huang Gai); Kongming's strategic ingenuity; Lord Guan's becoming governor of Jingzhou; Liu Bei's becoming king of Shu; Liu Bei's establishing his rule in Hanzhong; the conflict between Liu Bang and Xiang Yu that led to the founding of the Han dynasty. Another play, Gao Wenxiu's *The Meeting at Xiangyang (Xiangyang hui)*, develops the circumstances around Xuande's meeting with Shan Fu—a crucial fictional portion of the novel. So full a list of events from Yuan plays would suggest that early in the Yuan, audiences were familiar with a wide range of Three Kingdoms legends and saw Lord Guan as a central figure in those legends.

Lord Guan is also the principal fictional creation of the novel. The plot turns on him more than on any other character. The reader cannot lose the line of narrative so long as he knows what Lord Guan is doing at any given point. And Lord Guan's death, which triggers Liu Xuande's invasion of the Southland, is what drives the tale to its conclusion. After his death, Lord Guan's fictional essence is underscored by his return as a ghost. This shift to a supernatural mode could not have been effected with any other character such as Liu Bei, Kongming, Cao Cao, or Sun Quan because they are historical figures of real substance. Lord Guan can be brought back to life to affect events in the novel because he is made mostly of imaginary materials to begin with. Unlimited by historical reality, he is the novelist's to shape as he will.⁵³

The return of Lord Guan as a ghost is based on Guan Hanqing's other surviving Three Kingdoms play, *The Double Dream (Guan Zhang shuangfu xi Shu meng)*. In the play, Liu Xuande, now ruler of Shu, pines for his brothers, who are stationed far away. After they appear to him in a vision, he sends an envoy to Jingzhou for news. The envoy learns of Lord Guan's death. Zhang Fei has died at the same time (the historical Zhang Fei died two years after Lord Guan). Meanwhile, in Shu, Kongming withholds the news of Lord Guan's death, lest Xuande retaliate against the Southland. The soul of Lord Guan then meets the soul of Zhang Fei, and after decrying their unjust deaths to each other, they travel west together to urge Xuande to avenge them. The two ghosts are reunited with their living brother, who executes Mi Fang, Mi Zhu, Liu Feng, and Zhang Da, ending the last act.

In the novel, Lord Guan's soul returns to the world of the living (chapter 77) by undergoing a conversion at the hands of a Buddhist monk, Pujing (Universal Equilibrium). Pujing reproachfully reminds Lord Guan's new ghost of the many heads he took before losing his own. Lord Guan concedes the truth in Pujing's words, that is, that he has been justly repaid for his own acts. Through this recognition of Buddha's Law, Lord Guan transcends historical (and biographical) time and becomes a benign deity, his soul freed from the effects of his lifetime acts. From the mountaintop, Lord Guan can now recognize the unreality (*kong*) of the river of human events, the fearful symmetry of karma, and the chain of cause and consequence (or retribution), in which all other characters remain entrapped.

Once transcendent, he can render aid to those he deems wronged, like Sima Zhongxiang in the *PH* prologue.

Luo Guanzhong's novel culminated and synthesized many traditions, both historical and literary. It also eclipsed a number of its predecessors—as far as the literary public is concerned—in particular, the *PH* and Yuan Three Kingdoms drama. Most of the Three Kingdoms plays performed today are Ming or Qing works inspired by the novel.

LUO GUANZHONG AND HAN NATIONALISM IN THE YUAN-MING TRANSITION

In the Yuan period the Liu-Cao rivalry continued to have the kind of symbolic force— Han versus non-Han—that it did in the Southern Song-Gin period. But there were also variations on the theme.

Those Chinese (Southern Song loyalists above all) who saw the Yuan dynasty as a continuation of foreign rule—Mongols replacing the Jurchen rulers of the Gin dynasty— may well have maintained the preference for the Liu Xuande group. But the Mongols were first enemies and then conquerors of the Gin, and they may have shunned the connection with Cao Cao that the Gin had been proud to make. The Mongols may have wished to associate themselves with the Han side of this issue. Thus, the above-mentioned plays were not underground literature covertly directed against Yuan rule. To the contrary, plays sympathetic to the Liu Xuande group were welcomed by Mongol officials and performed at court. In the latter part of the dynasty the government paid homage to the Three Kingdoms heroes. In 1322, 1328, and 1340, the spirits of Kongming, Lord Guan, and Zhang Fei were honored as kings. These measures came at a time of increasing Han militance against Mongol rule, and the government sought to fortify its legitimacy by appropriating these nationalistic symbols.⁵⁴

The Three Kingdoms played a special role toward the end of the dynasty when the question of legitimating Yuan rule in relation to the three previous dynasties—Gin, Liao, and Song—was debated in Mongol ruling circles. The Mongol leader Toghto was in charge of a project to prepare a history of these three dynasties, and the solution he accepted was to treat none of them as legitimate, comparing them to the three kingdoms Wei, Wu, and Shu, which had been absorbed into the Jin. Those opposed to this treatment of the three pre-Yuan dynasties, however, most notably Yang Weizhen, sought to preserve the legitimacy of the Song as the basis of Yuan rule and relegated the Liao and Gin to the status of alien houses, treating them like the Xiongnu intruders led by Liu Yuan at the turn of the fourth century. Yang was punished for his theory, but his position was closer to the popular tradition of Liu legitimacy through the kingdom of Shu.⁵⁵

In the final years of the dynasty, anti-Mongol rebel leaders also used Three Kingdoms figures in their propaganda. The future first emperor of the Ming, Zhu Yuanzhang, when leading a Red Scarves peasant revolt in 1363, described the Mongol commander Wang Baobao in a letter: "With armored cavalry and crack troops, he holds the northern heartland in his thrall, his ambition no less bold than Cao Cao's."⁵⁶

When Zhu Yuanzhang founded the Ming dynasty in 1368, Han rule was restored over all China for the first time since 1127. Having overthrown the Yuan by force of arms, and therefore having no interest in depicting itself as a "successor," the Ming denied the legitimacy of Yuan rule. This denial led to a broader effort to restrict acknowledged legitimacy to the "Han" (or Chinese) dynasties of the past. "Hu Han... insisted on a distinction between Han and non-Han rule in adjudging legitimacy, thus repudiating the claim of the Mongol rulers.... Fang Hsiao-ju [Fang Xiaoru] espoused his theory on

legitimate succession... and included... racial and cultural superiority in addition to moral right and unified political control as bases of dynastic legitimacy."⁵⁷ That Zhu Yuanzhang turned to the Han and not the Song as his model dynasty may be explained by the fact that he broke with the group of anti-Mongol rebels who had rallied around the slogan of Song restoration, and sought to erase every trace of his connection with them. He may have been responsible for the death of one rebel leader, "Song Emperor" Han Lin'er in 1367.

The presumed author of *Three Kingdoms*, Luo Guanzhong, lived through these events of the Yuan-Ming transition. It would be satisfying if there were enough biographical information for a consensus about his life and its connection to the dramatic fall of the Yuan dynasty and the rise of the Ming. The information that exists, however, is so sparse and contradictory that there is no thesis, much less a consensus, on Luo's life, his political outlook, and their connection to the novel.

The earliest notice about Luo Guanzhong occurs in a Ming text called *Luguibu xubian* (Supplementary jottings on those who have died). In a brief text of some fifty or sixty words the writer says that in his youth he was a friend of a Luo Guanzhong much his senior (perhaps in his fifties), had last seen him in 1364, and now, more than sixty years later (i. e., after 1424), has no information concerning Luo's life or death. The account says that Luo rarely sought human society and was skilled in writing poems (*yuefu*, a genre typically used for social criticism) with implied significance. It mentions Luo's sobriquet, Huhai Sanren ("Wanderer by Lake and Sea"), but no given name (Ben, in some editions of the novel). The sobriquet, which suggests taking refuge in a time of adversity, may also explain the large number of places with which he is associated. Nothing is said of a novel called *Three Kingdoms* nor of any other prose or drama he might have authored; nothing is said of Luo Guanzhong's youth or middle age or of his political ambition.⁵⁸

Some scholars argue that Luo Guanzhong was deeply involved with the anti-Mongol leaders in south China and may have entered the service of one of them, Zhang Shicheng (fl. 1353-67), who controlled a considerable empire in the south. When Zhang transferred his allegiance to the Mongols, Luo Guanzhong (who may have tried to dissuade him) then turned to historical writing to express his political aspirations. This interpretation is based on a brief notice in the *Baishi huibian* (Collection of minor romances) by the Ming scholar Wang Qi: "Luo Guanzhong and Ge Kejiu were engaged in a quest for an ideal king to govern the empire; and they did encounter a true ruler. Subsequently... [Ge] gave himself to medicine and [Luo] to writing unofficial history."⁵⁹ The *zhenzhu* or "true ruler" was Zhang Shicheng, presumably. It is also possible that it was not Zhang Shicheng whose service Luo entered and left, but that of another rebel leader or even Zhu Yuanzhang himself.

Scholars who depict Luo as active in the anti-Mongol movement acknowledge that Luo Guanzhong shows little sympathy for peasant rebels in his novel, but they point out that the novel attributes the rebellion to corruption at court. As chapter 1 explains, Emperors Huan and Ling persecuted able and decent officials while they honored and trusted the eunuchs, who sold office and rank, employing only their relatives and punishing only their political foes. As a result, court administration worsened, the people murmured in discontent, and throughout the empire men's minds turned to thoughts of rebellion. The entire novel could then be seen as a study of the kind of leadership necessary to lead the people through a time of troubles to a reformed court and a reunified empire.

Another group, however, doubts that Luo Guanzhong was a partisan of the rebels. One such scholar explores the significance of Luo's connection with Ge Kejiu (alleged by Wang Qi) and also

his probable discipleship to the neo-Confucian scholar Zhao Baofeng. Both Ge and Zhao had participated in organized military action against the Red Scarves rebellion. Presumably, Luo Guanzhong would have been on the same side, the Mongol side; his novel, then, with its clear opposition to rebels, becomes a natural extension of his political position.⁶⁰

If Luo Guanzhong was in fact sympathetic to the pre-Ming rebel movements against the Yuan, or to one of those movements in particular, then the Song dynasty of 1355 should be considered. One Red Scarves leader in north China, Liu Futong, made Han Lin'er emperor of a new Song dynasty. The reign title declared was Long Feng; 1355 was the first year. But the movement was short-lived. In 1359 Mongol armies overwhelmed the new dynasty's forces and bases, driving Liu Futong and Han Lin'er into the arms of Zhu Yuanzhang; the Red Scarves movement in the north then declined, while in the south it developed new strength. There is nothing to connect Luo Guanzhong with this part of the Red Scarves movement, except that the reign title Long Feng, "Dragon and Phoenix," has an extraordinary prominence in the novel through symbolic association with Kongming (Sleeping Dragon) and his alter-ego Pang Tong (Young Phoenix, a minor but key figure). Also, from the standpoint of legitimism, it may be that Luo looked favorably on Song legitimacy even if he did not advocate restoration.

Perhaps one final speculation may be indulged in before we leave the unsolvable problem of the author and turn to the text of the novel itself, about which there a good deal more information. If the "true ruler" that Luo Guanzhong encountered was Zhu Yuanzhang, then it is possible that Liu Ji, one of Zhu's most important advisers, is the contemporary figure to which the portrait of Kongming refers.

According to his biography in the *Mingshi*, he had a broad and thorough knowledge of the philosophers and was almost supernatural in anticipating events. In discussing the shape of the empire, righteous honor was written on his face. Moreover, he was a master of astronomy and meteorology. "Zhao Tianze of Shu, in judging the men of the region below the Great River, named Liu Ji first, regarding him as a kind of Zhuge Kongming." Zhu Yuanzhang solicited his service many times before he finally emerged from the hills [to serve him], Liu Ji participated in the great battle at the Poyang Lakes, which resembles the battle at Red Cliffs. Zhu Yuanzhang called Liu Ji "My own Zifang."⁶¹

If Luo Guanzhong's "true ruler" was Zhu Yuanzhang, then the connection to the novel might lie in Zhu Yuanzhang's attempt to portray himself as an emperor after the model of Liu Bang, to whom he proudly compared himself. *Three Kingdoms* could be seen as celebrating the restoration of Han-like rule in China, as if perhaps Zhu Yuanzhang had fulfilled the mission that Liu Xuande and Kongming had left unfinished. Thus, the novel naturally builds upon the contradiction between Liu Bei and Cao Cao. As Qiu Zhensheng concludes his essay cited above,

An anti-Yuan position naturally drove Luo Guanzhong to accept all the more firmly the legitimism of a pro-Liu, anti-Cao view which had been taking shape since the Song and Yuan. For Luo to have affirmed Cao Cao would have been tantamount to affirming the legitimacy of the Yuan dynasty which occupied the northern heartland and extinguished the Song dynasty. Luo Guanzhong, who "strove for kingly government," could never have accepted this... and he poured his unrealized ideals into the figures of Liu Bei and Kongming, the sagely sovereign

and the able minister.⁶²

Perhaps at some future time this theory will be borne out. Even if it is finally determined that the novel (as many have argued) is not a product of the Yuan-Ming transition, but a product of the mid- to the late fifteenth century (that is, a generation or two before the first, 1522, edition), then Qiu's view may still have some relevance. Zhu Yuanzhang's victory over the Mongols in 1368 was decisive but not complete. From beyond the Wall, the Mongols continued to pose a serious military threat. In 1449 they inflicted a massive and humiliating defeat on the Ming armies in the battle of Tumu, capturing the Chinese emperor Ying Zong (who had led the offensive) and detaining him in Mongolia—covered with the dust of exile—for more than one year. (1449 was the last year of Ying Zong's reign period Zheng Tong, "Legitimate Rule.") This shocking event led to a resurgence of Han-nationalist hostility toward the Mongols and toward their non-Han predecessors.

In addition, the last half of the fifteenth century saw an upsurge of local peasant rebellion and a concentration of eunuch influence at court under Emperors Xiao Zong (r. 1488-1505) and Wu Zong (r. 1506-21). Such a climate might well have encouraged the composition of *Three Kingdoms*—it is after all a novel about the *end* of the Han—as a way to remind the Ming Chinese that the Han dynasty so admired by their founder fell and that the Ming might too if it did not maintain the policies of its founder. If such be the case, then the author of the novel chose to remain anonymous and used the name Luo Guanzhong for purposes unknown—perhaps to give the work an air of historical authority, perhaps because Luo had some minor fame as a writer of historical fiction and dramas and was a plausible choice, even if no other work attributed to Luo Guanzhong has anything like the scale, style, and structure of *Three Kingdoms*.

Once the tie between Luo Guanzhong and the novel is severed, many problems are eliminated, and arguments using internal criteria to establish dating can be put forward with greater assurance. A number of scholars have argued for a mid-Ming date (the latter half of the fifteenth century, say) on the grounds that at least a century would have had to pass to allow for the development from the *PH* and the drama to so magnificent a form. The most extensive and comprehensive presentation of a mid-Ming theory has been made by Andrew Plaks in the *Three Kingdoms* section of his *Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*. He argues that the affinities between *Three Kingdoms* and other mid-Ming novels like *Journey to the West* and *Shuihu zhuan* (Outlaws of the marsh) are sufficiently close to justify its being grouped with them. He points to the grand design of the novel, its subtle, finished style, and its self-consciously wrought texture as evidence that *Three Kingdoms* belongs to the literary tradition of the sixteenth century (or perhaps that it was one of the creators of that tradition).

The preceding discussion is intended as a general introduction for the Western reader to the historical and literary significance of *Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel*. If he has not already done so, the reader may wish to get into the novel itself at this point. The following, more specialized discussion of the text used for this translation, the Mao text of the mid 1660s, explores the political situation when the editors worked, the nature of their commentary, and the relationship of their text to the *TS* text.

We turn now from the Yuan-Ming transition of the mid-fourteenth century to the Ming-Qing transition of the mid-seventeenth century—that is, from the time when the author is alleged to have lived to the mid-1660s when the novel was put in its final form, the form which has eclipsed all other editions and become the universal edition, not only for the Chinese text but for all translations including the present one. Mao Lun and his son Zonggang were the editors of this universal edition. Mao Lun was probably the architect of the project, but as a convention, Mao Zonggang is often spoken of as the editor, though he may have been more an amanuensis.

Mao worked on an edition of the 1522 novel annotated by Li Zhi (Zhuowu); most scholars, however, believe that Ye Zhou, not Li Zhi, was the real annotator. Mao claimed to be revising the "Li" text on the authority of ancient source materials or *guhen*, such as the SGZ, the *Hou Han shu*, and the *Shishuo xinyu*. But he had far more than textual accuracy on his agenda. Mao took issue with many of Li Zhi's annotations, and his edition is as much a repudiation of Li Zhi's views as it is a revision of the novel itself.⁶³

Mao's work was twofold: he revised the actual text; and he added his own commentary to it. The revision entailed reducing the length of the novel by about one-sixth, from some 900 thousand characters to 750 thousand, mostly by removing original Han or Three Kingdoms documents and by smoothing out the narrative at various points. Mao changed, added, and deleted sometimes whole scenes, sometimes only a few words or phrases; he rewrote the chapter headings; and he reduced the number of poems highlighting the text from about four hundred to some two hundred, substituting in the process a number of Tang and Song masterpieces for the more conventional verse in the *TS*. Many significant passages that Mao altered are restored in the notes to this translation, but his stylistic improvements of unclear or wordy passages are not noted, nor in most cases are the deletions and substitutions of verse. However, Mao's tendency to remove lines in praise of Cao Cao's advisers and commanders—in particular his praise of Xun Yu (Wenruo) on the occasion of the latter's death—should be mentioned. According to one scholar, the *TS*'s thirty-four verses in praise of Cao's advisers and commanders were reduced to six by Mao Zonggang.⁶⁴

Aside from revisions of the novel's text, Mao provided a three-part system of commentary: first, the *dufa* (reading method), a lengthy essay on how to appreciate the novelist's narrative method, plus a *fanli* or list of major editorial changes; second, a one-page commentary introducing each chapter; third, the notes interspersed throughout the text of each chapter. This exhaustive system is an invaluable service to the reader and a fascinating example in its own right of literary criticism and aesthetic theory. The Mao edition seems to shift the history-fiction balance toward the "purely literary" end of the scale—literature as enjoyment rather than as lessons. Mao's notes often speak of the novel's literary devices as a means to enhance appreciation. For instance, in chapter 34 Mao writes: "The pleasure of reading: without panic, there is no pleasure; without anxiety, no relief; without tension, no relaxation." Mao also illuminates many subtle patterns of incident and characterization which serve to organize the voluminous and complex material in the novel and to create pleasing designs.

By contrast, didactic concerns dominate the 1494 and the 1522 prefaces that are omitted from the Mao edition. The 1494 preface by Jiang Daqi places the novel in the tradition of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (attributed to Confucius) and Zhu Xi's *Gangmu*, histories which mark the "rise and

fall of kingdoms" in a grand sweep of time while "preserving a moral judgment" in every turn of phrase. Not only is the novel a worthy successor to these works, Jiang Daqi says, it has the added virtue of reaching the broadest possible public (*tongsu*) with its message, which challenges the reader to reflect on how his own conduct measures up to the standards of loyalty and filial piety as they are fulfilled (or betrayed) in the novel. "Merely to read [*duguo*] it but not apply [its lessons] vigorously in one's own life," the preface says, "is inferior to [real] study [*dushu*]."

The author of the 1522 preface, Xiuran Zi, has a comparable lesson to offer: "[The reader] needs no laborious thought to realize that legitimate authority must be supported and usurpers removed; that the loyal, the filial, the self-disciplined, and the honorable are teachers of men, and that treacherous profit-seekers and craven flatterers must be eliminated. [The novel] does wonders for the moral atmosphere by establishing right and wrong clearly and completely before the [reader's] eyes."

In addition to his aesthetic interests, Mao Zonggang also had a powerful concern with moral and historical issues, particularly with the legitimacy of the Shu-Han dynasty and the superior claim of its founder, Liu Bei. Though most of the *dufa* explores the novel's literary technique, the essay begins with a statement on history and morality, a comparison of the three forms of succession: legitimate, transitional, and usurped. Mao then proceeds to distinguish lineage and territory as grounds for legitimacy. "Why deny legitimacy to the house of Wei? In terms of territory, [holding] the northern heartland is the main thing; but in terms of principle, Liu lineage is the main thing. Principle takes precedence over territory... and so Zhu Xi's *Gangmu* correctly legitimates Shu." Accordingly, as editor, Mao fortifies Liu Bei's claim to the Han mandate by sharpening the opposition between Liu Bei and Cao Cao and deleting lines that describe Cao Cao's better and Liu Bei's worse qualities.

If Mao Zonggang, too, was using the Liu Bei-Cao Cao contrast to serve certain political ends, a review of certain facts concerning the period when the Maos, father and son, prepared the *Three Kingdoms* text may be in order. Since little is known about the editors' lives or their views, any conclusions on this matter must remain in the realm of supposition and inference.

The Maos lived through the Ming-Qing transition—the decline of the Ming dynasty, and its fall in 1644 to the non-Han Manchu invaders. They witnessed the establishment of the Qing dynasty (the form of Manchu rule over China, as the Yuan was the form of Mongol rule), to which the Han Chinese continued to offer resistance. There were mass suicides, and there were massacres. One of the most notorious was a Manchu military action carried out in 1645 in Jiading, a city close to the Maos' hometown of Suzhou. At the same time, a Ming dynasty took shape around a survivor of the Ming imperial house. This dynasty never mounted a major challenge to Qing power, but it managed to survive in one form and place or another until 1683, when it ended its forty-year struggle against the foreign conquerors' rule.

There was much in the fall of the Ming to remind the Maos of the fall of the Han and the subsequent forty-year struggle of the Shu-Han kingdom. The Ming court had had a powerful eunuch faction (led by Wei Zhongxian) guiding the emperor and opposed by a body of scholar-bureaucrats (the Donglin group), a contest that undermined military solidarity and may well have recalled the *dang gu* proscriptions and persecutions of the late Han with which the novel opens. The last Ming reigns, like the last Han reigns, were plagued by a persisting pattern of peasant rebellion that, like the Yellow Scarves uprising, forced the dynastic government to divert resources sorely needed for northern border defense to internal control. From the north, where once the Xiongnu, Wuhuan, and

Xianbi made war and peace with their Han neighbors to the south, the Ming faced a military threat from the Manchus, a non-Han nation that in 1616 had created the Later Jin dynasty. The name Later Jin was used partly because many of the leaders traced their descent to the Jurchen and partly to remind the Chinese (the Jin used the particularly intimidating reign title Tian Ming, "Mandate of Heaven") that the Ming might suffer the same fate as the Northern Song after it fell to the Jin in 1127. The picture is completed by the formation after 1644 of the loyalist resistance movement (including Donglin scholars) around remnants of the Ming imperial line, later called the Southern Ming.⁶⁵

Thus, the issues and factors that brought about the Han-Three Kingdoms transition and also went into the making of the Three Kingdoms literary tradition and finally the novel itself, were again evident and interacting powerfully during the period of the Ming-Qing transition.

Scholars differ on how this affected Mao Zonggang. Some argue that his *Three Kingdoms* has a covert pro-Ming side. Others hold the contrary view, that the edition is designed to serve the purposes of the Manchu court. (A translation of the novel into Manchu was made in 1650 at the behest of the Qing court.) It is equally likely (and more in keeping with the overall mood of the novel) that the editor maintained an attitude of resigned but critical detachment rather than passionate advocacy with respect to the change of dynasty.

Far from making statements directly in support of the Southern Ming resistance, the editor seems to have taken steps to avoid offending the Manchus. For instance, Sun Jian, the founder of the Southland, is never called by his Han title (as he is in the TS), General Who Destroys the Barbarian (*polu*). The Manchus, who were trying to present themselves to the conquered Hans as a legitimate *Chinese* dynasty, objected to the word *lu* in any context as a xenophobic reference to themselves. Rather than offend the court, Mao eliminated the word from Sun Jian's and all other Southland titles. But Mao's superficial deference to Manchu dignity may have been required for the survival of his book, or himself. Any serious criticism of Qing rule would have to be indirect and ambiguous.

Ye Weisi and Mao Xin claim Mao Zonggang for the anti-Qing camp. They point to his comments in chapter 119 concerning Jiang Wei's false surrender to a Wei general as a ruse for saving the Shu-Han emperor. Mao Zonggang writes: "If Jiang Wei was overdoing it, does that mean Lu Xiu-fu was overdoing it, or Zhang Shijie, or Wen Tianxiang?" Why, Ye Weisi and Mao Xin argue, would Mao Zonggang bring up this famous trio of Southern Song resisters to the Mongols unless he meant to suggest his own support for Ming opponents of the Manchus, opponents such as Shi Kefa and Coxinga? If Mao Zonggang had such a hidden agenda, his comments in chapter 96 are also relevant: "You ask, why are southerners so deceitful? Don't you realize this is loyalty, not deceit? To fool an enemy is no deceit. To repay the king's love is loyalty. Say rather that the men of the south are full of loyalty, not deceit." Since northerners in the novel (Cao Cao for one) also practice deceit, it is difficult to account for this passage except as a cryptic reference to the ongoing struggle of the Southern Ming loyalists against the Manchu court.⁶⁶

Sharing this view of Mao Zonggang is Du Guichen. In a recent article he argues that Mao Zonggang's pro-Liu, anti-Cao stand was for pro-Ming, anti-Qing purposes and also that Mao Zonggang's formula "principle takes precedence over territory" obliquely drew resistance to the Manchu conquest into a context of resistance to foreign invasion from the Southern Song on. Du suggests a connection between the three mini-dynasties of the Southern Ming (1644-62) and the heroic Shu-Han kingdom, adducing a reply by Shi Kefa to a letter from the Manchu court. The Manchu regent Dorgon had demanded that the first Southern Ming emperor renounce his reign title and declare

himself a vassal of the Qing. Shi Kefa, a leading Southern Ming general, replied by placing that reign title, Hong Guang, in a line of imperial titles maintained defensively by Chinese emperors of the past, including Liu Xuande.⁶⁷

Another detail suggestive of Mao Zonggang's pro-Ming views is his use of lines by the poet Yang Shen (1488-1559) to set the stage for the novel. Yang Shen was the son of Yang Tinghe, a prime minister under Emperor Wu Zong (r. 1506-22). Yang Tinghe was famous for his efforts to block the eunuchs at court, but he fell afoul of Wu Zong's successor, Emperor Shi Zong (whose Jia Jing reign began in 1522), and lost his struggle against the eunuchs. In 1524 Yang Shen was exiled to Sichuan and spent the last thirty-five years of his life there. Looking back in the light of the Manchu conquest, Mao Zonggang may have seen the Yangs as prototypes of the high Ming period, genuine loyalists standing for the integrity of the court, men whose fall marked the dynasty's turn toward its doom. (Yang Shen's better-known contemporary Hai Rui was released from prison in 1567, only days after Emperor Shi Zong died.) Did Mao Zonggang have a political as well as a literary purpose in placing Yang Shen's poem (without attribution) at the front of his text?

Another figure relevant to the Mao edition is Jin Shengtan (1610? -61), a widely known literary critic who had succeeded in giving new life and importance to a number of popular works (and also to a selection Du Fu's poems) by providing them with extensive commentary. His method of annotation for *Shuihu zhuan* influenced the Mao commentary to *Three Kingdoms*. Jin Shengtan also had a political identity, and it eventually cost him his life. He participated in the Kumiao or Temple Protest incident of 1661, a demonstration in opposition to the Qing court's newly appointed magistrate of Suzhou and his program of punitive taxation. The Temple Protest came one year after Coxinga, on orders from the Southern Ming court, led a naval attack against Manchu forces. Even though the attack posed no serious threat, the government linked the Temple Protest to it as another instance of sedition. Like many involved in the protest, Jin Shengtan was executed. The larger purpose of the Manchu authorities' harshness was to impose social and economic discipline on the province of Jiangsu.⁶⁸

We do not know how Mao Zonggang felt about the death of his fellow townsman and literary inspiration. But his edition of *Three Kingdoms* bears a preface dated 1644 that is attributed to him. Most modern scholars doubt the date and the authenticity of this preface, arguing that Mao was trying to enhance the value of his book (and the prestige of his critical method) with the authority of the critic famed for his annotations to *Shuihu zhuan*. It seems difficult, however, to believe that Mao Zonggang could have honored a writer so recently executed by Manchu authorities in this way, and so the more likely possibility is that a later promoter added the name of Jin Shengtan.⁶⁹ There remains a significant minority of scholars who continue to accept the Jin Shengtan preface; its presence in any edition has a political undertone that is anti-Manchu, whatever the literary or commercial purposes of its inclusion.

It may never be known what these tantalizing hints add up to. Perhaps the largest clue is the story of *Three Kingdoms* itself with its reputation as a tale of heroes long associated with Han resistance to foreign occupation. That Mao Lun and Mao Zonggang chose to prepare and present this work twenty years into a foreign dynasty seems to support those scholars' arguing that the editors held pro-Ming, anti-Qing attitudes. Certainly the formula quoted above, "principle takes precedence over territory," which opens the *dufa*, could have given comfort to the Ming resisters: Manchu forces had squeezed them off the mainland by 1662 (the first year of the Kang Xi reign), leaving Taiwan province as the sole refuge for the redoubtable Coxinga.

If the Maos had pro-Ming attitudes, one might ask whether they were active sympathizers with the southern Ming loyalist dynasties or simply felt a passive nostalgia for the fallen regime. In an article published in 1989, Chen Xianghua has reprinted a short essay by Mao Zonggang that sheds a little light on this problem. The document is a colophon that Mao Zonggang wrote in 1709 for a volume containing the *juren* examination answer and handwritten testament of the Ming scholar-official Jiang Can. (Jiang Can died in 1661, the year that Jin Shengtan was executed.) Jiang Can was a principled Confucian and a sincere Ming loyalist. Mao Lun had been engaged by Jiang Can as a tutor for his eldest son's grandson, and so Mao Zonggang became friendly with some of the younger members of the Jiang family, especially Jiang Can's grandson Ming, another staunch loyalist. From the Maos' intimate association with the Jiang family, we may infer that at least the Maos were not enthusiastic supporters of the Qing dynasty.⁷⁰

The other side of the issue—that the Mao edition supports the Qing court—is also fortified with strong arguments. In the words of He Lei, who introduces the 1973 edition of the novel published by Renmin wenzue chubanshe:

Mao Lun and Mao Zonggang's revisions catered to the governors of the Manchu dynasty. The Manchu court regarded *Three Kingdoms* as an important book and had even had someone translate it into the Manchu language together with the Four Books [*Analects*, *Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, and *Mencius*]. In addition, the court lavished praise on Lord Guan as loyalty and honor incarnate... and propagandized for the theory of legitimate succession. The Manchu court tried to sell its slogan "Avenge the Ming," positioning itself as the legitimate successor to the Ming dynasty. It denied the legitimacy of the Wei dynasty, treating the Cao house as usurpers.⁷¹

He Lei's view, which many share, leads us to look into the ideological and psychological tactics of the Manchus in the decades before they assumed governmental power in China. In 1616 Nurhaci, later honored by the Manchus as the dynastic founder, established the Later Jin. In that political form he consolidated his nation's position, winning important battles against the other northern nations and also against Ming outposts. In 1626 Abahai succeeded Nurhaci. Beginning in 1629, Abahai campaigned successfully in the territory of China proper, and many Ming commanders and soldiers went over to the Manchus. By 1635 the Later Jin, ruled by the khan Abahai, had achieved a commanding superiority, having acquired the great seal of the Mongols in a victory over the Chahar branch.⁷²

Concomitantly, Abahai began preparing for the conquest of China by refashioning Manchu state organization along Chinese lines, copying certain aspects of Ming administration and assimilating certain elements of Chinese culture. This explains Manchu interest in *Three Kingdoms* and the four Confucian classics. In 1636, a turning point in China's history, Abahai changed his designation from khan to emperor (as Liu Yuan once had done at the beginning of the fourth century, before conquering the Jin); he changed his dynasty's name from Later Jin to Qing; and he changed his reign title to Honoring Virtue (implying "Things Chinese will be preserved").

The new reign title, Honoring Virtue (Chong De), served a symbolic purpose. Virtue refers not only to the rightness of Abahai's claim to rule China as emperor, but also to Five Agents theory, which explains the succession of dynasties in terms of a sequence of symbolic elements. The Manchus

used the element water in their dynasty name, Qing, and also in their national name, Manzhou (i. e., Manchu). This element suggests that they would "overcome" the Ming, which like the Han, ruled under the element fire.

The Manchus took these institutional and symbolic steps to deny their previous formal subordination to the Ming and to temper Chinese anxiety at the echo of the "foreign conquest of the Northern Song." The Manchus were also positioning themselves as the rightful successors to the Ming, bringers of a new order that would rescue China from corruption and rebellion, an order that would be fully recognizable and acceptable to the Chinese. And many Chinese did indeed accept Manchu rule, if only out of despair at the prospect of continued Ming rule. (Anti-Qing nationalism built upon a Ming restoration is a concept more of the nineteenth than the seventeenth century.) The small Southern Ming courts never became a serious force or a popular nationalist movement. In this perspective, He Lei's argument for the Maos' pro-Qing sympathy gains strength, and any analogy between the Southern Ming courts and the Shu-Han kingdom is weakened.

Another fact lending support to He Lei's position is the importance of Liu Bei to the Manchus as a symbol of their elder-brother relationship to the Mongols. According to an anonymous late Qing source:

The Manchus used *Three Kingdoms* as a means of exercising control over the Mongols. Even before the conquest, when [Abahai] first subjugated the various tribes of the inner Mongols he formed fraternal alliances with their khans. Using the oath in the peach garden of *Three Kingdoms* as a model, the Manchus identified themselves with Liu Bei and the Mongols with Lord Guan. After becoming emperor of China's heartland, [Abahai], fearing Mongol disaffection, enfeoffed Lord Guan [with many titles, including] sage and great emperor, in order to demonstrate his respect for the Mongols. At that time the Mongols revered no one more than Lord Guan, except their spiritual leaders, the lamas. And it is solely thanks to [the Manchu policy of honoring Lord Guan] that the Mongol vassals along the northern marches have remained loyal vassals for more than two hundred years, emulating Lord Guan's scrupulous devotion to Liu Bei.⁷³

According to this record, the novel had considerable importance to the Manchus before as well as after the conquest. The Maos therefore may well have been catering to their rulers' interests in preparing their edition. In 1650 the Manchus had *Three Kingdoms* translated into Manchu and required the elite youth to study it. The novel's political, military, and diplomatic information was useful for governing the Chinese; and the novel celebrated the fraternal ties that served as a model for Manchu relations with the Mongols. Or perhaps Liu Xuande stood for the quintessential Han Chinese leader in the Manchus' eyes (after their decision to become more "Chinese"), to whom non-Han nations could and would pay heartfelt homage. Considering how Xuande had represented Han resistance to non-Han conquerors, one might say that the Manchus had successfully appropriated an important symbol of the conquered.

At this point a simple question presents itself. If the novel really represented a pro-Ming position in the eyes of the Manchus, would they not have acted to censor it (as they censored *Shuihu zhuan* for advocating rebellion) instead of seizing on it as a useful instrument? It is not likely that the debate over whether the Maos were pro- or anti-Qing, or neither, can be resolved, but it is a tribute to the

thematic complexity of the novel that it can be used to support all three positions.

THREE KINGDOMS AS LITERATURE: THE MAO COMMENTARY

Mao Zonggang's comprehensive commentary on *Three Kingdoms* focuses on structure and character. He subdivides structure into larger and smaller, characters into major and minor. The *dufa*, Mao's analytical introduction, identifies six large narrative segments on which the novel is constructed. These "six beginnings" and "six endings" are:

[1] The reign of Emperor Xian begins when Dong Zhuo deposes his elder brother [Liu Bian, or Emperor Shao] and places him [Liu Xie] on the throne; it ends when Cao Pi usurps the [Han] throne. [2] The history of Shu begins when Liu Bei declares himself emperor in Chengdu; it ends with Liu Shan [Bei's son, Houzhu or Second Emperor] quitting the town of Mianzhu to surrender [to Wei]. [3] The story of the three brothers begins with the oath in the peach garden; it ends in Baidi with Liu Bei's last act, entrusting his son to the care of Zhuge Liang. [4] The story of Zhuge Liang begins with Liu Bei's three calls to his thatched hut; it ends with the six offensives he led against Wei from the Qishan hills. [5] The story of the kingdom of Wei begins with its first imperial reign period, Huang Chu, "Commencement of the Yellow" ; it ends with Sima Yan receiving the abdication of the last Wei emperor. [6] The story of the Southland begins when Sun Jian conceals the imperial seal; it ends when Sun Hao tenders the imperial seal to the Jin emperor [ending the novel].

These six narratives form the novel's framework.

As for the dominant characters, Mao Zonggang chooses three whom he calls incomparable (*jue*): Kongming, Lord Guan, and Cao Cao—the prime minister, the general, and the Machiavellian (or amoral, *jian*) hero. Mao does not need to mention Liu Xuande, since he is the pivotal figure around whom Kongming, Lord Guan, and Cao Cao orbit; the three incomparables define themselves in relation to Liu Bei. Thus, four biographies dominate the novel. Once these larger frameworks are understood, the reader can appreciate the novel's smaller-scale techniques of composition, the sequential plotting and the parallel and contrastive patterning that create its texture.⁷⁴

Causal sequences are of great interest to Mao Zonggang. In one passage of the *dufa* he discusses the author's practice of "probing the origins to find the source" :

The partition into three kingdoms stems from the rivalries among the various lords; these rivalries arose from Dong Zhuo's disruption of the dynastic succession; this disruption arose from He jin's summoning outside troops into the capital; the troops were summoned because of the tyranny of the Ten Eunuchs; the Ten Eunuchs, then, are the starting point. However, Liu Xuande's career does not start among the various lords, but rather among the marshland [i. e., outlaw] heroes who joined forces to fight for right and justice when the Yellow Scarves created turmoil in the land.

The narrative of *Three Kingdoms* thus has a second point of departure in the Yellow Scarves. But before they started their rebellion, Heaven sent down omens and portents as a warning; loyal counselors and wise planners gave blunt advice and unrestrained remonstrance because of what they foresaw. If only the sovereign had embodied that benevolent love that is

the mind of Heaven, accepted the sound judgment of elite vassals, and decisively thrust from him the Ten Eunuchs, then the Yellow Scarves would never have come into being, the heroes of the marshland would never have risen up, the various lords would never have resorted to arms, and the realm would not have been partitioned.

This search for causality is more than a literary device; it is a truism of Confucian political morality. On the authority of Confucius (*Analects*, 12. 11), the responsibility for disorder rests on those above: "If the king is not kingly, the vassals will not serve as [as vassals should]; if the father is not fatherly, the sons will not be filial." *Shuihu zhuan* similarly blames rebellion on misgovernment.

Another important technique that Mao Zonggang describes in the *dufa* is foreshadowing and aftereffect. Foreshadowing is "sleet seen before snow, thunder heard before rain. Something to be related formally and directly will be preceded by something informal or indirect.... The great fire that burned out Cao Cao in Puyang is preceded by the fire in Mi Zhu's house." Conversely, there are "ripples after the wave, showers after the storm.... Every extraordinary passage produces an after-pattern.... Liu Bei's three visits to Kongming are followed by Liu Qi's three visits to Kongming." Sometimes the most inconspicuous clue is inserted long before some great event,

a seed is planted many years in advance. The expert horticulturalist sows in anticipation of future growth. The chess master's casual play anticipates dozens of moves to come. The novel tells its story in much the same way. Liu Zhang, inspector of the Riverlands, is the son of Liu Yan. In the first chapter Liu Yan is mentioned before Liu Bei, planting long in advance the hint of Liu Bei's conquest of the Riverlands. Again, when Liu Bei campaigns against the Yellow Scarves, Cao Cao and Dong Zhuo make their entrances, preparing the way for Zhuo's overthrow of the legitimate emperor and Cao's monopoly of power.

The more one studies the patterns of the novel, the more it seems like a grand cathedral designed by an intelligence purposefully placing even the smallest, most innocent details, not only to create satisfying patterns but also to make a point or suggest a judgment.

Another technique Mao describes is contrast within categories:

The same tree has different branches, the same branch different leaves, the same leaf different blossoms, the same blossom different fruit.... Brothers in conflict include Yuan Tan and Yuan Shang, Liu Qi and Liu Zong, Cao Pi and Cao Zhi. The first pair died; of the second pair one died, one survived; of the third pair both survived.... Zhao Zilong saved Ah Dou [Liu Bei's son] twice: the first time on land, the second time on water; the first time receiving him from his natural mother's hands, the second time snatching him from his stepmother's grasp.

Mao Zonggang sees the novel patterned by repetitive incidents; he denies that this creates redundancy and speaks of the patterns as artfully contrived themes and variations.

Another aspect of the patterning is contrastive parallelism or "using the guest [i. e., the secondary figure] to enhance the host."

The brotherhood in the peach garden is preceded by the story of the three Yellow Scarves brothers. The former is the host, the latter the guest.... The story of He Jin is preceded by the

story of Chen Fan and Dou Wu [the novel's opening scene describes their efforts to free the court of eunuch influence]. Alongside the brilliance of Liu Bei, Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, Cao Cao, and Sun Jian [the kingdom-founders] one finds the mediocre lords of the various garrison towns. When Liu Bei is about to meet Kongming, he first encounters Sima Hui, Cui Zhouping, and others, who serve to set the stage for Kongming. Xu Shu [i. e., Shan Fu] and Pang Tong also serve as foils for Kongming, who advised two emperors [Liu Bei and his son Liu Shan]; Xu Shu comes early and departs swiftly, and Pang Tong comes late but predeceases Kongming. Zhao Zilong first served Gongsun Zan,... Ma Chao first served Zhang Lu, Fan Zheng and Yan Yan first served Liu Zhang. All eventually transferred their allegiance to Liu Bei, [lending him luster],... Regarding the theory of succession by abdication—Li Su used it to deceive Dong Zhuo, but Cao Pi made it real, and so did Sima Yan; Dong Zhuo was the guest, Cao Pi and Sima Yan the hosts. Places as well as persons can serve as host and guest. When Emperor Xian moved from Luoyang to Chang'an, then back to Luoyang and finally to Xuchang, Xuchang was the host, Chang'an and Luoyang the guests. When Liu Bei lost Xuzhou and then gained Jingzhou, Xuzhou was the guest, Jingzhou the host; then when he gained the Riverlands and lost Jingzhou, the Riverlands became the host, Jingzhou the guest.

The host-and-guest technique and the similar technique of contrast within categories are basically spatial. Mao also mentions a temporal or dynamic technique called *bian* (surprise or reversal):

As the poet Du Shading [Du Fu] says, "Clouds—one moment like white clothes in mid-heaven, the next a gray dog." This line speaks of the unfathomable events of this world.... He Jin started out plotting to execute the eunuchs, but in the end they killed him.... Liu Bei began by following Yuan Shao to chastise Dong Zhuo and ended up helping Gongsun Zan against Yuan Shao. At first Liu Bei wanted to aid Xuzhou, but finally he took over the province himself.

Mao Zonggang enumerates dozens of such reversals and, judging by the length of the list, looked on reversal as the main dynamic of the novel's narratives.

In addition to metaphors of gardening, weather, etiquette, and chess, Mao Zonggang draws on landscape painting to describe the novel's manner of composition:

Horizontal clouds transect mountains, bridges enclose streams. Certain segments are suited for continuous, others for discontinuous narration. Lord Guan's killing five of Cao Cao's pass guards, Liu Bei's three calls to Kongming's thatched hut, Kongming's seven captures of Meng Huo—all show the author's genius for continuous narration. Kongming's angering Zhou Yu three times, his six offensives from the Qishan hills, and the nine expeditions against the north—all show the author's genius for discontinuous narration. Shorter segments require continuous treatment for coherence; longer segments would fatigue the reader unless broken up with other material.

Another painting technique bears mention here: "Close hills are done with heavier strokes, distant trees with lighter ones." This describes the author's use of different emphases for foreground and background detail.

These are the principal aspects of *Three Kingdoms* composition as analyzed in the *dufa* of Mao Zonggang. To show in fuller detail Mao's method of analysis in practice, the annotations to this translation draw on many of Mao's chapter introductions and interlinear commentary. A number of Chinese scholars (and some Western readers, too) have found the novel's techniques of patterning obvious or burdensome. Some may feel the novel is redundantly structured. The author had to bring order to historical material of great volume and complexity, however, and this may explain his reliance on a variety of transparent organizing devices. In much the same way, Shakespeare resorted to rather transparent parallelisms and contrasts in writing the three Henry VI plays. If Luo Guanzhong's penchant for organization was his way of grappling with a wealth—if not a surplus—of material, the authors of *Shuihu zhuan* and *Journey to the West* were not so burdened, and therefore could give freer rein to their imaginations, unleashing their powers of invention to the full. The resulting spontaneity, many have found, makes these novels more appealing and sets them apart from *Three Kingdoms*. Mao Zonggang, however, contests this view, closing his *dufa* with the claim that *Three Kingdoms* surpasses *Shuihu* and *Journey to the West* because of its fidelity to the historical record. Mao is thinking along the same lines as Han Feizi when he remarked that it is easier to draw a demon than a man because demons do not exist and no one knows what they look like, while everyone knows what men look like. Perhaps this was the test—transforming a stretch of all too familiar history into literary art—that the author faced and passed.

We proceed now to consider how some of the major characters have been recast in the Mao edition, bearing in mind that we are dealing with shifts of emphasis within generally similar portraits.

KONGMING IN MAO ZONGGANG'S EDITION

The *dufa* says, "*Three Kingdoms* has three superlative portraits: Zhuge Kongming's, Lord Guan's, and Cao Cao's." Before comparing the Kongming of the Mao edition with the Kongming of the *TS*, certain thematic differences between the two editions of the novel should be noted. Both editions uphold the cause of Liu Xuande's legitimacy and treat Cao Cao as a tyrant and usurper, though the Mao edition, as noted elsewhere, consistently tries to sharpen the contrast, even at the expense of historical fidelity to the *SGZ* and *ZZTJ*. However, the two editions do not justify Liu Xuande's legitimacy in quite the same way. The *TS* gives priority to virtue (*de*) over Liu lineage; the Mao edition does not. Six times, and in six different contexts, the *TS* states, "The empire belongs to no one man but to all in the empire." The import of this motif, whether expressed or implied, is that "he who has virtue should rule." Mencius expressed similar reservations about making the rights of the blood heir absolute when he said, "Any man can be a [sage-king like] Yao or Shun."

Mao Zonggang cannot accept a formula that advocates nonlineage legitimacy. Therefore, he removes from his edition each of the six occurrences of the phrase "The empire belongs to no one man." For Mao, virtue can never displace lineage, and the figure of Liu Xuande does not require him to confront the possibility of a contradiction between virtue and lineage. Mao's opening statement in the *dufa* that lineage, not territory, determines legitimacy has already been cited. True to that principle, Mao says in his introduction to chapter 80: "In judging Liu Bei's accession to the imperial throne, having a Liu succeed a Liu meant simply that the throne was properly [*shun* as opposed to *ni*] won and properly held." Despite their differences on the basis of legitimacy, both editions of the novel uphold Liu Xuande's Shu-Han kingdom, not the Cao-Wei dynasty, as the rightful heir of the Han

dynasty. Accordingly, both editions (and the *PH* as well) protect Xuande's humane image by not including the protest of one Shu-Han official, Fei Shi, to his enthronement as emperor in Shu-Han, though the historical texts, the *SGZ* and the *ZZTJ*, record the protest.⁷⁵

Between the *TS* and the Mao edition the portrait of Kongming varies more significantly than does the portrait of Liu Xuande. Broadly put, the *TS* moves Kongming away from the magic-working immortal of the *PH* and the Yuan plays and back toward the historical figure of the *SGZ*, who, though virtuous, resembles at moments Machiavelli or Clausewitz (and has a touch of da Vinci's engineering genius). The Mao edition portrays Kongming the worthy and able minister (*xianxiang*) by accenting his humane values (*ren* and *yi*), values most closely associated with Xuande. Mao removes from Kongming's portrait most traces of the amoral calculation usually associated with Cao Cao.

Kongming's life is the heart of both editions. Of the *TS*'s twenty-four sections covering one hundred and thirteen years, fourteen are devoted to the last twenty-seven years of Kongming's life (A. D. 207-34); the other eighty-five years flanking this period take up the remaining ten sections of the *TS*. The novel's portrait of Kongming is well-founded in the sources, above all in Chen Shou's *SGZ* and Pei Songzhi's accompanying notes. Among the highlights in the early records are the intellectual powers of the young Kongming; his political aspirations and models; his life in seclusion before Liu Xuande's visit; his analysis of the state of the empire for Xuande; his arranging an alliance with the Southland to defeat Cao Cao; his role in guiding Xuande to the occupation of Jingzhou, the conquest of Shu, and the creation there of the kingdom of Shu-Han (the Riverlands); his regency over Liu Shan after Xuande's death; and his campaigns against the Southern Man and the northern kingdom of Wei. These historical and biographical essentials are preserved in the novel. Kongming's domination of the novel reflects his importance in the *SGZ*.

The virtues the novel ascribes to Kongming also have ample historical basis: his loyalty to his lieges; his untiring dedication to the cause of the Han; his ability in civil and military administration; his strategic insight; his receptivity to the views of subordinates; his personal humility and willingness to accept responsibility for failure; his fairness in applying the law and assigning reward and punishment; his skill as an inventor; and his honorable refusal to use his position to enrich himself. Chen Shou had the highest regard for Kongming the statesman and prime minister of Shu-Han, though he mentions that field tactics were not his forte. And Chen Shou records the high esteem in which the populace of Shu-Han held the prime minister after his death. Kongming consummated the classical Confucian ideal of the conjunction of great virtue (*de*) and talent (*cai*).

Evaluations of Kongming have usually transcended the vicissitudes of the Wei-Shu legitimacy debates. In his own time, key advisers to Cao Cao, Jia Xu, and Liu Ye praised Kongming for his skill in administering Shu. In later times, Kongming was honored even by those who did not advocate the cause of Shu-Han against Wei. Li Shimin, the second Tang emperor, spoke of Kongming's excellence as a prime minister despite having to serve under a weak ruler. And the Northern Song reformer, Wang Anshi, dedicated a poem of praise to him. Nevertheless, the historical Kongming was not without his faults and limits, as we shall see.

When we leave the realm of history to turn to the *PH*, we find a superhuman Kongming, a "godlike immortal" (*shen xian*) with magic powers. At the time of his first meeting with Liu Xuande, he is introduced as a controller of winds and rain, a conjurer of illusions, and a transformer of phenomena, a man who can change beans into soldiers and create a river with a wave of his sword. Perhaps these fictions served to offset the suspicion that he was somewhat wanting as a military tactician. The *PH*

as well as Yuan drama develop the image of a leader no less capable in military tactics than in political and diplomatic strategy. Luo Guanzhong drew mainly on the historical record for his portrait of Kongming; but he also drew on the *PH*, carrying enough of the *PH* magician over into the *TS* to justify the twentieth-century writer Lu Xun's remark that Luo Guanzhong's Kongming is a man of "much wisdom though verging on wizardry."⁷⁶ The trait that the Mao edition accents is "much virtue." In the *dufa*, Mao Zonggang says, "In the long annals of our history, worthy and able ministers stand thick as trees, but the name Kongming towers over all throughout the ages."

Mao Zonggang had a special problem with the character of Kongming. The edition of the *TS* that he worked on had been annotated by an editor explicitly hostile to Kongming. As Mao says in the sixth of his *fanli* or explanations: "The *su* edition, erroneously attributed to Li Zhuowu but actually from hands unknown, contains many insults against Zhao Lie [i. e., Liu Bei] and condemns the Martial Lord Kongming. We have removed all such remarks and replaced them with new, corrected commentary." What negative aspects of Kongming's portrait did Mao revise?

The "Li" edition's gravest charge against Kongming is that he plotted to usurp the Shu-Han kingdom and thus acted the part of a traitor, like Cao Cao, rather than that of a loyal minister to Liu Bei. The "Li" edition's commentary in chapter 80 says, "Underneath, Cao Cao and Kongming are one of a kind if different in style, with Kongming, it seems, always a move ahead." The cause of this harsh comment is Kongming's active role in the killing of Liu Feng, the only potential rival to Liu Shan as Liu Bei's heir. "Liu Feng was a loyal servant and a filial son," the "Li" edition argues in its annotation to chapter 79. "Liu Bei had him killed unwittingly, so his crime may be forgiven. But Kongming acted knowingly, so no punishment is harsh enough for him."

The story of Liu Feng's downfall reveals differences in the way Kongming appears in different texts. Shortly before his first meeting with Kongming, Liu Bei arrived in Jingzhou and adopted Feng from the Kou family (Feng's natural father was the lord of Luo; see chapter 36). According to the SGZ, Liu Bei had no children at the time of the adoption. Nevertheless, the *TS* and the Mao edition both place the adoption of Liu Feng *after* the birth of Ah Dou (Liu Shan) to Lady Gan.⁷⁷ The importance of which brother is elder will shortly be evident.

Eclipsed by Ah Dou, Liu Feng plays little part in the novel until Liu Bei establishes Shu-Han. By that time Feng is in his thirties and distinguishing himself as a field commander. The succession question remains unsettled until near the end of Liu Bei's life.

The story of Liu Feng's downfall (chapter 79) begins when Liu Bei becomes king of Hanzhong and, as a king must, names his heir apparent: Liu Shan (chapter 73). Kongming's anxieties about a challenge to this decision are recorded in Liu Feng's biography. "Kongming feared that Liu Feng would prove stubborn and assertive [*gang meng*] and difficult to control in the next reign, so he convinced Liu Bei to get rid of him."⁷⁸ This information about Kongming, a consistent supporter of Liu Shan, is not to be found in either edition of the novel, which connects Liu Feng's downfall to Lord Guan's plight in Jingzhou and Liu Feng's doom to Lord Guan's death (chapter 77).

Here is the novel's version of the circumstances: during the time when Lord Guan is hunted down, captured, and finally executed by Sun Quan, Liu Feng and Meng Da are the only ones in a position to send a rescue mission to try and save Lord Guan. Liu Feng and Meng Da have been posted as commanders to the eastern reaches of the Shu-Han kingdom and thus are close to Jingzhou, Lord Guan's sphere. But Liu Feng is either unwilling or unable to send help. Perhaps he refuses because he knows Lord Guan spoke for Liu Shan as Liu Bei's heir. Whatever Liu Feng's motives, when Liu Bei

receives a report blaming Liu Feng and Meng Da for the death of Lord Guan, he and Kongming are too angry to forgive, and they have Liu Feng executed when he returns to Chengdu; Meng Da defects to Wei soon after Lord Guan is killed.

When he defects, Meng Da writes a letter to Liu Bei explaining his change of masters. The letter is preserved in both editions of the novel. Meng Da also writes to Liu Feng urging him to defect, but Liu Feng hotly rejects the proposal, exclaiming, "This villain would break the bond between nephew and uncle and sunder the love of father and son, making me disloyal and unfilial." So saying, Liu Feng destroys the letter, executes the courier, and goes forth to challenge Meng Da to battle. His stand, however honorable, fails to save him when he returns to Chengdu.⁷⁹

Both editions of the novel have the basic story, but only the *TS* has Meng Da's letter urging Liu Feng to follow him and defect. The contents of the letter suggest Mao Zong-gang's motive for not including it. Meng Da appeals to Liu Feng by criticizing Liu Bei's choice of successor: "The selection of Ah Dou [Liu Shan] as heir apparent bitterly disappointed men of discernment.... Turmoil and ruin have ever sprung from the changing of the heir apparent." The letter moves on from the Shu-Han succession question to argue the superiority of natural to adopted parenthood: "Now, for one to abandon his [natural] parents to become another's heir violates tradition.... If someone of your ability were to give up his status and come east to resume the place of heir to the lord of Luo [Feng's natural father], it could not be a betrayal of a parent."⁸⁰

Even allowing for Meng Da's special pleading, this letter's argument fits the official record: Liu Bei and Kongming decided to get rid of Liu Feng in order to clear the way for the chosen heir, Liu Shan, to succeed Liu Bei as emperor of Shu-Han without a challenge from the only credible rival. And the result of Liu Shan's accession as Second Emperor was that "every governmental matter in Shu-Han, great or small, was decided by Kongming."⁸¹ Thus, the question of Liu Bei's succession, which the Mao edition suppresses, is openly handled in the *TS*, even if some relevant material in the *SGZ* is omitted. Once again the 1522 *TS* proves to be closer to the original record, while the Mao edition tends to develop its own moralizing fictions on certain points.

Mao Zonggang wanted to keep the focus off Liu Feng's status as Liu Bei's son and on his conflicts with Meng Da (whose defection was partly Feng's fault) as well as on his failure to rescue Lord Guan. Mao omitted any material about Liu Bei and Kongming that might have compromised their portraits as embodiments of traditional Confucian values such as virtue (*de*) and humanity (*ren*), the factors of legitimacy. It may be remembered at this point how often the novel makes an issue of the consequences of tampering with succession by the eldest son. Thus, Mao Zonggang's handling of the Liu Feng incident is in keeping with his advocacy of Liu-lineage legitimacy.

Nevertheless, if there is measurable distance between the 1522 *TS* and the Mao edition on certain key questions, their common distance from the *SGZ* is greater. The *SGZ* treats the Cao-Wei dynasty as legitimate, while the two editions of the novel take the pro-Liu, anti-Cao position. Accordingly, both editions omit the express objections of Fei Shi, a leading Shu-Han courtier, to Liu Bei's assumption of the throne, a step Kongming had strenuously advocated.

Mao Zonggang exercised great care in reworking the image of Kongming into an ideal; indeed, this transformation of Kongming may be considered the heart of the difference between the Mao edition and the *TS*. Their divergence is revealed again in the way they treat the case of the Shu commander Wei Yan. Although submerged in the novel, Wei Yan (see chapters 41 and 53) contributed as much to the cause of the historical Shu-Han as Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, or Zhao Zilong.

When Kongming leaves Jingzhou to join Xuande in Shu-Han, he places Lord Guan in charge of the province. When Xuande declares himself king of Hanzhong and departs for Chengdu, he places Wei Yan in charge of the region. The Hanzhong region, a buffer between Shu-Han and the north (or more specifically the Chang'an region) is no less important to Xuande than Jingzhou is. Zhang Fei has privately been expecting to assume control over Hanzhong when Liu Bei leaves, but Bei appoints Wei Yan instead, to the army's amazement. This is noted in the *SGZ* but not in the novel.⁸²

Wei Yan is a member of Kongming's inner circle and plays a prominent role in the last series of campaigns against the north. His proposal before one of these campaigns is famous. Wei Yan urges Kongming to strike Chang'an directly, but Kongming chooses instead to maneuver around from Longyou in the west. Later, many think that Kongming might have taken Chang'an had he heeded Wei Yan's advice. Wei Yan comes to prominence after the old guard—Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Zilong—die. Most important, Wei Yan supports Kongming's war policy, which the emperor has some doubts about.

Still and all, Kongming does not trust Wei Yan. "He has treason in his bones," is Kongming's judgment. (The only basis for this in the *SGZ* is a remark by Sun Quan that Wei Yan may prove unreliable after Kongming dies.) And so Kongming attempts to get rid of Wei Yan in the course of his surprise attack on Sima Yi in the Shangfang Gorge. Kongming uses Wei Yan to draw Sima Yi into the gorge, where a fiery ambush has been set, but a sudden downpour quenches the flames and enables Sima Yi to escape. Wei Yan would have perished too but for the rains.⁸³ Afterward, Wei Yan protests that Kongming tried to kill him, an accusation found in the *TS* but not in the Mao edition.⁸⁴ Kongming then arranges to have Wei Yan executed after his death.

At the time of Kongming's death, Wei Yan has the vanguard. He wants to send Kongming's body home and continue the campaign. He is ordered to turn the van into the rearguard, however, and protect a general retreat. Wei Yan refuses this order, and a leadership crisis erupts on the field. It may be that Kongming thought the army should rest after his death. It may be that Kongming feared his van leader might simply go over to the enemy. It may be that it suited the novelist's purpose to emphasize a crisis over Kongming's successor.

Whatever the problem, the editor of the "Li" edition of the *TS* uses the incident to attack Kongming: "Kongming is no follower of the kingly way, if only because he contrived to murder Wei Yan... If Wei Yan had committed a crime, why did he not make it public, why did he treat Wei Yan like a Sima?"⁸⁵ Mao Zonggang drops the paragraph in which Wei Yan accuses Kongming of trying to kill him. Moreover, Mao assumes that Wei Yan is a potential traitor: "Kongming anticipated Wei Yan's rebellion and got rid of him before he could act; this shows wisdom... Once Wei Yan rebelled, Shu-Han would have a foe in Wei Yan as great as Sima Yi. When Wei Yan burned the cliffside walkway, when he attacked Nanjun, had the northerners found out and turned back, the fate of Shu-Han would have been sealed."⁸⁶

Readers of historical conscience may feel that Wei Yan has been wronged when they turn to the biography that follows Wei Yan's in the *SGZ*, that of Yang Yi, Wei Yan's rival.⁸⁷ Yang Yi had expected to succeed Kongming as the prime minister of Shu-Han, but Jiang Wan was chosen instead. Indignantly, Yang Yi said he should have defected to Wei when Kongming died. Since Yang Yi is the source of the accusation of treason against Wei Yan, the charge becomes suspect.

To clarify the difference between the portrayal of Kongming in the *TS* and in the Mao edition has required taking up some of the minor figures of the last sixteen chapters, the chapters after Kongming's

death. The temptation to ignore these chapters as anticlimactic should be resisted. The fate of the epigones of the brilliant circle of leaders around Liu Xuande—the sons of Lord Guan and Zhang Fei, Wei Yan, Jiang Wan, and so on—is a part of the novel's aesthetic effect. After Kongming dies, the landscape flattens out: glorious heroes are replaced by lesser figures, and the epic drama subsides into a largely historical account, though military heroics are still part of the story. But in the last chapter, chapter 120, we find the final twist on heroic militarism: the Jin conquest of the Southland is carried out by commanders who have little interest in their campaign and continually think up excuses to defer it, while the southern forces are so weak that the feeblest push by the northern army suffices to consummate the conquest.

There is a third variation worth noting in the two editions of the novel. The Shu-Han campaigns against the Wei dynasty—Kongming's "six offensives from the Qishan hills," followed by Jiang Wei's "nine offensives against the heartland"—are treated a little more critically in the *TS* than in the Mao edition. The *SGZ* records no full-scale debate in the Riverlands on the pros and cons of waging war against the Wei dynasty, only traces of discontent with the policy. The *TS* retains more of these traces, whereas the Mao edition removes almost all of them. The notes to the translation indicate some of the differing passages. By contrast, the novel does contain the full-scale debate on the pros and cons of war that raged in the Southland when Cao Cao's grand army stood at the Yangzi some two decades earlier; for this debate, the novelist was able to draw on the more ample account in the *SGZ*.

In conclusion, the consensus of scholars (with which the translator agrees) is that the *TS* is more comprehensive and perhaps franker in presenting political facts and historical material than the Mao edition, but the Mao edition is the superior literary work, even if an occasional scene in the *TS* is more effective. Undoubtedly, it is mainly for reasons of artistic excellence that the Mao edition eclipsed the older *TS* and remains today the unquestioned favorite, even after the *TS* was republished in a popular edition in 1975. The Mao edition, with most of the Mao notes, was republished in paperback in 1981 by the Inner Mongolia People's Press (Nei Menggu renmin chubanshe). Thus there is continuing contemporary interest in Mao's critical commentary. Some readers, of course, will prefer the *TS* for its more contradictory portraits, its rougher narrative style, and its abundance of documentary material. Most seem to prefer the more streamlined writing and more smoothly drawn characters of the Mao edition.⁸⁸

NOTES TO "ABOUT *THREE KINGDOMS*"

1. *Guo* is conventionally translated "kingdom" in the phrase *Sanguo* (three kingdoms). The same word is an adjective in the phrase *guojia*, where it means "ruling"; *jia* means "family." *Guojia* referred to the ruling house or more often to its head, the emperor. His realm was called *tianxia*, "all under Heaven," i. e., "the empire." The English word "dynasty" refers primarily to the ruling line but may also suggest the territorial dimension (i. e., *guojia* plus *tianxia*).

2. The dubious hypothesis of a Song date is refuted in an article by Zhang Guoguang, who argues for a mid-Ming date. See his "*Sanguozhi tongshu yanyi chengshu yu Ming zhongye bian*," in *YJJ*, pp. 266-79. Arguments for a mid-Ming date may also be found in Andrew Plaks, *Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 361-495.

3. See Ouyang Jian, "Shilun *Sanguozhi tongshu yanyi* de chengshu niandai," in *YJJ*, p. 291.

4. The *Sanguo* scholar Liu Zhijian, who accepts Luo Guanzhong as the novel's author, has

suggested that the *Xinke quanxiang Sanguozhi zhuan* in the Beijing Library may reflect a pre-1522 version. See his "Congxin pingjia *Sanguo yanyi*," in *YJJ*, p. 4.

5. From Zhang Xuecheng's *Zhangshi yishu waibian*, cited in *ZLHB*, pp. 691-92. The entire quote reads: "Other historical novels [*yanyi*]... record historical facts; the *Journal to the West* and *Jin Ping* category is pure fiction. Neither [genre] causes any harm. But *Three Kingdoms* is seven parts fact and three parts fiction; this causes readers constant confusion over the peach garden oath, and so on. Even scholars and eminent men take such events as [real] precedents.... Fact and fiction should not be scrambled as they are in *Three Kingdoms*."

6. *Three Kingdoms: China's Epic Drama*, by Lo Kuan-chung, translated and edited by Moss Roberts (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976).

7. A critique of the Mao edition may be found in Ning Xiyuan's essay, "Maoben *Sanguo yanyi* zhimiu," *Shehui kexue yanjiu*, 1983, no. 4: 40-46. An appreciation of the literary merits of the Mao edition may be found in Ye Lang, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo meixue* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1982), pp. 120-53.

8. The most common name for the novel, *Sanguo yanyi*, is an abbreviation. The exact title of the 1522 edition is *Sanguozhi tongsu yanyi*. *Sanguozhi* is the title of the official dynastic records (*zhi*) compiled by Chen Shou (A. D. 233-97). By including the title *Sanguozhi* in the title of the novel, the novelist acknowledges his debt to the historian Chen Shou. *Tongsu* is usually translated "popular" ; but judging from how the term is used in the prefaces, it seems to be a verb-object, not an adjectival, compound, and hence should be translated "reaching the masses." The Mao edition, following the "Li Zhuowu" edition of the *TS*, drops the term *tongsu*, leaving *Sanguozhi yanyi* as the complete title. An interpretation of *yanyi*, literally "continuous development of the significance or the message," is suggested later in this essay.

9. Xuande is Liu Bei's courtesy name or style; hereafter styles will appear in parentheses after personal names. Certain key characters are called by their styles in this translation.

10. *SGZ*, p. 872. The Chinese is *de ren xin*.

11. Lu Xun, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shi lue*, cited in *ZHLB*, p. 523. The Chinese reads *zhanghou er siwei*. See Lu Hsun, *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, trans. Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), p. 158.

12. In the novel, the Wei-Shu conflict is primary, with Wu controlling the balance; the conflict between Wei and Wu is secondary, and so is the conflict between Shu and Wu. Historically, the conflict between Wei and Wu was primary, and Shu was the lesser factor, though it controlled the balance between Wei and Wu. Making Shu the moral pivot of the tale is an important fictional change; it is a change that echoes the "Spring and Autumn" tradition of history writing, by which Confucius allegedly made the relatively minor kingdom of Lu (his home state) central to his account of the Spring and Autumn era (722 to 481 b. c.). Because Lu preserved something of the Zhou dynasty's tradition of sagely government, the kingdom could serve as a standard for judging all the figures of the era.

13. *TS*, p. 574; the entire line is deleted in chapter 60 of the Mao edition. The first phrase, "The empire belongs to no one man but to all" is spoken on six crucial occasions in the *TS* and dropped each time in Mao's edition. The notes to this translation mark each instance.

14. *ZLHB*, pp. 691-92.

15. The accepted explanation for Chen Shou's formal acknowledgment of Wei's legitimacy is

that he was a subject of the Jin when he wrote the *SGZ* and that Jin's legitimacy (the Sima received the abdication of the last Cao-Wei emperor in a. d. 265) depended on the legitimacy of Wei's succession to Han. Some scholars, however, have argued that though Chen Shou had to legitimate Wei, he may actually have had some sympathy for Shu. Small signs suggest this possibility. For example, though both the Shu ruler and the Wu ruler are called *zhu*, the name Bei (of Liu Bei) is marked as taboo (an imperial courtesy) while the name Quan (of Sun Quan) is not so marked. Also, the Shu biographies are placed second, not third, in the *SGZ*. Further discussion of this matter may be found in William Hung's preface to the *SGZ* index, *Sanguozhi ji Pei zhu zonghe yinde*, Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Series, no. 33 (Beiping: Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1938). See Miao Yue et al., *Sanguozhi daodu* (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1987), pp. 1-14; and also Liu Jinghua and Hui Ying, "Chen Shou pingjia Zhuge Liang qubi bian," in Chengdushi Zhuge Liang yanjiuhui, ed., *Zhuce Liang yan-jiu* (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1985), pp. 192-201.

[16.](#) A list of twenty of the sources in Pei's notes that most influenced Luo Guanzhong may be found in Chen Zhouchang, "*Sanguo yanyi xingcheng guocheng lunlüe*," in *YJJ*, p. 307. Another important influence on Luo Guanzhong was Liu Yiqing's *Shishuo xinyu* of a. d. 430, translated by Richard B. Mather as *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976). Notably, both the *Shishuo* and *Three Kingdoms* open with stories about Chen Fan, the scholar who was purged for criticizing the eunuchs. Luo Guanzhong may also have taken a key component of Kongming's character from the *Shishuo*'s most prominent figure, Xie An, who is distinguished by his capacity for *yaliang*, "grace under pressure," or what Mather calls "cultivated tolerance" and "imperturbability." In addition, a number of strange incidents in *Three Kingdoms* come from the *Shishuo*. For a review of the influence of *Shishuo* on *Three Kingdoms*, see *ZHT*, pp. 5-7.

[17.](#) See Sun Xun, "Qiantan *Sanguo yanyi zhengtong guannian de lishi jinbuxing*," in *LWJ*, pp. 22-23. For information on the *Han Jin chunqiu* text, which survives only in fragments cited in other works, see Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, p. 403 n. 144.

[18.](#) Shu-Han's Second Ruler, Liu Shan, son of Liu Xuande, surrendered to the Wei army in a. d. 263. In a. d. 265 Sima Yan received the abdication of the last Wei emperor, Cao Huan, and founded a new dynasty called the Jin. In a. d. 280 the Jin accepted the surrender of the Southland, ending the Sun family's rule.

[19.](#) *SGZ*, p. 878.

[20.](#) *ZZTJ*, p. 2095.

[21.](#) Another element of this southern Three Kingdoms tradition—amplified in the novel—is heroic Shu. In chapter 118 of the novel, when Shu is about to surrender to Wei, the prince of Beidi (Xuande's grandson) demands that the Second Ruler (Liu Shan) order the kingdom to make a last stand against the northern conquerors to honor the memory of the First Ruler (Liu Xuande). In chapter 119 we find the reversal of the theme, Shu disgraced by the frivolity of Liu Shan (now a captive) before the Jin emperor. Both vignettes come from Xi Zuochi's *Han Jin chunqiu*; see *SGZ*, pp. 900-902.

[22.](#) For these quotes, see Qiu Zhensheng's short essay, "Cao Cao zai shenme shihou chengwei jianchen?" in *ZHT*, p. 56. For further information on the persona of Zhuge Liang in the Tang, see the article by Hoyt Cleveland Tillman (Tian Hao), "Zhongguo lishi yishizhong de Zhuge Liang," in Xibei daxue xuebao bianjibu, ed., *Zhou Qin Han Tang kaogu yu wenhua guoji xueshu huiyi lun-*

wenji (Sian: 1988), pp. 133-46.

[23.](#) See Ming K. Chan, "The Historiography of the *Tzu-chih T'ung-chien: A Survey*," *Monumenta Serica* 31 (1974-75): 1-38.

[24.](#) *ZZTJ*, pp. 2185-88. Sima Guang may have been implicitly arguing the legitimacy of his own dynasty, whose usurpation of the brief Later Zhou (a. d. 951-60) bore some resemblance to the Wei usurpation of Han. Sima Guang's overriding concern for order and authority led him to legitimate the Wei, but this did not prevent him from recognizing that Cao Cao "nourished in his breast a heart that denied his sovereign." See Cheng Yizhong, "Chongti jiuan shuo Cao Cao," in *YJJ*, p. 163; also see *ZZTJ*, p. 2174.

[25.](#) See *ZHT*, p. 58.

[26.](#) Liu Zhijian, "Luo Guanzhong weishenme yao fandui Cao Cao?" in his *Sanguo yanyi xinlun* (Chongqing chubanshe, 1985), pp. 73-76. This article originally appeared in the *Guangming ribao* for May 25, 1959. See also *ZHT*, p. 57. For a different view of the Three Kingdoms by a Gin writer, see Jing-shen Tao, *The Jurchen in Twelfth Century China, A Study of Sinicization* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), p. 104. For Lu You, see Michael S. Duke, *Lu You* (Boston: Tawyne Publishers, 1977); see pp. 49-53 for the poet's admiration for Du Fu.

[27.](#) Zhu Xi, *Yupi Zizhi tongjian gangmu* (Qin ding siku quanshu ed.), *juan* 14, pp. 55-57. A new reign title established during the year retroactively covers the preceding months of that year. Several of the *TS* chapter titles follow Zhu Xi's redaction of the *ZZTJ*. For example, the title of the *TS* equivalent of chapter 80, which recounts the events of A. D. 220-21, adapts Zhu Xi's heading: "Cao Pi usurps the han after deposing Emperor Xian; The king of hanzhong proclaims himself emperor in Chengdu."

[28.](#) In 1162 Southern Song armies stopped a Jurchen invasion at the Yangzi. In 1164 a Song counterattack failed disastrously. In 1165 a Southern Song-Gin truce ended the continual warfare that had marked the decades after 1127. A state of relative peace lasted until the third Song-Gin war broke out in 1204. The Song were badly defeated in 1206, the year that Temujin unified the Mongol zone by force and was declared Chinggis Khan. Five years later, his armies marched south and began the conquest of the Jurchen's Gin dynasty.

[29.](#) Zhu Xi, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, trans. Wing-tsit Chan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), pp. 295-96. For a comment on Kongming in Zhu Xi's *Zhuzi yulei*, see Wang Liqi, "Shilun Zhuge Liang de zhengzhi sixiang," in Chengdushi Zhuge Liang yanjiuhui, ed., *Zhuge Liang yanjiu* (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1985), pp. 18-33.

[30.](#) A. D. 951-79 and 937-75, respectively; both were local kingdoms extinguished by the Northern Song. The Northern Han and the Posterior Han refer to the same dynasty.

[31.](#) Cited in Miao Yue, *Dushi cunqao* (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1982), p. 14. The text of the *tiyao* is provided in the *SGZ*, p. 1473.

[32.](#) These Han River cities had military importance in the Three Kingdoms period, too. This region was sometimes called Jing-Xiang; see chap. 28, n. 3.

[33.](#) *Sanguozhi pinghua* (Shanghai: Shanghai gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1955). In reference to literary genres, *pinghua* seems to mean "historical novella." The work is dated 1321-23, but the words *xinkan* (new edition) in the subtitle suggest an earlier date.

[34.](#) See Richard Irwin, *The Evolution of a Chinese Novel: Shui Hu Chuan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 23.

[35.](#) From the *Dongpo zhilin*; cited in Irwin, *Evolution*, p. 23. The authenticity of the remark has been questioned by Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, p. 368.

[36.](#) Chen Zhouchang, "*Sanguozhi tongsu yanyi xingcheng guocheng lun lue*," in *YJJ*, p. 316.

[37.](#) The fullest account of the *PH* is Zheng Zhenduo's chapter "*Sanguozhi yanyi de yanhua*," in his *Zhongguo wenxue yanjiu* (Beijing: Zuoia chubanshe, 1957), pp. 166-239. This chapter includes a detailed summary of the *PH*. Also see CZL, pp. 15-34; and W. L. Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), pp. 69-134.

[38.](#) See Han Xin's biography in Ssu-ma Ch'ien [Sima Qian], *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1: 224-25.

[39.](#) Han Xin had conquered the pre-Han kingdom of Wei and renamed it Hedong district, so there is poetic justice in his preparing the foundation of the Wei dynasty reincarnated as Cao Cao.

[40.](#) The reincarnations of Peng Yue and Ying Bu, too, are geographically based. After Peng Yue had been convicted of revolt against the Han emperor [Liu Bang], Liu Bang pardoned him and exiled him to Shu; when he tried to have this punishment rescinded, Empress Lü had him eliminated. See Ssu-ma Ch'ien, *Records*, 1: 194. As for Ying Bu, he was an important general in the northern part of the Southland kingdom. Liu Bang enfeoffed him as king of Huainan; see *Records*, 1: 202. In the *Records* the biographies of Peng Yue, Ying Bu, and Han Xin are sequential; see *Records*, 1: 191-232.

[41.](#) Another reason Luo Guanzhong would have dropped the prologue is that it criticizes Liu Bang. Luo Guanzhong's novel contains only praise for the Han founder. This political fact is consistent with a Ming date, perhaps even the traditional dating to the first Ming reign, because the Ming founder, Zhu Yuanzhang (Ming Tai Zu), was an avowed admirer of the Han founder (Han Ga Zu). (A companion Yuan *pinghua*, the *Qian Han shu pinghua*, sides with Xiang Yu against the Han founder.)

[42.](#) Chen Zhouchang, "*Sanguozhi tongsu yanyi xingcheng guocheng lun lue*," in *YJJ*, p. 317. Sima Zhongxiang's remark (*PH*, p. 2), "The Qin founder [Qin Shihuangdi] was an evil monarch, but if I were the monarch, would I not make the people of the world happy?" recalls Liu Xuande's childhood remark that he would be emperor when he grew up (SGZ, p. 871; *Three Kingdoms*, chap. 1).

[43.](#) *PH*, pp. 144-45; see the end of chapter 119 of the novel, where Sima Yan (the first Jin emperor) cries, "I am avenging the house of Han."

[44.](#) Li Zhi, "Han Liu Yuan," in *Cang shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), p. 88. See also Liu Yuan's biography ("Liu Yuanhai") in the *zaiji* (records) section of the *Jin shu*.

[45.](#) Li Zhi, "Han Liu Yuan," in *Cang shu*, p. 89. Another pseudo-Han kingdom was established in Chengdu in A. D. 304; in 347 it was extinguished by the Eastern Jin.

[46.](#) See Chen Baocheng, "Yuanquli de Sanguo xi," *Zhengzhou daxue xuebao*, 1982, no. 2: 66. See also Li Chunxiang, "Yuandai de Sanguo xi ji qi dui *Sanguo yanyi de yingxiang*," in *YJJ*, pp. 343-60; CZL, pp. 35-63; Chen Zhouchang, "*Sanguozhi tongsu yanyi xingcheng guocheng lun lue*," pp. 318-22; and Plaks, *Four Masterworks*, p. 370 n. 35.

[47.](#) CZL, pp. 40, 41, 48.

[48.](#) See CZL, p. 61. For a discussion of the novel's tendency to exaggerate the Riverlands' importance at the expense of the Southland, see Zhan Huan, "Cong yongren deshi lun Sun Wu ji-tuan," in *YJJ*, pp. 211-27. See also Liu Zhijian, "Du *Dan dao hui zhaji*," in his *Xinlun*, pp. 134-53. The

Yuan text, but not the Ming text, has Sun Quan conceding that Liu Xuande deserves some Jingzhou territory to acknowledge his help in saving the Southland from Cao Cao. *Lone Swordsman* also raises the legitimacy question when Lord Guan denies the Southland claim to Jingzhou on the grounds that Liu Xuande's place in the imperial line—after Gao Zu, Guang Wu, and Xiandi—entitles him to the Han throne and all the land in the empire. Sun An, the sister of Sun Quan and husband of Liu Xuande, makes the same point in *A Battle of Wits Across the River (Gejiang douzhi)*: "As a member of the imperial house, Xuande is needed to bring Wu and Wei into a world [governed by] the house of Liu."

[49.](#) *SGZ*, p. 1096. There are other injustices to Southland heroes committed by the novelist. Two of the more notable concern Lu Su and Zhou Yu. Lu Su's *SGZ* biography describes him as an "exceptional talent, of decisive and independent intelligence" ; in the novel he is turned into a rather naive figure. Zhou Yu, the great Southland field marshal, is lauded in his biography for "grace under pressure and large-mindedness" and credited for the victory at Red Cliffs. The novel portrays him as spiteful and jealous and transfers many of his achievements and qualities to Kongming. Thus, even if it corrects some of the more fanciful tales about southern leaders in Yuan drama, the novel nevertheless shows clear signs of unhistorical anti-Southland prejudice.

[50.](#) The novel enhances the portrait of Lu Xun by attributing some of Lü Meng's qualities to him. See Yu Hongjiang, "Shilun *Sanguo yanyi* zhong de Lu Xun xingxiang," in *XK 2* (1986): 173-89. In the *SGZ* Chen Shou honors Lu Xun by devoting a whole chapter to his biography; by contrast, Zhou Yu, Lu Su, and Lü Meng share a single chapter. After the death of Liu Xuande, the Southland and the Riverlands resumed their alliance. Sun Quan gave Lu Xun full authority to review and administer all aspects of the alliance (*SGZ*, p. 1384). The *Pinghua* (p. 127) scarcely mentions him, and no Yuan drama, apparently, made Lu Xun an important figure. By lavishing attention on Lu Xun, *Three Kingdoms* restored an important piece of history. On the novel's treatment of the battle at Yiling (Xiaoting), see Cao Xuewei, "Yiling zhi zhan de qingjie he renwu chuangzao," in *XK 2* (1986): 254-63.

[51.](#) One play that may have influenced the novel's treatment of Cao Cao is *Yunchang Guan Rides Alone a Thousand Li (Guan Yunchang du xing qian li)*. In this anonymous play Cao Cao is a villain who openly expresses his desire to do away with Lord Guan, when the time comes for Guan to rejoin Liu Xuande. The novel (chapter 27) gives this important incident a nuanced interpretation. Favorable treatment of Cao Cao in Yuan drama is noted by Qiu Zhensheng in his essay "Youzhi tu wangzhu' Luo Guanzhong," in *ZHT*, pp. 66-69; however, in many of the plays cited Cao Cao is assisting the Liu Xuande group in some way.

[52.](#) Liu Zhijian, *Xinlun*, pp. 140-41. The Lord Guan cult flourished before and after the Yuan, and it survives in various places even today. (The words "King Guan" are in the full title of the *Dan dao hui*, which is *Guan da wang fu dan dao hui*.) Guan Hanging's exact dates are uncertain; he was born in or around 1220 and died sometime before 1324. For a study of Guan Hanqing's Three Kingdoms plays, see Liu Jingzhi, *Guan Hanqing Sanguo gushi zaju yanjiu* (Hong Kong: Shenghuo dushu xinzhishi sanlian shudian, 1990).

[53.](#) Kongming's fleeting ghostly appearance at Dingjun Mountain, where he was buried, may be regarded as a carryover into the novel of his magical aspect, so prominent in the *PH*. Lord Guan (like Buddha) transcended his historical identity to become a god worshiped by an empire-wide cult.

[54.](#) This led one scholar to suggest that the novel was written in the 1340s in order to support Yuan authority in the face of spreading rebellion against Yuan rule. See Liu Youzhu, "*Sanguo*

tongsu yanyi shi Yuandai zuopin," in *YJJ*, p. 303. Also see Stephen H. West, "Mongol Influence on the Development of Northern Drama," in *China Under Mongol Rule*, ed. John D. Langlois, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 434-65.

[55.](#) For a discussion of this issue, see Hok-lam Chan, "Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin [Gin], and Sung Histories," in Langlois, *China Under Mongol Rule*, pp. 56, 89-90. Considering the hostility of Toghto (the Mongol leader in charge of the government-sponsored history project) to Song legitimacy, and considering Toghto's treatment of the three kingdoms (Wei, Wu, and Shu) as equally nonlegitimate, he and other Yuan leaders could hardly have been pleased by pro-Liu, pro-Shu themes, particularly when those themes were associated with the Southern Song.

[56.](#) This quote is from Ming Yuzhen's biography in the *Ming shi*, cited in Liu Zhijian, *Xinlun*, p. 78. Wang Baobao is Kökö Temür, who became Zhu Yuanzhang's main opponent in the last years of the Yuan dynasty and the first years of the Ming. See Edward Dreyer, *Early Ming China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982), pp. 65-106, esp. p. 73.

[57.](#) Hok-lam Chan, *Legitimation in Imperial China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), p. 129. The Ming court did not itself sponsor discussion on legitimacy, and Hu Han and Fang Xiaoru represent a minor current of opinion. In the second half of the fifteenth century, however, there was "an outburst of Han protonationalism and antiforeignism" in which "the legitimacy of Chinese rulers over alien conquerors" was championed; see Chan, *Legitimation*, pp. 127-29. In the following generations, the impulse to reopen the legitimacy question of the Song became strong. One scholar, Wang Zhu, wrote a Song history (preface dated 1546) that erased Yuan legitimacy by fabricating an imperial ancestry for Zhu Yuanzhang back to 1279, the last year of the Southern Song. See Chan, "Historiography at the Yuan Court," in Langlois, *China Under Mongol Rule*, pp. 97-99, 467. Wang Zhu's device recalls Xi Zuochi's erasure of Wei legitimacy by deriving Jin directly from Han. Zhu Yuanzhang continued many of the institutions of the Yuan, whatever models he claimed to be following. This is one of the theses of John W. Dardess, *Confucianism and Autocracy: Professional Elites in the Founding of the Ming Dynasty* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983). Fang Xiaoru regarded Zhuge Liang as the greatest prime minister since the Qin and Han dynasties (see *juan* 5 of his *Xunzhizhai ji*, cited in Liu Chunfan, *Zhugue Liang zhuan* [Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1986], pp. 157-58).

[58.](#) See Wang Liqi, "Luo Guanzhong yu *Sanguozhi tongsu yanyi*," in *YJJ*, pp. 240-65.

[59.](#) See Xi Yunzhan, "Luo Guanzhong de yuanji zai nali?" *XK* 2 (1986): 30, 35.

[60.](#) Li Lingnian, "Luo Guanzhong wei Zhao Xie menren bian lue," *XK* 2 (1986): 54-63.

[61.](#) *ZHT*, p. 68. Zifang refers to Zhang Liang, who served Liu Bang as Kongming served Liu Bei. For further information on Han Lin'er, Liu Futong, Liu Ji, and Zhu Yuanzhang, see Dreyer, *Early Ming China*, pp. 31-35, 92-93; see also *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368-1644*, ed. L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976).

[62.](#) *ZHT*, p. 68.

[63.](#) See Huang Lin, "Li Mao liangben Zhuge Liang xingxiang bijiao lun," *XK* 2 (1986): 92-109. See also Zhao Qingyong, "Luo Guanzhong de zhengzhiguan ji *Sanguozhi yanyi* chuanguo sixiang guankui," in *LWJ*, pp. 358-68; and *CZL*, pp. 327-59. The title used by Mao, *Sanguozhi yanyi*, was taken from the "Li Zhuowu" edition. Chen Xianghua calculates that Mao Zonggang was born in 1632 and died in 1709 (or later); see "Mao Zonggang de shengping yu *Sanguozhi yanyi* Mao ping-

ben de Jin Shengtan xu wenti," *Wen xian*, 1989, no. 3: 71.

[64.](#) Xu Zhongwei, "Buke dengliang qiguan de liangbu *Sanguo*," *Wenxue yichan*, 1983, no. 2: 88-100. Mao does, however, express sympathy for those of Cao's advisers (Kong Rong, Guo Jia) who urged good relations with Liu Xuande.

[65.](#) The preceding account is based on Jerry Dennerline, *The Chia-ting Loyalists* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), Introduction and chapters 1 and 2; Lynn Struve, *The Southern Ming* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), Introduction and chapters 1 and 2; and Frederic Wake-man, Jr., *The Great Enterprise* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), chapter 3.

[66.](#) CZL, pp. 346-47.

[67.](#) Du Guichen, "Mao Zonggang yong Liu fan Cao yi zai fan Qing fu Ming," *XK* 1 (1985): 279-81.

[68.](#) John Ching-yu Wang, *Chin Sheng-t'an* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972), pp. 34-36. Jin Shengtan was executed in 1661.

[69.](#) See Huang Lin, "Youguan Maoben *Sanguo yanyi* de ruogan wenti," in *YJJ*, pp. 333-34. In this article, Huang Lin explains his reasons for doubting that the preface is authentic or that the original Mao edition carried it. A more elaborate argument for the falsity of the preface is presented in Chen Xianghua, "Mao Zonggang de shengping yu *Sanguozhi yanyi* Mao pingben de Jin Shengtan xu wenti," *Wen xian*, 1989, no. 3: 75-83. This portion of the article shows that the preface by Li Yu to the 1679 edition (the earliest extant Mao edition) was the basis for the later pseudo-Jin preface, though the details of the changeover remain unclear. According to the Li Yu preface (p. 79), credit for the Mao edition belongs to Mao Lun.

[70.](#) Chen Xianghua, "Mao Zonggang de shengping yu *Sanguozhi yanyi* Mao pingben de Jin Shengtan xu wenti," *Wen xian*, 1989, no. 3: 69-70. There is no precise date for the Mao edition; father and son were working on it in the mid-1660s; at the time Mao Lun lost his sight, and Zonggang performed secretarial work for him; Zonggang may also have contributed ideas of his own to the project.

[71.](#) Luo Guanzhong, *Sanguo yanyi* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1973), p. 3.

[72.](#) Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, p. 203.

[73.](#) *ZLHB*, p. 745.

[74.](#) A complete translation of the *dufa* by David Roy may be found in David L. Rolston, *How to Read the Chinese Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 152-95. Plaks refers frequently to the Mao commentary in his essay on *Three Kingdoms*; see *Four Masterworks*, chapter 5.

[75.](#) For more information on this issue, see the notes to chapter 80 of this translation. For Fei Shi's statement, see SGZ, pp. 1015-16, and *ZZTJ*, p. 2185.

[76.](#) *ZLHB*, p. 523. For a summary of Kongming's character and achievements, see Liu Chunfan, *Zhuge Liang zhuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1986), pp. 140-83.

[77.](#) See Chen Zhouchang, "Liu Feng zhi si," *XK* 1 (1985): 148-52. A number of the following points are drawn from this article. "Li" edition annotation may be found in the *huiping* (collected commentary) edition of the novel, edited by Chen Xizhong, Song Xiangrui, and Lu Yuchuan and published by Beijing University in 1986, *Sanguo yanyi huiping ben*. For a discussion of the militant, populist tenor of the "Li" annotations, see *ZHT*, pp. 360-62. The *PH* (p. 122) accepts Liu

Feng as the elder son of Liu Bei. In the *PH*, when the Liu Feng / Liu Shan succession question is put to him, Kongming refuses to become involved in "family matters" and tells Liu Bei to refer the question to Lord Guan; Lord Guan, like Kongming, favors Liu Shan.

[78.](#) *SGZ*, p. 994.

[79.](#) In the *PH* (p. 124), Liu Feng blocks Lord Guan's appeals to Liu Xuande for help. The Mao edition echoes this theme in its title for chapter 79: "Brother Oppresses Brother; Cao Zhi Composes a Poem; Nephew Entraps Uncle; Liu Feng Answers to the Law." The *TS* chapter title reads: "In Anger the King of Hanzhong [Liu Xuande] Has Liu Feng Killed." According to the *SGZ* (p. 991), "Liu Feng and Meng Da refused to accept Lord Guan's commands. When it came to pass that Lord Guan was overthrown and defeated, the First Ruler [Xuande] held it against them."

[80.](#) *TS*, p. 763.

[81.](#) See *SGZ*, pp. 918, 992.

[82.](#) *SGZ*, p. 1002.

[83.](#) Five Agents symbolism may be involved here: fire, the sign of Han, succumbs to water. Kongming's career could be symbolized as the defeat of fire by water. On Kongming's choice of Ma Su over Wei Yan to defend Jieting, see chapter 96 n. 1.

[84.](#) See notes to chapter 103.

[85.](#) See the general comment to chapter 103 in the *huiping* edition of the novel, p. 1269.

[86.](#) Mao Zonggang's introductory note to chapter 105.

[87.](#) *SGZ*, p. 1004.

[88.](#) For another introduction to the novel, see C. T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

Among the many books discovered after the completion of this translation, there are three that readers and researchers may find particularly useful:

1. Shen Bojun and Tang Liangxiao, eds. *Sanguo yanyi cidian*. Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1989. In this dictionary, many discrepancies between the novel and historical records are noted. Shen Bojun has in addition written a number of articles pointing out the novel's errors regarding names of persons, places, and titles.
2. Huo Yujia. *Sanguo yanyi meixue jiazhi*. Zhongzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1991. This book contains an extensive study of the aesthetic thought of Mao Zonggang (pp. 255-387).
3. Chen Xianghua. *Zhuge Liang xingxiangshi yanjiu*. Zhejiang: Zhejiang guji chabanshe, 1990. This book is a highly developed study of the numerous fictional characterizations of Kongming.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN *THREE KINGDOMS*

CAI MAO, brother of Lady Cai, enemy of Liu Bei in Liu Biao's court

CAO CAO, commander of Han forces and regent to Emperor Xian, founder of the fief of Wei, posthumously Emperor Wu of the Wei dynasty

CAO FANG, third ruler of Wei as king of Qi, adopted son of Cao Rui (r. A. D. 240-53)

CAO HONG, brother to Cao Cao, commander of forces

CAO HUAN, fifth and last ruler of Wei (r. A. D. 261-65), grandson of Cao Cao, son of Yu, prince of Yan; abdicates to Sima Yan

CAO MAO, fourth ruler of Wei, grandson of Cao Pi, son of Lin, prince of Ding, killed by the Sima clan (r. A. D. 254-60)

CAO PI, son of Cao Cao and first emperor of the Wei dynasty, Emperor Wen (r. A. D. 220-26)

CAO RUI, eldest son of Cao Pi, Emperor Ming of the Wei dynasty (r. A. D. 227-39), served by co-regents Cao Zhen and Sima Yi

CAO SHUANG, son of Cao Zhen, opposes Sima Yi's designs on the Wei court

CAO ZHEN, Wei commander

CAO ZHI, son of Cao Cao, passed over as heir in favor of Cao Pi

CHEN LIN, adviser to Yuan Shao, author of tract denouncing Cao Cao

CHENG PU, senior Southland commander, shares authority with Zhou Yu at first

DENG AI, Wei commander who conquers the Riverlands

DENG ZHI, Riverlands emissary sent to restore relations with the Southland

DIAN WEI, bodyguard to Cao Cao

DIAOCHAN, singing girl who undoes Dong Zhuo for Wang Yun

DING FENG, Southland commander

DONG CHENG, relative of Empress Dong, bearer of Emperor Xian's secret decree

DONG ZHUO, warrior from the west who places Emperor Xian on the Han throne after removing Liu Bian (Emperor Shao)

EMPEROR SHAO (LIU BIAN), son of Emperor Ling, elder brother of Emperor Xian; reigns from May to September A. D. 189; deposed by Dong Zhuo

EMPEROR XIAN (LIU XIE) replaces his older brother, Bian, as Han emperor in A. D. 189 and reigns until A. D. 220

EMPRESS DONG, foster mother of Emperor Xian EMPRESS HE, mother of Emperor Shao

FA ZHENG, official at Liu Zhang's court who facilitates Liu Bei's conquest of the Riverlands

FEI YI, adviser to the Shu-Han court

GAN NING, Southland expert on naval warfare, defects from Liu Biao's camp

GONGSUN ZAN, friend of Liu Bei, military leader based in Liaoxi

GUAN XING, son of Lord Guan

GUAN YU (YUNCHANG), see Lord Guan

HAN DANG, Southland commander

HUA TUO, physician who cures Lord Guan's wounded arm

HUA XIN, official at Cao Pi's court, instrumental in Emperor Xian's abdication

HUANG GAI, false defector from the Southland to Cao Cao's camp

HUANG ZHONG, veteran warrior and commander for Liu Bei

JI PING, Han court physician, killed by Cao Cao

JIA XU, military counselor to Cao Cao

JIAN YONG, aide to Liu Bei

JIANG WEI, Shu-Han commander, pursues Kongming's policies after Kongming's death in A. D. 234

KAN ZE, Southland scholar, aids Huang Gai's false defection to Cao Cao's camp

KONG RONG, Han scholar, opponent of Cao Cao at the Han court; later, as governor of Beihai, rescued by Liu Bei

LADY CAI, Liu Biao's second wife, sister of Cai Mao, mother of Liu Zong

LADY GAN, wife of Liu Bei, mother of Liu Shan

LADY MI, sister of Mi Zhu, wife of Liu Bei; commits suicide

LADY SUN, sister of Sun Quan, wife of Liu Bei

LADY WU, sister of Sun Ce's late wife, counselor to Sun Quan

LIAO HUA, a commander in Liu Bei's army

LIU BEI (XUANDE), leader of the three oath brothers and founder of the kingdom of Shu (the Riverlands), posthumously First Ruler of the Shu-Han dynasty (r. A. D. 221-22)

LIU BIAN, see Emperor Shao

LIU BIAO, protector of Jingzhou, gives Liu Bei refuge; father of Qi and Zong; husband of Lady Cai

LIU FENG, adopted son of Liu Bei

LIU QI, first son of Liu Biao, first heir to Jingzhou

LIU SHAN (AH DOU), son of Liu Bei, Second Emperor of Shu-Han (r. A. D. 223-63).

LIU ZHANG, protector of the Riverlands before Liu Bei's arrival

LIU ZONG, actual heir to Jingzhou, son of Lady Cai and Liu Biao, killed by Cao Cao

LORD GUAN, the second oath brother

LU SU, Southland adviser sympathetic to Liu Bei and Kongming

LU XUN, Southland commander who foils Liu Bei's invasion

LU ZHI, Imperial Corps commander serving Emperor Ling

LÜ BU, companion to Dong Zhuo, suitor to Diaochan

LU FAN, Southland adviser

LU MENG, Southland commander who captures Lord Guan

MA CHAO, son of Ma Teng, warrior of the northwest

MA TENG, one of the original oath-takers against Cao Cao, warrior of the northwest

MENG DA, Riverlands commander who defects to Sima Yi

MI ZHU, patron and father-in-law of Liu Bei

PANG TONG, adviser to Liu Bei, peer of Kongming

QIAO ZHOU, mentor of Chen Shou (author of the *Sanguozhi*), Riverlands scholar-official opposed to Kongming's military campaigns

SHAN FU, Taoist name of Xu Shu, military adviser to Liu Bei

SIMA SHI, son of Sima Yi, aids Yi in the coup of A. D. 249

SIMA YAN, receives abdication from Cao Huan to become first Jin emperor

SIMA YI, general serving the house of Cao, prepares the way for the Sima clan to usurp the sovereignty of Wei, held by the house of Cao

SIMA ZHAO, son of Sima Yi, adoptive father of Sima Yan; receives submission of Shu-Han

SUN CE, southern warrior, son of Sun Jian, brother of Sun Quan

SUN HAO, last Southland emperor

SUN JIAN, southern warrior, founder of the Southland

SUN QIAN, high assistant to Liu Bei

SUN QUAN, king, then emperor, of the Southland (r. A. D. 222-52)

TAISHI CI, rival, then friend, of Sun Ce

TAO QIAN, inspector of Xuzhou, abdicates to Liu Bei

WANG YUN, senior counselor of the Han court, uses Diaochan in a plot against Dong Zhuo

WEI YAN, commander of Hanzhong for the Riverlands, thought disloyal by Kongming

XIAHOU DUN, warrior and close companion of Cao Cao

XIAHOU YUAN, cousin of Xiahou Dun

XU HUANG, commander under Cao Cao

XU JING, official in Liu Zhang's court

XU SHENG, Southland commander

XUN YOU, relative and ally of Xun Wenruo

XUN YU (WENRUO), adviser to Cao Cao, opposes his steps toward usurpation

YANG YI, Kongming's successor as director general of the Riverlands

YI JI, aide to Liu Bei

YU FAN, Southland adviser

YU JI, Taoist magician who haunts Sun Ce

YU JIN, general in Cao Cao's army

YUAN SHAO, leader of the confederation against Cao Cao, controls the northeast until defeated by Cao Cao in the battle of Guandu, A. D. 200

YUAN SHU, early pretender to the throne, brother of Yuan Shao

YUE JIN, general in Cao Cao's army

ZHANG BAO, son of Zhang Fei

ZHANG FEI (YIDE), THE THIRD OATH BROTHER

ZHANG HE, general in Cao Cao's army

ZHANG LU, controls Hanzhong region

ZHANG SONG, Riverlands emissary spurned by Cao Cao, invites Liu Bei to enter his kingdom

ZHANG ZHAO, adviser to Sun Quan, leader of peace faction

ZHAO YUN (ZILONG), companion of Liu Bei and leading commander

ZHONG HUI, commander in the final invasion of Shu-Han

ZHONG YAO, leading adviser in the Wei court

ZHOU TAI, Southland commander

ZHOU YU, Southland chief commander, companion to Sun Quan, leader of war faction

ZHU RAN, Southland commander

ZHU ZHI, Southland commander

ZHUGE DAN, high officer in the Wei court

ZHUGE JIN, brother of Zhuge Liang, vassal to Sun Quan

ZHUGE KE, high officer in the Southland court, son of Zhuge Jin

ZHUGE LIANG (KONGMING), chief adviser to Liu Bei, director general of the Riverlands

ZHUGE ZHAN, Riverlands commander opposed to submitting to Wei

CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS IN *THREE KINGDOMS*

Years are A. D. Chapter numbers are given in brackets.

- 168 Death of Emperor Huan; accession of Emperor Ling [1]
- 184 Uprising of the Yellow Scarves [1]
- 188 Shift of court appointments from imperial inspector to provincial protector; conflict between Empress He and Empress Dong over the succession to Emperor Ling [2]
- 189 Death of Emperor Ling (May 13); the reign of Liu Bian (Emperor Shao) begins (May 15); Yuan Wei, uncle of Yuan Shao, made imperial guardian; He Jin and Yuan Shao defend the new sovereign against the eunuchs; Dong Zhuo summoned to the capital [2]; Dong Zhuo deposes Emperor Shao and enthrones Emperor Xian (Liu Xie) on September 28; Yuan Shao and Cao Cao oppose Dong Zhuo [3, 4]
- 190 Yuan Shao rallies the lords against Dong Zhuo [5]; Dong Zhuo moves the capital from Luoyang to Chang'an (April); Luoyang burned and sacked; Sun Jian holds the royal seal [6]
- 191 Yuan Shao battles Gongsun Zan and takes control of the provinces northeast of the Yellow River; Sun Jian and Liu Biao wage war [7]
- 192 Lü Bu kills Dong Zhuo [8, 9]; Cao Cao becomes protector of Yanzhou and receives the surrender of the Yellow Scarves of Qingzhou [10]
- 194 Liu Xuande defends Kong Rong; Xuande assumes control of Xuzhou [12]
- 195 Dong Zhuo's generals revolt; Emperor Xian moved from Chang'an; the Emperor requests aid from Cao Cao [13]
- 196 Cao Cao brings the Emperor to Xuchang, mid-October [14]
- 197 Lü Bu attacks Liu Xuande; Xuande takes refuge with Cao Cao [16]; Yuan Shu declares himself emperor [17]
- 198 Cao Cao faces two enemies, Zhang Xiu and Yuan Shao [18]
- 199 Cao Cao has Lü Bu executed [19]; Emperor Xian gives Dong Cheng a secret edict [20]; Yuan Shu dies [21]
- 200 Dong Cheng executed [23]; Cao Cao attacks Liu Xuande; Xuande takes refuge with Yuan Shao; Cao Cao attacks Yuan Shao [24]; Cao Cao captures Lord Guan; Lord Guan kills Cao Cao's generals [25, 26]

- 199-200 Events in the Southland: Sun Quan succeeds Sun Ce as ruler and accepts Han title rather than help Yuan Shao [29]; Cao Cao defeats Yuan Shao at Guandu and expands his power in the northeast [30, 31]
- 201 Yuan Shao flees to Jizhou; Xuande finds refuge with Liu Biao in Jingzhou [31]
- 202-4 Yuan Shao dies; Cao Cao attacks Shao's sons and conquers the city of Ye [32]
- 205-8 Yuan Shao's sons flee to the Wuhuan people; Cao Cao defeats the Wuhuan and returns to Ye [33]
- 207-8 Conflict between Xuande and Liu Biao's wife, Lady Cai; Xuande meets Shan Fu in Xinye [34-35]; Cao Cao prepares to attack Jingzhou [35]; Shan Fu recommends Kongming to Liu Xuande [36]; Xuande seeks out Kongming [37]; Xuande meets Kongming; Sun Quan attacks Jingzhou [38]; conflict between Liu Biao's sons, Qi and Zong; Kongming's first battle [39]; Lady Cai plans to cede Jingzhou to Cao Cao [40]; Xuande flees to Xiakou; Liu Biao dies; Lu Su of the Southland travels to Xiakou to see Kongming [41, 42]; Kongming goes to the Southland to meet General Zhou Yu and arrange an alliance against Cao Cao; the Battle at Red Cliffs [43-50]
- 209-10 Xuande occupies Jiangling and Gong'an; Liu Qi dies [51]; Xuande occupies the southern districts of Jingzhou [53]; Xuande marries Sun Quan's sister, Lady Sun; Lu Su demands the return of Jingzhou to the Southland [54]; Xuande leaves the Southland with Lady Sun [55]
- 211 Zhou Yu dies; Cao Cao kills Ma Teng; Cao Cao threatens Hanzhong; Hanzhong's ruler, Zhang Lu, threatens the Riverlands; Riverlands leader Liu Zhang sends Zhang Song to Cao Cao for help; Zhang Song visits Liu Xuande [57-60]
- 212 Xuande marches to the Riverlands; Kongming governs Jingzhou [60]
- 212-13 Cao Cao attacks the Southland; Cao Cao assumes the Nine Dignities of a patriarchal lord; Xuande enters the Riverlands [61-62]
- 214 Kongming goes to the Riverlands; Lord Guan governs Jingzhou; Xuande takes control of the Riverlands [63-65]
- 215 The Southland demands Jingzhou; Cao Cao conquers Hanzhong [66-67]
- 216 Cao Cao becomes king of Wei [68]
- 217 Cao Cao attacks Southland positions [69]
- 218 Revolt against Cao Cao crushed in Xuchang; Huang Zhong kills Xiahou Yuan, endangering Cao Cao's hold on Hanzhong [69-72]

- 219 Cao Cao withdraws from Hanzhong to Chang'an; Xuande becomes king of Hanzhong; Lord Guan takes Xiangyang and Fan; the Southland takes Jingzhou; Lord Guan defeated [73-76]
- 220 Sun Quan puts Lord Guan to death; Cao Cao dies; Emperor Xian abdicates (November 24) to Cao Pi, who establishes a new dynasty, the Wei [77-80]
- 221 Xuande proclaims himself emperor (May) and marches against the Southland (August); Sun Quan accepts the suzerainty of the Wei dynasty; the Southland resists the Riverlands invasion [80-82]
- 222 Southland forces under General Lu Xun drive back Liu Xuande's invading army; Wei attacks the Southland [83-85]
- 223 Liu Xuande dies; Liu Shan succeeds him as Riverlands ruler; Sima Yi attacks the Riverlands; Kongming revives the Riverlands-Southland alliance against Wei [85-86]
- 224 Cao Pi invades the Southland [86]
- 225 Kongming subdues the Southern Man people [86-91]
- 226 Cao Pi dies; Cao Rui becomes the new ruler of Wei; Kongming persuades Liu Shan to wage war against Wei; Sima Yi leads the Wei forces [91-92]
- 228 Meng Da killed; Kongming launches the war against Wei [94-95]
- 229 Sun Quan proclaims himself emperor [98]
- 230 Wei commander Cao Zhen's campaign thwarted by heavy rain [99]
- 231 Cao Zhen dies; Kongming recalled from the field [100]; Kongming resumes the war [101]
- 234 Kongming dies on the field; Riverlands armies return to Chengdu; Wei Yan dies [104-5]
- 239 Cao Fang succeeds Cao Rui as ruler of Wei; Cao Zhen's son, Cao Shuang, becomes co-regent with Sima Yi; decade of conflict between Cao Shuang and Sima Yi begins [106]
- 249 Cao Shuang killed; Sima Yi seizes control of the Wei kingdom; Jiang Wei, aided by Xiahou Ba, leads a new Riverlands campaign against Wei [106-7]
- 251-52 Sima Yi dies; Sun Quan dies; war between Wei and the Southland [108]
- 254 Sima Yi's son Sima Shi deposes Cao Fang and enthrones Cao Mao [109]

- 255 Commanders Wen Qin and Guanqiu Jian revolt against the coup in Wei; Sima Shi dies and his brother Sima Zhao leads the Sima clan [110]
- 257 Sima Zhao defeats his opponents; the Riverlands abandons its war against Wei [112]
- 258 Sun Chen deposes Sun Liang, ruler of the Southland; Sun Xiu assumes power and executes Sun Chen; Wei commander Deng Ai leads the campaign against the Riverlands [113]
- 260 Cao Mao killed; Cao Huan assumes the Wei throne; Sima Zhao becomes prime minister [114]
- 263 Wei's campaign against the Riverlands threatens Chengdu [115-17]
- 264 Liu Shan, Second Emperor of the Riverlands, surrenders to Deng Ai; Sima Zhao marches to Chang'an; Zhao names Sima Yan his heir and dies [118-19]
- 265-80 The Sima clan establishes a new dynasty, the Jin, and then conquers the Southland; the empire is again united [120]

TITLES, TERMS, AND OFFICES IN *THREE KINGDOMS*

Auxiliary Corps commanding officer	<i>biebusima</i>
Cavalry commander	<i>qiduwei</i>
chief commanding officer / grand marshal / regent-marshal	<i>dasima</i>
chief of Palace Security	<i>weiwei</i>
chief of the Capital Guard	<i>zhijinwu</i>
chief of the Secretariat	<i>zhongshuling</i>
city or town	<i>xian</i> or <i>cheng</i>
commandant/commander	<i>xiaoyu/xiaowei</i>
commandant for Military Standards	<i>dianjunxiaoyu</i>
commander of the Capital Districts	<i>silixiaoyu</i>
commanding general	<i>shuai</i>
commanding officer / commander	<i>sima</i>
corps	<i>bu</i>
corps commander	<i>bujiang</i>
county magistrate / prefect	<i>xianling</i>
court counselor	<i>yilang</i>
court officer / imperial attendant	<i>silang</i>
court steward	<i>taipu</i>
director general	<i>junshi</i>
director of the Imperial Clan	<i>zongzheng</i>
director of the Palace	<i>guangluxun/langzhongling</i>
director of the Secretariat	<i>lushangshushi</i>

district / imperial district	<i>jun</i>
district commander	<i>duwei</i>
district inspector	<i>duyou</i>
Exemplary Cavalry	<i>yuejixiaoyu</i>
eunuch / constant attendant	<i>zhongchangshi</i>
field army	<i>lu</i>
field marshal / general	<i>dudu</i>
first field marshal / chief commander	<i>dadudu</i>
first secretary	<i>zhubu</i>
garrison commander	<i>yajiangjun</i>
general/commander	<i>jiangjun</i>
general of Chariots and Cavalry	<i>jujijiangjun</i>
general of the Flying Cavalry	<i>piaojijiangjun</i>
governor (of a district)	<i>taishou</i>
governor (of a fief)	<i>xiang</i>
grand commandant	<i>taiyu/taiwei</i>
honorary lord	<i>guannei hou</i>
imperial attendant / court officer	<i>silang</i>
imperial censor	<i>yushidaifu</i>
Imperial Corps commander	<i>zhonglangjiang</i>
imperial corpsman	<i>zhonglang</i>
imperial guardian	<i>taifu</i>
imperial inspector	<i>cishi</i>

imperial mentor	<i>taizhongdaifu</i>
imperial preceptor	<i>taishi</i>
Imperial Tiger Escort	<i>huben</i>
Inner Bureau	<i>huangmen</i>
judicial officer	<i>xianwei</i>
libationer	<i>jijiu</i>
lieutenant (to <i>cishi</i> or <i>mu</i>)	<i>biejia</i>
lieutenant commander	<i>fujianjun</i>
lord of a Capital Precinct	<i>duting hou</i>
lord of the first rank	<i>liehou</i>
master of ceremony	<i>taichang</i>
minions of the Palace	<i>zhongjuan</i>
minister of protocol	<i>taihonglu</i>
minister of the interior	<i>situ</i>
mountain/hill	<i>shan</i>
Palace Guard	<i>jinjun</i>
precinct	<i>ting</i>
precinct master	<i>tingzhang</i>
prime minister / Excellency	<i>chengxiang</i>
privy counselor	<i>shizhong</i>
protector	<i>mu</i>
province	<i>zhou</i>
regent / regent-marshal / supreme commander	<i>dajiangjun</i>

Royal Guard

yulin

Secretariat

shangshu

senior adviser

Zhangshi

supervisor in the Secretariat

puye

three elder lords

sangong

treasurer

dasinong

Valiant Cavaliers

xiaojixiaoyu

ABBREVIATIONS

- CZL* Ye Weisi and Mao Xin. *Sanguo yanyi chuanguo lun*. N. p.: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1984.
- HHS* Fan Ye. *Hou Han shu*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982.
- LWJ* Henansheng shehui kexueyuan wenxue yanjiusuo. *Sanguo yanyi lunwenji*. Zhongzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985.
- PH* N. a. *Sanguozhi pinghua*. Shanghai: Shanghai gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1955.
- SGZ* Chen Shou. *Sanguozhi*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959.
- SJ* Sima Qian. [*Shi ji*] *Shiki kaichū kōshō*. Ed. Takigawa Kametarō. Tokyo: Tōhō bunka gakuin Tōkyō kenkyūjo, 1932-34.
- TS* Luo Guanzhong. *Sanguozhi tongsu yanyi*. Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1980.
- XK* Zhongguo *Sanguo yanyi xuehui*. *Sanguo yanyi xuekan* #1. Chengdu: Sichuan-sheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1985. #2, 1986.
- YJJ* Shehui kexue yanjiu congkan bianjibu. *Sanguo yanyi yanjiu ji*. Chengdu: Si-chuansheng shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1983.
- ZHT* Qiu Zhensheng. *Sanguo yanyi zonghengtan*. Nanning: Lijiang chubanshe, 1983.
- ZLHB* Zhu Yixuan and Liu Yuchen, eds. *Sanguo yanyi ziliao huibian*. Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe, 1983.
- ZZTJ* Sima Guang. *Zizhi tongjian*. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976.

NOTES TO *THREE KINGDOMS*

EPIGRAPH

1. Mao Zonggang took this verse from *Ershiwu shi tanci*, a collection of popular songs on historical themes compiled during the Ming dynasty by Yang Shen (d. 1559). The verse opens section three of the collection, the section covering the transitions from the Zhou dynasty to the Han. The Great River is the Chang Jiang, sometimes called the Jiang or the Yangzi. A river is a conventional metaphor for history. See, for example, Lord Guan's speech opening the third act of Guan Hanqing's *Guan da wang fu dan dao hui*: "Battle follows battle on the Jiang; / The second wave impels the first wave on." Also see *Analects* 9. 16: "The Master stood above the river. 'Racing past like that—day and night, unceasingly,' he said." Yang Shen's poem recalls Su Shi's *ci*, "Remembering the Red Cliffs," translated under its tune-title, "The Charms of Nien-nu," in Cyril Birch, ed., *Anthology of Chinese Literature* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 1: 356.

Mao Zonggang was the editor of the mid-1660s edition of *Three Kingdoms*, the one translated here. For further information, see the Afterword, pp. 939-40 and 965-80. In the notes, the form "Mao:" indicates a translation of an interlinear note to the text by Mao Zonggang.

CHAPTER 1

1. The Zhou dynasty, founded in the 11th century B. C., was conquered in 256 B. C. by the western state of Qin, which established its unified rule over the empire in 221 B. C. In its fifteen-year dominion (221 to 206 B. C.) the Qin dynasty organized the realm into a system of imperial districts and counties (*jun* and *xian*), thus laying the geographical and bureaucratic foundation for the succeeding dynasty, the Han (206 B. C. to A. D. 220), China's longest and mightiest. The Warring States period (403 to 221 B. C.) preceded the Qin-Han era of unity; the Three Kingdoms era (A. D. 220 to 280) followed the Han.

2. The Supreme Ancestor (Gao Zu), founder of the Han, was Liu Bang (256 to 195 B. C.), one of many rebels against the Qin. According to his "Basic Annals" in the *SJ* the serpent he slew was the son of the White Emperor, god of the west, which certain Qin kings had worshiped. The "Feng shan shu" of the *SJ* explains the incident of the killing of the serpent as the killing of the son of the White Emperor by the son of the Red Emperor. Eventually, fire and the color red came to symbolize the Han; they also symbolized the Zhou dynasty.

3. Xian was the last Han emperor; this posthumous title meaning "rendering up" may refer to his ultimate abdication. He reigned from A. D. 189 to 220.

Mao Zonggang's prologue ends with this paragraph. The 1522 or *TS* edition begins at paragraph 2 as follows: "On the death of Emperor Huan [r. A. D. 147-68] of the Later Han, Emperor Ling [r. a. d. 168-89] came to the throne at the age of twelve. Sustaining and guiding him were Regent Dou Wu, Imperial Guardian Chen Fan, and Minister of the Interior Hu Guang." (Hu Guang later made his peace with the government; presumably that is why Mao left out his name.)

4. In the struggle for control over the imperial house in this period, the senior court officials and the district- and provincial-level officials fought for decades against the growing influence of the palace eunuchs. The empress's family sometimes aided and sometimes opposed the eunuchs. Beginning with Huan's reign the civil and military services suffered purges called *dang gu*; these

were suspended only in A. D. 184 after the Yellow Scarves Uprising became so threatening that court-palace unity had to be restored. The *dang gu* proscriptions are often regarded as a primary cause of the fall of the Han. See *HHS* ("Dang gu liezhuan"), pp. 2183-223, and the useful summary in Zeng Zi-sheng, *Zhongguo zhengzhi zhidu shi* (reprint, Hong Kong: Longmen shudian, 1969). Also see B. J. Mansvelt Beck, "The Fall of Han," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, *The Ch'in and Han Empires*, 221 B. C. -A. D. 220, ed. Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 317-76.

5. Imperial guardian was the highest civil office at this time; there was no prime minister (*chengxiang* or *xiangguo*). As the guardian of the heir apparent, he was a key figure in selecting and guiding the emperor's successor.

6. A. D. 168-72. Han emperors established several successive *nianhao* or year titles in the course of their reigns. Within each *nianhao* the years were numbered, starting with one (or *yuan* meaning "origin" of the reign period).

7. A. D. 178-84. Mao: "The eunuchs represent male turned into female. Eunuch interference in government represents female turned into male." A secondary (or "female") rainbow is concentric with but fainter and larger than a primary rainbow.

8. A span (*chi*) was slightly under 10 inches. Six *chi* made a *bu* (pace); and 300 *bu* made a *li*, about one-third of a mile.

9. The avalanche suggests danger from non-Han nations of the north, the Wuhuan or Xiongnu; the word *beng*, "collapse," also refers to the death of the Emperor.

10. *Zhongchangshi* (constant attendants to the emperor) were employed as early as the Qin. The founder of the Eastern or Later Han, Emperor Guang Wu (Liu Xiu), required all such personal attendants on the imperial family to be eunuchs. The constant attendants were drawn from the Inner Bureau (*huangmen* or "Yellow Gate"). See Hans Bielenstein, *The Bureaucracy of Han Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

11. In Chinese, Yellow Scarves is *huang jin*. Yellow is the imperial color; the word *jin*, "a piece of cloth," is the lower element in the graph *di*, "emperor." Rebels often established a counter-emperor to challenge the one in power. (The Yellow Emperor, Huangdi, was the patron saint of medicine.)

In Five Agents theory yellow represents earth, which overcomes fire. The mid-Han usurper Wang Mang adopted yellow as his symbolic color, and so did the house of Wei after accepting the abdication of the Han (see chap. 80). The yellow band around the head or hair of the rebels suggests the forbidden "yellow at the top" : "one who imitated the emperor's yellow carriage top and flags... acted unlawfully." T'ung-tsu Ch'ü, *Han Social Structure* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), p. 68.

12. A. D. 189-90. The reign title *Zhong Ping* suggests "North China [the *zhongyuan* or heartland] is stable." *Zhong*, "central," also refers to the imperial government.

13. *Jiangjun* is usually translated "general" if an honorary title precedes it, "commander" if alone. The thirty-six commands recall the thirty-six imperial districts into which the First Emperor of Qin divided China. In the opening of the *Shuihu zhuan*, Grand Commandant Hong releases thirty-six spirits from the Hall of Expelling Corruption.

14. Jing was emperor of the Former Han from 156 to 140 B. C.. Emperor Guang Wu, founder of the Later Han, traced his lineage to Emperor Jing.

The word *xuan* means "red mixed with black." The color symbolism suggests a darkened Han

virtue. Another possible allusion is to Liu Bang, who had briefly conceived of himself as the Black Emperor, perhaps thinking to be a Qin emperor (Qin's color symbol was black) before deciding to found a new dynasty, the Han.

Following Xuande's official biography, "Xianzhu zhuan," the *TS* (p. 4) mentions Xuande's fondness for hounds and horses as well as musical entertainment and fine clothes; see *SGZ*, p. 871. Mao leaves these details out and adds a phrase of his own, "gentle and generous by nature."

15. See Appendix III to "Emperor Wu," in Pan Ku [Ban Gu], *The History of the Former Han Dynasty*, trans. Homer H. Dubs (Baltimore: The Waverly Press, 1938-55), 2: 126-28.

16. *Xiaolian* (filial and honest) designates someone whom the district governor has recommended to the court for examination and appointment. One or two recommendations were made annually from each imperial district.

17. The *TS* (p. 4) reads: "The uncle reproached him: 'Don't talk nonsense! You'll ruin our whole family!'"

18. Zheng Xuan was an important annotator of the classics. Lu Zhi was one of the three Imperial Corps commanders dispatched to suppress the Yellow Scarves. Both men were scholars of the Old Text tradition, that is, they favored the *Zuo zhuan* and its philosophy of moral responsibility and rational relation of cause to effect in history. Opposed to the Old Text tradition was the New Text school, which emphasized prognostication, portents, and mystifying correspondences in interpreting history.

19. *Fei* means "to fly" ; *yide* means "wings [assisting] virtue." *De*, "virtue," is also part of Xuande's name. The given name, *Bei*, means "fully endowed" or "qualified."

20. Qiu Zhengsheng traces Lord Guan's red face to the following Song dynasty legend. After killing a corrupt magistrate and releasing his victims, Lord Guan took refuge in a Taoist temple. A sorceress at the temple had him wash his face in a spring. The water turned his face red, and as a result he could not be identified. See *ZHT*, p. 47.

21. *Yu* means "wings" ; *changsheng*, "prolonged life," is a Taoist phrase; *yunchang* is "permanent (or fleeting) as a cloud." The aerial imagery of these names suggests a connection with an anti-dynastic Taoist sect. The term *yuhua* (endowed with wings) was used by certain late Han sects to denote transcendence.

22. The *PH* (p. 11) paints Guan Yu in more revolutionary colors: "Because county officials were greedy and corrupt and cruel to the toiling people, Lord Guan killed the country magistrate and then fled for his life." This was the kind of action taken by members of the Yellow Scarves.

23. For the reader's convenience the three heroes will be called Xuande, Lord Guan, and Zhang Fei unless the context requires the use of their other names.

24. Peach blossoms in bloom suggest the ritual time of plighting troth. See *Shi jing*, ode 6, "Tao yao."

25. Horse sacrifice may have had non-Han origins. In his commentary to the *SJ*, Takigawa Kametarō notes: "The Xiongnu killed horses to offer to Heaven; the Rong and Di [peoples] did so too. The Qin followed the custom of the Western Rong [in making such sacrifices]." *SJ*, "Feng shan shu," p. 8. The sacrifice of a white horse (*baima*) is mentioned by Wang Ling, an opponent of Empress Lü's plan to supplant the Liu: "Empress Lü took control of the government [in 187 B. c.]. She proposed establishing members of her clan as kings and asked the counsel of Prime Minister of the Right Wang Ling. Wang Ling said, 'The Supreme Emperor [Liu Bang] slaughtered a white horse

and made a general covenant stating that if anyone who was not a member of the Liu clan became king, the whole empire must attack him. If you now make members of the Lü clan kings, you will violate this binding covenant" ; see *SJ*, "Lühou benji," p. 10. In the opening of the Yuan (or early Ming) drama devoted to the formation of the brotherhood, *Taoyuan jieyi*, the horse is sacrificed to Heaven, the ox to earth. During Luo Guanzhong's lifetime there was an anti-Mongol rebel league called the Red Scarves; this group performed horse and ox sacrifices.

[26.](#) The *jin*, approximately twenty ounces, consisted of ten *liang*, or "taels."

[27.](#) During the process of welding and cooling, a wavy damascene pattern may appear on the metal surface of a sword blade. See Joseph Needham, *The Development of Iron and Steel Technology in China* (London: W. Heffer, 1964), pp. 40-44. Lord Guan's sword is charged with solar (*yang*) energy; Green Dragon is the name of the eastern quadrant of the sky, from which the natural forces of renewal come each day.

[28.](#) The watches began at sundown and lasted two hours each.

[29.](#) In the *TS* (p. 8) Cao Cao is called "a real hero" (*hao yingxiong*) rather than a "leader" (*jiang*).

The names Ah Man and Jili are not mentioned in the "Wudi ji," the imperial annal for Cao Cao in the *SGZ*. The two names are in Pei Songzhi's interlinear citation (*SGZ*, pp. 1-2) from the *Cao Man zhuan*, a work ascribed to a man of Wu (the Southland); the same work is the source of the statement that Cao's grandfather, Teng, was a man of the Xiahou clan. Possibly, Ah Man and Jili are his Xiahou names. The "Wudi ji," favorable to Cao Cao, simply says that Cao Song's real origins could not be ascertained (*SGZ*, p. 1); the *Cao Man zhuan* is an unfriendly source. This passage of the novel mingles the two sources. Cao Cao's given name, a second tone, is a different word from his surname, Cao, a first tone; the given name means "integrity," but as a verb often means "manipulate." The word Ah means "dear little," and the word Man means "deceive," thus Cao Man means "Cao, the Deceiver." The name Cao Man is used occasionally in the novel.

[30.](#) Mao: "How can a man who deceives his father and uncle not deceive his king? Xuande treats his mother with filial love."

[31.](#) Mao: "Cao Cao enters and exits like the wind."

[32.](#) Mao: "Twice Xuande tried to assist the government forces but had no success. This time he found an unlooked-for battle as he was withdrawing and heading home. This illustrates the narrative principle of surprise [*bian*]. "

[33.](#) Mao: "They set out to assist Lu Zhi and ended up saving Dong Zhuo." Readers seeking to explore the novel's techniques of composition and character development will profit from two studies: Andrew Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987) and Andrew Hing-Bun Lo, "San-kuo-chih yen-i and Shui-hu chuan in the Context of Historiography: An Interpretive Study" (Ph. D. diss., Princeton University, 1981). For a more general introduction, see C. T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968).

CHAPTER 2

[1.](#) Part of the shamanic ritual for summoning demonic powers, unbound hair also suggests defiance of imperial authority. The use of animal offal and excrement to defeat supernatural agents is

discussed in Donald Harper, "The *Wu Shih Erh Ping Fang*: Translation and Prolegomena" (Ph. D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1982).

2. The titles assumed by the three rebel leaders, General of Heaven, General of the Earth, General of Men, correspond to the three elder lords, the *sangong*, the Emperor's closest confidants, who were also identified with Heaven, earth, and man. The *sangong* was more a ceremonial institution than a real force by the end of the Han.

3. General of Chariots and Cavalry is a military title second only to that of regent-marshal. It is comparable in status to general of the Flying Cavalry, a title first awarded to honor a daring foray into Xiongnu territory. See *SJ*, "Wei jiangjun piaoji liezhuan." Protector was a provincial appointment at a compensation rate of 2, 000 piculs of grain per month. Typically under the Han the customary chief provincial officer was the imperial inspector at 600 piculs. The protector had relatively independent authority; the imperial inspector was more strictly answerable to the court. Weakening central authority in the last Han reign is reflected in the increasing number of protector appointments over inspector appointments. See n. 8 below.

4. The founders of two of the three kingdoms, Cao Cao (of Wei, in the north) and Xuande (of Shu, in the west), are introduced in chapter 1. Sun Jian may be regarded as the founder of the third kingdom (Wu, in the south), although it was his son, Sun Quan, who actually became the ruler of the southern kingdom.

5. Mao: "Despite his ample ability he still needs connections, alas."

6. The *TS* (p. 14) attributes this speech to the Emperor.

7. There are other versions of this well-known scene. In the *SGZ* ("Xianzhu zhuan") the beating is administered by Xuande himself. In the *PH* (p. 23-24) Zhang Fei murders the local leadership and then beats the inspector to death in front of Xuande; afterward, the corpse is dismembered.

8. The appointment of Liu Yu in A. D. 188 as protector of Youzhou is a milestone in Han institutional history, marking the end of the central government's policy of retaining as much military authority as possible and restricting the development of regional and local forces (see Liu Yan's biography in *HHS* ("Liu Yan, Yuan Shu, Lü Bu liezhuan"), pp. 2431-38).

9. Emperor Ling had entrusted the eunuch Jian Shuo with the task of making Prince Xie, not Prince Bian, the next emperor. In A. D. 188 Ling formed a corps, the Eight Commandants of the West Garden, led by Jian Shuo, to ensure victory over the supporters of Prince Bian.

10. In his introductory note to chapter 2, Mao contrasts Zhang Fei's impetuosity (with which the chapter opens) to the temporizing of He Jin.

11. Empress Lü was the wife of Gao Zu (the Supreme Ancestor), founder of the Han, and the first empress dowager of the Han. Her son Hui was the second Han emperor. His first act upon assuming authority was to name her "Queen Mother." On Hui's death she installed her kinsman Lü Hong, king of Hengshan, as emperor (183 B. C.), but she herself held actual power. On her death her two nephews Lu and Chan took over the government, precipitating a small civil war that ended with the restoration of the Liu line and the destruction of the Lü line. See the annals of Han Gao Zu's empress in the *Han shu* ("Di ji," *juan* 3).

12. Mao (introductory note): "In the Western or Former Han dynasty, the Empress's relatives constituted a stronger faction than the eunuchs. In the Eastern or Later Han, the reverse was true. In the former case trouble began with Empress Lü's nephews threatening the imperial line, and culminated with the usurpation of Wang Mang. The eunuchs never attained the dominant position they would have

in the Later Han. Thus it may be said that the fall of the Western Han was due to the Empress's relatives. In the Eastern Han the Empress's relatives and the eunuchs vied for dominance, alternating in their periods of ascendancy. But as a rule the eunuchs—not the relatives—prevailed, as we see from the death of Dou Wu [see chap. 1] and He Jin. Thus it may be said that the fall of the Eastern Han was due to the eunuchs. Dou Wu lost but his own life; He Jin's death brought down the dynasty. Why? Because he summoned troops from outlying districts."

CHAPTER 3

1. In the *TS* (p. 22), Dong Zhuo's denunciation includes the charge that Zhang Rang has amassed vast holdings of choice farmland near the capital. This charge is also found in the *Dian lüe* version of the indictment as cited by Pei Songzhi (SGZ, pp. 172-73).

2. Lu Zhi was one of Xuande's teachers. Falsely accused of passivity in fighting the rebels, he was placed in a cage-cart. Subsequently he was vindicated and restored to his former position (see chap. 1).

3. This palace was assigned to the Empress; it was also known as the Eastern Palace.

4. He Jin was her brother as well as her subject.

5. This ancient royal graveyard dating back to the Zhou dynasty was located north of Luoyang.

6. Beginning with this paragraph the *TS* (p. 25) calls the boys "the two emperors" (*er di*). Mao Zonggang does not let such an expression of divided authority stand, although "two emperors" becomes an important theme later in the epic. Liu Bian's reign as Emperor Shao lasted from May 15 to September 28, 189.

7. Yuan Shao and Chunyu Qiong were among the eight commandants (see chap. 2, n. 9). Cao Cao, with the title *dianjun xiaoyu* (commandant for Military Standards), was another of the eight. Though its leader, Jian Shuo, was dead, the corps still had its mission to accomplish.

8. Wearing a sword on the palace grounds was a capital offense.

9. The *TS* has Bingzhou, correctly, according to the *SGZ*, p. 219.

10. The name is explained in the *PH* (p. 26): "The horse is extraordinary, its entire body covered with 'blood spots' that are a fresh red. [Presumably the blood-sweating Dayuan horse; see Arthur Waley, "The Heavenly Horses of Ferghana," *History Today* 5(1955): 95-103.] Its mane and tail are like fire. It is called Red Hare Steed [*chi tu ma*], not for the color red but because it is a horse for hunting [*she* (to shoot) is almost a rhyme with *chi*] the hare. If it spies a hare, it stops running and holds its ground without waiting for the rider to apply the reins [presumably allowing a steadier shot]. For this reason they call it Red Hare or Hare Hunter." In chapter 90 a Southern Man leader rides a *chi tu* horse: the interpretation is uncertain.

11. A position Cao Cao held.

CHAPTER 4

1. The Qin and Former Han title of prime minister (*xiangguo* or *chengxiang*) is not a standard one of the late Han. Its restoration by Cao Cao eighteen years later in A. D. 208, coupled with the elimination of the three elder lords (*sangong*), is a milestone in the history of the imperial bureaucracy. According to Dong Zhuo's biography in the *SGZ* (p. 174), he acquired the following offices before putting Emperor Xian on the throne: *sikong* (minister of works, one of the *sangong*);

taiyu (grand commandant, one of the *sangong*); and he took possession of the instruments of command over the Imperial Tiger Escort. After establishing Emperor Xian, Dong Zhuo had himself elevated to prime minister. Because the office is closer to the sovereign than any other, Cao Cao later assumed it himself.

2. Mao: "Wine goes most elegantly with poetry. But who would have expected this?"

3. According to the *Xu Hanshu*, He Jin (styled Suigao) "from Nanyang, was the elder brother of the Empress by the same father but different mothers. He Jin originally belonged to a butcher's family.... After the father's death, his sister, with the help of the Inner Bureau, entered the ranks of imperial concubines. Preferred by the Emperor, she rose to Empress in Guang He 3 [A. D. 180]. Through her, He Jin received rank and imperial favor. In Zhong Ping 1 [A. D. 184], after the uprisings of the Yellow Scarves, He Jin was appointed regent" ; cited in SGZ, p. 172.

4. Hanging enemy heads in this manner was a custom of the northwestern Qiang people, among whom Dong Zhuo was raised.

5. Mao: "The knife was the perfect gift to give in exchange for the horse. Why did Cao Cao need a special knife to kill Dong Zhuo? He asked for it because he was thinking ahead, and making it a gift may well have been part of his plan all along."

6. The murder of Lü Boshe is interpreted differently in the *Weishu*, a text cited in Pei Songzhi's interlinear commentary to the "Wudi ji" : "Convinced that Dong Zhuo would eventually come to ruin, Cao Cao refused appointment [to the Valiant Cavaliers] and fled to his native village. Accompanied by his followers, he passed the home of Lü Boshe. Boshe was not there, and his sons and their friends tried to kidnap Cao Cao and take his horses and goods. Cao stabbed several of them to death" (SGZ, p. 5). The novelist has chosen not to include other significant events of Cao Cao's early years. For example, the *Weishu* records that he submitted a memorial to Emperor Ling recommending the rehabilitation of the anti-eunuch officials Chen Fan and Dou Wu (SGZ, p. 3), and the SGZ (p. 4) itself says that he blocked a plot to depose Emperor Ling. Nonetheless, some scholars have argued that the novel's portrait of Cao Cao is basically historical. For an example of this view, see Weng Bonian, "San lun Cao Cao" *XK* (1985) 1: 124-43.

Mao Zonggang, normally so severe on Cao Cao, makes an interesting defense of his character here: "No reader reaching this episode fails to revile him.... They fail to recognize that Cao excels here too [in saying 'Better to wrong the world than have it wrong me']. Who has not felt this way? Who dares give such feelings voice? The good Confucian gentlemen speak hypocritically when they say, 'Better to be wronged than wrong another.' Not that it doesn't sound good, but when you examine their conduct every step they take is in secret imitation of Cao Cao's statement. Cao Cao is simply an ambitious and amoral man who said what was in his heart. Such frankness is most refreshing compared to the deceits spoken by the other type. In this sense Cao Cao excels."

CHAPTER 5

1. Mao (introductory note): "If Dong Zhuo had not deposed the Emperor, the eighteen lords would not have risen against him. If the eighteen lords had not risen against him, the empire would not have split into three. In this chapter we find the origin of the three kingdoms."

2. The coordinate concepts *zhong* and *yi* are central to the epic's themes and structures. *Zhong* is always translated "loyal" or "loyalty." It means "truehearted" devotion to established authority and is

an extension or correlate of *xiao*, filial love. *Yi* is a more difficult word to interpret. The conventional translation "righteous" is often too limited. *Yi* means commitment to a cause, principle, man, or group; it is an extension or correlate of *ti*, fraternal love. In this translation the various renderings include honor, honorable, devoted to the cause of, loyalist, righteous, sworn, true allegiance, and ethical (or principled). In chapter 1 the three brothers *jiyei*, enter an "honor-bound commitment" to uphold the dynasty. In the course of the novel, so long as loyalty and honor are congruent, allegiances are undivided and moral judgments clear; but when *zhong* and *yi* conflict, tragic divisions arise.

[3.](#) The fief at Pei is Cao Cao's home district.

[4.](#) Yuan Shao had stormed out of the court at the end of chapter 3.

[5.](#) Liu Bei (Xuande) is the protagonist of the novel. The author uses his *zi* (style), Xuande, as a sign of respect. Neutral observers and Xuande's opponents use his *ming* (given name), Bei; the hero refers to himself as Bei, a humble form equivalent to "I." This is true for every character, of course, but this translation preserves such distinctions only for a few major characters. From here on, except in dialogue, the *zi* ("style" or "courtesy name") will be simply enclosed in parentheses; in a few special cases a character will be consistently named by his *zi* instead of his *ming*.

[6.](#) Mao: "They made him chief solely on the basis of his lineage."

[7.](#) Sun Jian is the father of the founder of the kingdom of Wu, the Southland. He is introduced in chapter 2.

[8.](#) See *Analects*, 17. 4. Citations are to the text in James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, 2d ed., vol. 1, *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1893-95). Translations of the text may vary from Legge's.

[9.](#) A *jian* is a pointed two-edged sword; it has been called a sword-of-war. A *dao* is a single-edged weapon, also known as a backsword; the weight of its back increases its cleaving power. In this novel most swords are *dao*.

[10.](#) Cheng Pu is Sun Jian's most senior general.

[11.](#) TS (p. 46): "'What precedent is there for seating a lowly county magistrate?' Xuande said."

[12.](#) This is a posture of respectful attention indicating readiness to serve.

[13.](#) Chen Shou, author of the SGZ, credits Sun Jian with the killing of Hua Xiong; see SGZ, p. 1096. The novelist sometimes follows a tradition in Three Kingdoms fiction of attributing deeds of southern heroes to the group around Liu Xuande.

[14.](#) Mao: "What good is Yuan Shao as war-ruler if he can neither control his younger brother [Shu] nor protect his uncle?" Yuan Wei played a key role in the change of emperors engineered by Dong Zhuo. According to the *ZZTJ* (p. 1904), Yuan Wei guided Emperor Shao down from the dais and presented the prince of Chenliu with the royal seal and cord.

[15.](#) A discussion of Chinese animal designs can be found in "Art as the Path to Authority," in K. C. Chang, *Art, Myth, and Ritual* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

[16.](#) I. e., Liu Xie, prince of Chenliu, now Emperor Xian.

CHAPTER 6

[1.](#) The reference is to Dong Zhuo's murder of Imperial Guardian Yuan Wei and his household.

[2.](#) In this context the deer symbolizes the throne.

[3.](#) Liu Bang, whose posthumous temple name is (Han) Gao Zu, meaning "Supreme Ancestor."

4. Liu Xiu, whose posthumous temple name is Guang Wu, meaning "Glorious-in-Arms."

5. Guanzhong or "the land within the passes" has Chang'an at its center.

6. This is a corrected translation; the text erroneously repeats "minister of the interior" (*situ*). The *TS* and the *SGZ* have "minister of works" (*sikong*), who would be the logical official to address Dong Zhuo's claim to be able to rebuild the capital quickly.

7. Mao: "Cao Hong is a true brother, but he acts for the world, not for the family."

8. The bull, the sheep, and the pig. According to the *Li ji*, "Yue ling," the sacrifice was to petition for a son for the emperor, who participated personally; see *Ci yuan* (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1979-83), s. v. *gao mei* (p. 3481) and *tailao* (p. 702). Sun Jian's act is a reminder that no successor to Emperor Ling had been universally accepted.

9. This was 221 B. C., the year the unification was accomplished; see the opening paragraphs of chapter 1.

10. Ziyang was the last ruler of the Qin dynasty.

11. Liu Xiu, temple name Guang Wu, was the emperor who restored the Han after the usurpation and interregnum of Wang Mang.

12. Jingzhou was the central province geographically. Changsha, governed by Sun Jian, was one of Jingzhou's imperial districts; Jiangxia, mentioned below, is another. Both Changsha and Jiangxia bordered on Yangzhou, the southern province that for the most part lay south of the Great River.

CHAPTER 7

1. Mao: "Yuan Shu withheld grain and caused Sun Jian's defeat. Han Fu, by supplying grain, incited Yuan Shao's scheming."

2. The principal city of a province often bears the same name as the whole province. Jizhou will be the nucleus of Cao Cao's northern kingdom.

3. In view of the importance of Zhao Zilong in *Three Kingdoms* and more generally the question of defection, the longer dialogue in the *TS* is worth noting. Zan: "They say people in your esteemed region are wholeheartedly throwing in their lot with Yuan Shao. You are the only one, young master, taking a different course in coming to me. Why?" Zilong: "Now the people are in a precarious plight, as if in a time of rising floodwaters. It is my desire to follow a lord of humanity and honor [*ren yi*, conventionally rendered "benevolence and righteousness "] and restore peace in the empire. It is not simply that I would turn my back on Yuan Shao to enter your service, my enlightened lord" (p. 62). Throughout the translation the name Zilong is used for easier recognition.

4. The white horse was sacred to many of the non-Han nations of the north (see chapter 1).

5. Imperial preceptor is the new title Dong Zhuo has assumed in Chang'an. Like the title he assumed in Luoyang, *xiangguo* (prime minister), it is a revival of a Qin and early Han title, not a standard one in the late Han bureaucracy. His aim is to assert his authority over the child emperor.

6. Mao: "Previously, Yuan Shu caused Sun Jian's defeat by refusing him grain. Now he resents others' refusing him and for his satisfaction deceives Jian into risking his life. Detestable man!" Liu Biao's appointment was made the year before by the Dong Zhuo court.

7. Mao underscores the parallelism: "Yuan Shu's letter to Sun Jian is followed by Liu Biao's appeal to Yuan Shao. This was inherent in the situation."

8. After his first wife's death, Liu Biao married Lady Cai.

9. To the reader who may feel bewildered by the skirmishes and battles recounted in this chapter, Mao Zonggang addresses the following note: "The battles between Yuan Shao and Gongsun Zan tilted one way, then another, even in the course of a single day. Who could have predicted such reversals? Then came the wars between a civilian-minded, weak Liu Biao and a brave, vigorous warrior like Sun Jian. Surely the victory should have been Jian's, the defeat Biao's. But in the event there was the opposite result. This too was unforeseeable. Alas! what permanence can anyone find in the chaotic events of this world? Not only in Chen Shou's *Sanguozhi* must one look at things this way; the same applies to all seventeen dynastic histories!"

10. Mao's introductory note discusses the author's narrative technique: "The death of Sun Jian and the introduction of Sun Ce are narrated for the sake of Sun Quan,... who in this chapter is merely mentioned by name... but ultimately becomes the southern counterpart of Xuande and Cao Cao—the rulers of their kingdoms. Hence Quan is the principal and Jian and Ce the foils. And yet Jian and Ce are the principals with respect to Yuan Shao and Gongsun Zan. However, since in the account of Gongsun Zan, Xuande suddenly appears and then disappears and is recommended by Zan as governor of Pingyuan, then Zan is written of because of Xuande, and Yuan Shao because of Zan. In that case the war between Shao and Zan becomes the major theme [due to connection with Xuande] and Jian's attack on Biao, the minor. Why so? Sun Quan [is relatively less important because he] took only a share of Han's domain while Xuande was Han's legitimate continuator. Inasmuch as the division of the realm is the main theme, Zan, Shao, and the rest become the foils. And among the three kingdoms Xuande is the principal and Sun Quan his foil. Taking an overview of this chapter, Yuan Shao made war on Gongsun Zan, but the author's main interest was in Xuande; Sun Jian attacked Liu Biao, but the author's interest was in Sun Quan. The relative positions of major and minor [literally, 'host' and 'guest' or principal and foil] must be finely discriminated by readers of *Three Kingdoms*."

CHAPTER 8

1. Shangfu was a term used by Wuwang (King Wu), founder of the Zhou dynasty, to address his preceptor, Lü Wang, also known by the names Jiang Ziya and Taigong Wang.

2. The *TS* (p. 71) is more graphic: "Before dying, the victims kept coming back to the wine stands, struggling for their lives.... After the banquet had adjourned, Dong Zhuo said that there was no cause for alarm as only criminals were being killed."

3. *TS* (p. 71): "Dong Zhuo ordered Lü Bu to urge the guests to drink as the severed head was brought before each in turn."

4. Mao: "Since Cao Cao failed to assassinate Dong Zhuo, Wang Yun [who provided Cao with the jeweled knife], must have been in a state of despair. Diaochan's suggestion fills the reader in."

5. Dong Zhuo is both prime minister (*xiangguo*) and imperial preceptor (*taishi*).

6. Diaochan's name, composed of the words for "marten" and "cicada," conveys something of her appeal: the foxy chirper or songstress.

7. Yi Yin, a Shang dynasty minister, disciplined his sovereign, Tai Jia, and ruled in his stead. Zhougong (the Duke of Zhou) served as regent for the child emperor Chengwang, son of Wuwang.

8. In the *TS* (p. 73) Wang Yun's speech begins: "The empire [*tianxia*] belongs to no one man [*yiren*]; but to all in the empire [*tianxia ren de tianxia*]." This motif of the *TS* recurs five more times; the Mao edition deletes each one. Notes to this translation mark the six deletions. For a

discussion of this point, see Zhao Qingyun, "Luo Guanzhong de zhengzhiguan ji *Sanguo yanyi* chuanguo sixiang guankui," *LWJ*, p. 358-61.

9. This poem is based on an allusion to Zhao Feiyan, who lived in Zhaoyang Palace. A skilled performer, she was renowned for her physical lightness, hence the name Feiyan or "Flying Swallow." During the reign of the Former Han emperor Cheng, Feiyan was first his consort, then his empress.

10. The "beat" in line one is set by musicians with clappers. Lü Bu is the rover, but the line may also allude to pilgrim-lovers of the rain goddess who dwelled in Dongting Lake.

11. The allusion is to King Xiang of Chu, who vainly sought the goddess on Gaotang Mountain. See Song Yu's poem "Rhapsody on the Goddess" (Shen nü fu) in *juan* 19 of the *Wen xuan*.

CHAPTER 9

1. When the candles blew out and all was dark, a man tugged at the queen's robes. She seized his hat ribbon and bade the king apprehend him. The king refused and told all the guests to tear off their ribbons. Jiang Xiong is not named in the original story; Chu's war was with Wu, not Qin. See *Han shi wai zhuan*, chap. 7.

2. Mao: "The panic is real, the tears false."

3. *TS* (p. 81): "There is a secret edict from the Emperor. Conceal it on your person, General. "

4. Mao (introductory note): "In persuading Lü Bu to kill Dong Zhuo, Wang Yun is alternately urgent and nonchalant, forthcoming and reluctant. He approaches Lü Bu with negative arguments and positive ones. He exerts no pressure, then he squeezes. It is a more satisfying [demonstration of the art] than Li Su gave when he persuaded Lü Bu to kill Ding Yuan" (in chap. 3).

5. This is another allusion to Lü Wang, who supported the founder of the Zhou dynasty. When he was preceptor, Lü Wang dreamed of flying bears. There was no such corps during the Han.

6. These are visual puns: the Chinese graphs for "thousand," "li," and "grass" make up the graph for Dong, and the graphs for "divining," "ten," and "day" make up the graph for Zhuo.

7. The graph for the surname Lü consists of two mouths (small squares), one above the other.

8. The *TS* (p. 83) dates Dong Zhuo's death to Initial Stability (Chu Ping) 3, 4th month, 22nd day, or May 22, A. D. 192.

9. The *HHS* and *ZZTJ* provide a more balanced picture of Dong Zhuo than the novel, though they record his cruel acts and depredations. Zhuo used the eunuch domination of the government to justify seizing power, but after the wholesale execution of the eunuchs, "he promoted the sons and brothers of the elder lords and ministers to fill the offices they once occupied" [*ZZTJ*, p. 1905). He also rehabilitated the reputations of many of those purged during the *dang gu* periods, most notably Chen Fan and Dou Wu (with those executions the novel begins), "to accord with people's expectations. Then he restored their ranks and titles and raised their progeny to official positions" (*HHS*, p. 2325). Dong Zhuo murdered Emperor Shao (Liu Bian) after learning that Yuan Shao had organized the lords of the east against him, presumably to deny his enemies a newly deposed emperor as a rallying point.

10. Mao (introductory note to preceding chapter): "The eighteen armies of the confederate lords failed to kill Dong Zhuo. One Diaochan sufficed [to accomplish it]. Liu Xuande, Lord Guan, and Zhang Fei could not conquer Lü Bu. Diaochan, alone, was able to. The couch was her battleground, cosmetics her armor, glances her spear and dagger, frowns and smiles her bow and arrows. With pleasing words and humble phrases she arranged surprise attacks and ambushes—a female general

truly to be feared and respected." From the 1522 introduction to the *TS*: "Dong Zhuo absurdly coveted the sacred throne; He Jin's folly planted the seeds of disaster; Yuan Shao organized a great army openly; the three brothers stirred wind and thunder with their blood-sealed oath in the peach garden. How sad: the schemes of so many heroes fell short of Diaochan's arts of song and speech."

The story of Diaochan is not found (except for mention of a love rivalry between Zhuo and Bu) in *SGZ* or *HHS*, but the incident is developed in the Yuan drama *Lian huan ji*.

11. Mao: "[This was in] revenge for the murder of Queen Mother He."

12. Mao: "Dong Zhuo carved and scraped the people's living flesh [to amass this wealth], and what became of him? Let this be a warning against avarice."

13. Cai Yong was working on the *Dongyuan Hanji*, the main history of the Later Han. Others who worked on the encyclopedia were Ma Midi, Yang Biao, and Lu Zhi.

14. Mao: "Wang Yun feared that Cai Yong would give a distorted account of the life of Dong Zhuo." Sima Qian (145-86? B. C.), author of the *SJ* (historical records from remote antiquity to the reign of the fifth Han emperor, Wu), was one of China's great historians. During the Han, however, he was often criticized for his treatment of certain officials and more generally for not sufficiently extolling the Han. A major exponent of this critical view was Ban Gu, author of the *Han shu*. By contrast, the Qing editor of *Three Kingdoms*, Mao Zonggang, regards Sima Qian as a superlative historian and Luo Guanzhong as perhaps his only equal.

15. Zhuge Liang (Kongming), a central character, appears in chapter 36. He is also called Sleeping Dragon, hence "lay low."

16. *HHS*, biography of Wang Yun (pp. 2172-75): "At the time of the Yellow Scarves uprising Yun was given a special appointment as imperial inspector of Yuzhou [a post later held by Liu Xuande], and he made Xun Shuang and Kong Rong his assistants, the Emperor having rescinded the proscription of officials opposed to the eunuchs. He won great victories against the Scarves and, together with Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun, accepted the surrender of hundreds of thousands. In rebel documents he discovered correspondence between the eunuch Zhang Rang and the Scarves, and he accused Zhang Rang publicly on this evidence of treachery. The Emperor was angry, but Zhang Rang kowtowed and apologized, so the Emperor took no action against him. Zhang Rang in his desire for vengeance contrived to have Wang Yun imprisoned for some offense.

"In a subsequent amnesty Yun returned to his post as imperial inspector of Yuzhou, but was rearrested on new charges within ten days.... Although he was finally freed on appeals from the three elder lords, the power of the eunuchs was so great that to escape death he changed his name and hid himself here and there in the Henei-Chenliu area.

"When Emperor Ling died Yun came to the capital for the rites. At that time Marshal He Jin wanted to execute the eunuchs, and Yun joined his staff as an aide before rising to governor of Henan. With the accession of Emperor Xian he was made court steward and head of the Secretariat. In A. D. 190 he replaced Yang Biao as minister of the interior while remaining in charge of the Secretariat.

"When Dong Zhuo moved the capital to the west, Yun gathered up the main documents, maps, and occult writings and followed him. After reaching Chang'an, the libraries were put into proper order once again.... All business at court was delegated to Yun, and he enjoyed the confidence of Zhuo.... That is how he upheld the royal house in the midst of the chaos."

This information, which also serves as background to chapter 1, would have been known to a traditionally educated reader of the novel.

17. This action taken by Wang Yun is the seed of all subsequent events. Mao (introductory note to chap. 8): "Had Wang Yun not driven the four generals into rebellion, the house of Han could have been restored at this time. And Diaochan would have won everlasting recognition."

18. Mao: "Hu Chi'er's murder of Niu Fu resembles Lü Bu's murder of Dong Zhuo. What he saw clearly in others he was blind to in himself."

19. Reversing standard procedure, Liu Bang's general, Peng Yue, used this tactic against the forces of Chu in a battle of the civil war between Chu and Han.

CHAPTER 10

1. Zhu Jun was a veteran of the campaigns against the Yellow Scarves. See chapter 1.

2. Mao: "With members of Dong Zhuo's faction at the top, there are corresponding uprisings below."

3. Zhang Liang (Zifang) was an important adviser to Han Gao Zu. Mao: "[Cao was] implicitly treating himself as the founder of the Han."

4. Elai's physical strength was legendary. He was a subject of the last ruler of the Shang dynasty.

5. Mao: "In attacking the Yellow Scarves instead of Li Jue and Guo Si, Cao Cao gave greater weight to the wide world than to the court. In calling for his father before rescuing the Emperor, he put his own concerns before the public good."

6. Suspecting that Cao Cao meant to kill him, Dong Zhuo had issued a warrant for his arrest. On such a charge the whole clan, including Cao Cao's father, would have been held responsible. See chapter 4.

7. Xuzhou was the main city and governing center of Xuzhou province. The invasion took place in the autumn of A. D. 193.

8. When Cao Cao was fleeing from Dong Zhuo, Chen Gong was the guard who first detained Cao Cao, then joined him in flight.

9. Mao: "[This] sets the stage for Lü Bu's subsequent attack on Xuzhou."

CHAPTER 11

1. "Con" is the latinized form of "Kong," Confucius' surname.

2. Surnamed Li, according to one tradition.

3. Mao: "Cao Cao was avenging his father; Taishi Ci was repaying Kong Rong's kindness to his mother."

4. Mao: "Mi Zhu had no sooner sought Kong Rong's help for Tao Qian than Taishi Ci was sent to seek Liu Bei's help for Kong Rong. The developments [of the plot] are unimaginable." The facts are historical according to Liu Bei's biography in *SGZ* and Kong Rong's in *HHS*.

5. Mao: "Every word striking home with Liu Xuande."

6. In the *TS* Lord Guan is characterized by two phrases: reader of the *Zuo zhuan*; and wielder of the Green Dragon. The *Zuo zhuan* was the principal text of the Old Text school.

7. *SGZ* ("Xianzhu zhuan"), p. 873: "At this time Liu Bei had somewhat more than a thousand soldiers, as well as a sprinkling of nomad horsemen from the Wuwan [i. e., Wuhuan] people in Youzhou. He also had a few thousand commoners [fleeing famine]." The *ZZTJ* (p. 1949) places Tao Qian's call for help in early A. D. 194.

8. Mao: "This sentence answers Xuande's earlier remark, 'So the governor of Beihai knows there's a Liu Bei in this world?' ' From his introductory note: "What began with Tao Qian seeking help ended with Kong Rong seeking help. What began with Taishi Ci helping Kong Rong ended with Liu Xuande helping Kong Rong. What began with Kong Rong seeking Xuande's help ended with Tao Qian seeking Xuande's help. These fantastic changes are beyond anyone's power to fathom, much less grasp."

9. Mao: "Genuine? Or specious?"

10. Mao (introductory note): "How can a man set out to avenge his father and do his enemy a good turn? A filial son bent on vengeance does not consider his own life. How could he think of his home and break off his mission midway?... Taishi Ci is a filial son... Cao Cao is not."

11. The *TS* (p. 107) reads: "'Bring the insignia then; I'll take them. It's not up to elder brother to refuse,' said Zhang Fei. 'Will you drive me to dishonor?' said Xuande. 'Then I will take my own life.' With that, he held his sword to his throat, but Zhao Zilong pulled it from him."

12. According to *SGZ* (p. 873), Tao Qian at this point recommended to the court that Liu Xuande be appointed imperial inspector of Yuzhou, a position later approved through Cao Cao. Later in the narrative Xuande is sometimes called Liu Yuzhou.

13. According to the "Wudi ji," after Liu Dai was killed fighting the Yellow Scarves, the remaining officials of Yanzhou went to Dongjun and invited Cao Cao to rule their province (*SGZ*, p. 9).

14. This battle took place in the eighth month of A. D. 194.

CHAPTER 12

1. The *TS* dates the action to A. D. 194, 9th month, 21st day.

2. The Chinese word translated as "government building" is *zhouya*, a term of the Song period; it does not recur.

3. According to the *SGZ*, "that year [A. D. 194] one bushel of unhusked grain cost more than five hundred thousand cash" (see p. 177 on Dong Zhuo's degradation of the currency in A. D. 190). Cannibalism was practiced, according to the "Wudi ji," p. 12.

4. Guang Wu is the posthumous temple name of Liu Xiu, founder of the Later Han.

5. In his introductory note Mao criticizes Xun Wenruo for planting notions of sovereignty in Cao's mind with these references to the founders of the Former and Later Han: "How could he [Wenruo] later object to Cao Cao's subsequent disloyalty to the Emperor, having himself alluded to these precedents?" (See also his interlinear notes.)

6. Dated to Xing Ping 1, 12th month (early A. D. 195) in the *TS* (p. 117).

7. Where Cao Cao was burned out.

8. Mao: "Who would have expected his false surrender would turn out to be true?"

9. Mao: "No news of Diaochan."

CHAPTER 13

1. Regent-general, or *dasima*, is not a standard title of the Jian An period. During the Han it alternated with that of grand commandant, or *taiyu*. In the Former Han the regent was called *dasima*, and that may be why Li Jue, as the Emperor's caretaker, assumed it. The title here is used

retroactively. The official appointment by the Emperor comes later in the chapter.

He Jin, brother of the Empress, was the last regent-marshal, or *dajiangjun*. The position had been held in the Later Han by a member of the empress's family. After He Jin's death there was no regent (until Cao Cao), and the highest military position was general of Chariots and Cavalry.

2. Mao (introductory note): "Like Wang Yun, Yang Biao used a woman to divide his enemies. Wang Yun's action eased the crisis; Yang Biao's made it worse.... Lü Bu had the Emperor's mandate to kill Dong Zhuo; Guo Si attacked Li Jue without one.... Thus, there is a difference between Lü Bu and Dong Zhuo; there is none between Li Jue and Guo Si." The conflict between generals Li and Guo took place in the summer of A. D. 195.

3. This character appears in chapter 1 (as one of three Imperial Corps commanders sent to suppress the Yellow Scarves) and occasionally thereafter as a loyalist bureaucrat. Dong Zhuo left him in the eastern capital, Luoyang, when he moved the court to Chang'an. At the time he had been promoted to general of Chariots and Cavalry. He died holding the office of treasurer, *dasinong*.

4. Hou Yi was the king of the Youqiong in the Xia era. According to legend, he was an expert marksman who relied on strength and courage alone. Politically incompetent, however, he was eventually murdered by his subordinates.

5. The Qiang dominated the area covered by present-day Gansu as well as parts of Sichuan and Qinghai. They were the main threat to the Later Han during the last century of its rule. Dong Zhuo, partly of Qiang stock himself, rose to power as a general who could manage the Qiang.

6. Zhang Ji was the third of Dong Zhuo's "four generals."

7. Zhang Ji had troops stationed in Hongnong. The district, roughly midway between Chang'an and Luoyang, was under the authority of the commander of the Capital Districts (*silixiaoyu*). The unusual visibility of the Emperor in this chapter suggests his vulnerability.

8. Dong Cheng was an uncle of Emperor Xian and a nephew of Emperor Ling's mother. He will play a critical role in the plot in chapter 20. Emperor Xian reached Hongnong early in A. D. 196.

9. In his introductory note the editor, Mao Zonggang, compliments the author for tracing the totality of the action regardless of its length or complexity, 'in the hands of the raconteurs of today the reemergence of Cao Cao would have followed directly after the fall of Dong Zhuo. But the author purposefully goes into the story of Li Jue and Guo Si as an aftereffect of the Dong Zhuo episode; and then into the story of White Wave leader Li Yue as an aftereffect of the Li Jue-Guo Si episode. That is followed by the transitional passages describing Yang Feng and Dong Cheng rescuing the Emperor. Only gradually does the narrative lead into the appearance of Cao Cao. Such twists and turns! Truly a master storyteller! "

CHAPTER 14

1. Mao: "The very spot where Sun Jian looked at the moon."

2. Mao: "The idea is 'establish [Jian] the capital; bring peace [*an*] to the dynasty.' Clearly the Emperor meant to make Luoyang his capital." The year was A. D. 196. The Emperor arrived in Luoyang on August 12.

3. Liu Bang (see chap. 1) made his comeback from the Mang-Dang marshes and went on to defeat his main rival, Xiang Yu of Chu, who rode his famous war-horse in his final hour.

4. Mao (introductory note): "To those who ask why the Emperor summoned Cao Cao and not Liu

Xuande, I would answer: Xuande had too few troops and his position was weak... The disparity in their strength dictated the choice. What is more, there was danger from Yang Feng and Han Xian and from other outside garrisons as well. How could Xuande have defended [the Emperor] against them all? When Xun Wenruo warned Cao Cao that someone else might reach the Emperor first, he recognized that Yuan Shao or Yuan Shu might have sought a leading role but would have proved incapable, while Xuande, though capable, lacked the means. Cao Cao was the only possibility."

5. This was a key moment in Liu Bang's conquest of power. In 206 B. C. his antagonist Xiang Yu had the nominal King Huai of Chu, the Righteous Emperor (Yidi) murdered (see *SJ*, "Xiang Yu benji"). Liu Bang seized the occasion to portray himself as a loyalist by mourning the Righteous Emperor.

6. Fan Kuai was a general who saved the first Han emperor's life. Mao: "Cao Cao by implication regards himself as another Liu Bang."

7. He left the city to show sincerity and allay suspicion.

8. Yang Feng was a general under Li Jue; Han Xian was a leader of the White Wave rebels.

9. The city of Xu was renamed Xuchang at the beginning of the next dynasty, the Wei. As a capital (*du*) it is called Xudu or Xu in historical sources.

10. Mao (introductory note): "There is nothing to distinguish Cao's moving the Emperor to Xuchang from Dong Zhuo's moving him to Chang'an or Li and Guo's moving him to Mei. Cao Cao was acting under the cover of obedience, however, a claim the others could not credibly make. A loyalist force cannot be equated with one that abducts an emperor."

11. *SJ*, "Tian guan shu" : "Even when a wise king reigns, one must watch where Mars stands."

12. Wei, the name of the dynasty the Cao family will found, was considered to be in the central or fifth direction, hence symbolized by earth and yellow.

13. Mao: "This underpins a coming turn in the narrative."

14. Mao: "The commander of the Capital Districts and the chief of the Secretariat had responsibility for executing imperial commands. In the end Cao Cao left these positions vacant; he might better have assumed them himself. Li Jue and Guo Si wrote down the offices they demanded and left appointment [*feng*] to the Emperor; Cao Cao made the appointments himself, sparing the Emperor even that effort. Cao Cao's conduct becomes increasingly extraordinary."

15. An office created by Cao Cao.

16. In the *TS* (p. 137), Cao's speech begins with the following sentences: " Today I have reached the status of elder lord through my devotion and respect to the royal house. In all things I have relied on your advice. My principal concerns are Yuan Shao and Yuan Shu, but they are well established in their territories and we are not ready to act against them. Xuande, however,..."

17. Cao Cao is still regent-marshal; his appointment as prime minister (*chengxiang*) will not occur until Jian An 3; it is still Jian An 1 (A. D. 196).

18. According to the *TS*, among those who attended the meeting were Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, Jian Yong, Sun Qian, Lord Guan, and Zhang Fei.

19. Yuan Shu (Gonglu), Yuan Shao's half-brother, had risen to Imperial Corps commander of the Imperial Tiger Escort (*huben zhonglangjiang*) when Dong Zhuo deposed Emperor Shao. On the eve of the dethronement Dong Zhuo appointed Shu as general of the Rear, but Shu fled to Nanyang rather than tie his fortunes to Dong Zhuo. At this time it happened that Sun Jian, governor of Changsha, had killed Zhang Zi, governor of Nanyang; Yuan Shu consequently assumed authority and plundered the rich and populous district of Nanyang. Later, defeated by armies of Yuan Shao and Cao Cao, Yuan

Shu fled to Jiujiang (a district in northwest Yangzhou), killed the imperial inspector, and assumed control.

Initially, Yuan Shu and Yuan Shao fell out over Shao's plan to make Liu Yu, protector of Youzhou, emperor and then attack Dong Zhuo in Chang'an. Yuan Shu's plan was to eliminate Dong Zhuo and rescue Emperor Xian. See SGZ, pp. 207-8.

[20](#). Xuande's two wives were Lady Gan and Lady Mi.

CHAPTER 15

[1](#). Mao: "Previously Yuan Shu refused to give Lü Bu refuge. Now he tries to make an ally of him. Such flip-flops are ridiculous."

[2](#). Xiaopei is the town Xuande originally gave Lü Bu (chap. 13). Mao (introductory note): "After Lü Bu seized Yanzhou, Cao Cao finally recovered it. After Lü Bu seized Xuzhou, Liu Xuande could not recover it. This was because of circumstances, not Xuande's failings. What began with Lü Bu dependent on Xuande ended with Xuande dependent on Lü Bu: host and guest exchanged roles."

[3](#). Here the narrative of the Sun family—founders of Wu, the southeastern kingdom—resumes, picking up the thread from chapter 7.

[4](#). Jiangnan and Jiangdong (*jiang*, the [i. e., Yangzi] River; *nan*, south; *dong*, east) are alternative designations for Wu. Both terms are translated "Southland," but Jiangnan emphasizes geography, while Wu accents the region's pre-Han tradition. The administrative designation Yangzhou, as applied to Jiangnan, disappears after this chapter with the defeat of Liu Yao, its last imperial inspector. The southerners, preferring to emphasize regional independence, spoke only of Jiangnan or Wu. However, the two districts north of the Great River, Jiujiang and Lujiang (less than 20 percent of the whole area), were sometimes called Yangzhou by the northern court.

[5](#). Sun Jian was buried in Qu'e.

[6](#). The "Wu shu" supplies background that explains Sun Ce's grievances: "Initially, Yuan Shu allowed Sun Ce to serve as governor of Jiujiang district, but soon gave the position to Chen Ji of Danyang instead.... Later, when Yuan Shu sent Sun Ce to attack [Lujiang], he said, 'I made a mistake replacing you with Chen Ji and never cease regretting that I did not fulfill my original purpose. Now if you capture Lu Kang, Lujiang district will really be yours.' But after Sun Ce succeeded, Yuan Shu retained the previous governor, Liu Xun, to Sun Ce's deep disappointment. Before these events Liu Yao was the [legitimate] imperial inspector of Yangzhou, and the seat of government was at Shouchun. After Yuan Shu seized Shouchun, Liu Yao crossed the Great River and moved the government to Qu'e. Since [Sun Ce's uncle] Wu Jing was still in Danyang,... he was driven to Liyang by Liu Yao.... Yuan Shu appointed Hui Ju... as imperial inspector of Yangzhou and made Wu Jing his Imperial Corps Commander Supervising the Army.... For years they struggled unsuccessfully [against Liu Yao]. Sun Ce then went to persuade Yuan Shu to let him help Wu Jing pacify the Southland." See SGZ, p. 1102; also see Liu Yao's biography, SGZ, p. 1183. Sun Jian had married Wu Jing's sister; she was the mother of Sun Ce.

[7](#). Yuan Shu in fact was returning to Sun Ce troops that had been under his father's command. According to the *Wu li*, Zhang Hong had imperial ambitions for Sun Ce: "In ancient times when the house of Zhou was in extremity, the states of Jin and Qi attained power and prosperity. Through their effort the royal house was stabilized, and the lords of the realm paid tribute to it. Now you are

following the footsteps of the great hegemon of old, and you have a reputation as a valiant warrior. Go to Danyang, gather your forces at Wujun and Kuaiji, unify the provinces Yangzhou and Jingzhou, and you will be avenged. With the Great River under your control, you can give wide scope to your powerful influence, punish and eliminate the multitude of evildoers, and uphold the house of Han.... Why be content with being a mere border state?" To this Ce replied, "Your words coincide with my own thinking." See *SGZ*, p. 1103.

[8.](#) See chapter 11.

[9.](#) Here Luo Guanzhong nods, and the remainder of this chapter may seem tedious. The events leading to an independent Southland under Sun Quan (Ce's brother) are important history, nonetheless. If the reader wishes to skip to the last page of the chapter, the gist of the story is this: Sun Ce defeats the legitimate imperial inspector of Yangzhou, Liu Yao; wins to his side the great warrior Taishi Ci; and conquers the southern districts of Wujun and Kuaiji. In this way Sun Ce lays the foundation for the southern kingdom that his brother Quan will inherit and rule as regional hegemon and eventually as emperor. The chapter ends with Yuan Shu's preparing to attack Liu Xuande.

[10.](#) Sun Ce's victory at Ox Landing is dated by the *ZZTJ* (p. 1971) to A. D. 195.

[11.](#) Literally, a junior Xiang Yu, who had the title of *ba wang* or hegemon-king. Xiang Yu once dominated the Southland and was Liu Bang's principal rival during the wars that led to the founding of the Han.

[12.](#) Mao (introductory note): "The previous section narrates the beginning of Cao Cao's establishment of power. This section narrates the events leading to the establishment of the Southland under the Sun family.... And Liu Xuande is adrift, though he is the true heir to the Han. Hence the chapter concludes with him, and the next section begins with him, though the bulk of the narration is devoted to Cao and Sun. Xuande is like a dragon in the sky: there's the head, here's a claw. The subtlety of the author's art is unsurpassed."

CHAPTER 16

[1.](#) Yuan Shu's letter, cited in the *TS* (p. 154), expresses gratitude to Lü Bu for his earlier victories against two common enemies, Dong Zhuo and Cao Cao.

[2.](#) *TS*: "We'll have to quit Xiaopei and turn to Cao Cao."

[3.](#) In the *TS*, Lü Bu is torn between the two appeals. Chen Gong says, "Although Liu Bei is in your power now, he will eventually be an independent force and a threat to you, General. I would not save him." Lü Bu rejects the advice.

[4.](#) See the description of Liu Xuande in chapter 1. Large lobes signify royalty in Buddhist iconography.

[5.](#) This is the second of the four verses given in the *TS* (p. 157). The others—most of them celebrating Lü Bu's marksmanship—are dropped, including one critical of Liu Bei's future betrayal of Lü Bu: "Early on he knew 'Big Ears' was not a man to trust / And came to rue the halberd shot at the war camp gate."

Hou Yi was a mythical marksman of the Xia period. During a severe drought ten suns rose in the sky; he shot nine of them down, ending the crisis. Yang Youji was a figure of the Spring and Autumn period. His lord shot apes for sport. When Yang Youji entered the target area and raised his bow, the apes began to shriek. Literally, the fourth line reads, "At causing apes to shriek he could have

surpassed Youji."

6. The ruling families of the Spring and Autumn states of Qin and Jin regularly intermarried; hence marital alliances came to be called Qin-Jin relations. Mao (introductory note): "In the Spring and Autumn period marriages were habitually entered into by rivals. When Zhen Ying was in Jin, Qin attacked. When Mu Yi was in Qin, Jin severed relations with Qin. Marriage was even less likely to bring harmony to Lü Bu's dealings, for how could the man who had disavowed his fathers have a son-in-law? How could Yuan Shu, who had disavowed his own brother [Shao], have a relationship with a stranger?"

7. Mao: "Chen Gui is partial to Liu; Chen Gong to Lü."

8. Mao: "Most vicious and subtle! Also, this lays a foundation for what is to come."

9. Lü Bu has driven Xuande to seek Cao Cao's support. The central narrative of the novel may be said to begin with this episode.

10. Mao (introductory note): "Fear of Liu Bei led Cao Cao to have Lü Bu try to kill him and to induce Yuan Shu to attack him. But the reason Cao Cao would not act himself is because he wanted to shift the consequences to others. He was unwilling to kill a worthy man in his own name and thus alienate his admirers."

11. The *TS* (p. 162) dates this to Jian An 2, 5th month (A. D. 197).

12. Mao: "A beloved commander, a beloved son, lost for the sake of a woman.... But what happened to Lady Zou?"

13. The Qingzhou force was made up largely of Yellow Scarves who had surrendered to Cao Cao.

14. *TS* (p. 164): "Cao Cao told them of Yu Jin's betrayal. Dun prepared to do battle with him."

15. Mao: "Zhang Xiu's move lays the basis for the narrative line to come."

16. Cao Cao faced danger on all sides. To the west and south he contended with Zhang Xiu for Nanyang imperial district, the northern part of the province of Jingzhou, which Liu Biao governed. To the east and north he had to deal with Yuan Shao, his most formidable adversary, who governed the four provinces north of the Yellow River. To the south he faced the challenge of Yuan Shu, his rival for control of Xuzhou province, which Lü Bu ruled.

CHAPTER 17

1. Yao, mythic first emperor of the Chinese, selected a stranger, Shun, for his successor. After a period of joint rule during which he educated Shun, Yao yielded the throne to him, passing over his own son. The legend of Shun is often invoked to justify succession out of the blood line. See *Shu jing*, "Yao dian" and "Shun dian."

2. Mao: "Referring to descent from Shun's second son." *Zhong* means "second;" *shi*, "clan."

3. The city is Shouchun. After enthronement the emperor made offerings to Heaven on the southern outskirts of the capital and to earth on the northern outskirts.

4. Mao: "The last two generals [surrendered from the imperial side] will figure in the events to come."

5. See chapter 13.

6. Similar accoutrements were worn by Zhou Wuwang at his last battle against the Shang, according to the account in the *Shu jing*, "Mu shi."

7. Mao (introductory note): "Once Yuan Shu arrogated the name of emperor, he became the common target of the rest of the realm. That is why Cao Cao held back from such a step. Cao Cao feared the realm even more than he coveted it... keeping real power to himself while letting the Emperor rule in name. Yuan Shu, lacking real power, gambled for the name. How cunning the one; how clumsy the other!"

8. The *TS* (p. 173) notes in this paragraph that Cao Cao was making all important decisions alone, notifying the Emperor afterward. The expedition is dated to the ninth month of Jian An 2 (A. D. 197).

9. The principal city of Yangzhou, Shouchun was in northwest Jiujiang, slightly south of the River Huai.

10. Mao: "Earlier he borrowed grain from Sun Ce. Still short, he borrowed Wang Hou's head.... How can a head be 'borrowed'?... When can it be returned?" Mao (introductory note): "Cao Cao was always borrowing something. He borrowed the Emperor to command the feudal lords; he borrowed some feudal lords to attack others; he borrowed a man's head to calm the troops; he even borrowed his own hair."

11. Mao (introductory note): "Cao Cao dreaded Lü Bu as much as he dreaded Liu Bei. When Lü Bu and Liu Bei joined forces, Cao Cao tried his best to divide them. Then, when Lü Bu and Liu Bei became enemies but it was not yet opportune for Cao Cao to attack [either one], Cao arranged for [the two enemies] to combine temporarily. Thus he acted in a way that brought them together while secretly giving instructions that would ultimately estrange them from each other. First Cao Cao used the plan called 'Two Tigers Fight for Food.' Next he used a plan called 'Drive the Tiger to Swallow the Wolf.' Finally he tried one called 'Dig a Pit and Wait for the Tiger.' In each case his intention was malicious. Lü Bu was fooled, but Liu Bei complied with Cao Cao's orders out of expedience. Cao Cao for his part knew full well that Liu Bei understood the actual situation; meanwhile, everyone feigned ignorance."

12. The translation "silver wolves" is based on Arthur Waley's translation of *Shi jing*, ode 261, "Han yi." See *The Book of Songs* (1937; rpt. New York: Grove Press, 1960), p. 148. The term is a metaphor for fierce warriors.

The name Cao Man for Cao Cao is discussed in chapter 1, n. 29.

CHAPTER 18

1. *TS* (p. 182): "Chen Gong, read me what this says" (implying that Lü Bu is illiterate).

2. Zhang Liao will be an important character.

3. She was the *ci qi* or second principal wife; the first wife presumably was Lady Gan, whom he married when he went to Xiaopei. Children have not yet been mentioned. His son Ah Dou (Houzhu) was not born until he moved to Jingzhou. See *SGZ*, p. 905.

4. Mi Zhu came from a family of enormous wealth and ten thousand servants. His biography in the *SGZ* (p. 969) states: "Tao Qian, protector of Xuzhou, raised Mi Zhu to serve as his lieutenant [*biejia*]. After Tao Qian's death, Mi Zhu, on the authority of the late protector's testament, installed Xuande in Xiaopei. In Jian An 1 [A. D. 196] Lü Bu took advantage of the fact that Xuande was in the field against Yuan Shu to surprise Xiapi and abduct Xuande's family. Xuande then shifted his forces to Haixi in Guangling, and Mi Zhu married his younger sister to him. At the same time Mi

Zhu granted Xuande a retinue of two thousand as well as gold, silver, money, and silk to resupply his army. Thanks to this fund, Xuande recovered from a grave defeat."

5. *TS* (p. 183): "Unable to crack Xiaopei, Lü Bu challenged Xuande to single combat. Appearing at the top of the city wall, Xuande said with fervor, 'I have committed no offense. Prime Minister Cao had an imperial decree that I had to answer. I can show you the document.' Lü Bu considered this and ordered the blockade maintained but no further attacks. He returned to Xuzhou and dispatched He Meng to Yuan Shu to apologize and offer his daughter in marriage."

6. Mao (introductory note): "What a cunning man, Cao Cao! When Yuan Shu attacked Lü Bu, Cao Cao came to Lü Bu's aid, fearing reconciliation between Yuan Shu and Lü Bu. After Lü Bu defeated Yuan Shu, Cao Cao allied with Liu Bei against Lü Bu, knowing that Yuan Shu would never again join forces with Lü Bu. As much as Cao Cao dreaded an alliance of Liu Bei and Lü Bu, he feared the alliance of Yuan Shao and Lü Bu even more. When Liu Bei and Yuan Shu had broken with Lü Bu, Cao Cao struck."

CHAPTER 19

1. Mao: "In this chapter Xuande loses his wife, Liu An kills his wife, and Lü Bu can't leave his wife. These contrasts enliven the narrative.... Again Xuande loses Xiaopei, a city he gains and quits three times."

There is little information on Xuande's family prior to this time. The biography of Empress Gan says, "When Liu Bei came to Yuzhou, he stayed in Xiaopei and took her [Lady Gan] as his secondary wife. Liu Bei had suffered the death of a principal wife several times, so Lady Gan often took charge of domestic affairs" (SGZ, p. 905).

2. *TS* (p. 185): "And lived as outlaws."

3. Mao: "Brothers before family."

4. Tao Qian, the former inspector, recommended Xuande for this title; Cao Cao had it confirmed after Xuande became his ally against Lü Bu. When Tao Qian died, Mi Zhu arranged for Xuande to succeed him as imperial inspector of Xuzhou—that is when Yuan Shu attacked him in Jian An 1 (A. D. 196) (SGZ, pp. 873-74).

5. Mao: "Xuande once compared his wife to clothes; Liu An now takes his wife for food."

6. In the *TS*, Xuande wants to take Liu An with him; but Liu An refuses, saying that he must care for his mother. Frightful though it is, this scene shows the readiness of a true brother to sacrifice his family to the cause. In the *Shuo chang ci hua* collection dating from the 1470s, "Hua Guan Suo zhuan" gives the following account of the formation of the brotherhood:

After the three—Guan, Zhang, and Liu Bei—had made their vows to Heaven in the templ of Jiang Ziya, Liu Bei said, "I am without family. You both have old and young to worry about. Your concern might cause a change of heart." Lord Guan replied, "I shall join you, elder brother, after I have killed them." Zhang Fei said, "How could you kill your own? Yo kill mine, and I'll kill yours." "That is best," Liu Bei said. The song goes:

Zhang Fei did not wait:
With bronze blade firm in hand,
He entered his brother's home

And killed the first he met,
And then two more—but spared
His sister-in-law, Hu Dingjin.

Hu Dingjin bore Hua Guan Suo, Lord Guan's son. This character appears briefly in chapter 87. See CZL, p. 19; also, Gail Oman King, *The Story of Hua Guan Suo* (Tempe: Center for Asian Studies, Arizona State University, 1989). A footnote on p. 35 states: "Jiang Ziya... was the officially promulgated God of War throughout the Yuan dynasty. His worship in this capacity was abolished by imperial decree in 1387."

[7.](#) The *Yingxiong ji* dates this meeting between Liu Bei and Cao Cao to the tenth month of Jian An 3 (A. D. 198); see SGZ, pp. 874-75.

[8.](#) Mao: "Chen Deng waited for Lü Bu to mention his family—ingenious."

[9.](#) Xiaopei is slightly north of Xiao Pass; it is a strategic point between Cao Cao's province, Yanzhou, and Lü Bu's, Xuzhou.

[10.](#) In the *TS* version (p. 190) Lü Bu moves to kill Gong; Zhang Liao saves him, saying, "He acted from loyalty." Bu then demands of Gong a plan to stop Cao.

[11.](#) The envoys' use of "Your Majesty" refers to Yuan Shu's assumption of imperial power.

[12.](#) Mao (introductory note): "Had Bu killed Xuande after discovering his reply to Cao Cao [see previous chapter], Cao Cao would have said, 'Bu did it, not I.' Had Xuande let Lü Bu through the southern route he was guarding and been executed, Cao Cao would have said, 'I didn't kill him, military law did.' Cao Cao wanted someone else to kill Xuande but lacked a rift he could exploit... Cao Cao had no justification for killing Xuande himself: only violation of military law could have justified it. At every step of the way Cao Cao was trying to eliminate Xuande, even as he seemed to be taking every possible measure to protect him. Xuande, for his part, remained on the alert every step of the way, even as he seemed to be taking every possible step to appease Cao."

[13.](#) See chapter 4; Chen Gong was the guard who joined Cao Cao after refusing to arrest him.

[14.](#) With the executions of Lü Bu and Chen Gong (Feb. A. D. 199) the *PH's* first section (of three) ends. The *PH* (p. 44) reads: "Cao Cao said, 'Execute Chen Gong but release his family.' Chen Gong shouted back, 'Do not make that mistake, Your Excellency. If you spare my son, he will plague you in times to come. Let your mercy touch my mother and wife only.' Thus Cao Cao executed the son but spared Chen Gong's mother and wife."

[15.](#) Mao: "Chen Gong spared Cao Cao twice: first, when he arrested him; and once again, outside the farmhouse [of Lü Boshe]. Cao Cao will not spare Chen Gong once. Indeed, he is like a wolf."

[16.](#) Mao (introductory note): "There are some who hold the view that Xuande, knowing the fate of Ding Yuan and Dong Zhuo, should have tried to persuade Cao Cao to retain Lü Bu. That would have given Xuande some leverage against Cao Cao in the future. I disagree. Cao was a far different sort from Zhuo and Yuan... He would have known how to make use of Bu and guard against him at the same time. Xuande would only have been augmenting Cao's strength, and he knew that at the time."

1. Mao: "This forms the basis for Zhang Liao's rescue of Lord Guan" (see chap. 25).

2. *Guannei* or *guanzhong hou*: "These 'lords within the passes' have no territory but are supported by the revenue from the counties in which they live. The amount of tax revenue is determined by the number of households" (*HHS*, p. 3631). "Lesser marquis" is the translation used in Denis Twitchett and Michael Loewe, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, *The Ch'in and Han Empires* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

3. Instead of this sentence, the *TS* (p. 197) reads: "Cao said to Xuande, 'After you have paid homage to the Emperor in court, Xuzhou will be returned.' Xuande expressed his appreciation."

4. The text continues, anachronistically, to call the capital Xuchang instead of Xudu ("the capital at Xu"). The name was not changed to Xuchang until the next dynasty. This translation consistently refers to the city as Xuchang. It is not to be confused with Xuzhou, the name of a different place, employing different graphs.

5. In the *TS* Xuande is deeply moved by the Emperor's question and weeps.

6. Mao: "This is the real reason Cao Cao did not leave Liu Bei behind to rule Xuzhou." Liu Bei claims descent from Emperor Jing (r. 157-141 B. C.) of the Former Han. Liu Xiu, founder of the Later Han, claimed descent from the same emperor. See Xu Tianlin, *Dong Han huiyao* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), p. 1. (This *huiyao* is a Southern Song work.)

7. Mao: "Earlier Yang Biao had persuaded the Emperor to call for Cao Cao's help."

8. Mao: "Kong Rong was last seen when Liu Bei and Taishi Ci rescued him from a siege at Beihai" (see chap. 11). For a discussion of Cao Cao's court at Xuchang, see Chi-yun Chen [Chen Qiyun], *Hsün Yüeh A. D. 148-209* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

9. Cao Cao's inviting the Emperor to hunt was in fact lese majesty, implying the subordination of the king to a minister. See the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, "Xigong," year 28.

10. In his introductory note Mao says, "Zhao Gao examined the king's attendants for loyalty by pointing to a deer [and insisting it was a horse]. Cao Cao tested his acceptance among the courtiers by shooting the deer." For the story of Zhao Gao, see *SJ*, "Qin Shihuang benji," p. 80: "Zhao Gao wanted to overthrow the [Qin] dynasty. Fearing that the officials would refuse to obey him, he devised a test: he brought a deer to court and presented it as tribute to the Emperor [Er Shi, the second Qin emperor] but called it a horse. The Emperor laughed and said, 'Your Excellency is mistaken.' Among those in attendance, some kept silent; some said that it was indeed a horse, to appease Zhao Gao; and some said it was a deer. In accordance with their answers, Zhao Gao had those who had said it was a deer secretly executed; the officials thereafter lived in dread of him."

11. The Changshui (Chang River) command was one of the five commands (*xiaoyu*) in the capital under the *beijun zhonghou*. See Yang Hongnian, *Han Wei zhidu congkao* (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 1985), pp. 154-55.

12. Mao: "Through a relative of the Empress [i. e., Dong Cheng] a kinsman of the Emperor [Liu Bei] was named."

CHAPTER 21

1. *TS*: "Xuande is one of Cao's henchmen" (lit., tooth and claw).

2. *Silang*: either a full member of the Secretariat staff who has already served three years' probation, or a lieutenant to an Imperial Corps commander.

3. Mao (introductory note): "By setting his name to Dong Cheng's righteous roster, Xuande established his claim as legitimate successor to the Han. The words 'General of the Left Liu Bei' count for more than 'August Emperor, Reflecting Han's Glory' [Zhao Lie, Xuande's posthumous temple title]. When Liu Bang, founder of the Han, took up righteous arms against Xiang Yu, his edict read, 'I vow to join with the feudal lords and kings in attacking those who have killed the Righteous Emperor.' By that action his cause was vindicated, and the realm gave him its allegiance. In the case of Xuande, it was his receiving the Emperor's edict hidden in the girdle that established the legitimacy of all his future actions." In this context the word *yi* (righteous) may be understood as "loyalist."

4. The *TS* version (p. 206): "Lord Guan said, 'Brother, you seem to care no more for the conquest of the realm by bow and horse, devoting yourself instead to lowly tasks.' Xuande replied, 'You would not understand.' Lord Guan whiled away his time reading the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and its commentary, the *Zuo zhuan*, or else practicing his horsemanship and marksmanship." His interest in the *Zuo* identifies Lord Guan as an Old Text student; Xuande had studied with Zheng Xuan and Lu Zhi, two of the school's exponents. The school emphasized moral factors in interpreting history; the rival New Text school emphasized numerology and superstition.

5. Mao: "Was he also thinking of Zhang Ji's wife?"

6. Here, *shijun*; in the *TS*, *Xiandi*, "worthy brother."

7. The dragon was the symbol of rain and more broadly the cycle of condensation and precipitation. It also symbolized the emperor, particularly as orchestrator (through the calendar) of the natural cycle.

8. Mao: "Yuan Shu is mentioned first because he had declared himself emperor."

9. *Analects*, 10. 16. Xuande's biography is the source for the incident (*SGZ*, p. 875).

10. "Hongmen" alludes to a situation of murderous intrigue. Shortly before conquering the empire, Liu Bang attended his rival Xiang Yu's banquet at Hongmen. Yu's adviser tried to have a sword dancer assassinate Bang, but a second performer checked his every move. Finally one of Bang's commanders, Fan Kuai, burst in, fully armed, and put an end to the sword dancing performance, thus saving the future first emperor of the Han. See Ssu-ma Ch'ien [Sima Qian], *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1: 52-54.

11. According to the *TS* (p. 212), "Yuan Shao desired to usurp the dynasty; accordingly, he summoned Yuan Shu. Shu collected his army and the forbidden regalia of the emperor. First he went to seize Xuzhou."

12. According to the *SGZ* ("Wudi ji"), "After absorbing the troops of Gongsun Zan and bringing the four northern provinces under his rule, Yuan Shao amassed more than one hundred thousand men to attack Xuchang—a force that Cao's commanders regarded as irresistible" (p. 17). Yuan Shao's biography in the *SGZ* states that before Cao Cao brought the Emperor to the new capital of Xuchang, Guo Tu had advised Yuan Shao to receive the Emperor at Ye and make that the new capital. Yuan Shao did not adopt this plan; but after Cao Cao received the Emperor at Xuchang, he tried to have Cao Cao move the Emperor to the city of Juan, closer to Ye. Cao Cao refused (p. 194).

13. The *PH* mentions the evaluation of heroes and the incident of the dropped chopsticks. It attributes to Cao, not Xuande, the idea of sending Xuande to intercept Yuan Shu. The *SGZ* ("Wudi ji") also attributes the move to Cao Cao, but includes the protest of Guo Jia and Cheng Yu over "letting

Liu Bei go" (p. 18).

14. In the *TS*, Xuande says to Xu Chu, "Cheng Yu and Guo Jia continually demanded bribes of me. I refused to pay, and so they slandered me to the prime minister. If I were a cruel man, I would cut you to pieces right here. However, since I shall never forget His Excellency's kindness, [I shall let you] hurry back and give him my answer" (p. 211).

15. Tao Qian gave Xuzhou to Xuande (chap. 12). Lü Bu usurped the province and was its de facto ruler when Cao Cao killed him. Instead of restoring Xuande as protector, however, Cao put his own man, Che Zhou, in office.

16. Yuan Shu's assumption of imperial authority is described in chapter 13.

17. Mao (introductory note): "When Gongsun Zan died, he had three hundred thousand pecks of grain. When Yuan Shu died, he had thirty pecks of wheat. Both were doomed. Why? Both lacked strategy; the amount of grain made no difference. Still, Zan had his recommendation of Xuande to his credit; but Yuan Shu in his whole life had nothing to his. He once wronged a man [Sun Jian, see chap. 5] by denying him grain [Shu was Yuan Shao's grain dispatcher during the campaign against Dong Zhuo], Now he perishes for want of grain. Heaven's retribution is most exacting."

18. Mao (introductory note): "Not only does this chapter bring to an end the stories of Gongsun Zan and Yuan Shu, it also winds up the story of the lost imperial seal."

19. Chen Deng had supported Mi Zhu in turning the rule of Xuzhou over to Xuande; see *SGZ* ("Xianzhu zhuan"), p. 873.

20. Chen Deng and Chen Gui betrayed Lü Bu to Cao Cao in chapter 19.

21. Mao: "They had the troops of Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao; there was no need to dress specially."

22. Mao (introductory note): "Lord Guan's killing of Che Zhou becomes a casus belli for Cao Cao. Xuande would have preferred Che Zhou alive. With the girdle decree still secret and Dong Cheng's plot undisclosed, Xuande would have wanted to preserve formal relations while working covertly against Cao."

23. Mao (introductory note): "After Che Zhou was killed, why did Xuande not publish the Emperor's edict? In fact, the edict was given to Dong Cheng; and since Cheng was still at court, premature disclosure of the document could have cost Cheng his life. After Dong Cheng's death, the edict was made known to the realm."

CHAPTER 22

1. *Shi jing*, ode 36, "Shi wei," and ode 26, "Bo zhou."

2. See chapter 1.

3. The following text, to the end of Chen Lin's indictment, is not in the *TS*. Mao added the famous essay from the *Wen xuan* "for the reading pleasure of those who love antiquity." See his *fan li* ("general instances"), number 4.

4. Liyang is just north of the Yellow River, due south of the city of Ye. Ye was the capital of Jizhou, which as the foremost of the four northern provinces was Cao Cao's base.

5. Mao: "[The author] implicitly compares Yuan Shao to the former [lord of Jiang, Zhou Bo], and Xuande to the latter [lord of Zhuxu, Liu Zhang]."

6. Cao Cao never held this title.

7. Teng has a favorable biography in the *HHS* (p. 2519). He served four emperors and

was widely admired, even by his enemies.

[8.](#) Mao: "Yuan Shao was proud of his family's tradition of imperial service; hence, the proclamation opens with the evils of Cao Cao's family history."

[9.](#) See chapter 6.

[10.](#) Mao: "Cao Cao took the leadership of Yanzhou on his own initiative. Shao takes the credit for the appointment by [Chen Lin's] distortion of the record."

[11.](#) Meng Ming led a Qin army against the state of Jin. He was defeated, but the king of Qin refrained from punishing him in order to whet his desire for vengeance, and later he did overcome Jin in battle.

[12.](#) Mao: "See chapter 10."

[13.](#) Mao: "See chapter 11."

[14.](#) Mao: "See chapter 14."

[15.](#) Mao: "Yuan Shao did not participate in the rescue of the sovereign [when he was chased from Chang'an by the four insurgent generals], Chen Lin finesses his absence. The emergency on the northern border refers to Gongsun Zan."

[16.](#) See chapter 20.

[17.](#) See chapter 21.

[18.](#) This is the end of the document as quoted in the interlinear citations to Yuan Shao's biography in SGZ, pp. 197-99. The paragraph ending with the words "blood and blade" is not in the extract from the original source, the *Weishi chunqiu*, cited in the SGZ.

CHAPTER 23

[1.](#) In chapter 18, Jia Xu guided Zhang Xiu to victory over Cao Cao.

[2.](#) Emperor Wu (Liu Che) reigned from 141 to 87 b. c.

[3.](#) Sang Hongyang, a key participant in the salt and iron debates of 81 b. c., had the ability to do computations in his head. Zhang Anshi, who directed the Secretariat for Emperor Xuan (74-49 b. c.), earned a reputation for the power of his memory when he recited the texts of three cases of books lost by the Emperor.

[4.](#) During the Warring States period Ren Zuo defended a critic of the king of Wei in the face of his sovereign's displeasure. Shi Yu gave up his life protesting the appointment of a wicked minister in the state of Wei during the Spring and Autumn period.

[5.](#) I. e., in the inner sanctum.

[6.](#) Liu Bang's political and military advisers.

[7.](#) Generals under Liu Xiu, founder of the Eastern Han.

[8.](#) Dated by the *TS* to Jian An 5 (A. D. 200), early in the eighth month.

[9.](#) The earliest and primary of the Confucian classics.

[10.](#) A convict who was made a ranking official after appearing to the Emperor in a dream.

[11.](#) Mao: "Mi Heng's head is the Han Emperor; the courtiers' head is Cao Cao."

[12.](#) In his commentary to the *ZZTJ* (p. 2018), Hu Sanxing notes: "According to the Han system, only the commander of the Capital Districts had assigned imperial corpsmen (*congshi zhonglang*), but by the end of the Han provincial protectors also had such officials."

[13.](#) Mao: "Emperor Xian stabbed his finger to write the secret edict. Ji Ping echoes the action

by biting off a joint to mark his oath."

14. Mao: "He only mentions five of the names—excellent touch."

15. Mao: "The seventh man was Liu Xuande. Ji Ping would have made the eighth. But he was not one of the signatories; and the informer did not mention Xuande. Cao's guess is an ingenious touch on the author's part."

16. Mao: "All along Cao Cao knew only of the oath, not of the edict. All along he thought there were six; now he knows of the seventh [Xuande]." In the *PH*, Cao assumes immediately that Liu Xuande is the man behind Ji Ping (p. 49).

17. Mao: "At last Cao Cao expresses the wish to do what Dong Zhuo did."

18. Mao (introductory note): "This chapter opens with Cao Cao planning a campaign against Liu Bei. Then Cao drops the plan because he wants to win Zhang Xiu's support first. Suddenly Dong Cheng is brought into the picture; but Xuande's involvement in Dong Cheng's conspiracy remains unknown to Cao Cao. Only when Dong Cheng's quarters are searched and the loyalists' oath is brought to light does Cao Cao discover Liu Bei's name. After that he orders Liu Bei attacked without further delay. And so, although this chapter contains none of Liu Bei's doings, Liu Bei is the main topic."

The end of this chapter is dated to the first month of Jian An 5, which began February 3, A. D. 200. The chapter begins with events of the eighth month of the same year.

CHAPTER 24

1. Mao: "Cao Cao had participated in the collective campaign that Yuan Shao led against Dong Zhuo [to punish him for deposing the previous emperor]. Ultimately Cao Cao was dissuaded from deposing Emperor Xian [lest he become the focus of a similar campaign]."

2. Mao: "The mistake is intentional; the Emperor is hinting that Cao Cao is another Dong Zhuo."

3. Royal wives who fell from favor were housed in the "cold palace."

4. Liu Bei's position in northwest Xuzhou threatened coordination between Yanzhou, Cao Cao's home province, and Qingzhou, the southern part of which Cao Cao controlled. Moreover, Cao Cao wanted to punish Liu Bei for killing Che Zhou, whom Cao had appointed governor of Xuzhou, and taking over the province. Not only did Cao Cao have ample reason to attack Liu Bei, but he could do so in the name of the Emperor and thus declare Liu Bei a rebel. According to Liu Bei's biography, the "Xianzhu zhuan," "Before Liu Bei left the court,... General of Chariots and Cavalry Dong Cheng, on parting from the Emperor, received from him a girdle that contained a secret decree calling for Lord Cao to be executed" (SGZ, p. 875). Liu Bei, then, had imperial sanction to take military action against Cao Cao; this makes understandable Zhu Xi's topic sentence for the account of the incident in his redaction of the *ZZTJ*, the *ZZTJ gangmu*: "Liu Bei musters an army in Xuzhou to punish Cao Cao in the name of loyalty to the Emperor [*tao*]" (see the *Gangmu*'s last entry for the year A. D. 199).

According to the *ZZTJ* (pp. 2023-24), Liu Bei made Lord Guan acting governor of Xuzhou. Under Guan's leadership, the allegiance of tens of thousands of rebels in Donghai (a district northeast of Xiapi) was won away from Cao Cao and the central government. Guan then proposed to Yuan Shao joint action against Cao Cao. At this point Cao Cao sent Liu Dai and Wang Zhong against Liu Bei.

A summary of the geographical and military situation may be found in *Zhongguo gudai zhan-zheng zhanli xuanbian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 2: 1-23.

5. Mao (introductory note): "The Son of Heaven could not save his consort; a feudal lord doted on his son. If the son's illness so engaged Shao's feelings, could the death of the Emperor's unborn child leave us unmoved?"

6. Mao: "I. e., soldiers formerly serving Zhu Ling, Lu Zhao, and Che Zhou."

7. Mao (introductory note): "He who makes a bid for the empire cannot concern himself with his family. When Xuande was defeated by Lü Bu, he abandoned his family. Now he abandons his family again, as Han Gao Zu [Liu Bang] did when Xiang Yu captured his family. [See *Records of the Historian*, trans. Watson, 1: 62.] As for that Yuan Shao, whose family feeling was so strong—doting on that boy—how could he achieve royal power?"

As a student of the *Zuo zhuan*, Lord Guan would have known the phrase *da yi mie qin* (For the higher loyalty one may have to sever the bonds of kinship); see "Yingong," year 4.

Mao (introductory note): "Yuan Shao and Xuande had met twice before: the first time at Tiger Trap Pass; the second, at the River Bi; this is their third meeting. And Xuande has thrice sought Yuan Shao's help: first, through the offices of Zheng Xuan; second, by his own letter; and third, by riding to him unattended.... Previously, Xuande had depended on Lü Bu and Cao Cao. Later on, he will depend on Liu Biao and Sun Quan."

8. Mao: "Xun Wenruo realized that Xuande had taken refuge with Yuan Shao [and would overcome his inertia]." All the events in this chapter took place in the spring of A. D. 200.

CHAPTER 25

1. Mao: "At this time Xuande's two wives, Lord Guan's sisters-in-law, Lady Gan and Lady Mi, were trapped in the city of Xiapi. Before this, Zhang Fei had lost the two wives in Xuzhou."

2. See the end of chapter 19.

3. Mao: "His tone is still disdainful."

4. Mao: "In trying to persuade a hero, praise is useless; but criticism will move him. Gentle humility is far less effective than a severe tone and a direct look."

5. Protector of Yuzhou is the title Emperor Xian (on Cao Cao's recommendation) gave Xuande. See chapter 16.

6. *TS* (p. 240): "To preserve their chastity they must die; otherwise, they will be given to someone else."

7. Mao (introductory note): "Lord Guan served the Han to begin with. Why did he insist on surrendering to the Han? Because he wanted to distinguish it from 'surrender to Cao.' Cao Cao was using the word 'Han' to secure support around the empire. Lord Guan used the word 'Han' in opposition to Cao Cao.... The fact that Lord Guan drew a clear line between Han and Cao shows his depth of learning and understanding, something he could not have attained but for his familiarity with the *Spring and Autumn Annals*

8. "If the king treats me commonly, my service will be common; if he treats me worthily, my service will be worthy." Bi Yurang served Zhi Bo, a leader of the kingdom of Jin at the end of the Spring and Autumn period. See chapter 29, n. 5.

9. Mao (introductory note): "The third condition is implicit in the first. Cao Cao said 'I am

the Han, ' but for Lord Guan the imperial uncle is the Han. When Lord Guan said he gave allegiance to the Han, not to Cao, it was tantamount to giving allegiance to Liu, and not to Cao."

10. Mao (introductory note): "If Cao Cao were not interested in winning Lord Guan's affections, they would have suffered the same fate as High Consort Dong and the seven hundred executed at the capital gates."

11. The famous hostel scene with Lord Guan holding a candle outside the door is not to be found in the *TS*. But the division of the living quarters into two compounds is mentioned in both the *PH* and the *TS* and goes back at least to the Yuan dynasty play *Guan Yunchang Rides Alone a Thousand Li*. See Li Diankui, "Sanguo gushi xiqu zhi yanjiu" (Master's thesis, National Taiwan Teacher's Normal Research Institute, 1980), p. 65. Lord Guan's amorous inclinations are not mentioned in the *Three Kingdoms*. According to the *Shuji* (cited in SGZ, p. 939), after the conquest of Xuzhou, Lord Guan wanted to take Lü Bu's concubine Diaochan for his wife, but Cao Cao kept her for himself on hearing of her extraordinary beauty—to Lord Guan's chagrin.

12. Lü Bu betrayed two lords, Ding Yuan and Dong Zhuo.

13. *TS* (p. 245): "Zhang Liao realized that Lord Guan could never be made to stay, and withdrew. He thought, 'If I tell Lord Cao the truth, Lord Guan's life might be endangered. If I don't, I shall have done my lord a disservice.... Lord Cao is my lord, a father; Lord Guan, a brother. It would be disloyal to deceive my lord-patriarch for the sake of fraternal sentiment. I can live with denying fraternal sentiment though it is dishonorable; but disloyalty is unthinkable.' He therefore told Cao Cao what Lord Guan had said."

This striking passage was probably omitted from the Mao text because it shows a fairly sympathetic character, Zhang Liao, speaking of loyalty (*zhong*) to Cao Cao, and making it a higher virtue than honor [*yi*], on which the fraternal bond is based. In effect Zhang Liao is rejecting the bond of brotherhood in favor of the duties to king and father, summed up in the term "loyalty."

14. A note in the *TS* (pp. 247-48) takes something from the glory of Lord Guan's feat: "When Yan Liang took leave of Yuan Shao, Liu Xuande told him privately, 'I have a brother, Guan Yunchang, nine spans five tall, with a beard one span eight; his face is ruddy as a date, his eyes are like those of the crimson-faced phoenix, topped by brows like nestling silkworms. He prefers to wear a green brocade battle gown; he rides a tawny mount and wields a green-dragon blade. I am certain he is with Cao Cao. If you see him, have him come to us as soon as possible.' Accordingly, when Yan Liang saw Cao Cao approaching, he thought he was coming to join him and so had made no defensive preparations when Lord Guan struck him down."

A poem cited in the *TS* underlines this point: "Because of Xuande's last-minute words, / A hero [Yan Liang] met his death unprepared for battle."

15. The relationship between Cao Cao and Lord Guan is an important part of the novel. The relationship, however, is a fictional invention. The histories hardly mention it. Here are some relevant passages from the *PH*, beginning with the court's sending Xuande to deal with rebels to the south:

Xuande had been traveling for a month when he reached the border reception house, some thirty *li* from the city [Xuzhou], where officials and commoners received him. Cao Cao meanwhile had made Che Zhou governor of the province, depriving First Ruler [of Shu, i. e., Xuande] of his office. Che Zhou also came to the reception house and demanded of

First Ruler, "Have you documents from the prime minister?" Imperial Uncle replied, "I have a command from the Emperor. What use is a document from the prime minister?" Che Zhou hurried away and stealthily returned to Xuzhou. First Ruler said, "If Che Zhou gets to Xuzhou before us and will not come out, what then?" Lord Guan said, "Let me go ahead."

Lord Guan assassinated Che Zhou not far from the city. On arriving, First Ruler was met on the way by all the officials and the village elders who welcomed him to the *yamen*. A general banquet was held. Xuande said, "I want my brothers and all of you to prepare for war. Cao's army will be coming."

About a month later Cao's army came. Lord Guan said to First Ruler, "Divide our troops into three units. I will take your family to Xiapi." First Ruler approved.

Zhang Fei said, "Cao Cao's hundred thousand mean nothing to me!" Told they were camped ten *li* from the city, Zhang Fei said, "I know a way to defeat Cao Cao completely.... Sunzi teaches us that an army cannot attack a city after crossing a river but that exhausted troops can be attacked. During the night I will take three thousand men, raid the camp, and kill Cao Cao." First Ruler approved.

What Zhang Fei could not help was that a squad leader in his command, Zhang Ben, was determined to avenge his father-in-law, Zhang Bao, who had been killed by Lord Guan for assisting Lü Bu's successful raid on Xuzhou. Zhang Ben slipped out of Xuzhou and informed Cao Cao. [As a result of the betrayal, Zhang Fei's raid fails and Cao Cao seizes Xuzhou.]

Seated in his tent, Cao Cao said, "Liu Bei and Zhang Fei are dead. Lord Guan is now in Xiapi. I would dearly love to have him. How can it be done?" Zhang Liao volunteered to lure Lord Guan to Cao's side. Cao Cao said, "If Lord Guan sees you, they will all surrender."

Lady Gan and Lady Mi, cradling Ah Dou, lamented to Heaven and told Lord Guan, "Brother-in-law, if you and the imperial uncle perish, what will happen to our family?" Lord Guan wept and said, "If you live, sisters-in-law, I will live with you. If you die, I will die with you." Cao's envoy arrived at the city wall demanding to speak with Lord Guan. Lord Guan had him admitted.

The Man of the Magnificent Beard [Lord Guan] said to Zhang Liao, "Is Xuzhou lost? The imperial uncle and Zhang Fei too?" "Killed in the confusion of battle," was the answer. The Man of the Magnificent Beard said, "Death I fear not. You must have come to win me over." "Not necessarily," Zhang Liao replied. "You have hidden your lord's family. But if Cao's troops come here, won't it pose quite a dilemma for you? You, a student of history from your youth, have read the *Zuo zhuan* to the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Cao is a man who responds to the worthy and elevates the able. He would be most sympathetic. He has the greatest admiration for you."

"What if I were to take refuge with Cao Cao?" Lord Guan asked. "You would get an important military position," Zhang Liao said. "Four hundred strings of cash monthly, an four hundred piculs of grain." "I'll surrender on three conditions," Lord Guan said.... "I am to live together with my lord's wives in a divided compound. If we have word of the imperial uncle, I am to go to him at once. My surrender is to the Han, not to Cao. Eventually I will perform an important service for His Excellency... otherwise I'll fight here to the death." Zhang Liao reported back to Cao Cao.

Cao came to the wall of Xiapi and called for Lord Guan. "What about the three conditions?" Lord Guan asked him. Cao Cao shouted up, "This is the age of Han. You can seek protection with me. We will enfeoff you as lord of Shouting. The monthly stipend will be four hundred strings of cash and four hundred piculs of grain. You can live with your sisters in a divided compound. If your elder brother is found alive, you may take his family and go to him. You say you will do service for us, and I shall treat you as a trusted friend." Lord Guan descended and met Cao Cao.

Several days later Lord Guan took the imperial uncle's family west to Chang'an [read Xuchang] to see the Emperor. The Emperor noted Lord Guan's great beard. In addition to the other things promised, the Emperor gave him gold and silver... and a minor banquet every third day, a major one every fifth.

The imperial uncle came to a wood by a valley of Nine Mile Mountain, some fifty *li* north of Xuzhou. He had very few followers. He drew his sword and tried to cut his throat. His men stopped him. Xuande wept and said, "Xuzhou is lost. Zhang Fei may be dead. My beloved brother Lord Guan has taken my family to Cao Cao for refuge." So saying, he looked to Heaven, deeply shaken.

Xuande finally reaches Qingzhou and decides to ask Yuan Shao for fifty thousand men to kill Cao Cao and rescue his family (pp. 50-52).

CHAPTER 26

1. Mao (introductory note): "Even scholars of wide learning sometimes mistakenly call Lord Guan 'lord of Shou precinct,' taking 'Han' to refer to the dynasty. The error comes from the popular edition [*suben*, presumably the Li Zhuowu edition], which says that Lord Guan would not accept the seal of enfeoffment until the word 'Han' had been placed at the head of the title. Hanshou is the place-name; *tinghou*, the title." Hanshou was the capital of Jingzhou province before Liu Biao made Xiangyang the capital.

2. According to the *PH*, after Wen Chou's death Yuan Shao again accused Liu Bei of collusion with Lord Guan and moved to have him executed. Zhao Zilong came to Liu Bei's rescue by persuading Yuan Shao that if Lord Guan knew where to find Liu Bei he would come over directly. Liu Bei, however, took a gloomier view of the situation and decided to leave Yuan Shao's camp. He was grateful to Zhao Zilong for interceding with Yuan Shao, but despaired of Lord Guan, convinced that his brother had really gone over to Cao Cao. Liu Bei set out for Jingzhou to seek refuge with Protector Liu Biao; and Zhao Zilong, won over by Liu Bei's charisma, went with him. (See pp. 56-57.)

3. Mao: "Does Yuan Shao remember how, as war-ruler, he spurned Lord Guan when the lords met before the battle at Tiger Trap Pass?"

4. Mao: "Lord Guan is not afraid Yuan Shao will kill him; he is afraid Xuande may no longer be with Yuan Shao. He will face what he must once Xuande's whereabouts have been confirmed."

5. Mao: "Lord Guan assumes Cao Cao does not know where Xuande is; in fact, Cao Cao has already laid deep plans with Cheng Yu."

6. Mao: "Waiting for Sun Qian to return, he withholds explanation."

7. The *TS* passage (p. 255) contains no reference to a *jun-chen* (lord-vassal) bond between Xuande and Lord Guan. "Zhang Liao said to Lord Guan, 'What about the friendship between you and me?' Lord Guan answered, 'Our friendship is fortuitous. If one of us gets into trouble, the other will help. If it is not possible to render assistance, then so be it. It is nothing like my life-and-death friendship with Xuande.' Zhang Liao then asked, 'When Xuande was in trouble in Xiapi, why didn't you fight to the death to protect him?' Lord Guan replied, 'At the time I did not know the actual situation. If Xuande has died, do you think I will live on?'"

8. Mao: "This letter verifies Xuande's whereabouts. There is no need to wait for Sun Qian's report."

9. This refers to an anecdote from the Warring States period. Two friends, Zuo Botao and Yangjue Ai, were bound for Chu in search of office when a snowstorm overtook them. There was not enough food and clothing to keep both alive, so Zuo Botao sacrificed himself, giving his share to Yangjue Ai. Later, Yangjue Ai became an official. He searched for and found Zuo Botao's remains, interred them, and then killed himself to demonstrate his loyalty to his friend's memory.

10. Mao (introductory notes): "Zhang Liao originally served Lü Bu; Xu Huang originally served Yang Feng; Jia Xu originally served Zhang Xiu; Wen Ping originally served Liu Biao; Zhang He was formally Yuan Shao's vassal; Pang De was a general under Ma Chao. Each of these vassals had abandoned his former master to follow Cao Cao, and would have gladly died for his new lord. Lord Guan alone stayed true to his first lord."

CHAPTER 27

1. The *TS* cites three texts on Cao Cao's action:

The historian [*shiguan*] Pei Songzhi delivered this judgment: "Lord Cao appreciated Lord [Guan] and inwardly prized his intention. By not going after [Lord Guan], [Cao Cao] consummated his sense of honor. Could [a leader] without the breadth of vision of a true king or a hegemon have gone so far [i. e., shown such tolerance]? Truly this shows Cao Cao's well-auguring excellence" (p. 259).

Of Lord Guan the poet Song Xian wrote:

His merit won, he returns on his own to his lord:
Undoes the seal, stores the gold, and quits the capital.
Nor glittering gold, nor gorgeous rooms divert him,
Grace, honor, his only thoughts on the long road away.
They say outstanding men are rare in a thousand years;
I say a General Guan comes once in ten millennia.
No, Cao Cao did not lack the cavalry to pursue;
Lord Guan's departing letter weighed most with him.

Another poem praised Cao Cao:

In the early years before the three kingdoms formed,

Cao Cao alone worked out the subtlest plans.
He let General Guan go back to serve Xuande,
Showing the character to rule the northern plains.

The TS annotator adds: "This [poem] tells us that Lord Cao's refusal to kill Xuande or pursue Lord Guan was praiseworthy. Cao's restraint shows that he had a magnanimous and virtuous mind and was fit to rule the heartland [*zhongyuan*]. "

2. Lord Guan had told Cao Cao he might have to leave without formalities.

3. In the *TS* (p. 262), Lord Guan's statement to Liao Hua is given in full: "I appreciate your generous offer, but unfortunately I am bound by my promise to Cao Cao to travel alone." Cao Cao had good relations with former Yellow Scarves elements but may have become nervous over growing disaffection in their ranks. He would not have wanted Lord Guan collecting their support on his way out. See *ZZTJ*, p. 2030: "The Runan Yellow Scarves leader Liu Pi and others revolted against Cao Cao and became receptive to Yuan Shao. Yuan Shao sent Liu Bei with forces to aid Liu Pi. Most of the counties in the area were receptive to Liu Bei."

4. Mao (introductory note): "In this chapter the reader breathes one sigh for Cao Cao's sense of honor, and could well breathe another for his utter treachery. On Lord Guan's departure Cao Cao presented him with gold and a battle gown and personally saw his visitor off. The one thing he held back was a slip of paper [to see Lord Guan through the checkpoints].... Should a pass commander have killed him, Cao Cao could have preserved his reputation for cherishing able men by blaming the officer for wrongly taking Lord Guan's life."

5. Mao: "Meeting today they speak of things long past and lay the basis for their next meeting twenty years hence."

6. Mao: "At Jade Springs Hill." See chapter 77.

CHAPTER 28

1. Guanxi means "west of the pass" and suggests something like the American Wild West.

2. The phrase "loyal vassal" is not in the *TS*. Mao Zonggang has added the idea of loyalty in Lord Guan's bond to Xuande. Similarly, Mao has inserted the words *zhuchen* (liege and liege man) in the second half of the chapter title to modify the phrase *juyi* (reunion of the righteous). In the *Shuihu zhuan*, the phrase *juyi* is used in the name of the bandits' meeting place.

3. Jingzhou is the central province around which the three kingdoms will form. It is also the pivotal area in the development of the plot. Jingzhou comprises seven districts, clockwise from the north, Nanyang, Jiangxia, Changsha, Guiyang, Lingling, Wuling, and Nanjun. The "nine districts" of Jingzhou simply means all the districts. Two major rivers, the Han and the Great River, transect the province. The Han loops down from Xiangyang southeast to Jiangxia, where it joins the Great River close to the Southland; the Great River runs roughly horizontally from Nanjun in the west to Jiangxia. The four imperial districts of Changsha, Guiyang, Lingling, and Wuling lie below the Great River; Nanjun and Jiangxia lie above the Great River; and Nanyang lies above the River Han. The chief city, Xiangyang, on the south side of the River Han, stands between Nanyang and Nanjun; as Liu Biao's capital, the city was sometimes called Jingzhou.

Having received his protectorship from Dong Zhuo's short-lived western court in Chang'an, Liu

Biao was not considered loyal to the Han emperor's court. But he was not an active threat to the court, either. According to one of Cao Cao's advisers, "Liu Biao stays put between the Great River and the Han because, in my view, he lacks ambition" (chap. 32). Thus, the Han court controlled Nanyang, the imperial district north of the Han. This explains the novel's occasional use of the term Jing-Xiang instead of Jingzhou: Jingzhou] refers to the six districts below the river Han and Xiangyang] refers to the northernmost district, Nanyang. Traditionally, Jingzhou meant the land below the Han.

The unusual term Jing-Xiang does not occur in the *SGZ*. It was, however, used in the Southern Song to name a key region for offensive or defensive operations against the Jurchen forces holding the north. For example, Chen Liang (1143-94), arguing a militant anti-Jurchen policy in a letter to his emperor, Song Xiao Zong (r. 1163-90), wrote, "In Spring and Autumn times, the southern kingdom of Chu held Jing-Xiang and struck fear into [the northern kingdoms] Jin and Qi. [As a result] Jin and Qi could not bend Chu to their purposes, and down to the Warring States period, Jin and Qi contested sovereignty only [westward] with Qin. Three hundred years later, [the Later Han founder] Guang Wu arose in Nanyang... and another two hundred years after that Nanyang was [still] a vital point, changing hands more than once in the Three Kingdoms period. Zhuge Liang came from Nanyang too... and Han was to depend on Jing-Xiang for its survival in Shu." See *Chen Liang ji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), p. 7. See also the afterword to this translation, n. 32.

4. Mao (introductory note): "From an earlier perspective, the peach garden was the first *juyi* [righteous union]; Gucheng is the second *juyi*. From a later perspective, Xuande's meeting with Zhuge Liang at Nanyang will be a great *juyi*; meeting with Zhao Zilong is a minor *juyi*." Neither the *juyi* in the peach garden nor the one at Gucheng is attested in the histories.

5. Mao (introductory note): "It is generally recognized that in surrendering to the Han, and not to Cao, Lord Guan showed great integrity. Zhang Fei's great integrity on this question is not so generally recognized.... Cao Cao was a traitor; thus, one who follows him is also a traitor. Zhang Fei mistakenly thought Lord Guan had submitted to Cao Cao... and denounced him, without stopping to consider their old friendship formed in the peach garden. It would seem that the lord-vassal bond took precedence for Fei over the fraternal bond, and that the breach of the lord-vassal bond [between Xuande and Lord Guan] suspended the fraternal bond between Zhang Fei and Lord Guan. Zhang Fei's public-minded indignation based on Emperor Xian's secreted decree outweighed the private covenant in the peach garden. We may infer from Zhang Fei's commitment that had he been the one encircled on the hill [by Cao's men], he would have died before compromising with Cao Cao.... Zhang Fei's hatred of Lü Bu [whom he called the "bastard with three fathers "] served to define correctly the father-son relation; his hatred of Cao Cao served to define correctly the lord-vassal relation.... Truly a filial son and a loyal vassal."

Mao Zonggang's Confucianization of Zhang Fei completes the process of "taming" the *PH* characterization of Zhang Fei, a process that Luo Guanzhong began. In the Gucheng episode, the *Pinghua* has Zhang Fei established as Great King Without Surname in the Golden Bells Palace; his reign title is Year of Happiness. When Xuande and Zhao Zilong approach his city, Zhang Fei comes forth to fight. He is amazed at the prowess in combat Zilong displays. When, exhausted, Zilong retreats, Zhang Fei follows him and meets Xuande. Fei prostrates himself and welcomes his elder brother into the city, "making him August Emperor [*huangdi*]." Xuande tells Zhang Fei how Lord Guan took office under Cao Cao and endangered his, Xuande's, life by killing Yuan Shao's generals, saying, "He nearly sent me to my doom. The peach garden bonds of grace are no more" (pp. 59-62).

The *PH* version of the ensuing clash and reconciliation between Lord Guan and Zhang Fei is used in both the *TS* and the Mao Zonggang edition.

The histories paint a very different picture. There is no Gucheng reunion, but Xuande does revert to the banditry with which the novel begins. Yuan Shao sends Xuande to organize Yellow Scarves who have chosen to switch allegiance from Cao Cao. Xuande himself is described as plundering the area south of the capital and being chased out by Cao Cao. In a related incident Xuande kills Cao Cao's general Cai Yang. (In *Three Kingdoms* Lord Guan kills Cai Yang to prove his anti-Cao commitment to Zhang Fei.) Indeed, in the *ZZTJ* only Cao Cao emerges as an effective governor. It is possible that the historical Xuande left Yuan Shao for the same reason the historical Lord Guan left Cao Cao, that is, to stay clear of the impending battle and let the two principal powers of the north exhaust themselves. See *ZZTJ* under autumn, A. D. 200 (pp. 2030-33).

CHAPTER 29

1. Lujiang is the northwestern district of Yangzhou, Yuzhang the western. As a result of Sun Ce's victories, the only district of Yangzhou remaining under the Han court's control was the northern district of Jiujiang (*ZZTJ*, p. 2037). The districts of Lujiang and Jiujiang lay between the River Huai and the Great River.

2. According to Sun Ce's biography in *SGZ* (p. 1109), "Sun Ce's concealed intention was to surprise Xuchang and take custody of the Emperor. To this end he began quietly organizing an armed force." The placement of the story of Sun Ce in chapter 29 and the emphasis on his ambitions suggest that Zhu Xi's *Gangmu* was Luo Guanzhong's source. The *PH* does not introduce the Southland question at this point in the story, and the *ZZTJ* treats the subject in a different way. Grand marshal (*dasima*), was a former Han title, similar to grand commandant in the Later Han. Sun Ce sought, and Cao Cao refused, the title because it would have given Sun Ce status comparable to Cao Cao's.

3. Xiang Yu was the main rival of the first Han emperor, Liu Bang, or Han Gao Zu (Supreme Ancestor, his temple name); Xiang Yu also came from south of the Great River.

4. Mao: "Sun-Cao relations deteriorate after this."

5. At the close of the Spring and Autumn period, Bi Yurang was serving as a retainer to Zhi Bo, *ba* or hegemon of Jin. A lord, Xiang, murdered Zhi Bo, divided the kingdom, and founded the kingdom of Zhao (an event often taken to mark the beginning of the Warring States period). Determined to avenge Zhi Bo, Yurang underwent many painful alterations of his appearance so that he could approach Xiang undetected. After he had succeeded in entering Xiang's palace as a workman, Yurang tried but failed to kill Xiang. Impressed by Yurang's fierce devotion to his late master, Zhi Bo, Xiang pardoned him. Yurang made a second attempt on Xiang's life, and this time Xiang ordered him executed. Yurang's last plea was to have Xiang's cloak handed to him. In his final moments before death, Yurang then proceeded symbolically to exact vengeance on his lord's murderer by stabbing the cloak. See *Chan-Kuo Ts'e [Zhanguo ce]*, trans. J. I. Crump, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 285-87. Mao: "Yurang did not succeed in hurting his lord's enemy in the slightest, for he simply cut a piece of his cloak. Xu Gong's three avengers exacted greater satisfaction by far."

6. *TS*: "Should an assassin appear, it would be the ghost of someone he had wronged" (p. 283).

7. *TS*: "The man who shot me must be Cao's man" (p. 283).

8. Yu Ji was a proponent of the Great Millennium and thus an influence on the ideology of the Yellow Scarves (see chap. 1). For further information see Max Kaltenmark, "The Ideology of the T'ai-p'ing ching," in *Facets of Taoism*, ed. Holmes Welch and Anna Seidel (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

9. According to some sources, Yu Ji passed the text on to his disciple, Gong Chong, who later presented it to Emperor Shun (r. A. D. 126-44). See Max Kaltenmark, "The Ideology of the T'ai-p'ing ching," p. 20.

10. In the TS the officials send their wives to Lady Wu to urge her to intercede. Sun Ce then tells her, "I would prefer you to pay no heed to these women, Mother" (p. 284).

11. Mao: "Like Han Gao Zu and Fan Kuai, Sun Ce and Zhou Yu were married to two sisters."

12. The Chinese word is *ba*, "hegemon" or "lord protector."

13. After the fall of the Qin dynasty, Xiang Yu honored King Huai of Chu with the title Righteous Emperor. In 206 B. C. Xiang Yu, as the "hegemon of Western Chu," had the Righteous Emperor killed; this became the first year of the Han. See *SJ*, "Xiang Yu benji."

14. The *TS* mentions that Zhuge Jin had taken refuge in the south from the disorders in the north. He was versed in the *Odes* (Mao text), the *Book of Documents*, and the *Zuo zhuan*, making him an Old Text Confucian like Lord Guan and Xuande.

15. Cao Cao also had appointed Sun Quan General Who Punishes Barbarians (*taolu jiangjun*), a title for Quan that the *TS* preserves. Zhu Xi headlines his entry with this appointment (see *Gangmu*, *juan* 13). However, the title is not found in the Mao edition, probably in deference to the Manchu prohibition of the word *lu* (slave), a derogatory term sometimes used by the Chinese to refer to northern non-Han nations, especially the Jurchen, remote ancestors of the Manchus. See Herbert Franke, "Some Aspects of Chinese Private Historiography in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *Historians of China and Japan*, ed. W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 124.

16. Cao Cao had held Zhang Hong hostage when the marriage between Cao Ren's daughter and Sun Kuang was arranged (see the opening of this chapter).

17. Mao (introductory note): "Sun Ce wanted to unite with Yuan Shao against Cao Cao, a rapid reversal of alliances. Sun Quan then broke off with Yuan Shao and declared his obedience to Cao Cao, preserving a unity that almost was divided and a division that was almost ended. How hard to grasp—these mysterious transformations events bring.

"The previous chapter related how Liu Bei left Yuan Shao. The following chapter will relate how Yuan Shao attacked Cao Cao for the second time. This chapter unexpectedly separates these events with a narrative of the Southland, like an astonishing peak boldly drawn into the background. As events unfold, the narrative design alters."

CHAPTER 30

1. Mao (introductory note): "After Han Gao Zu and Xiang Yu had agreed to let the River Hong divide their realms, Gao Zu wanted to return home. If Zhang Liang had not convinced him not to return home, who knows who the victor would have been? Here, Cao Cao and Yuan Shao were locked in battle at Guandu, and Cao Cao, short of grain, wanted to return to Xuchang. If Xun Wenruo had not convinced him to stay, who knows what the outcome might have been? It is a

great moment in the story, resembling a complex position in chess, with the struggle focused on a single move."

[2.](#) Yejun, capital of Jizhou, Yuan Shao's home province.

[3.](#) Mao (introductory note): "When Cao Cao attacked Lü Bu, Yuan Shao could have sent his whole army against the capital. His failure to do so was a mistake. When Cao Cao attacked Liu Bei, Yuan Shao let the same opportunity pass again. After Lü Bu and Liu Bei were defeated, it was too late to try to wrest the capital from Cao Cao. Yet, with his main force at Guandu and an auxiliary force attacking the capital, Yuan Shao might still have had his victory. Once again, he failed to act."

[4.](#) The *TS* (p. 298) dates this to Jian An 5 (A. D. 200), 10th month, 23d day.

[5.](#) Mao (introductory note): "Initially, Han Xin and Chen Ping served Chu; but Xiang Yu drove them to serve Han Gao Zu. Xu You and Zhang He initially served Yuan Shao; he drove them into the service of Cao Cao. How lamentable! As for those who suffered abuse but refused to leave, there is only Fan Zeng in the former instance, and Ju Shou in the latter. Such men are rare."

[6.](#) Sun Bin was a Warring States strategist. When the king of Qi sent Tian Ji and Sun Bin to raise Wei's siege of Handan, capital of the state of Zhao, Sun Bin stormed Wei's capital city, knowing that Wei's best troops were deployed at Handan.

[7.](#) Pei Songzhi quotes the *Xiandi zhuan*, which has Ju Shou replying to Cao Cao's offer, "My uncle, mother, and younger brothers are at Yuan Shao's mercy. If you would grant a kindness, a speedy death would be a blessing" (SGZ, p. 200). The *TS* (p. 301) follows Pei Songzhi.

1. The yellow star is identified with the star Canopus in Edward Schafer, *Pacing the Void* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), p. 69; other commentators have suggested the planet Saturn. The yellow star portends imperial good fortune. More generally, yellow stars augur well for ordinary men.

2. The *SGZ* (p. 22) dates this battle in the 4th month of Jian An 6 (A. D. 201).

3. Liu Pi and Gong Du were both former Yellow Scarves leaders. According to the *ZZTJ* (p. 2031), "Liu Bei was plundering the area between Runan and Yingchuan [i. e., moving north from Runan and closer to the capital]. This caused unrest among the officials and the population south of Xuchang, and Cao Cao considered [Bei's activities] a threat to the security [of the court].... Cao Cao sent Cao Ren with cavalry to attack [Liu Bei]. Cao Ren, after defeating [Bei] and driving him away, restored governmental control in all of the counties that had rebelled. Ren then returned [to Xuchang]." According to the *SGZ* (p. 20), "In Runan, Liu Pi and other rebels who had surrendered revolted [against the court] and began working with Yuan Shao; they plundered the area south of the capital. Shao sent Liu Bei to give aid to Liu Pi. Cao Cao dispatched Cao Ren to the area, and he defeated Liu Bei and Liu Pi."

4. In the *TS* (p. 308) this section, equivalent to the second half of chapter 31, opens with a lament by Cao Cao: "Since raising a loyalist force to rid the realm of violence and sedition, the men from my native region have almost all perished. I hardly see anyone I know in the course of a day, and it makes me sad. Now the ripening crops need attention. Military action can be suspended." Some of Cao Cao's best-known poems, "Haolixing," for example, express a similar mood of sorrow.

5. Mao (introductory note): "Chen Lin, in the indictment of Cao Cao that he composed at Yuan Shao's behest, never mentioned the decree because Dong Cheng's plot was still secret. At the battle of Guandu, Yuan Shao announced his possession of the decree... but did not recite it before the army. Here Xuande's recitation is thoroughly satisfying. 'At the command of the beloved and trusted leader, the soldiers give their utmost,' the *Book of Changes* tells us. This applies to Xuande. In the presence of the highest principle [*da yi*], we no longer judge according to success or failure."

6. Mao: "During this period Cao Cao was conducting raids on Gong Du and in Runan, but nothing has been said about it; everyone is kept in the dark." In the *TS* Xuande says, "He is afraid to fight us!" Mao Zonggang leaves out this bit of naivete.

7. The text is evasive about Liu Biao's titles, perhaps because he was made imperial inspector of Jingzhou by Dong Zhuo and later named protector by the renegade generals Li Jue and Guo Si. See his biography in *SGZ*, pp. 210-17.

8. Xuande's arrival in Jingzhou is headlined in the *Gangmu* and dated to the ninth month of Jian An 6. In the *PH*, Liu Biao ("King of Jing") says, "I never expected the imperial uncle to come here. I have no kinsmen in Jingzhou. But now in him and his brothers I will have support" (p. 62).

In A. D. 198 Cao Cao had supported a rebellion in Jingzhou's southern district of Changsha. After crushing the rebellion in A. D. 200, Liu Biao himself began to display publicly his imperial ambitions while Cao Cao was locked in combat with Yuan Shao. See *ZZTJ*, pp. 2039-40.

1. Mao: "Sun Ce died grandly; Yuan Shao died wretchedly." Yuan Shao died in the fifth month of Jian An 7 (A. D. 202).
2. "Both brothers" probably means Yuan Shao and Yuan Shu.
3. The city is variously referred to as Ye, Yejun, or Jizhou. The governing city of a province often takes the name of the province; e. g., Xuzhou is the capital of Xuzhou, Jingzhou of Jingzhou.
4. Mao (introductory note): "Reflecting on the disorder in the house of Yuan, truly, since ancient times no man has ever achieved power if his family was beset by fraternal conflict. The peach garden brotherhood in which men of a different surname bound themselves as kinsmen we will not touch on. Sun Ce and Sun Quan of Wu had mutual respect for each other's ability, and Cao Hong of Wei was willing to sacrifice himself in recognition of Cao Cao's greater talents."
5. Mao: "So timid against Cao Cao, so fierce against his elder brother."
6. A small gate for launching sudden sorties from inside the city.
7. Mao: "It was Yuan against Yuan within the family. Cao Cao's using Yuan generals against Yuan is a part of this."
8. Shen Pei's death is dated in the *TS* (p. 323) to the seventh month of Jian An 9 (A. D. 204).
9. Mao: "Chen Lin likened himself to the arrow, Yuan Shao to the string. It is the string that sends the arrow. And if Cao Cao will be the string, Chen Lin will be his arrow.... The killing of Shen Pei resembles the killing of Chen Gong. The sparing of Chen Lin resembles the sparing of Zhang Liao."
10. According to the *TS* Cao Cao took for his concubine a woman of the Bian family in Langye who had been a courtesan. This woman was Cao Pi's mother (p. 323).
11. Mao (introductory note): "Yuan Shao unexpectedly took Jizhou province from Han Fu. Just as unexpectedly Cao Cao took it from Yuan Shao. Initially, Han Fu lost it, Gongsun Zan fought for it, and Yuan Shao took it. After Yuan Shao's death Yuan Tan lost it, Yuan Shang fought for it, and Cao Cao took it. In the twinkling of an eye the robber is robbed!... This chapter recounts the struggle between Cao Cao and the Yuans in patterns of reversal. First, Yuan Shang wants to aid Yuan Tan; second, he refuses to aid him; third, he goes to his aid. First, Yuan Tan wants to surrender to Cao Cao; second, he allies with Yuan Shang; finally, he surrenders to Cao Cao. First, Cao Cao attacks Jizhou; next, he attacks Jingzhou; in the end, he attacks Jizhou."

CHAPTER 33

1. Mao: "An indication that Lady Zhen will become empress to the future emperor Cao Pi."
2. Mao (introductory note): "Lady Liu, mother of Yuan Shang, displayed the cruelest jealousy [in killing Yuan Shao's concubines; see opening of chap. 32], Then, after the capture of her city, instead of dying to preserve her honor, she angled to save her skin by offering Lady Zhen to Cao Pi."
3. Nine is an "ideal" number and is used to represent the whole.
4. In the last chapter Wang Xiu appealed to the Yuan brothers to act in the name of fraternal love to preserve their provinces.
5. The Wuhuan people of Liaoxi were led by Tadu. In the period A. D. 190-93 this chieftain organized the Wuhuan of three other districts—Shanggu, Youbeiping, and Liaodong—into a powerful alliance. For aiding Yuan Shao against Gongsun Zan, Tadu was enfeoffed as king of the

Wuhuan. The "Wudi ji" dates the flight of the Yuan brothers to the spring of Jian An 10 (A. D. 205); see SGZ, p. 27.

The "Wudi ji" here and elsewhere shows how dramatic reform measures were integral to Cao Cao's ingenious military tactics. Under Jian An 10: "Cao Cao ordered cessation of private vengeance, prohibited expensive funerals, and subjected all uniformly to the laws. That month [the first] Yuan Xi's leading generals Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan and others turned against and attacked the Yuan brothers, who fled to the Wuhuan of the Three Districts" (SGZ, p. 27). *Three Kingdoms* tends not to bring out the social aspect of Cao Cao's tactics. See Jian An 5, autumn, when Cao Cao's social measures served military ends (ZZTJ, pp. 2030-31).

6. This was Zuixian Wang. The southern branch of the Xiongnu had become loyal to the Han court during the later reigns.

7. Jian An 11 (A. D. 206), seventh month (TS, p. 330). At about this time Liu Xuande tried to get Liu Biao to attack Xuchang, but without success.

8. Fan Li helped the defeated king of Yue conquer the state of Wu. Chen Ping was a minister to Han Gao Zu. His "Hereditary House" is translated in *Records of the Grand Historian*, trans. Burton Watson, 1: 152.

9. The "Wudi ji" (SGZ, p. 28) dates Cao Cao's return to the second month of Jian An 12 (A. D. 207).

CHAPTER 34

1. Xun You is referring to the mythic succession from god-king Yao to god-king Shun; see *Shu jing*, "Yao dian" and "Shun dian." Yao passed over his own son and chose the worthy but unrelated Shun to succeed him. Xun You is implicitly comparing Emperor Xian to Yao and Cao Cao to Shun.

2. Jiangxia is the easternmost district of Jingzhou. Its capital, Jiangxia, is above the Yangzi and close to Lujiang, the Southland district due east. It was a focus of contention between Jingzhou and the Southland.

The *PH* (p. 62) describes Liu Biao's thoughts on Xuande's arrival: "How unexpected! I had no kinsmen in this province. Now I will have the imperial uncle, Guan, and Zhang as my arms and shoulders."

3. Mao (introductory note): "Yuan Shao doted on his second wife. So did Liu Biao. Yuan Shao loved his cadet the most. So did Liu Biao. Yuan Shao was indulgent and indecisive. So was Liu Biao. Why were the two men so alike? In the first place, each was too proud of his family traditions.... In the second, each was too satisfied with mere reputation... But Liu Biao was superior to Yuan Shao in this respect: Yuan Shao killed Tian Feng because of Pang Ji's slander; Liu Biao, however, did not kill Xuande despite Cai Mao's slander." Note that Chen Shou puts the biographies of Yuan Shao and Liu Biao in the same chapter of the *SGZ*; see *SGZ* ("Dong er Yuan Liu zhuan"), pp. 171-217.

4. In the Chinese text the horse is called *dilu*: literally, "target skull." The term is translated "white forehead" in Richard B. Mather's version of Liu I-ch'ing [Liu Yiqing], *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü: A New Account of Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p. 16.

5. Xinye was a frontline position facing Cao Cao's domain.

6. Mao (introductory note): "Liu Bei urged Liu Biao to attack Xuchang only when Cao Cao was attacking the Wuhuan, not when Cao Cao was attacking Jizhou. Why? In Jizhou Cao Cao was still close enough to the capital for a timely return. But to return from the Wuhuan to rescue the capital would have taken too long. Furthermore, Liu Biao had previously shown a want of courage in not saving Yuan Tan, and so Cao Cao did not take Liu Biao seriously and consequently had not prepared."

7. Liu Biao had welcomed Xuande in Jingzhou six years earlier in the autumn of Jian An 6 (A. D. 201), a few months after Yuan Shao's final defeat at Cangting (*ZZTJ*, p. 2041).

8. Lord Guan calls Liu Biao Liu Jingzhou, after the province he governs.

9. Mao: "This is a fabrication, like the verse he attributed to Xuande."

10. I. e., Xianyang, capital of the Qin, north across the River Wei from Chang'an, the Former Han capital. The Han dynasty could be said to have begun when Liu Bang received the surrender of the last Qin emperor in 207 B. C. and then entered Xianyang. After five more years of civil war Liu Bang defeated Xiang Yu and founded the Han.

11. The phrase *yue ma* (vaulting horse), used in the title of chapter 34, recalls the figure of Gongsun Shu, an official of the Wang Mang government who proclaimed himself emperor of an independent kingdom in the Riverlands (Yizhou, including Hanzhong) after the fall of Wang Mang. In A. D. 36 the founder of the Later Han, Emperor Guang Wu (Liu Xiu), completed his conquest of the empire when his forces killed Gongsun Shu near Chengdu. The poet Zuo Taichong refers to Gongsun Shu as "vaulting on horseback" and pairs him with Liu Xuande in the closing lines of his "Shudu fu" (*Wenxuan*, *juan* 4): "Gongsun vaulted on his horse and proclaimed himself emperor, / Liu [Xuande] of royal stock descended from his palanquin and made himself king." The biography of Gongsun Shu is in *HHS*, pp. 533-45. See also Du Fu, "Ge ye," line 7, "Sleeping Dragon and Vaulting Horse ended up in the yellow earth." On proclaiming himself emperor, Gongsun Shu gave priority to the color white; hence, he is sometimes known as the White Emperor (*baidi*); he also founded the city Baidi. That Liu Xuande died in Baidi (renamed Yong'an) reinforces the association with Gongsun Shu.

CHAPTER 35

1. Mao (introductory note): "If Zhang Fei had been in Zhao Zilong's place, he would have killed Cai Mao. If Lord Guan had been in Zhao Zilong's place, he would at the least have seized Cai Mao and demanded his brother's person. Would either of Xuande's brothers have been willing to release Cai Mao so easily and then search for him first in Xinye, then in Nanzhang? All three men are equally courageous, but Zilong is by nature meticulous, unperturbable."

2. His name is, literally, "Water-mirror." Water, like the mind, reflects accurately only when calm. The term "water-mirror" suggests a man of impartiality, objectivity, and insight. Xi Zuochi discusses the imagery of water and mirror as objective standards: "When water is absolutely level, it can serve as a standard for [a line] not true; when a mirror is absolutely clear, an ugly person will not become angry at his reflection. Water and mirror can reveal all without incurring resentment because they have no personal interest [in the result they yield]" ; *SGZ*, p. 1001.

3. Literally, "the yellow springs below."

4. The events involving Liu Bei will culminate in the interview with Zhuge Liang described

CHAPTER 36

1. Mao: "Lord Guan adopted Guan Ping, but he did not want Xuande to adopt Kou Feng. The reason is that a vassal's children would not fight to succeed him, but the children of a lord will."

2. Mao: "Not even Xuande knows who he is!"

3. The text now reverts to Shan Fu's real name, Xu Shu. This translation keeps the assumed name, Shan Fu.

4. Mao: "The author supplies the sentence that Xuande failed to hear the night he overheard Shan Fu and Still Water conversing."

5. The few sentences on Shan Fu carried in the *SGZ* (p. 914) are in the *Wei lüe*, quoted in the commentary to Zhuge Liang's biography. The novel's departure from the earlier record begins with the introduction of Madame Xu, Shan Fu's mother. Cao Cao's imprisoning the woman, Cheng Yu's coaxing handwriting samples from her, etc., appear to be inventions of the novelist, most likely for the purpose of providing a pious motive for Shan Fu's defection to Cao Cao.

In the *PH* account (p. 64), Xuande holds a banquet for Shan Fu after his victory over Cao Ren: "Shan Fu thought to himself that day, 'My mother is in Xuchang, and Cao Cao knows I am here and have killed his soldiers. We are enemies now and my mother and family are unsafe.' Shan Fu took his leave. Xuande was unhappy." Mao Zonggang suggests that the military director assumed the name Shan Fu to keep his identity from Cao Cao.

However much he may have admired Xuande, Shan Fu probably foresaw that he would soon suffer defeats. Thus, another possibility is that he chose to leave Xuande. If so, a letter from his mother was his best chance of getting safely away. This speculation is supported by the *ZZTJ*'s placing of Shan Fu's departure between the eighth and tenth months of Jian An 13, when Xuande was on the run near Dangyang and nearly overwhelmed by Cao Cao's special five-thousand-man force. These historical events postdate by months Xuande's famous meeting and interview with Kongming; see *ZZTJ*, p. 2084.

6. The *TS* (p. 355) adds: "I forsake my hopes of upholding the royal house."

7. Lü Wang (also called Jiang Ziya) was living in obscurity when King Wen, founder of the Zhou dynasty, solicited his services; he became adviser both to King Wen and to his son, King Wu. In this capacity Lü Wang played a key role in the overthrow of the Shang and the establishment of the Zhou. For the various accounts—historical and legendary—see Sara Allen, "The Identities of Taigong Wang in Zhou and Han Literature," *Monumenta Serica* 30 (1972-73): 57-99. Zhang Liang played an analogous role, helping Liu Bang defeat Xiang Yu and found the Han; his biography in *SJ* is called "Liuhou shijia."

8. Guan Zhong (d. 645 b. c.) helped Patriarch Huan of Qi attain leadership of the feudal lords in the Spring and Autumn period. Confucius spoke of him as one of the saviors of Chinese civilization. He died before Patriarch Huan; after Huan's death the political order that Guan Zhong had built unraveled. Guan Zhong's achievements are described in *SJ*, "Qi Shaogong shijia." Yue Yi, a senior general in the kingdom of Yan, organized a successful attack on its stronger neighbor, Qi, toward the end of the third century b. c. Shortly after this victory, however, a jealous minister contrived to have Yue Yi persecuted, and he went into exile. See *SJ*, "Yue Yi liezhuan."

9. The elegies are odes of filial mourning. The personal reference is perhaps to Zhuge Liang's early loss of his father. Liangfu Mountain is one of the lesser elevations near Mount Tai and was a site for funerary rituals. Zhuge Liang's father was styled Zigong, the name of Confucius' famed disciple; thus, the *Kong* of Kongming in all likelihood refers to Confucius. *Ming* means "enlightened" and echoes his given name, Liang, meaning "light."

10. In most instances Zhuge Liang will henceforth be referred to as Kongming.

11. Mao (introductory note): "Cao Cao did not force Lord Guan to stay, and in that way he preserved the principle of fraternal love. Xuande did not force Shan Fu to stay, and in that way he preserved the principle of filial love. But were the motives of Cao Cao and Xuande similar? No. Cao Cao openly let Lord Guan go but covertly tried to block him. Xuande simply saw Shan Fu off. Cao Cao dearly wanted Yuan Shao to kill Xuande. Xuande's only concern was that Cao Cao might kill Shan Fu's mother.... Contemplating the parting of Xuande and Shan Fu... is superior to reading dozens of Tang poems on parting."

Reflecting on this famous scene, one may suspect that Xuande and Shan Fu were testing one another. Xuande had to be sure Shan Fu would not share his military knowledge with Cao Cao before letting him go. Shan Fu had to be sure of Xuande's sincerity in letting him go before recommending Zhuge Liang. Shan Fu's close friendship with Zhuge Liang is recorded by Chen Shou in the text of the *SGZ*; however, the *Wei lüe*, our source for Shan Fu, does not say that he introduces Zhuge Liang to Xuande. On the contrary, it has Zhuge Liang traveling to see Xuande and succeeding in getting his attention. See the commentary to Zhuge Liang's biography in *SGZ*, esp. p. 913. The main text by Chen Shou of course has Xuande visit Kongming.

12. Shan Fu here calls Xuande by his office, Liu Yuzhou, or protector of Yu province.

CHAPTER 37

1. Mao: "Initially Shan Fu was no more than a hired sword. In spite of that, he was able to make a noted scholar of himself. That his mother should have denounced him for ending up worse than he had begun shows the novelist's ingenuity."

2. The story of Mother Xu resembles the story of Mother Wang, whose son Ling was an early supporter of Liu Bang; Xiang Yu had his mother killed. See the short notice on Wang Ling in *SJ*, "Chen chengxiang shijia."

3. The *SGZ* ("Wudi ji") dates the construction of the pool to the first month of Jian An 13 (A. D. 208), after Cao Cao's return to Ye; see p. 30. The record continues, "They did away with the offices of the three elder lords [sangong] and reinstated the [Western Han] system of a prime minister and an [assisting] imperial censor [*chengxiang* and *yushi dafu*]." In the summer of A. D. 208 Cao Cao was made prime minister. Previous use of the title in *Three Kingdoms* is anachronistic.

4. Lord Guan's mastery of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and its commentary the *Zuo zhuan* is mentioned elsewhere in the *TS*, e. g., p. 255. His remark is thus in character, but the Mao text of *Three Kingdoms* tends to leave out references to Guan's scholarly interests. At this point in the *TS* (p. 359) Lord Guan says, "I have heard that Guan Zhong kept the realm from falling apart by unifying the feudal lords. For this Confucius praised him, saying, 'But for Guan Zhong we would have unbound hair and coats fastened on the left' [like the barbarians; *Analects*, 14. 18]. Yue Yi conquered seventy towns in the state of Qi [and restored the state of Yan]."

5. In the *PH* (p. 65) Xuande arrives at the hermitage with three thousand troops. The lad informs Kongming, who whispers something to him. The lad then goes out and informs Xuande that Kongming is not at home.

6. Dated by the *TS* to the 12th month of Jian An 12; this would be January, A. D. 208. Jian An 12 ended on February 3, 208; Jian An 13 began on February 4.

7. This song in the Liangfu mode, a kind of elegy, is adapted from the first half of Li Bo's "Liangfu yin." The singer may be Kongming himself; he is said to have favored that mode, perhaps to mourn the loss of his father and, soon after, the loss of the uncle who raised him. Perhaps he was also mourning the waning royal house. The opening lines of Li Bo's poem read: "He keens the 'Liangfu yin'; / When will he meet a wise lord?" The poem then sums up the highlights of the lives of two advisers, Jiang Ziya and Li Yiji, who brought success to their lords, King Wen and Han Gao Zu. The word "keen" translates *chang xiao*, either a whistle or an imitation of an animal's prolonged cry. *Chang xiao* also occurs in the last line of the old-style ballad describing Kongming's retreat; there it is translated "impassioned cry." See "Xiao fu," *Wen xuan*, *juan* 18.

8. This incident is related only in the Han version of the *Shu jing's* "Tai shi." Also see James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, 2d ed., vol. 3, *The Shoo King* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1893-95), p. 298 ("The Great Declaration"). According to Legge's translation, as Wuwang (i. e., King Wu) was launching the Zhou attack on the Shang, a white fish came into his boat. The lords regarded it as a favorable sign. Wuwang was the son of Wenwang (i. e., King Wen); he led the invasion after his father's death.

9. See the last stanza of *Shi jing*, ode 236, "Da ming."

10. A common bow was insultingly perfunctory; nothing less than prostration was called for. Li Yiji gave Liu Bang (at this time the "Big Nose Governor" of Pei) some lessons in civility and conducted diplomatic missions for him. At the time Gaoyang was both Li Yiji's hometown and Liu Bang's headquarters. An English translation of Li Yiji's biography may be found in Ssu-ma Ch'ien [Sima Qian], *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1: 269-75.

11. The last three lines of the first part of the Li Bo poem cited in n. 7 above:

If the "Crazy Drunk" Li Yiji could do so much,
What of this hero in his prime, ready to take on his peers?
I want to mount the dragon and meet my lord!

12. Lines 3-8 refer to events chronicled in chapter 1.

13. The couplet is not in the *TS*. Mao Zonggang has taken it from the *Zhuge Liang ji* and inserted it here. See *ZHT*, p. 88. For a discussion of the Huang-Lao Taoist basis of this couplet, see Wang Liqi's study of Zhuge Liang's political philosophy, "Shilun Zhuge Liang de zhengzhi sixiang," in Chengdushi Zhuge Liang yanjiuhui, ed., *Zhuge Liang yanjiu* (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1985), pp. 18-33. This article also discusses the possible connection of Yue Yi (one of Kongming's models) to Huang-Lao Taoism. Huang-Lao was a school of early Han Taoism; adherents advocated quietism for the emperor, personal discipline and political activism for the ministers.

14. Theoretically, Liu Bei is still protector of Yuzhou, the province east of northern Jingzhou.

15. The plum blossoms early in the year and thus often faces adverse weather. The flower became a symbol of heroism and sometimes, more specifically, the gallant resistance of the Song to Jurchen or Mongol power.

[16.](#) Liu Bei's visit to Kongming's retreat is largely romance. The resentment of the brothers toward Kongming is one of the few historical details in the chapter. See *SGZ*, p. 913.

CHAPTER 38

[1.](#) Mao: "Kongming is a specialist in the military use of fire. For Zhang Fei to display his technique would have been a case of the novice trying to impress the master. A witty touch."

[2.](#) See *Shi jing*, ode 168, "Chu ju," for the phrase "longer, longer grow the days." The ode's first lines are:

Let our war-carts roll forth
To that grazing field.
They've come from Heaven's Son
To call us to war.
We summon our drivers;
We tell them to load.
The king tasks us hard;
Only make haste.

[3.](#) Mao: "Immediately after the meeting the author has Xuande speak first and Kongming answer." The term *guanjin*, describing Kongming's headdress, was translated after consultation with Donald Harper.

[4.](#) Nanhai, the main city of the Southern Viets or Nanyue, was a commercial entrepot close to Canton.

[5.](#) The meaning is "and on to Chang'an." Qinchuan is present-day Shaanxi and eastern Gansu, the region of the ancient state of Qin. The capitulation of the county of Wan, capital of Nanyang district, played a crucial role in Han Gao Zu's successful assault on the Qin capital at Xianyang. See Ssu-ma Ch'ien [Sima Qian], *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1: 88.

[6.](#) With this speech the novel returns from the romantic mode to the historical. *SGZ* (pp. 912-13) and *ZZTJ* (p. 2075) both carry the text of the speech.

[7.](#) The late king is Xianzhu, the first ruler of Shu (the Riverlands), i. e., Liu Xuande. Wuzhangyuan ("the last campaign") is a place-name. After a hundred-day stalemate in the war with Wei, Zhuge Liang died there in A. D. 234. It is now A. D. 208. The year A. D. 209 will be reached in chaps. 51-52.

[8.](#) The *TS* (p. 333) introduces the lines as follows: "When Kongming left his cottage, he was twenty-seven. In testimony we have this poem in the old style from Zeng Zigu."

[9.](#) Mao (introductory note): "Kongming urged Xuande to take over the territory of Liu Biao and Liu Zhang but not that of Sun Quan or Cao Cao. Some say it made no sense for Xuande to eliminate his own royal kinsmen if he wanted to uphold the Han. I disagree. The territory of the two Lius would have fallen to Sun or Cao in any event. It would have been far preferable to receive Jingzhou from Liu Biao than to fight Sun Quan for it.... Taking the Riverlands from Liu Zhang was tantamount to taking it from Cao Cao."

10. Sun Ce was Sun Quan's elder brother, killed in A. D. 200.

11. The six districts of Yangzhou as listed in the *HHS*: Jiujiang, Danyang, Lujiang, Kuaiji, Wujun, Yuzhang. The traditional regional name, Wu (the Southland), rather than the administrative provincial name (Yangzhou), is used in order to deny central government authority.

In the *TS* (p. 372), Zhou Yu's speech begins: "I disagree. Long ago when the land of Chu was first granted its fief beside the Jing Mountains, it had less than a hundred *li* of territory. Through many generations of able leadership Chu expanded its boundaries and established its capital at Ying. Thus we came to possess south of the Jing Mountains as far as the lands of the Viets and have maintained our rites for more than nine hundred years."

12. I. e., the expeditions against Yuan Shao, his sons, and the Wuhuan, which lasted until late A. D. 207.

13. I. e., Jian An 8 (the last weeks of A. D. 203 through to the first weeks of 204). Posted at Xiakou, Huang Zu was Liu Biao's forward defense against the Southland.

14. Only two Southland districts lay above the Great River, Lujiang and Jiujiang. Danyang, below the river, was southeast of these districts. Jiujiang was nominally loyal to Cao Cao. Lujiang's governor Li Shu rebelled against Sun Quan (A. D. 201-2), but Cao Cao refused to help him, and Sun Quan was able to regain control of the district after a major military campaign; see Pei Songzhi's commentary to *SGZ*, p. 1116. The Sun Yi incident is dated in the *TS* to the twelfth month of Jian An 9 (the first weeks of A. D. 205).

15. The *TS* (p. 374) version of this verse reads:

Honorable and chaste, she guarded her person;
To avenge her wronged husband and execute the villains, she pretended to offer herself.
Of the many heroes in the time of the Kingdoms Three,
Does any compare to this Southland woman?

16. Sun Quan regarded Liu Biao and Huang Zu as mortal enemies. Liu Biao's men had killed Sun Jian, Quan's father, in an ambush (Chu Ping 3, 11th month; late A. D. 192 to early 193). Huang Zu, who was involved in the action, was taken alive by Southland soldiers and later exchanged for the body of Sun Jian. See chapter 7. The *TS* (p. 375) makes the revenge motive explicit.

17. Mao: "Su Fei recommended Gan Ning to Huang Zu for the sake of Gan Ning. Had Su Fei acted for the sake of Huang Zu, then he should have told Huang Zu either to give Gan Ning an important command or to kill him and prevent his becoming an asset to the enemy. How could Su Fei go so far as to smooth Gan Ning's path to the south? In planning for his friend Su Fei was loyal. In planning for his lord he was disloyal."

18. The easternmost district of Jingzhou, Jiangxia faced the Southland districts of Lujiang and Yuzhang. Huang Zu was posted at Xiakou; the Southland's key salient was Chaisang in Yuzhang district, just south of the Great River.

19. The Great River meets the Mian (also called the Han) at Miankou (also called Xiakou), site of the modern city of Wuhan in eastern Hubei. The region was called Three Rivers (Sanjiang) in later times.

1. Jingzhou is the capital of the province; it is also called Xiangyang.

2. Mao: "This recalls the events of chapter 7 but also echoes Lady Xu's sacrifice to her husband's altar in the previous chapter. In chapter 7 Sun Ce exchanged a live Huang Zu [whom he had captured] for his father's body. Here Sun Quan offers a dead Huang Zu to his dead father, Sun Jian. Such dutiful sons make the father immortal."

3. Mao: "The author goes directly from Sun Quan's revenge to Gan Ning's repayment of kindness, then from there directly to Ling Tong's revenge. The honorable warrior and the filial son are vividly shown forth."

4. Mao: "This will lead to Liu Qi's request [to Liu Biao] to guard Xiakou."

5. Mao: "Ling Tong did not get satisfaction. Sun Quan got partial satisfaction: Huang Zu was dead, but Liu Biao still lived. Lady Xu got complete satisfaction for her husband's wrongful death."

6. Wu-Kuai, as in the previous chapter, is translated as Wujun following the annotation in *ZZTJ*, p. 2135. Kuaiji was administered from Wuxian (or Wujun, present-day Suzhou); hence the name Wu-Kuai for the Southland capital. Chaisang is the Southland's westernmost strongpoint on the Great River.

Mao: "At this point the reader feels certain Sun Quan and Liu Biao will go to war, never imagining that the stage is being set for their joint action against Cao Cao."

7. Mao: "Kongming is anxious that [Xuande] not treat Sun Quan as an enemy—precisely because he will soon want to turn to him."

8. Mao: "He is subtly alluding to Gan Ning. But also, Huang Zu's failure to use Gan Ning well and Liu Biao's failure to get rid of Cai Mao are similar errors. Xuande uses Huang Zu to criticize Liu Biao."

9. Both were sons of the Patriarch Xian of Jin during the Spring and Autumn period. After the patriarch made Lady Li his favorite, he wished to make her son, Xi Qi, his heir. Lady Li nonetheless slandered the two other sons to the patriarch, saying they wished for his death. Advised to flee, Shensheng refused and was forced to commit suicide. Chong Er went into exile and eventually became ruler of the state of Jin. See *Zuo zhuan*, "Xigong," year 4.

10. Mao (introductory note): "After Huang Zu's death Liu Biao wanted Xuande to help him oppose Sun Quan. But Kongming wanted to preserve Sun Quan as an ally. For that reason Kongming advised Xuande to leave Quan [the southern front] and confront Cao Cao."

11. Mao (introductory note): "Liu Qi borrows Jiangxia as a refuge from [the Cai family's] intrigues. Kongming devises this safe move for Liu Qi—and also for Xuande—well in advance, should he need help in case of military defeats."

12. Jian An 13 (A. D. 208), sixth month (*ZZTJ*, p. 2079). He created the Eastern and the Western Bureaus, each with its own director. See Rafe de Crespigny, *The Last of the Han* (Canberra: A. N. U. Centre of Oriental Studies, Monograph 9, 1969), p. 465 n. 7.

13. *Zhubu*, usually translated here "first secretary." Mao: "Sima Yi's family background is narrated in considerable detail. Even before Wei has supplanted Han, the supplanter of Wei has been introduced." (The Sima family ended the Wei dynasty of the Cao clan and founded the Jin dynasty in A. D. 265.)

14. Mao: "Cao Cao wants Xinye watched, not Xiangyang, showing that he despises Liu Biao and respects Xuande."

15. Mao (introductory note): "The reader has often been led to doubt Kongming's plan could succeed,... but finally with the defeat of the enemy he sighs at the ingenuity of the writing. The outcome was more than he could have foreseen. If the author had simply wanted to use an inflexible narrative line, then the *Gangmu* headline, 'Zhuge Liang destroys Cao's army at Bowang, ' would have taken care of the matter and the novelist [*yanyizhe*] could have spared himself the trouble of composing the text."

CHAPTER 40

1. Mao: "Herein Cao Cao excels: he rewards his commanders despite the defeat." In the *PH* (p. 71) Cao Cao condemns Xiahou Dun to death for the defeat, but the commander is spared on Shan Fu's appeal.

2. The day named in the text for the invasion to begin is *bingwu*. In addition to and independent of the calendar pegged to the imperial reigns, the Chinese traditionally had a system of counting days (and years) in cycles of sixty, a system sometimes called the sexagenary cycle. Ten *tiangan* (Heavenly stems) are paired off with twelve *dizhi* (earthly branches): stem one with branch one, stem two with branch two, and so on; on the sixtieth day (or year), when the tenth stem is paired with the twelfth branch, the cycle ends and the count begins again. *Bingwu* is the forty-third day of the cycle, but a *bingwu* day did not fall in the seventh month of Jian An 13; neither the *SGZ* nor the *ZZTJ* specifies a date. Accordingly, the date has been left out of the translation.

3. *Taizhong daifu*, translated "imperial mentor," was the second of four grades of *daifu* in the Later Han bureaucracy. A *daifu* could enter the palace (*gong*) but not the imperial household (*sheng*). See Yang Hongnian, *Han Wei zhidu congkao* (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 1985), pp. 97-106.

4. Mao: "The 'most humane' refers to Liu Bei alone; Kong Rong did not attach much importance to Liu Biao or Sun Quan." After the abolition of the three elder lords (*sangong*), the imperial censor (*yushi daifu*, not among the four grades of *daifu* mentioned in n. 3) stood second to the prime minister (*chengxiang*); see *SGZ*, p. 30.

5. Yan Hui was Confucius' most treasured disciple.

6. The conflict between Cao Cao and Kong Rong came to a head over the prohibition edict. According to Kong Rong's biography in the *HHS*, "with a poor harvest and a mobilization under way, Cao Cao memorialized the throne for a decree banning wine. [After it was issued], Kong Rong frequently protested the ban, using language demeaning to Cao Cao" (p. 2272).

The *TS* (p. 389) reads: "In opposition to the edict banning wine Kong Rong wrote, 'There is a Wine Banner star in the heavens above; there is a Wine Springs district here below; and men speak of the virtue of fine wine. And did not the ancient sage-king Yao drink a thousand measures and fulfill his sagehood, while the vicious rulers Jie and Zhou gave themselves to sensual pleasure and lost their kingdoms? Why not ban marriage too?' Thus Kong Rong belittled Cao Cao." The commentary to the *HHS* (p. 2273) gives more detail on Kong Rong's celebration of the ritual and historical uses of wine.

Kong Rong also opposed Cao Cao's military ventures (the northern expedition against the Wuhuan as well as the current southern expedition). Since the ban on wine was connected to the mobilization, Kong Rong may have protested the ban for reasons of policy as well as tradition and custom.

Kong Rong was a staunch supporter of the Liu house. For his opposition to the enthroning of

Emperor Xian, Dong Zhuo punished him by sending him from Luoyang to govern rebel-infested Beihai, where Liu Bei rescued him (chap. 11). Kong Rong was one of the first to perceive that Cao Cao's ultimate purpose was to overthrow the royal house and establish his own dynasty, and so he became a consistent opponent of Cao Cao's plans. Naturally, Kong Rong was a protege and friend of the powerful Yang clan (Yang Biao and his son Xiu), since the Yangs strongly opposed Cao Cao's ambition to usurp the Han—the ultimate goal of his campaigns.

The *TS* (p. 389) suggests a diplomatic angle to the Cao Cao-Kong Rong conflict. "Liu Bei and Liu Biao were close to Kong Rong and often exchanged letters with him. Moreover, Kong Rong slandered the court while speaking to a representative from Sun Quan." The accusation of contact with Sun Quan's agent is supported by the *HHS*.

The *ZZTJ* (p. 2081) records another protest Kong Rong made, a petition for restoration of the thousand-*li* imperial demesne. This traditionalist proposal, if implemented, would have invalidated all new fiefs within a three-hundred-mile area around the capital, including the fief established by Cao Cao at Ye.

The *ZZTJ*, a chronicle that avoids taking sides, also records some of the domestic reforms undertaken by Cao Cao, including the appointment of clean and honest officers; ending the practice of preferment by lineage; promoting solid, simple men and rejecting showy, frivolous ones; and so forth; see p. 2079.

The *Gangmu*, however, openly sympathizes with Kong Rong by headlining the incident "Imperial Mentor Kong Rong killed [*sha*, not *tao* or *zhu*," chastised "or" duly executed "]." Moreover, as Mao Zonggang points out in his introductory note to the chapter, Zhu Xi, author of the *Gangmu*, underlines his disapproval of Cao Cao's act by preserving Kong Rong's official title in his headline.

The *SGZ* has no biography for Kong Rong, and Cao Cao's "Annals," the "Wudi ji," does not mention him. Even though Chen Shou compiled the *SGZ* two generations after Cao Cao's death, he probably had to suppress any account of so pivotal an anti-Cao figure since the legitimacy of Chen Shou's own emperor depended on the legitimacy of the Cao imperial house. See "Afterword" for further discussion of the legitimacy of the Cao line.

7. Following the *HHS*, the *TS* reads "Lord Cao" rather than "kings and dukes."

8. Jiangxia was the easternmost district of Jingzhou and included territory both north and south of the Great River, or Yangzi. Jiangxia district jutted eastward into the Southland districts of Lujiang and Yuzhang. Chaisang, on the river and on the boundary between Lujiang (to the north) and Yuzhang, was the Southland's most advanced position on its northwest. *Xia* is the name of the first dynasty and an ancient ethnocultural term for the northern Chinese, as in the term *huaxia*, for example. Thus Jiangxia could mean "the Xia settlers along the Jiang." But *xia* is also a perfect homonym for *xia*, "lower," and so Jiangxia may simply refer to the district on the lower Yangzi. The capital or district township called Jiangxia was located north of the river about twenty miles northeast of Xiakou, the juncture (*kou*) of the River Han and the Yangzi (modern Wuhan). The *Gangmu*'s "Jilan" says: "Xiakou was originally north of the Yangzi. After Sun Quan captured the opposite [southern] shore, he used the name Xiakou, and the name for the northern site went out of use." Liu Qi's Xiakou would have been north of the river.

According to Pei Songzhi's commentary, the Cai faction in Jingzhou sent Liu Qi to Jiangxia in order to get him out of the way and thus facilitate Liu Zong's succession; Kongming's ingenuity was not involved (*SGZ*, p. 214).

9. Mao: "Yuan Shao's wife put the younger son in power in accordance with her husband's wish. Liu Biao's wife did it in violation of her husband's wish."

10. Yi Ji had warned Liu Bei of Cai Mao's plot at the Xiangyang banquet (see chap. 34).

11. Mao (introductory note): "It would have been wrong for Xuande to take Jingzhou in Liu Biao's moment of peril. It would not have been wrong for him to take Jingzhou after Liu Zong's usurpation. Even if it had been deemed wrong for Xuande to take the province after Liu Zong's usurpation, there could have been nothing wrong in his taking it after Liu Zong had surrendered it to Cao Cao. His mistake of allowing the province to fall into Cao Cao's hands allowed the province to become a target for Sun Quan as well." The novel follows the historical record concerning Liu Bei's reluctance to usurp Jingzhou; see *ZZTJ*, p. 2083.

12. Mao (introductory note): "The episode in which Xuande visits Kongming leads naturally to the great victory at Bowang. But the author interrupts the narrative to tell us how Sun Quan kills Huang Zu and how Liu Qi is posted to Jiangxia. After Bowang the narrative should proceed directly to the victory at Xinye, but the author interposes Cao Cao's killing of Kong Rong and Liu Zong's surrender of Jingzhou to Cao Cao. It seems that the author cannot detail these concurrent events all in one place and so presents them severally."

CHAPTER 41

1. Mao: "Cao Cao made Liu Bei an offer, knowing he would not submit. Cao Cao also sent Shan Fu to Liu Bei, knowing he would not urge surrender. These two shams are but 'the civilities before the hostilities, ' shows of consideration for the benefit of the common people."

2. The text reads Jing-Xiang, describing the divided province. As soon as Cao Cao consolidated his hold in northern Jingzhou, he created Xiangyangjun, the imperial district of Xiangyang, which he hoped would be the basis for expanding the court's control south, below the River Han and beyond the northernmost district of Nanyang. Under the Wei there was a Southland Jingzhou and a Wei dynasty Jingzhou. Xinye became the capital of the northern (or Wei) Jingzhou. The city of Fan stood on the north side of the River Han, directly opposite Xiangyang. Jiangling was about 200 *li* south of Xiangyang slightly above the Great River. As the administrative township of Nanjun imperial district, Jiangling was sometimes called Nanjun; as the provincial capital of Liu Bei, the city was also called Jingzhou. In the Spring and Autumn period the Chu city of Ying occupied the site.

3. Mao (introductory note): "This is the only case of Cao Cao's not sparing someone who had submitted to him. Where does the reason lie?... Cao Cao could not leave the last ruler of Jingzhou alive lest his former vassals rally round him and plot against the court. More importantly, if Liu Zong had made common cause with Liu Qi and join forces with Liu Bei, Cao Cao would have had to face a major threat. Cao Cao's act was well thought out. Liu Zong had to die."

4. Mao (introductory note): "Lady Xu stayed alive to avenge her husband. Lady Mi died to preserve the heir. Both were worthy wives. Lady Wu of the Southland entrusted her grown son to able ministers before her death. Lady Mi entrusted an infant to a brave warrior. Both were worthy mothers." Liu Bei's four marriages were territorially connected. He apparently married Lady Mi when he took power in Xuzhou. With Cao Cao's help he married Lady Gan when he became governor of Yuzhou. Later he marries a Southland woman and then a Riverlands woman.

Lady Gan gave birth to Ah Dou when Liu Bei reached Jingzhou. See the SGZ, "Xianzhu zhuan" and "Er zhu fei zi zhuan" ; neither mentions Lady Mi. The *TS* annotator (p. 408) says, "In later times [Zhao] Zilong was not admitted to the shrine for Xuande's military vassals. This must have been because he had terrified the Second Emperor's [i. e., Ah Dou's] mother and brought about her death; this was, after all, disloyal of him." These words as well as the scene itself suggest that Lady Mi may actually have been Ah Dou's mother. See the afterword for a discussion of Ah Dou's status and his rivalry with Liu Bei's adopted son Liu Feng.

CHAPTER 42

1. Mao: "Yuan Shao rejected Tian Feng's counsel because he doted on his infant son. Xuande rejected his own son to bind Zilong more closely to him. What a difference between Yuan Shao's folly and Xuande's wisdom." According to the *TS*, Xuande's child was then three *sui*, i. e., more than two years old.

2. Mao (introductory note): "Zhang Fei's shout repulsed Cao Cao's army. But would Cao Cao have been awed had not Lord Guan earlier lauded Zhang Fei? Furthermore, Cao Cao suspected an ambush when Zhang Fei—horse poised, sword leveled—met him at the bridge. But would Cao Cao have been so cautious had not Kongming previously struck fear in him with two fiery attacks?"

Historically, Liu Bei was defeated at Dangyang, the county where Steepslope Bridge was located, and Zhang Fei was covering Liu Bei's flight across the River Han to Jiangxia. Liu Qi probably deserves as much credit for the rescue as anyone. According to Lu Su's biography in the SGZ's "Wu shu," a southern source, Lu Su entered the picture at a significantly earlier point, meeting Liu Bei not at Jiangxia, but at Steepslope. See SGZ, pp. 1262, 1269; also see the excerpt cited from the "Jiangbiao zhuan" on p. 879, which begins with the words, "Liu Bei followed Lu Su's plan and advanced to Fankou in Exian [south of the Yangzi]." The purpose of Lu Su's mission to Jingzhou, according to his biography (SGZ, p. 1269), was to acquaint himself with the political situation in the province since the death of Liu Biao so that the Southland could establish itself there before Cao Cao. In particular, Lu Su wanted to know if Liu Bei was on good terms with Biao's sons. If so, Lu Su meant to ally with Bei. En route to Jingzhou, however, Lu Su learned that Liu Zong had surrendered Xiangyang to Cao Cao and that Liu Bei was in flight. Su then met Bei in Dangyang.

3. The *TS* (p. 416) reads: "Xuande replied, 'I refrained [from attacking Cao Cao at the hunt] out of concern for the Emperor's security. If Heaven upholds the true, this misfortune may yet prove a blessing.' Later the official historian Pei Songzhi criticized Liu Xuande for speaking hypocritically. In his judgment, 'When Xuande was in Xuchang, he plotted with Dong Cheng to assassinate Cao Cao. The plot failed when it was exposed. If Xuande was so concerned for the Emperor, why did he join in the plot?... His answer to Lord Guan is insincere: a gloss on the truth, no more. '"

4. See chapter 23. Liu Biao had jailed Han Song for urging an agreement with Cao Cao. The novel omits Jia Xu's advice to Cao Cao after the capture of Jiangling: to consolidate his gains, not to extend the campaign, and to wait for the south to submit. See SGZ, p. 330.

5. Mao: "Kongming says he is 'well informed' to elicit Sun Quan's request for advice. Kongming says 'our strength falls short' to imply that they need Sun Quan's help."

6. Mao (introductory note): "Kongming convinced Xuande to make an ally of Sun Quan; Lu Su convinced Sun Quan to make an ally of Xuande. The two advisers saw the situation in more or

less the same way, but Kongming's genius lay in the fact that he saved his lord the trouble of seeking the Southland's aid and, quite remarkably, managed to get the [stronger] Southland side to send its envoy to request Xuande's aid. When Lu Su arrived, had Kongming welcomed him with a great to-do, the scene would have become ordinary. But most ingeniously, Kongming refused to appear until Lu Su had requested to meet him. This was Kongming's first stroke of genius. After the meeting with Lu Su, had Kongming laid forth his position, the scene would have become ordinary. But most ingeniously, Kongming made no attempt to arouse Lu Su's interest; rather, Lu Su was the first to suggest joining forces. This was Kongming's second stroke of genius. Lu Su intended to invite Kongming to go back to Chaisang with him. Had Kongming eagerly accepted, the scene would have become ordinary. But most ingeniously, Kongming made a number of spurious objections and then let Lu Su prevail upon him to go. This was Kongming's third stroke of genius."

Instability and division in Jingzhou province caused the name "Jingzhou" to be applied to four cities. This happened because "Jingzhou" is not a place-name per se but simply denotes the administrative township of the province. Hence, Xiangyang, Jiangling, Gong'an, and later Xinye, came to be called "Jingzhou." In most cases this translation will use the geographical name rather than the administrative.

CHAPTER 43

1. Hu Sanxing's commentary to the *ZZTJ* (p. 1914) lists seven imperial districts: Nanyang, Nanjun, Jiangxia, Lingling, Guiyang, Changsha, and Wuling. Nanyang, the northernmost district (in which Kongming's home was located), will eventually come into Cao Cao's control. Nanjun (western Jingzhou) and Jiangxia (eastern Jingzhou), roughly along the 31st parallel between the Han and Jiang rivers, will be divided between northern and southern control. The four districts below the Yangzi will later be divided, east and west, between Liu Bei and Sun Quan.

In the *PH*, Kongming is present when Cao Cao's letter inviting Sun Quan to a hunt in Jiangxia arrives. After the reading, Kongming kills the bearer on the spot, thus forcing Sun Quan to abandon any thought of joining with Cao Cao (p. 78). The historical role of Kongming in encouraging southern resistance to Cao Cao is difficult to determine. Kongming's own biography in the *SGZ* provides a firm foundation for Luo Guanzhong's interpretation of him as the catalyst. However, the biographies of Lu Su and Zhou Yu—both southern sources—ignore him. The scholiast of the *SGZ*, Pei Songzhi, comments (p. 1262): "In my view, the plan to resist Cao really came from Lu Su. Lu Su urged Sun Quan to summon Zhou Yu, who had been assigned to the Poyang Lakes [south of Chaisang], On returning from Poyang, Zhou Yu found himself in agreement with Lu Su." In the *PH*, Sun Quan's mother plays a larger role than she does in *Three Kingdoms*: she denounces Cao Cao and advocates cooperation with Imperial Uncle Liu Xuande.

2. Mao: "Zhang Zhao and Zhou Yu were advisers inherited from Sun Quan's brother Ce. Lu Su alone was personally recruited by Sun Quan; that is why Quan holds him dear."

3. Throughout these scenes Liu Bei is called either Liu Yuzhou, a reference to his titular position as protector of Yuzhou, or *shijun*, a phrase of respect used to address a province leader. "Lord Liu" is the translation covering both terms.

4. Mao (introductory note): "What happened to Liu Zong is an object lesson for Sun Quan. Zong's ministers, Wang Can, Kuai Liang, and the others, held high office. But Zong alone was

killed. Submitting to Cao, Quan could suffer a like fate. Priceless indeed were the words of Lu Su: "They may submit, you alone may not."

5. Mao: "He does not denounce him for submitting to Cao; he denounces him for not attacking Cao—a despicable argument."

6. Here Kongming uses arguments of classical Mencian Confucianism, the heart of Old Text historiography, against the superstition and numerological mystification indulged in by the New Text scholars. Xue Zong opens his argument with, "The empire belongs to no one man but to all in the empire" (TS, p. 424)—this is the second of six occasions when the phrase is used in the *TS* but deleted in the Mao edition. Xue Zong continues by saying, "Accordingly, Yao abdicated the realm to Shun; and Shun abdicated to Yu. Later, Cheng Tang [founder of the Shang] banished Jie [last emperor of the Xia], and King Wu [founder of the Zhou dynasty] waged just war against King Zhou [last ruler of the Shang], The warring kingdoms gobbled each other up, and Han devolved from Qin [the victor among the warring kingdoms]."

7. Mao: "The scholars who served Cao Cao would be equivalent to Yang Xiong."

8. The story of Tian Heng, last king of Qi (one of the warring kingdoms) must have inspired Han and post-Han Chinese much as the legend of the forty-seven *rōnin* did the Japanese of later times. Rather than submit to the Supreme Ancestor (Gao Zu, the Han founder), whose trustworthiness he had every reason to suspect, Tian Heng refused a generous amnesty and committed suicide. His advisers and five hundred of his warriors followed their lord in death. The allusion to Tian Heng is historical. See Kongming's speech to Sun Quan in SGZ, p. 915.

9. Lady Wu is Sun Quan's aunt; she graduated to the status of mother on the death of her elder sister, the biological mother of Sun Ce and Quan.

CHAPTER 44

1. Mao (introductory note): "Long before, Zhou Yu had made up his mind to drive Cao Cao back. Zhou Yu's pretense at favoring submission is an effort to induce Kongming to request aid from the south. Unaware of Zhou Yu's pretense, Lu Su argues strenuously for resistance. Well aware of the pretense, Kongming plays along. Zhou Yu and Kongming work their ruses, speaking falsely, leaving everybody guessing in the dark and showing his ignorance at the same time. Between Zhou Yu and Kongming the novelist has placed a most sincere Lu Su, whose naive remarks sharpen the delineation of the principals involved."

2. This is an allusion to a southern legend concerning Fan Li, an adviser to the king of Yue during the Warring States period. After the king of Wu had conquered the Yue at Kuaiji, Fan Li arranged for the beauty Xi Shi to be presented to the victorious king of Wu, ostensibly as a peace offering. Perhaps distracted by Xi Shi, the king of Wu became less vigilant, enabling the Yue many years later to avenge its defeat and destroy the kingdom of Wu.

3. This rhapsody served a different occasion in history from the one it serves in the novel. The SGZ (p. 558) dates the rhapsody to the winter of A. D. 210, i. e., two years after the events of this chapter and after Cao Cao's grand ambitions had been thwarted. Historically, the poem was intended to project Cao Cao's imperial ambition in moral rather than martial accents, taking a tone more appropriate for lauding a chastened chief commander; it was not written to celebrate Cao Cao's plan to conquer the empire. The poet, barely nineteen at the time of composition, used extravagant

and derivative language. See n. 5 on Kongming's use of the rhapsody in the novel.

4. The next eight lines are not in Cao Zhi's original; they are in the *TS*, p. 434.

5. In the *TS* this reads "holding two bridges [*qiao*, the graph for the surname written with the wood radical]," not "holding two [brides surnamed] Qiao." A footnote to the 1973 edition of the *Sanguo yanyi* (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1973; p. 385) comments, "In chapter 34 it says that 'they built two flying bridges to traverse the space.' So the two *qiao* must refer to the flying bridges [of the Bronze Bird Tower]. In [chapter 44 of] the novel, in order to provoke Zhou Yu, Kongming cunningly twists the words to make them mean that Cao Cao wants to steal the wives of Zhou Yu and [the late] Sun Ce. Then in chapter 48, Cao Cao himself speaks of his desire for these two women. This somehow verifies Kongming's accusation while blackening Cao Cao's name." It was Mao Zonggang, however, who changed the *TS* text. In the *TS* (p. 434) the lines added to Cao Zhi's poem read: "Embracing two *qiao* on the southeast, / Like rainbow arches [*didong*] in the eastern sky." This version describes the towers' architecture while making an allusion to *Shi jing*, ode 51, "Didong," a poem about a marriage that alienates a woman from her family. According to the "Little Preface" to the *Shi jing*, the moral purpose of ode 51 is to discourage elopement.

Mao Zonggang's alteration of Cao Zhi's poem may remind Chinese readers of the legend of the *hebo* (river baron), a maiden-devouring monster that haunted the River Zhang by the city of Ye. Each year the girls to be sacrificed to the *hebo* were cloistered in special quarters built on the riverbank. Ximen Bao is the enlightened official who put a stop to the killing; see *SJ*, "Guji liezhuan." See, also, n. 9.

6. Literally, "flying bears enter the dream," an allusion to King Wen of Zhou's meeting the sage Taigong (Jiang Ziya) on the riverbank. References to the father of the founder of the Zhou dynasty reinforce Cao Cao's protestations of support for the Han. King Wen had the allegiance of the empire but refrained from overthrowing the decadent reigning dynasty. With the next line the original text resumes.

7. The provincial capital of Jizhou, Ye.

8. The original poem ends here.

9. Zhou Yu's jealousy is a theme from the *PH* (p. 80): Zhou Yu is too happy with his beautiful wife to heed Sun Quan's call for help. Gifts of gold, jade, and silk also fail to move him. But when Kongming tells him that Cao Cao has built a bronze tower to house many beautiful women and predicts the imprisonment of the sisters Qiao, Zhou Yu rises to the cause of the south.

10. Xiakou is being held by Liu Xuande.

11. A note from the 1973 edition of *Three Kingdoms*: "An ancient 'military law.' The seven prohibitions are: recklessness, insolence, theft, deceit, defection, dissension, and sabotage. Each category contained many subdivisions, totaling fifty-four, violation of which was punishable by decapitation."

12. In the *TS* (p. 436) Sun Quan says: "Zhang Zhao has no sense. All of them look to their families [*qi zi*] and cling to their personal interests, to my great disappointment."

13. Three Rivers refers broadly to the area where the Han meets the Yangzi, or Great River.

14. Bo Yi and Shu Qi were elders of the Shang dynasty who starved to death rather than transfer their allegiance to the newly victorious Zhou.

15. In this conversation, *qing* is translated as "sentiment," *yi* as "honor." The *TS* version (p. 438) reads:

Kongming said, "You mean the sentiment between Bo Yi and Shu Qi?" His brother Jin replied, "Those two men refused office and fled, yet remained together. Later they remonstrated with King Wu [for attacking the Shang, the dynasty to which Wu's father, King Wen, had remained loyal]. Spurned by King Wu, they chose to live as recluses rather than eat the grain of Zhou, [the new dynasty founded by King Wu], In the end, though they starved, they died as they had lived—never apart. When I think how we two, brothers suckled at the same breast, are forever divided serving different masters, I blush with shame before the example of Bo Yi and Shu Qi."

To this Kongming replied, "Elder brother, you speak of honor. But which of the three—honor [yi], loyalty [*zhong*], and filial piety [*xiao*]*—counts most?*" Jin responded, "It is said that loyalty and filial piety are the foundation; and that honor may never be breached." Kongming said, "What if I were to ask you to preserve your loyalty and filial piety whole?" "What do you mean?" Jin asked. Kongming said, "We are both men of the Han. Imperial Uncle Liu is a remote descendant of Emperor Jing, fifth sovereign of the Han, through Jing's son, Prince Jing of Zhongshan. If you would leave Lord Sun and serve Imperial Uncle Liu, the principle of loyalty would be uncompromised. Think also of our parents' tombs in the north, across the river. If you would return there to sweep their graves and offer sacrifices, the principle of filial love would be uncompromised. And if you would join me in serving a weak and isolated lord, the principle of honor, too, would be preserved intact. But if, instead, you cling to the Southland, ignoring the importance of loyalty and filial piety, I can hardly be expected to heed your call to make whole the principle of honor."

CHAPTER 45

1. *TS:* "... and deliver Liu Bei."

2. Jiang Gan has appeared in the guise of a hermit.

3. Shi Kuang was a musician of the state of Jin during the Spring and Autumn period; he was skilled at distinguishing differences in pitch.

4. Lu Jia and Li Yiji were two diplomats of the early Han dynasty.

5. Mao: "As arranged."

6. Mao suggests that Cao Cao might not have killed the commanders had they defended themselves instead of allowing their confusion to lend them a guilty appearance.

7. After Liu Biao died, Cai Mao and Zhang Yun conspired to do away with Biao's heir, Liu Zong, and deliver his province, Jingzhou, to Cao Cao. See chapter 40.

8. Mao's introductory notes emphasize the parallels that recur throughout the novel: "The beauty [of the scene in which] Xuande overhears Yuanzhi in Still Water's farmhouse [chap. 35] lies in the clarity of every word. By contrast, Jiang Gan understands little of what the guard says in Zhou Yu's tent, and therein lies the beauty [of that scene]. Although Xuande heard clearly, he had no idea who Yuanzhi was, nor did he understand what was going on. By contrast, Jiang Gan could not hear what was said but, having seen the letter, was convinced he understood what was going on.

"The beauty [of the scene in which] Chen Gong picks up the letter from Xuande to Cao Cao [chap. 18] lies in the utter genuineness of it. The beauty [of the scene in which] Jiang Gan picks up the letter

from Cai Mao and Zhang Yun to Zhou Yu lies in the [reader's] uncertainty of its authenticity. When Lü Bu saw Xuande's letter, he had no doubts. When Cao Cao saw his commanders' letter, he was initially convinced and later—too much later—doubtful. But the letter that Chen Gong picked up was not written by Cao; the letter Jiang Gan picked up was in fact written by Zhou Yu."

CHAPTER 46

1. Mao: "It is Kongming who speaks of punishment, Zhou Yu of reward."

2. In the *PH* (p. 81), Zhou Yu himself is the author of the arrow-harvesting scheme. There is no fog. Cao Cao and Zhou Yu guide their boats to the center of the river to talk. When Cao Cao's men begin shooting, Zhou Yu returns the fire and maneuvers his craft so as to collect an enormous number of arrows. The taunt "Thank you, Your Excellency" is uttered by Zhou Yu.

3. Mao: "Zhou Yu's previous question as to the choice of weapons was not genuine. This question is."

4. Mao: "The reference is to the battles at Bowang and Xinye [chaps. 39 and 40]."

5. The *TS* (p. 455) has Huang Gai giving a fuller version of the capitulationist argument: "Since Zhou Yu assumed chief command, we have worn ourselves out in vain. The disproportion in forces is too great for us, and we cannot continue clinging to illusions. We shall have to accept Zhang Zhao's view and sue for peace."

6. Mao's introductory note characterizes Kongming's genius: "The beauty of his schemes lies in their 'borrowings.' To defeat the northern army, he borrows the Southland's army; to help the Southland's army, he borrows the northerners' arrows.... To get the arrows, he borrows Lu Su's boats; to puzzle Cao Cao, he borrows the river fog. He borrows from man and from Heaven, too.... And so he will borrow an east wind. Is there any reason not to borrow Jingzhou?"

CHAPTER 47

1. Mao: "With a letter as a hook, himself as the line, and Cao's eighty-three legions as the catch."

2. Mao: "The key line."

3. The *TS* (p. 459) adds this opening line: "Officer for Grain Supply for the Southland, Director of the Naval Vanguard Huang Gai presents this letter to Your Excellency with heartfelt and inexhaustible respect." The document is dated Jian An 13 (A. D. 208), 11th month.

4. Mao: "Kan Ze had to wring this concession from Cao Cao before he could proceed."

5. Mao's introductory note discusses the art of persuasion: "The reason Kan Ze succeeded instead of being killed is because he knew how to speak persuasively to a cunning man of action [*jianxiong*]."

Whether speaking to a cunning man of action or to a heroic man of action [*yingxiong*], it is essential to be contrary rather than agreeable. The heroic man of action prides himself on his honor, nothing else. Thus, when Zhang Liao was working on Lord Guan, he condemned holding his life too lightly as dishonorable [chap. 25]. The cunning man of action, however, prides himself on his knowledge, nothing else. In working on Cao Cao, Kan Ze mocked his ignorance in sizing up the situation. "

6. Mao: "Kan Ze reverses the truth to test Gan Ning."

7. The *TS* adds here: "Kan Ze's accomplishment may be considered the first victory of the Battle at Red Cliffs." A commemorative poem to him confirms the point.

8. Of this refugee group, Zhang Zhao, Sun Quan's principal civil adviser and the main advocate of accommodation with Cao Cao, is perhaps the most influential. Pang Tong (Young Phoenix) is paired with Kongming in chapters 35 and 36.

9. Jiang Gan had carried a letter to Cao Cao (chap. 45) falsely incriminating the two naval commanders Zhou Yu wanted eliminated, Cai Mao and Zhang Yun. Zhou Yu was able to deceive Jiang Gan a second time because Cao Cao never revealed that he had been fooled the first time.

10. Sunzi and Wu Qi were master military strategists of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, respectively.

11. Sima Rangju was a military strategist of the kingdom of Qi during the Spring and Autumn period.

12. The ZZTJ (p. 2089) commentary cites Du You's description of the two kinds of craft: "The light attack boats are cased in raw oxhide; both sides have openings for oars. Left and right are openings for crossbows and lances. No enemy can approach them, nor can arrow or missile destroy them. These are small boats designed for speed. No troop-carrying ship can overtake them. They do not engage the enemy directly. In contrast, the warship is girt by a crenellated wall some three feet high. Below it are the oarlocks. Inside is a shed, as high as the wall, on top of which stands a second crenellated wall.... Fore and aft, left and right, there are flags, signal banners, gongs, and drums. This is a [troop-carrying] warship."

CHAPTER 48

1. Mao: "Shan Fu [Xu Shu], who had dropped out of sight, suddenly reemerges." He was Liu Xuande's first military adviser. Cao Cao lured him to his camp by forging a letter from Fu's mother. See chapters 35 and 36.

2. The significance of Xu Shu's assignment to guard against the western warriors Ma Teng and Han Sui will become clear ten chapters later.

3. Cao Cao has incorporated this slogan of the Yellow Scarves, just as he has incorporated their forces into his Qingzhou army. See chapter 1.

4. The broken halberd is a relic from the ensuing battle at Red Cliffs.

5. Du Kang was the legendary first vintner.

6. *Shi jing*, ode 91, "Zi jin." The ode's theme is longing for an absent love.

7. *Shi jing*, ode 161, "Lu ming." The ode's theme is the welcoming of guests.

8. Sima Qian quotes the Duke of Zhou as saying, "At any meal, in my anxiety not to pass up one of the empire's worthy men, I may spit out my food and rise from the table to receive men of standing." See *SJ*, "Lu Zhougong shijia."

9. There is a second part to this ode, which Luo Guanzhong omits; it elaborates on Cao Cao's historical models. The Duke of Zhou is the historical model of the loyal regent, which Cao Cao invokes to show his support for the legitimate Emperor and his determination not to usurp the throne. The two other figures Cao compares himself to are Patriarch Huan of Qi and Patriarch Wen of Jin. They were the archetypal *ha*, or hegemon (rulers by force rather than virtue), who always subordinated themselves to the Emperor in formal or ritual matters, while concentrating great

military power in their own hands. In the *Analects* Confucius expresses the deepest admiration for the Duke of Zhou and he acknowledges the achievement of Patriarch Huan, but he does not cite Patriarch Wen, whose reputation has suffered because he once compelled the Emperor to attend a meeting and thus was guilty of insubordination. On that occasion appearances were preserved by saying that the Emperor was going on a "hunting expedition." The hunting party in chapter 20 therefore suggests that Luo Guanzhong could see Cao Cao as a Patriarch Wen, but did not share Cao Cao's appraisal of himself as a Duke of Zhou or Patriarch Huan. (The historical Cao Cao wrote the song.)

[10.](#) The *TS* (p. 470) has a sentence, inexplicably missing from the Mao text, that is essential to the point of both this scene and the chapter: "Wen Ping reported the loss of Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan to Cao Cao. Cao, perfectly pleased with himself [because he had argued the incompetence of northerners in marine warfare], recalled the remainder of the attack force." Also see n. 11 below.

[11.](#) In his introductory note Mao discusses the importance of this chapter's closing scenes to the development of the narrative: "The southern command tricked Cao Cao into joining his boats. When Jiao Chu and Zhang Nan were defeated in boats that were not bound to the flotilla, Cao was confirmed in his decision that it was imperative to join the boats.... What the southern command intended to use was fire. But Han Dang and Zhou Tai, by scoring a victory without using fire, persuaded Cao that the south would not necessarily use fire. Thus their eventual use of fire was past all anticipation by Cao.... People only think of Pang Tong's offering of the 'boat-connecting scheme' [in the preceding chapter] and the outcome of the battle at Red Cliffs [in the next chapter], overlooking the manner in which this chapter connects these events."

CHAPTER 49

[1.](#) Mao: "If Pang Tong [Young Phoenix] cured the northern troops, Kongming [Sleeping Dragon] has to be the one to cure Zhou Yu."

[2.](#) *TS* (p. 472): .. and to put ghosts and spirits under one's command; it can be used to deplo a line and array troops, to secure the populace and stabilize the dynasty; and it can be used to find good fortune and avoid ill. "On *dun jia* (evading stems), the technique by which Kongming will summon the winds, see Kenneth J. Dewoskin, *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

[3.](#) I. e., the Northern Dipper (in Ursa Major); Kongming will again appeal to this constellation at the end of his life.

[4.](#) In his introductory note Mao says that the wind and fire might be linked to the *gua* (hexagrams) of the *Book of Changes* in the following way: the wind trigram (*sun*, no. 6) over the fire trigram (*li*, no. 7) yields the hexagram called "Family Members" (*jiaren*, no. 37); the fire trigram over the wind trigram yields the hexagram "Tripod" (*ding*, no. 50). Hence: if Sun Quan and Liu Xuande become "family members," the realm will divide into three parts, typically symbolized by the tripod. The interdependency of Sun and Liu is like the interdependency of fire and wind in the battle at Red Cliffs.

[5.](#) With slight alterations, translations of star names in this passage are based on Joseph Needham et al., *Science and Civilization in China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954-), 3: 235-37. A slightly different interpretation can be found in Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), p. 76. The green dragon

(east/ wood), dark tortoise (north/water), white tiger (west/metal), and vermilion bird (south/fire) represent the four quadrants of the sky—excluding the region of the circumpolar stars, the center or "imperial court." See also Wang Chong's chapter "The Nature of Things" in his *Lun Heng*, trans. Alfred Forke (reprint, New York: Paragon Book Gallery, 1962), 1: 106.

6. In the *TS* (p. 472), Kongming prudently sends Lu Su away: "Go back and help Zhou Yu.... If there is no wind after my incantation, show no surprise. Wait for the wind and act when it comes." He then gives the instructions himself. Lu Su's departure from the altar is assumed in the Mao version as we find him back with Zhou Yu in the next paragraph.

7. Bringing to bear the full force of the symbols of the day's and the year's renewal—east, sun, *yang*, natural greens—and suggesting at the same time the prevalence of the east wind over the west.

8. These light craft had various functions: liaison, communications, rescue, and evacuation of the skeleton crews of the fireboats.

9. The *TS* (pp. 475-76) has Zhou Yu add, "A better plan would be to ally ourselves with Cao Cao and capture Liu Bei and Kongming." Lu Su protests, "Cao Cao is ten times the problem Liu Bei is. If we don't defeat Cao first, we're done for."

10. Liu Qi, the elder son of Liu Biao, on Kongming's advice, had had himself assigned to Xiakou for his own safety. See chapters 39 and 40.

11. Liu Feng was Liu Xuande's adopted son; see chapter 36.

12. See chapters 25 and 26 on Lord Guan's debt to Cao Cao.

13. In his *Sanguo shihua* the historian Lü Simian summarizes the historical situation as follows:

The battle at Red Cliffs is the key to the history of the period, for if it had not occurred, or if Cao Cao had won, the empire would have been united and would never have split into three parts. This battle decided the question of unity or division....

Liu Xuande had aspirations to leadership and would not resign himself to playing second fiddle. After he and Cao Cao joined to defeat Lü Bu, he could easily have become an important and respected person in Cao's fold, but he would not do so—and even joined Dong Cheng in opposing Cao Cao.

After Cao Cao defeated him, Xuande threw in his lot with Yuan Shao, and after that with Liu Biao. The possibility of returning to Cao no longer existed.... Even if Xuande had wanted to, Cao Cao would never have accepted him, nor could it have been a sincere submission; so whatever the military situation, Xuande had to oppose Cao Cao to the bitter end.

Sun Qun's situation was altogether different.... His father, Sun Jian, and his brother, Sun Ce, had been allied with Yuan Shu. But Yuan Shu did not know how to reward Sun Ce for his many military achievements, and so Ce decided to conquer the Southland rather than continue serving Yuan Shu.... After Ce made the Southland his sphere of influence, Yuan Shu broke with him. At the time, Cao Cao did not have enough power to aim for the Southland, and since he was already at odds with Yuan Shu, he allied himself with Sun Ce and had the Emperor appoint him General Who Punishes Rebellion [*taoni*] and enfeoff him lord of Wu [*Wu hou*], In Jian An 5 [A. D. 200], when Cao Cao and Yuan Shao were locked in struggle, Sun Ce wanted to cross the river in force. But he was killed by Xu Gong's followers [see chap. 29]. According to his biography in the *Sanguozhi*, the intention of Sun Ce's northern expedition was to attack the capital [Xuchang] and take charge of the Emperor. Another interpretation is

that he wanted to defeat Chen Deng, whom Cao Cao had made governor of Guangling in hopes of establishing, through him, control over the Southland. But after Sun Ce's death Cao Cao unwisely transferred Chen Deng to Dongcheng, losing all leverage over the Sun clan.... After Sun Quan succeeded Sun Ce, he attacked the governor of Jiangxia, Huang Zu [loyal to Liu Biao], year after year, finally killing him in A. D. 208. This brought his influence to the southeast section of present-day Hubei [Jiangxia], Farther west he could have... been within striking distance of Jiangling and Xiangyang.

In the same year Cao Cao attacked Liu Biao [Jian An 13, 7th month]. The next month Biao died. His elder son, Liu Qi, replaced Huang Zu as governor of Jiangxia, and Biao's younger son, Zong, was installed as his successor. Who could stop Cao now? His army reached Xinye in the ninth month, and Liu Zong submitted. Xuande had fled from Xinye to Fan, on the north side of the River Han opposite Xiangyang, and went next to Dangyang with a mass of followers.... Cao Cao pursued him to Steepslope. Xuande then went to Xiakou to take refuge with Liu Qi.... Xuande had few options remaining when Sun Quan unexpectedly proposed joining forces against Cao Cao....

Why was Sun Quan determined to resist? And Zhou Yu? And Lu Su? Submission would have won Sun Quan handsome treatment from Cao Cao and spared the empire the catastrophe of division, as Pei Songzhi suggests in his note to Zhang Zhao's biography. Perhaps the answer lies in Lu Su's biography. Once, when Lu Su was thinking of leaving the Southland to return north, Zhou Yu dissuaded him by quoting an old prediction: "Those who replace the Han will come from the southeast." Zhou Yu then introduced Lu Su to Sun Quan. During the interview Su said to Quan, "The house of Han will not revive. Nor can Cao Cao be easily eliminated. Your survival, General, lies in establishing the Southland as one part of a tripartite realm and watching for openings and divisions in the others."

Translated, abridged and adapted from Lü Simian, *Sanguo shihua* (Shanghai: Kaiming shudian, 1943), pp. 69-77.

CHAPTER 50

1. This famous story is found in *Mencius*, 4B. 24; but also see *Zuo zhuan*, "Xianggong," year 14. Lord Guan is described in the TS as an avid student of the *Zuo zhuan*. See chap. 11 n. 6 and chap. 21 n. 4; see also chap. 25 n. 15.

In the Spring and Autumn period Yugongzhisi was dispatched by the kingdom of Wei to pursue and attack Zizhuoruzi. Both men were expert marksmen. Overtaken by Yugongzhisi, Zizhuoruzi was too ill to take up his bow and defend himself. Yugongzhisi said to him, "Yingongzhituo was my archery instructor, and you were his instructor. I don't have the heart to kill you with the skills that you yourself have passed on to us." So saying, he knocked the heads off his arrows, shot four shafts in each direction, and left.

2. See chapter 25. When Cao Cao had Lord Guan surrounded, Zhang Liao persuaded Lord Guan to submit to Cao by negotiating the "three conditions."

3. Lord Guan's release of Cao Cao is as pivotal to the story of the three brothers as the battle at Red Cliffs is to the historical narrative. Mao's introductory comment: "Some people have raised

the question, 'Why did Lord Guan spare Cao Cao at Huarong, when he was so eager to kill Cao Cao on the hunting field [chap. 20]? ' My answer is: Lord Guan wanted to kill Cao Cao at the hunt out of loyalty [but spared him rather than endanger the Emperor]; he spared Cao Cao at Huarong out of honor. If the difference between obedience and disobedience is not observed, there can be no loyalty; and if the difference between favor and injury is not understood, there can be no honor."

Looking at the situation strategically rather than ethically, it may be observed that Kongming had good reason for wanting Cao Cao spared. The rivalry between himself and Zhou Yu had reached the point of attempted murder (reflecting the rivalry between Sun Quan and Liu Xuande for Jingzhou). Cao Cao's death would have left Kongming and Xuande facing a far more powerful Zhou Yu. Cao Cao alive could inhibit the Southland's eagerness to dispose of ephemeral allies and assume control of Jingzhou. Moreover, preserving Cao Cao's relationship with Lord Guan kept a little door open to a Liu-Cao reconciliation.

CHAPTER 51

1. The You is a relatively small river (*jiang*) that meets the Yangzi at right angles from the west, slightly below the point at which the Yangzi turns south at Jiangling. The town there, still in northern hands, is called Youjiangkou or Youkou (*kou* means "juncture"). Since Liu Bei will be based there and laying his claim to the whole province, at the end of this chapter the town's name becomes Jingzhou in the Chinese text. In chapter 53 Youjiangkou is renamed Gong'an. For the sake of simplicity the town is usually called Gong'an in this translation; Jiangling is called Nanjun because it is the seat of Nanjun district; "Jingzhou" normally refers to the province.

2. The *TS* (p. 491) adds: "As the ancients said, 'The empire belongs to no one man but to all in the empire. '" This is the third of the six times the lines occur in the *TS* and are dropped from the Mao edition.

3. Mao (introductory note): "Xuande resented Kongming's allowing the south to attack Jingzhou first. Lu Su resented Zhou Yu's allowing Xuande to attack Jingzhou second. [And yet] Xuande refused to seize Jingzhou from either Liu Biao or Liu Zong, and Lu Su had no wish to see Xuande or Kongming killed."

4. Mao (introductory note): "Lü Bu opened the gates to Puyang to deceive Cao Cao [see chap. 12], Cao Ren opened the gates to Nanjun to deceive Zhou Yu. These deceptions are similar, but Cao Cao was lured into the city and burned; Zhou Yu was lured into the city and shot. Lü Bu's deception was created by a false surrender; Cao Ren's by a false evacuation. So there is that difference. Now, the man Lü Bu sent to convey his surrender finally made a genuine submission; and Cao Ren's evacuation proved in the end to be genuine, too. So there is a similarity within the difference. Truly ingenious incidents, ingenious writing!"

5. Mao (introductory note): " When a man of learning looks at the battle for Nanjun, he can only sigh at the uncertainties of warfare. After Cao Cao's great defeat at Red Cliffs he left a plan in the hands of Cao Ren, which caused Zhou Yu to be seriously wounded at Nanjun after his victory.

Eighty-three legions of northerners could not overcome Zhou Yu, but a single Cao Ren succeeded. The southern armies on the river and in the Black Forest never tasted defeat—until the battle for Nanjun. This is extraordinary. And what is even more remarkable is that from the vantage of previous events, the shooting of Huang Gai was a small frustration in a major victory; and the

shooting of Zhou Yu was similarly a small check after a big win. But from the vantage of succeeding events, Cao Cao's outwitting of Zhou Yu was a small victory after a major loss, while Cao Ren's loss of Nanjun was a major frustration after a minor victory. Such is the difficulty of anticipating outcomes: how can those who practice warfare give up after defeat or be complacent after victory? "

Cao Ren held out in Nanjun for one year. His evacuation occurred in the first month of A. D. 210.

CHAPTER 52

1. Mao: "For Xuande, reconciliation with Cao Cao became unthinkable the day he received the secret decree from Emperor Xian. But for the Southland leaders the possibility of Xuande's reconciling with Cao Cao is always of concern."

2. As mentioned before, the "nine imperial districts [*jun*]" of Jingzhou amount to seven according to the *HHS*: Nanyang, Nanjun, and Jiangxia are the three northern districts (i. e., above the Great River); Lingling and Wuling to the west, Guiyang and Changsha to the east, are the four southern districts. However, the *TS* annotator (p. 510), in accordance with a later Southland reorganization, lists nine *jun*: Jiangyang, Hanyang, Baling, Xiangyang, Jiangxia, Wuling, Guiyang, Lingling, and Changsha.

3. Mao: "Liu Biao was a mortal enemy of the Southland [since killing Sun Quan's father, Sun Jian], But Kongming can use Liu Biao as an expedient pretext to defer giving Jingzhou to the Southland because the Southland had earlier sent Lu Su to Jingzhou on a condolence call after the death of Liu Biao."

4. Yi Ji was the man who had warned Xuande to flee the banquet in Xiangyang, thus saving his life. See chapter 34.

5. Mao (introductory note): "Ma Liang's advice to place Liu Qi in charge of Jingzhou shows that many remembered [Qi's late father] Liu Biao and had chosen to follow Cao Cao only under duress. Thus, had Xuande seized control of the province that Biao entrusted to him, he would have lost the people's allegiance.... His reluctance to seize power was no miscalculation."

6. Lingling city was about two hundred kilometers south of Wuling; Wuling about sixty kilometers south of Nanjun. Wuling thus seems to have been closer. The boundary between Jingzhou and Yangzhou (the Han court's name for the Southland) was somewhat east of the Xiang River, and so Sun Quan would have been most likely to contest the conquest of Changsha and Guiyang, two districts lying in part to the east of the Xiang. When, in A. D. 215, Liu Bei and Sun Quan divided Jingzhou between them, the Xiang River became the boundary.

7. The *TS* (p. 500) dates this to Jian An 14, first month (A. D. 209).

8. Chinese with the same surname, though unrelated, are wont to say that they belonged to the same family five hundred years past.

9. Regarding Xuande's completion of the conquest of Jingzhou, Mao makes the following comment in his introductory note: "Everyone seems to remember that Zhou Yu's battles with Cao Ren enabled Kongming to capture the three northern districts of Jingzhou province. They forget that Sun Quan's battle at Hefei enabled Kongming to capture the four southern districts of the province."

At this point in the narrative, Cao Cao must hold Hefei to the east and the line west to Lujiang or be pushed north of the River Huai; on the west, he will enlarge his part of Jingzhou province, establishing new districts west of Nanyang to counter any threats from Ma Teng. On the

north, Sun Quan seeks to capture Hefei; on the south, he will extend his hold to include Jiaozhou (in A. D. 210).

CHAPTER 53

1. Mao (introductory note): "The author's method of composition is ingenious. Wei Yan's surrender of Changsha echoes an earlier incident while laying the basis for a later one. And Wei Yan's killing of Han Xuan echoes his struggle with Wen Ping at Xiangyang [chap. 41]. At Changsha, Kongming wants Wei Yan executed. Kongming's foresight will be borne out [in chap. 105 after Kongming's death] when Wei Yan betrays the kingdom of Shu-Han. In the sweep of the whole narrative, notwithstanding the complexity of men and events, the author ingeniously balances foreshadowings and fulfillments.... Truly, he conceived this work with immense calculation." Wei Yan becomes a principal character after Kongming's death.

2. It was from Gong'an, at the junction (*KOU*) of the Yangzi and You rivers, that Xuande launched the attack on Nanjun, which eventually led to the conquest of Jingzhou province.

3. The region east of Dongting Lake.

4. Meng Ben and Xia Yu were formidable warriors of the Warring States period.

CHAPTER 54

1. For the fourth time Mao Zonggang has excised the thematic phrase that appears in the *TS* (p. 514): "Since time immemorial the empire has belonged to no one man but to all in the empire."

2. Mao Zonggang has cut off the final phrase in the *TS*: "Are you trying to improve your position at another's expense?" Mao's slight alterations in this section and below tend to weaken the reader's sympathy for Lu Su's position and allay suspicion of Xuande's motives.

3. This speech runs differently in the *TS*: "... you will forfeit your credibility before the world, and I will [die without] hope of a decent burial...."

4. From the *Shi jing*, ode 1, "Guan ju."

5. Qiao was the father-in-law of Sun Quan's elder brother, Sun Ce, and Zhou Yu.

6. Mao: "Now we see the beauty of Kongming's sending five hundred guards: too few to defend Xuande, too many to serve as the groom's wedding party."

7. In the *PH*, the mother is a part of the conspiracy.

8. The temple's name is the conventional translation of *amrita*, the "a-mortal" medicine of Nirvana.

9. Literally, the earmarks of the dragon and phoenix and the heavenly sun.

CHAPTER 55

1. Feb. 12, A. D. 210; the first day of the new year in the lunar calendar is the first day of spring.

2. According to the biography of Fa Zheng in the *SGZ* (p. 960), Lady Sun serves her brother as a spy; she does not side with Liu Bei. However, in the *PH* and in the Yuan drama *Liang junshi ge jiang douzhi*, Lady Sun is loyal to her husband. See Liu Zhijian, *Sanguo yanyi xinlun* (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1985), pp. 97-100.

3. The remainder of this paragraph, including the verse, are not in the *TS*. The place-name

Liulangpu (bridegroom Liu shorepoint) is an obvious anachronism.

4. Mao (introductory note): "How great was Kongming's ingenuity! He 'borrows' Sun Quan's mother and Zhou Yu's father-in-law to help him arrange Xuande's wedding. Then he 'borrows' Sun Quan's sister, Lady Sun, to help Xuande return to Jingzhou. Having borrowed the help of these three people, what's wrong with his borrowing Jingzhou for a time?"

CHAPTER 56

1. Xuchang had been the Han capital since Cao Cao brought Emperor Xian there. Historically, it was called Xu or Xudu until Cao Pi, Cao Cao's son, changed the name after the end of the Han dynasty. See chapter 14, n. 9.

2. Mao: "Cao Cao had resented Xuande's acquisition of Xuzhou, but he arranged nonetheless for the Emperor to appoint Xuande protector of the province, his purpose being to turn Lü Bu against Xuande. In this instance Sun Quan resents Xuande's acquisition of Jingzhou, but petitions the Emperor to make Xuande protector of the province, his purpose being to turn Cao Cao against Xuande. These machinations have much in common."

3. Shu is the traditional name for the western region (roughly modern Sichuan) that Xuande will soon move to, just as Wu is the traditional name for the southern kingdom. Xichuan or "western rivers" is the geographic name for the region, just as Jiangdong or Jiangnan, "east or south of the Yangzi," is the geographic name for the southern region. As a Han province, the region was called Yizhou. Generally this translation uses "Riverlands" for Shu, Xichuan, and Yizhou. Silk of exceptional quality was produced there (or brought through there from India).

4. *Analects*, 8. 20: "Though King Wen [of Zhou] held two-thirds of a realm divided into three, he submissively served the reigning house of Shang. Zhou's virtue may be called ultimate." King Wen's son, King Wu, conquered the Shang by force and founded the Zhou house.

5. The source for this important speech (which the *TS* cites more fully) is the Wei Wu *gushi* under the twelfth month of Jian An 15 (A. D. 211). Both versions of *Three Kingdoms*, however, omit Cao's reference to his early exploits against the eunuchs and to the powerful gentry opponents who forced him to retire lest his family come to harm (a hint of this is retained in chap. 1). Also cut from this version is a series of historical allusions to upholders of the house of Zhou, allusions Cao Cao makes to bolster his claim to being a loyal servant of the Han with no ambition to create his own dynasty. Finally, both *Three Kingdoms* texts omit Cao's final relinquishment of three counties of twenty thousand households as his personal demesne, reserving only Wuping with ten thousand households, a measure Cao took to reduce criticism. See SGZ, pp. 32-34. In the following year the main portion of Cao's holdings went to his sons, and his son Cao Pi was made vice prime minister.

6. Mao: "The project, first mentioned in chapter 34 and finished only now, must have caused unimaginable hardship to the people as well as great financial injury. Cao Cao's edifice may be compared to the palace complex at Mei that Dong Zhuo built."

7. I. e., Jingzhou territory. Mao (introductory note): "Sun Quan recommends Liu Bei as protector of Jingzhou not in order to ally with Bei, but rather to make Cao Cao attack Bei out of fear and suspicion.... Cao Cao appoints Zhou Yu governor of Nanjun not out of fear of Zhou Yu, but rather out of fear of Liu Bei. He hopes that Zhou will attack Liu Bei.... Nominally giving Zhou Yu

what Liu Bei possesses, Cao really wants to recover Jingzhou for himself; and the Southland memorial petitioning that Liu Bei be appointed protector actually has the same end in view."

8. A shrewd move by Cao Cao. Sun Quan and Zhou Yu resented nothing so much as the loss of Nanjun to Xuande. The extent of the sacrifice the south made to wrest Nanjun from Cao Cao is described in the SGZ: "In Jian An 14 [A. D. 209] Zhou Yu and Cao Ren held their [opposed] positions for more than a year. A great many were killed or wounded. When Cao Ren fled the city, Sun Quan made Zhou Yu governor of Nanjun. Liu Bei proposed that the court make Sun Quan acting general of Chariots and Cavalry [i. e., second-ranking general under the *dajiangjun*] and protector of Xuzhou. Bei himself was protector of Jingzhou, stationed at Gong'an." See Sun Quan's biography, SGZ, p. 1118.

9. In the Spring and Autumn period the kingdom of Jin asked the kingdom of Yu to permit its troops to pass through in order to attack the kingdom of Guo. On their way back, the Jin army annexed Yu. See *Zuo zhuan*, "Xigong," year 5.

10. Mao: "For Zhou Yu's 'funeral. '"

11. Mao (introductory note): "Lu Su made three attempts to recover Jingzhou, and Kongming thrice turned him down. Kongming's first excuse was that Liu Qi [Liu Biao's legitimate heir] was still living; his second, that they were waiting until the Riverlands were taken; his third, that they couldn't bear to take over the Riverlands from a kinsman. Not only does his third excuse contradict his second, but his eventual takeover of the province will contradict his third excuse! These deceptions answer those of Sun Quan, who, after sending Lu Su to reclaim Jingzhou, turned around and petitioned the Emperor to make Liu Bei the protector of Jingzhou; and having done that, turned around again and sent Lu Su to demand the return of the province.

"Zhou Yu made three attempts to kill Liu Xuande: when he tried to lure him into provisioning the troops; when he lured him into the marriage; and when he pursued him to Liulangpu. Zhou Yu also made three attempts to kill Kongming: when he tried to get him to attack Cao Cao's grain depot, hoping Cao Cao would kill him; when he had him deliver one hundred thousand arrows, hoping Kongming would be executed according to military law; and when he pursued him to the Altar of the Seven Stars. Thus, it is only fitting that Kongming drove Zhou Yu to desperation three times; yet Kongming's retaliations were not so harsh [as the acts that prompted them]."

CHAPTER 57

1. Liu Feng and Guan Ping were the adopted sons of Xuande and Lord Guan, respectively.

2. Zhou Yu's musical genius is mentioned in his biography (see SGZ, p. 1265). His "friend" refers to Sun Ce, who was killed at an early age. The *TS* (p. 542) dates the death of Zhou Yu to Jian An 15, 12th month (early in A. D. 211).

3. Lu Su was probably recommended not for his military ability, but presumably because—unlike Zhou Yu's senior rival Cheng Pu—Lu Su represented Wu-Shu, (i. e., Southland-Riverlands) friendship.

4. Instead of this *Zhuangzi*-derived phrase, the *TS* (p. 543) reads *jihui fengyun* (a time of wind and cloud), an idiom for achieving preeminence in stormy times.

5. The *TS* has sixteen more characters here: "You were crowded by weak men, men who quailed [at the coming struggle with Cao Cao; but] though Zhang Zhao was timid and submissive, you

stood firm in rejecting accommodation [with Cao]."

6. In the *TS*, Pang Tong reaches for a sword but is prevented by Lu Su from killing Kongming. Afterward, Tong claims to have acted in jest. Contradictions between Pang Tong and the Liu Xuande group is a *TS* theme that the Mao edition partially suppresses. Mao (introductory note): "Kongming's unexpected meeting with Pang Tong after this trip is analogous to Pang Tong's unexpected meeting with Xu Shu [Shan Fu; see the end of chap. 47] after he has persuaded Cao Cao to chain his boats together. In the former case Xu Shu disappears from the narrative; in this case Pang Tong is retrieved after a prolonged absence."

7. For Pang Tong's role in the defeat of Cao Cao, see chapter 47. Lu Su is trying to strengthen the pro-Xuande group in the South by recommending Pang Tong.

8. Under Xuande, Pang Tong will hold a rank equal to Kongming's own, namely *junshi zhonglangjiang*, or director general and Imperial Corps commander. See *SGZ*, p. 954. At this point the title director general is anachronistic.

9. See chapter 35.

10. Dated by the *TS* (p. 547) to the fifth month of Jian An 16 (A. D. 211).

11. At this point the action shifts westward as Cao Cao sets his sights on the regions from which the Han dynasty first arose. Cao will approach from the north: he will take Guanzhong first, then Hanzhong, and finally the Riverlands—the latter an objective he shares with Sun Quan and Liu Bei. If he succeeds, he will have matched his consolidation of the north a decade earlier. In preparation for this, he reinforces at the key border cities: Xiangyang and Fancheng in the center; Hefei and Shouchun to the east. Meanwhile, Liu Bei has consolidated Jingzhou; Sun Quan, the Southland, especially the southern regions, Jiaozhou and Nanling (see *ZZTJ*, p. 2105). According to the histories, Cao's announced target for the western campaign was Zhang Lu, the independent ruler of Hanzhong (this point has been dropped in the novels), but his actual objective is the Ma clan of Liangzhou and Guanzhong. The key city of Guanzhong is Chang'an. Liangzhou or Xiliang (modern Gansu) is west and north of Guanzhong.

Liu Chunfan summarizes Ma Teng's career: "In A. D. 192 Ma Teng and Han Sui came to the assistance of the Emperor when he was [Dong Zhuo's prisoner] in Chang'an; for this the Emperor rewarded Teng with generalships. In A. D. 194 Teng planned to expand his power by attacking Chang'an, but, exposed and defeated, he returned to Liangzhou. In A. D. 202, after Yuan Shao's death, Shao's son Yuan Shang tried to ally with the southern khan in an attack on Hedong [one of the Capital Districts], To meet this threat Cao Cao came to the aid of Zhong Yao, who besieged the khan in Pingyang. Then Teng's son Ma Chao aided Zhong Yao by defeating Yuan Shang's generals. The khan surrendered and Teng received a generalship and a lordship. When Cao Cao attacked Jingzhou in A. D. 208, he elevated Ma Teng to commandant of the Guards in order to forestall a rebellion by bringing him to court. Hearing that Cao Cao was planning to attack Zhang Lu, Ma Chao and Han Sui [felt Guanzhong was at risk and] organized the Guanzhong commanders for the defense at Tong Pass." (Excerpted from Liu Chunfan, *Sanguo shihua* [Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1981], p. 113.)

The *Sanguo* novels, however, make an important change: they have Ma Teng called to Chang'an by Cao Cao after, not before, the defeat at Red Cliffs. The reason, presumably, is to preserve Teng's integrity as one of the signatories of the oath taken by Liu Xuande and the others in response to Emperor Xian's secret decree. For similar reasons *Three Kingdoms* chooses to ignore the

recorded fact that Ma Chao also held an appointment under Cao.

12. Dong Zhuo had been a general in Xiliang before he entered the capital and put Emperor Xian on the throne.

Mao (introductory note): "It is some thirty chapters since Dong Cheng and seven others swore a secret oath to uphold the Emperor against Cao Cao. Among them, only Ma Teng has been lost to view since he departed for Xiliang, leaving him virtually suspended as far as the reader is concerned. Suddenly he reappears in this chapter, and in a way that ingeniously fits together with Pang Tong's advice to Xu Shu [i. e., to request that Cao Cao assign him to hold Tong Pass against Ma Teng and thus escape the conflagration at Red Cliffs], Such a [tight] narrative style makes each chapter seem like a sentence."

13. In the service of Guang Wu, first emperor of the Eastern Han, Ma Yuan suppressed the revolt of the Trung sisters and established Chinese institutions in northern Vietnam in the year A. D. 43. The Southland court had ties to the local (Jiaozhou) leaders.

14. According to the *TS*, "because he was too poor to take a [proper i. e., Chinese] principal wife."

15. The next three paragraphs diverge markedly from the *TS* (p. 547), according to which Ma Teng and his two sons accept titles from Cao Cao and are about to begin their expedition against Liu Xuande when Emperor Xian summons Ma Teng to inform him that he has not sanctioned the expedition. The Emperor urges Ma Teng to live up to the example of his famous ancestor Ma Yuan, to remember the secret edict, and to turn his armed forces on Cao Cao, not Liu Xuande. Ma Teng accepts the Emperor's injunction eagerly and convinces his sons to help him support the house of Han.

The three paragraphs in the translation are not in the *TS*. The narratives come together again with Ma Teng serving wine to Cao's envoy, Huang Kui.

The *PH* (p. 103) renders the beginning of the Ma Teng episode as follows:

Cao Cao came to Chang'an and held court. He said to his officials, "I often think back to the situation two years ago, when I drove a poor and isolated Liu Bei into Xiakou. He had an army of five thousand then. Still, I couldn't capture him. Now he has Jingzhou with thirteen districts, fifty thousand gallant fighters, and thirty ferocious commanders. No one can stand against him. He has Zhuge, who is knowledgeable in civil matters, and commanders Guan and Zhang, who are knowledgeable about warfare. How can we deal with him?"

The high officer said to the prime minister: "The former emperor dismissed Ma Teng, his credentialed agent in the western region.... Teng has two sons, Chao, the eldest, and Dai, who are universally regarded as having great prowess and courage. Ma Teng can handle Zhuge; Ma Chao, Lord Guan; and Ma Dai, Zhang Fei."

On Cao Cao's petition the Emperor summoned Ma Teng to court. Ma Teng said to his son Chao, "You must know how the Ten Eunuchs seized power; and how Dong Zhuo did, too. Do you not realize that in Cao Cao's empire the power of life and death rests with him, and not Emperor Xian?"

16. See chapter 20.

17. The title was *silang*. He was either a full member of the Secretariat staff, after three

years probation, or a lieutenant to an Imperial Corps commander.

18. Li Jue and Guo Si were two of the four generals who rebelled after Dong Zhuo's death. See chapters 9 and 10.

CHAPTER 58

1. The historical texts do not have Kongming playing an instigatory role in the Cao Cao-Ma Chao conflict, which had causes of its own. At this time the historical Cao Cao was building his dynasty, reinforcing his defenses to the south and east, and turning his main attention to the west. See notes below in this chapter.

2. Dated by the *TS* to Jian An 16 (A. D. 211), the first ten days of the 7th month.

3. According to the "Wudi ji," Cao Cao began the year A. D. 211 by announcing a campaign against the independent ruler of Hanzhong, Zhang Lu. The news alarmed the Ma clan, who controlled Guanzhong, which Cao Cao had to cross to attack Zhang Lu. The Mas organized the local chieftains, and Tong Pass became their first point of defense. See *SGZ*, p. 34.

4. Zhong Yao (Yuanchang) from Changshe in Yingchuan was a general of considerable importance to the rise of Cao Cao, as these highlights from Zhong Yao's career, taken from his biography in the *SGZ* (p. 391), show:

When Li Jue and Guo Si were holding the Emperor captive in Chang'an, Zhong Yao helped the Emperor to escape. For this Cao Cao rewarded him well. Later Cao Cao sent Zhong Yao to Chang'an as privy counselor to perform the duties of commander of the Capital Districts. Zhong Yao had a free hand in the region, which he governed well with the cooperation of Ma Teng and Han Sui.

During the battle of Guandu, Zhong Yao provided Cao Cao with two thousand horses, a vital contribution. He continued to be the mainstay of Cao Cao's influence in the west, keeping the west from allying with Cao's main enemy at the time, the Yuan family.

Soon after the Cao established the state of Wei, Zhong Yao became prime minister.

5. Mao: "Pang De had slipped into town with the crowd."

6. Mao (introductory note): "On the eve of the battle at Red Cliffs, Xu Shu petitioned Cao Cao to send him away to guard Tong Pass. Yet here we find Zhong Yao but no Xu Shu. Why? He might have died. If not, though he pledged not to advise Cao Cao, he could hardly have abandoned his post if he were indeed at the pass. But since his whereabouts are unknown, it is likely that he retired to his village on the pretext of illness." The battle at Tong Pass is one of the decisive battles of the period.

7. The white battle gown indicated mourning for his father, Ma Teng.

8. Mao: "How dare Cao Cao wear red when Ma Chao was mourning his father? Cao Cao's stripping of his red battle gown is tantamount to putting on mourning for Ma Chao's sake!"

Mao's introductory note: "Both Cao Cao and Sun Quan attempted to avenge their fathers' deaths. But these attempts were private, not public; made for their fathers' sakes, not for their lords'. Ma Chao's attempt to avenge his father, however, was public, made for this father's sake and for his lord's. Inasmuch as Ma Teng died on account of [Emperor Xian's] secret decree, he was a loyal servant of the Han. And Ma Chao took up arms against Cao Cao because of his father's loyal sacrifice. That makes Chao a filial son and a loyal servant, despite the fact that histories of earlier times slander him as a traitor and a rebel.... [By contrast,] Cao Cao failed to kill his father's killer,

Tao Qian, and retreated because of Lü Bu's attack; Sun Quan, too, failed to kill his father's killer, Liu Biao, and even sent Lu Su on a condolence mission after Biao's death."

9. Mao (introductory note): "The gentleman-scholar may well conclude that Cao Cao's cutting his beard and discarding his surcoat was due to the almost magical influence of the Han Emperor's authority. Why so? If the decree concealed in the robe had not been communicated, the declaration of [the seven] loyalists would not have been made, Ma Teng would not have perished, and Ma Chao would not have come [to avenge him], [In this chain of causation] it was only because the Emperor pricked his finger [to write the decree] that Cao Cao cut his beard; it was only because the Emperor removed his robe [and gave it to Dong Cheng] that Cao Cao discarded his surcoat."

10. Mao (introductory note): "During the battle at Tong Pass, if the Sun and Liu camps had joined forces to attack the capital while Cao Cao was absent, it would have been a great day! Why was neither one willing to do it? The Southland was prepared for defense but not for offense. How could they take Xuchang if they couldn't subdue Hefei? Moreover, their goal was Jingzhou, not the north-central plains. As for Liu Bei, he was building up his forces to attack the Riverlands to the west.... Though his strategic objective lay to the north, Liu Bei did not dare make that move until the west was won."

Tong Pass is south of the juncture of the Wei and the Yellow rivers, north of the Hua Mountains. The pass was located in the Zhongnong district and was therefore under the jurisdiction of the commander of the Capital Districts, who tried to keep the River Wei region under his control as far west as possible. The irregular border between Liangzhou or Xiliang and Guanzhong was about 70 miles west and northwest of Chang'an. The safety of the western capital depended on control of the rivers north and west of the city.

11. They crossed slightly north of the Yellow River's right-angle turn east. Cao Cao sent two commanders across first; after he joined them, the combined force descended southward along the west bank of the Yellow River, thus getting behind Tong Pass, the gateway to Guanzhong from the east. This maneuver enabled Cao Cao to recapture Chang'an, the administrative center of Guanzhong. Cao Cao's operations show that he had acquired a better understanding of river warfare since Red Cliffs.

12. The rivers are the Wei and the Yellow River. The Wei flows east and meets the south-flowing Yellow River as it turns ninety degrees east. It is because the Yellow River makes a right-angle turn that the text speaks of an east and west as well as a north and south bank. The name Wei seems to apply slightly east of the juncture, however. See Liu Chunfan, *Sanguo shihua*, p. 114, for a map of the battle. Also see Ren Zhaokun and Shen Bojun, "Shitan *Sanguo yanyi* de dili cuowu," in *XK* 1: 285-94, for a discussion of certain geographical errors in the novel.

13. The office of commandant for Military Standards was held by Cao Cao himself under Emperor Ling. The commandant's principal function was army training and discipline.

14. Mao (introductory note): "While Zhou Yu lived, the houses of Sun and Liu were at odds; when Zhou Yu died, the two houses cooperated. When Cao Cao was domestically occupied, the houses of Sun and Liu were at odds; when Cao Cao threatened [one or the other], the two houses cooperated. This is the key to the relations between the Sun and the Liu."

1. Mao (introductory note): "Military science calls for great ingenuity in dividing one's enemies. Two are far easier to overcome than one, for two can be split... but the techniques are manifold. After the conversation on horseback, the letter aroused suspicion. And the letter made the conversation appear more suspicious. Dividing one's enemies requires a foundation. Before Han Sui executed Cao Cao's messenger there was the first letter [which he showed to Ma Chao], which made the second letter more suspicious. Then, when Han and Ma offered Cao Cao territory if he would end the war, a letter was sent to Cao, and Cao sent one back—another source of suspicion. The ways in which Cao Cao sowed suspicion in Ma Chao's mind show how deeply he grasped the subtleties of the art of dividing one's enemies."

2. According to the *TS* (p. 565), Yang Qiu said, "Ma Teng rebelled against the dynasty and has been punished as he deserved. My lord, do you wish to make common cause with rebels?" Mao Zonggang has eliminated this accusation of treason, perhaps because it casts Cao Cao in a loyalist light; the cut also spares the reputation of Ma Chao, who will join the camp of Liu Xuande.

3. Mao (introductory note): "The genius of Zhou Yu's deception of Jiang Gan [chap. 45] lay in his use of dark night. In dividing Han Sui and Ma Chao, Cao Cao's genius lay in his use of broad daylight. The genius of Zhou Yu's letter deceiving Jiang Gan lay in its clarity; the genius of Cao Cao's letter, in its vagueness. When Zhou Yu met Jiang Gan, his master stroke was his saying what was most essential [i. e., 'Do not allude to the military situation']. When Cao Cao met Han Sui on horseback, the master stroke lay in his saying what was most inconsequential."

4. Mao (introductory note): "More than fifty chapters earlier [chap. 1] Zhang Jue was deluding the masses with his subversive [Taoist] doctrine. Seemingly from nowhere, Zhang Lu emerges in this chapter as his counterpart. Zhang Jue had two brothers; Zhang Lu had a father and grandfather. Zhang Jue had such names and titles as 'Taoists of the millennium, ' 'great and worthy leader. ' Zhang Lu used titles like 'lord-preceptor, ' 'libationer, ' and 'ghost squad. ' It is almost as if they were two of a kind, albeit unintentionally. It seems that the Yellow Scarves were the prelude to Liu Bei's gathering in the peach garden; and Zhang Lu, the starting point for Liu Bei's entrance into the Riverlands. This is an important conjunction in the structure of the work as a whole."

5. Liu Yan, as governor of Youzhou, issued the call for volunteers with which Liu Xuande's career began (chap. 1). Liu Yan's biography is often cited for illustrating the shift from the system of imperial inspectors, who represented the court, to provincial protectors, who, though formally appointed, exercised independent power. According to the "Shu shu," after an impressive bureaucratic career Liu Yan spoke out against the corruption of court-appointed local officials and recommended a reliable system of regional protectors. He requested assignment to Jiaozhou (northern Vietnam and southern Guangdong-Guangxi) to get away from the turmoil of the age; but before completing the journey, he was persuaded to head for Yizhou (the Riverlands). There he replaced the imperial inspector and befriended the man who had suppressed the local Yellow Scarves (led by Ma Xiang, self-styled Son of Heaven). Yan tolerated the Ghost's Way sect founded by Zhang Lu's mother, and sent Lu to rule Hanzhong after appointing him Captain Who Monitors Loyalty.

Liu Yan participated in an abortive plot against the Emperor when the Emperor was taken to Chang'an. Two of his sons, Fan and Dan, lost their lives in the incident. Haunted by grief and misfortune, Liu Yan died. His son Zhang, however, remained loyal to Emperor Xian and was made imperial inspector of Yizhou. See *SGZ*, pp. 865-67.

1. The *TS* (p. 569) adds here: "In the south he has advanced to the Yangzi and Han rivers; in the north, to the provinces of You and Yan."
2. This is a key sentence.
3. Sima Xiangru was a noted poet and man of letters of the Western Han. Ma Yuan was the military hero (Tamer of the Deep) who subdued the Viet (Yue) region during the Eastern Han. Zhang Ji was a famed physician of the Eastern Han.
4. Shu, the name of the western region that is modern Sichuan, is a true homophone for *shu*, "rodent."
5. *TS* (p. 572): "... you might antagonize the *man yi* [southern 'barbarians']. Only well-informed people will know of the envoy's rudeness. Others will say Your Excellency killed him because his gifts were considered inadequate."
6. "Before you resume your journey home," as the *TS* has it. Kongming's purpose was to give friendly service to the traveler on his way, not to welcome him too obviously.
7. I. e., Kongming and Pang Tong. This is the first time the two Taoist sages are found together.
8. *TS* (p. 573): "At the banquet [Xuande, Kongming, and Pang Tong] made no reference to the Riverlands, to the condition of Inspector Liu Zhang, or to the type and character of the men found there. Zhang Song addressed himself to whatever came up as he waited for Xuande to broach the subject [uppermost in his mind]. But his hosts never alluded to it."
9. *TS* (p. 574): "'The empire belongs to no one man but to all in the empire. He who has virtue shall possess it.'" This motif is dropped here for the fifth time by Mao Zonggang.
10. Zhang Song, lieutenant inspector to Imperial Inspector Liu Zhang, had little confidence in Liu Zhang's ability to govern the province. Sima Guang (*ZZTJ*, p. 2109) says that the two men conspired to bring in Liu Xuande to replace Liu Zhang. Fa Zheng's biography (*SGZ*, p. 957) confirms this view. However, the historical basis for Fa Zheng's overture toward Liu Bei goes back three years to the time of Red Cliffs. Zhang Song was rebuffed by Cao Cao shortly before the great battle. After Cao Cao's defeat, Zhang Song recommended to Liu Zhang an alliance with Liu Bei instead of Cao Cao. Luo Guanzhong has advanced the incident more than three years.
11. The *TS* (p. 577) includes a poem that ends: "Had Liu Zhang heeded this advice, / He could have saved his province from that [other] Liu."
12. *TS* (p. 578) dates this to Jian An 16, 12th month (late January or February of A. D. 212).
13. Founders of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, respectively; according to tradition, each overthrew a tyrant before establishing the new regime.
14. The *TS* adds here: "Throughout history the realm for the most part has been won by expedience [*quan* and *bian*] but kept by benevolence and righteousness [*ren* and *yi*]."

CHAPTER 61

1. The *TS* (p. 583) dates the meeting to the first month of spring, Jian An 17 (A. D. 212). According to Liu Xuande's biography in the *SGZ*, this is the essence of the situation: Riverlands Inspector Liu Zhang invited Xuande's help in countering the threat from Zhang Lu. The Zhan Song-Fa Zheng faction had no faith in their inspector, however, and wanted Xuande to rule the province. When Xuande entered the Riverlands, the inspector met him at Fu and provided him with thirty thousand men and ample military supplies. Xuande stationed himself at Jiameng but instead of attacking Zhang Lu, he cultivated the loyalties of the local people. Thus, he became a threat to Liu Zhang even while defending him from Zhang Lu.

2. On the significance of Xuande's allusion to Hongmen, see chap. 21, n. 10.

3. According to the account in the *PH* (p. 110), Liu Zhang accuses Zhang Song and Fa Zheng of plotting to help deliver his province into the hands of Xuande. Zhang Song replies, "My lord, have you not heard that Sun Quan is plotting to gain the Riverlands, and Cao Cao, too, and Zhang Lu and Ma Chao? Have you not heard that the imperial uncle's humane virtue has won the respect of all Riverlanders and that he is a member of the royal family? If he came to possess your province, would he deny you a governorship to which you might comfortably retire?" Outraged by this speech, Liu Zhang summons various commanders to drive Xuande from place to place. He tries to go to Jiameng Pass but is blocked.

4. The city was called Moling in the Qin-Han period; Sun Quan changed the name to Jianye in A. D. 212; the name was changed to Jiankang during the Jin dynasty. The site is close to modern Nanking. Sun Quan was trying to maintain positions north of the Yangzi; Cao Cao was trying to maintain positions south of the Huai. Hefei, in Jiujiang district, was about midway between the two rivers. South of Hefei was the great lake (*hu*) called Chao Hu. The Ruxu linked the south end of the lake to the Yangzi.

5. This translation is based on Ban Gu, *Po Hu T'ung*, trans. Tjan Tjoe Som (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1949-52), pp. 25-27; and on Pan Ku [Ban Gu], *History of the Former Han Dynasty*, trans. Homer H. Dubs (Baltimore: The Waverly Press, 1938-55), 3: 208-11. The ceremony took place in mid-June A. D. 213. See chapter 91 n. 16.

6. Zhang Liang, lord of Liu, (the place-name, not the surname), was Han Gao Zu's principal adviser. Kongming is usually compared to him. Zhang Liang helped ensure the succession of Emperor Hui to Gao Zu's throne and thus preserved the dynasty from the threat of usurpation by the Lü clan. Xun Wenruo by contrast had encouraged Cao Cao's imperial ambition at earlier times. Thus, as Mao Zonggang observes, Xun Wenruo was in no position to protest Cao Cao's assumption of the Nine Dignities. On the other hand, Sima Guang, author of the *ZZTJ* (p. 2115), esteems Xun Wenruo and likens him to Guan Zhong, the sage counselor of Duke Huan of Qi during the Spring and Autumn period.

CHAPTER 62

1. Qingni was the base for Lord Guan's defense of Jingzhou. The letter, given in the First Ruler's biography (*SGZ*, p. 881), says in part: "Lord Cao is attacking Wu [the Southland], a grave threat. Also, Yue Jin is at Qingni opposing Guan Yu [Lord Guan]. If I do not go to rescue [Guan] Yu, [Yue] Jin will overwhelm him, and then turn and invade this province—a much greater threat

than [Zhang] Lu." The time was January A. D. 213.

2. Zhang Su represents not only loyalty to Liu Zhang but also the policy of preserving ties with Cao Cao. Liu Zhang held a nominal appointment (General Who Inspires Awe) from the Han throne thanks to Cao Cao's petition. According to the *SGZ* (p. 882, under Jian An 17): "The breach between Liu Zhang and Liu Bei opened with Zhang Su's disclosure of the plot."

3. Dongchuan (East Rivers) is a Tang, not a Han name; it refers to Hanzhong. Xichuan (West Rivers), a Han name, is one of the terms translated Riverlands. Xichuan enlarged by Dongchuan constitutes a "greater Riverlands," that is, the Yizhou of the Han period. The classic statement of Hanzhong's strategic importance was made to Kongming by Yang Hong: "Hanzhong is the throat of Yizhou, the critical junction on which the province's survival depends. Without Hanzhong there is no Shu [i. e., Xichuan]" ; see *SGZ*, p. 1013. Zhang Lu severed Hanzhong from Yizhou, killed the Han officers, and made it an independent realm. Zhang Lu's threat to Xichuan originally prompted Liu Zhang to solicit Xuande's help. On the strategic virtues and agricultural productivity of Hanzhong, see Guo Qinghua, "Zhuge Liang tunbing Hanzhong dui beifa de yi," in Chengdushi Zhuge Liang yanjiuhui, ed., *Zhuge Liang yanjiu* (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1985), pp. 250-58.

4. Mao (introductory note): " Xuande's first home base was Xuzhou [which he received from its governor, Tao Qian]; but he lost it to Lü Bu, after which Cao Cao seized it. Xuande's second base was Jingzhou; Cao Cao lost it to him, but Sun Quan demanded it from him. The Riverlands was Xuande's true home.

"The reason he accepted Xuzhou from Tao Qian's hands but declined Jingzhou from Liu Biao's hands is because he had learned his lesson from losing Xuzhou after having gained it....

"The reason Xuande refused to seize a kinsman's realm in Jingzhou but finally did so in the Riverlands is because he had learned his lesson from criticism of his slowness to act in Jingzhou."

CHAPTER 63

1. The turtledove, it was thought, drove his mate away in rain and called her home when the weather cleared. The lines seem to mean that Pang Tong was as well known in his hometown as the turtledove's homing call, and suggest the townsmen's wish for the hero's return when the storms of war had cleared. Pang Tong died in the summer of A. D. 214.

2. The Sky Dog (*tiangou*) is described in Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), p. 93: "... it shatters armies and kills commanders. '... [They] were explosive meteors which struck the earth or rushed through the lower atmosphere as fire-balls."

3. Pang Tong's death, the result of an apparently accidental change of horses and routes, may not have been unwelcome to Xuande and Kongming. See Ling Ying, *Sanguo yanyi zongheng tan* (Hong Kong: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), pp. 148-59.

4. Schafer, *Pacing the Void*, p. 93: "There was also a constellation called 'Dog of Heaven,' in Cancer."

5. Mao (introductory note): "When Kongming first unveiled his strategy to Xuande, he urged alliance with Sun Quan as a precondition for conquering the north. This is all he was saying to Lord Guan. But now that Lady Sun has returned to the Southland, ending the Sun-Liu alliance, there is a likelihood of a Sun-Cao alliance. At the battle of Ruxu, Sun Quan did not call on Xuande for

help but only asked Cao Cao to withdraw. Here lay the potential for an alliance of the Southland with the north. Division between Liu and Sun was not nearly so great a concern as a Cao-Sun alliance. Hence, it was not enough for Lord Guan to repel Cao Cao. If he did not preserve harmony with the south, how would he repel Cao Cao?"

6. The last line literally reads: "Where offerings of wine, chicken, and pig make every day a spring day." Mao (introductory note): "Zhang Fei performed many deeds in his life to gladden men's hearts. He whipped the inspector; he denounced Lü Bu; he drove Cao Cao back with his powerful voice at Steepslope; he rescued Ah Dou from Lady Sun. But none of these acts of courage compares with the shrewdness he displayed in capturing Yan Yan and then releasing him under obligation... It is because his association with Kongming has transformed his crude and arrogant features."

CHAPTER 64

1. Here the *TS* (p. 613) reads: "Xuande had the boundless blessing that only a Son of Heaven enjoys." Mao's edition does not use this phrase, but it follows the *TS* in beginning to refer to Xuande's forces as Han forces. In a note Mao points out that this miraculous rescue of Xuande was the result of Zhang Fei's winning the assistance of Yan Yan and moving quickly through the Riverlands strongpoints. According to Pang Tong's biography, Tong died in the siege at Luoxian; see *SGZ*, p. 956.

2. Mao (introductory note): "Zhang Ren killed Pang Tong in an ambush; Kongming captures Zhang Ren in an ambush."

3. The text has Waishui (outer water), the name for the Great River inside the Riverlands. Deyang is on the River Fu.

4. Mianzhu is north of Chengdu; Luoxian stands halfway between. Xuande must eliminate the threat from the rear before taking the capital.

5. Ma Chao's defeat and flight to the Qiang in Liangzhou is described in chapter 59. The province of Liangzhou stretches from Dunhuang on its northwest end to the three districts of Longxi, Tianshui, and Anding on its southeast.

6. "Remote" peoples are non-Han peoples.

CHAPTER 65

1. Dongchuan is equivalent to Hanzhong.

2. This was an early title granted Liu Bei by Emperor Xian on Cao Cao's recommendation.

3. Ma Teng, Chao's father, was a co-conspirator with Xuande in the attempted coup against Cao Cao. See chapter 20.

4. Emperor Ling had appointed Liu Yan protector of Yizhou in Zhong Ping 5 (A. D. 188). Liu Zhang's surrender to Xuande took place in A. D. 214.

5. This is the first use of *Xianzhu* (first ruler) in reference to Xuande; it becomes his final title in the *SGZ*. His son, Liu Shan (Ah Dou), is called Second Emperor (*houzhu*) in this translation.

6. See *ZZTJ*, p. 2129. Liu Ba was a longstanding opponent of Xuande.

7. Gong'an was Xuande's seat of government in Jingzhou.

8. Hanshou was the fief with which Cao Cao had honored Lord Guan when he resided with Cao (see chap. 26).

9. Mao (introductory note): "When Xuande was in flight with no home base, he could not bear to abandon the common people. But the moment he conquered the Riverlands, he wanted to parcel out the people's lands to reward his deserving followers. Here Zhao Zilong's protest was indispensable. He was a warrior who loved the people and, accordingly, the government. Thus, he did not revert to love of his family. Previously, when he conquered Guiyang, an offer of marriage did not tempt him. Now, entering the Riverlands, he does not let property affect his thinking. Such was the manner of the great ministers of old. How can the phrase 'famous general' do full justice to him?"

10. The three provisions were: "Those who kill shall die; those who injure and steal must redeem their offense; all other laws are rescinded."

11. Ying Bu and Peng Yue were two of Han Gao Zu's fiercest warriors. The letter is dated in the *TS* (p. 631) to Jian An 19 (A. D. 214), 7th month.

CHAPTER 66

1. Mao: "Having failed to seize Ah Dou in order to use him to control Xuande, the southerners now try to borrow Zhuge Jin in order to control his younger brother Liang."

2. In the *TS* (p. 632) Xuande makes a slightly different reply to Zhuge Jin: "It was Lord Sun's intention to take Jingzhou from the beginning. And I had every intention of returning it. But then he went ahead and spirited away my wife. When he proved so hostile and undependable, what could be left of my part of the relationship? You want war? Bring on your armies!"

3. Mao: "Xuande and Kongming knew this full well but said nothing. Lord Guan blurts it right out."

4. The *TS* adds: "My lord, since your youth you have read the Confucian philosophers, whose doctrine of the five constants—humanity, honor, courtesy, knowledge, and trustworthiness—you have mastered, save the fifth,"

5. *TS*: "Now that you have taken possession of the Riverlands, you want to cut off and assimilate Jingzhou. An ordinary man could not bear to do this, much less a leader of men. Such greedy and dishonorable deeds will lead to disaster."

6. Lord Guan's performance at the banquet goes back to a well-known Yuan drama, *Dan dao hui* translated by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang as *Lord Guan Goes to the Feast in Selected Plays of Kuan Han-ching* (Shanghai: New Art and Literature Publishing House, 1958), pp. 178-204. This fictional interlude, which Luo Guanzhong has adapted, transforms the historical fact that Liu Bei visited Guan and that Bei's troops fought Sun Quan's after Lord Guan expelled the administrators. In this particular case the *PH* is closer to the historical record; see p. 117.

Prior to these events of A. D. 214-15 Sun Quan had wanted to invade the Riverlands himself and "unify the south." Liu Bei had blocked Sun Quan's initiative, saying that an attack on the Riverlands might well shame him into defending his kinsman Liu Zhang, inspector of the Riverlands; see chapter 56. It is thus understandable that Liu Bei's coup in the Riverlands outraged Sun Quan, who called Bei a "cunning devil." See *ZZTJ*, pp. 2135 *et seq.*

It is unlikely that either Liu Bei or Sun Quan could have conquered the Riverlands by military means alone. Liu Bei succeeded only through the aid of the disaffected Riverlands official Fa Zheng, to whom he always felt indebted.

7. Lin Xiangru, representing the weaker king of Zhao, thwarted the bullying tactics of the king of

Qin at the Mianchi conference in 279 B. C.

8. Chief of the Imperial Secretariat (*zhongshuling*) was the highest governmental office in Cao Cao's reorganized bureaucracy.

9. Xun Wenruo had opposed Cao Cao's assumption of the title lord patriarch of Wei and his acceptance of the Nine Dignities. See chapter 61.

10. The Pepper Chamber was her living quarters. Aromatic spices covered the walls. The Emperor was arrested in January of A. D. 215.

11. Mao's introductory note raises for the first time the issue of reincarnation of figures from the first Han reign period: "When we consider Cao Cao's beating the Empress to death, it seems an act almost without precedent. There are some who explain it as follows: 'Emperor Xian is the reincarnation of the Supreme Ancestor (Han Gao Zu); Empress Fu, of Empress Lü; Cao Cao, of Han Xin; Cao Cao's daughter, of Qi Ji; Hua Xin, of Ru Yi, prince of Zhao.' I cry out: can it be true?" The *PH* opens with a reincarnation fable that interprets the division of the Han into three kingdoms as punishment for the first Han emperor's liquidation of his comrades-in-arms during the wars of conquest preceding the establishment of the dynasty.

CHAPTER 67

1. Nanzheng, sometimes called Hanzhong, was the key city of Hanzhong (the eastern Riverlands). It stood about two-fifths of the way from Chang'an to Chengdu on a southwest line. Yangping Pass is due west of Nanzheng.

2. Mao: "When Xuande wanted to win Ma Chao over, Kongming thought of bribing Yang Song; and when Cao Cao wanted to win Pang De over, Jia Xu thought of bribing Yang Song. His greed was widely known abroad; only Zhang Lu was unaware of it. Alas!"

3. First spoken by the founding emperor of the Eastern Han, the phrase means: "We control both sides of the Long Mountains and the reach of the River Wei; why take the risk of the long drive southward against the capital of the Riverlands, Chengdu?" Mao (introductory note): "Cao Cao had three reasons for caution. First, when he defeated Yuan Shao and absorbed his army, he made the southern march with an exhausted, unintegrated force; the result was the defeat at Red Cliffs. A campaign against the inaccessible Riverlands with the newly absorbed Hanzhong army could similarly end in failure. Second, such a campaign might enable Jingzhou and the Southland to unite in attacking his northern heartland. Third, he still feared Kongming's tactical ability, [remembering] times at [Bowang and Xinye] when Kongming thwarted his drive with fire."

4. Mao: "This time the offer is real."

5. Mao: "The first time no one was sent to inform Lord Guan, making it clear that Xuande and Kongming were trifling with Zhuge Jin."

6. See chapter 34. The Southland defeat at Hefei took place in October, A. D. 215.

7. According to the *ZZTJ* entry for the autumn of Jian An 20 (A. D. 215), the political situation in Chengdu was very unstable after Liu Bei's coup. Sima Yi and Liu Ye strenuously urged Cao Cao to exploit the situation by invading the Riverlands. Cao hesitated in Longxi for seven days; then he asked Liu Ye's view once again. Liu Ye replied, "Things there are a little more stable now; an attack would not be appropriate." See p. 2140.

More than thirty years earlier, Longxi had been an independent kingdom under Song Jian. He

titled himself the King from Heshou (the western end of the Yellow River) Who Will Pacify the Han. Song Jian instituted his own calendar and created his own officials. In the tenth month of Jian An 19 (A. D. 214) Xiahou Yuan put Song Jian's capital, Fuhan, to the sword, executed Song Jian, and pacified Liangzhou (SGZ, p. 44). Cao Cao put domestic business ahead of further conquest at this point. The next entry in the "Wudi ji" of the SGZ describes the arrest and execution of Lady Fu and her relatives.

CHAPTER 68

1. An earlier rescue of Sun Quan by Zhou Tai is described in chapter 15. According to the ZZTJ (p. 2149), other commanders would not obey Zhou Tai because of his humble origins; hence Sun Quan's act here was a public affirmation of Zhou Tai's authority.

2. Cao Cao defended Hefei in the winter of Jian An 21 (a. d. 216-17). The fighting ended in the third month of Jian An 22 when Sun Quan nominally acknowledged Cao Cao as his suzerain. This relationship lasted until a. d. 222 when Sun Quan declared his own reign title, Huang Wu.

3. Xun Wenruo lost his life for opposing Cao's advancement to Weigong (lord patriarch of Wei). His nephew Xun You lost his life for opposing Cao's advancement to Weiwang (king of Wei). A *wang* was an independent dynast who named an heir. Hence he was a potential emperor.

4. See Rafe de Crespigny, *The Last of the Han*, Oriental Monograph Series, no. 9 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1969), pp. 488-89 n. 2: "The ceremonial cap was rather like a mortarboard... rounded at the front, straight at the back, and longer than it was wide. The twelve strands of white jade beads, hung six at the front and six at the back, were the prerogative of the emperor. High nobility and the three Dukes (i. e., Elders) had seven strands and the bands were green."

Cao Cao became king in the fifth month of Jian An 21; the ceremonial cap was conferred in the tenth month of the next year.

5. Mao: "Cao Cao's declaration that he is king of Wei is a harbinger that a son of his will usurp the dynasty; that is why a discussion of his progeny occurs here."

By Han law the title of *wang* (king or prince) was awarded only to those with the surname Liu; others were enfeoffed as *hou* (lord). Cao Cao's previous title of *gong* (lord patriarch) was not a typical Han title. Only one man had taken it before: Wang Mang, the usurper of the Western Han.

In the PH, Cao Cao's ascension to king of Wei touches off consequences in the rival kingdoms. Sun Quan declares himself king of Wu, and Kongming urges Xuande to declare himself king of Hanzhong. Since the position of king necessitates the naming of an heir apparent, Liu Bei asks Kongming whether Liu Feng (his adopted son) or Liu Shan (Ah Dou, son of the late Lady Gan) should be named his successor. Kongming refuses to answer and remains at home on the pretext of illness. Pressed by Liu Bei, Kongming tells him to put the question to Lord Guan in Jingzhou (p. 123). Lord Guan—Kongming obviously knows—has had conflicts with Liu Feng.

6. Cao Pi will found the Wei dynasty in a. d. 220. Cao Zhi is the author of the "Tongque tai fu," or "Bronze Bird Tower Rhapsody" (see chap. 44).

7. Imperial Mentor is a position that Kong Rong once held.

8. Mao: "It is said nowadays that Liu Bei established his patrimony by tearful appeals, forgetting that the same is true of Cao Pi."

9. Both Yuan Shao and Liu Biao had come to grief by denying the claim of the eldest.

10. Five years earlier, according to the "Wudi ji" (SGZ, p. 34), "the Son of Heaven named Cao Cao's eldest son, Cao Pi, Imperial Commander for the Empire's Highest Officials [*Wuguan zhonglangjiang*] with an appointed staff, and a lieutenant to the prime minister [i. e., Cao Cao]."

11. Mao suggests that this was a reminder of the empty box that Cao Cao had sent to Xun Wenruo as a suggestion that he take his life.

12. Emei Mountain was a center of occult arts.

13. Zuo Ci is referring to the *dun jia*, "evading stems" or "stems (and branches) to avoid." A discussion of the subject and a translation of Zuo Ci's biography may be found in Kenneth J. Dewoskin, *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

Zuo Ci says "Your Highness has reached the highest ministerial office" to suggest that Cao Cao retire. Cao Cao's original statement, "As prime minister, I have gone as high as an imperial servant can go," was made to explain why he could not retire. The statement was made in Jian An 15 (A. D. 210). See Pei Songzhi's excerpt from the *Wei Wu gushi*, SGZ, pp. 32-33. On that occasion Cao Ca also argued that his protection of the Han emperor Xian prevented others from unlawfully declaring themselves emperor or king.

Mao: "At the Bronze Bird Tower Cao Cao once told his officials that he would have relinquished his powers but for fear of harm. By following Zuo Ci he could have had his wish."

14. Mao: "Su Dongpo [in his "Second Red Cliffs Rhapsody"] mentions catching one. Can the sight of the fish remind Cao Cao of the events at Red Cliffs?"

15. The *TS* (p. 661) has "jade rat" rather "earth rat." Presumably, the "golden tiger" is a tower by that name that Cao Cao had built in the seventh month of Jian An 18 (A. D. 213). Mao sees this as an omen of Cao Cao's death in the first month of the *zi* (rat) year (see chap. 78).

CHAPTER 69

1. A craft for predicting good or ill fortune. According to the *SJ*, "Tian guan shu," the wind could be used to predict agricultural and meteorological events.

2. I. e., physiognomizing. Xu Zhi goes on to describe Guan Lu's powers for several pages.

3. Mao: "If this account made Cao Cao think of the murders of the concubine Dong and Empress Fu, his heart must have shivered."

4. Mao: "Cao's own ailment."

5. For the biography of Guan Lu, see Kenneth J. Dewoskin, *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 91.

6. See chapters 20 and 21.

7. The conspiracy of Geng Ji and Huang Wei envisioned bringing in Lord Guan, who was in a strong position at this time. See *ZZTJ*, p. 2154. The revolt was crushed in the beginning of A. D. 218.

8. "Titled lordship" is the Chinese (*minghao*) *hou jue*; "lords within the passes" is the Chinese *guan zhong hou*; "honorary lords" is the Chinese *guan nei* or *wai hou*; and "court retainers" is the Chinese *daifu*. According to the *Wei shu* (cited by Pei Songzhi in *SGZ*, p. 46), "none of these enjoyed land rent. Taken together with the traditional *lie hou* and *guan nei hou*, there were now six major orders [of lordship]." Pei Songzhi's own note says, "It would seem that empty enfeoffment began at this time." This entry is made under the tenth month of Jian An 20 (A. D. 215).

9. Nanzheng, in the extreme west of greater Hanzhong, was the capital of Hanzhong district, one of the three districts into which Cao Cao divided greater Hanzhong (or the Hanzhong region) after Zhang Lu's surrender. The other two districts, from west to east, were Xicheng and Shangyong. Xicheng (later called Weixing) and Shangyong became western districts of Jingzhou during the next (Wei) dynasty. When Zhang Lu held greater Hanzhong, he changed Nanzheng's name to Hanning. On assuming control of the area, Cao Cao changed the name back. Baxi stands midway between Nanzheng and Chengdu on a southwest line. The administrative center of Baxi was Langzhong.

CHAPTER 70

1. Mao (introductory note): "The Zhang Fei of this day is not the Zhang Fei who lost Xuzhou [to Lü Bu, chap. 14] through drunkenness. They are virtually two different men. But the Zhang Fei who outwitted Zhang He is the Zhang Fei who outwitted Yan Yan. When he outwitted Yan Yan, there were two Zhang Feis, [a real and a false,] one behind the woods, one in front. When he outwitted Zhang He, there were again two Zhang Feis... almost as if, like Zuo Ci, he could materialize outside of himself. Is this his transcendence in wine?"

2. Dingjun Mountain is a key point because it protects Nanzheng (i. e., Hanzhong) from the west. It lies east of the Yangping passes. To its northeast is Willow Basket Gorge; and farther east, Ye Gorge. Kongming was buried, at his request, at Dingjun (Outpost) Mountain.

CHAPTER 71

1. Liu Bei had appointed Zhang Fei governor of Baxi; his main force was based in Langzhong county, on the western branch of the Han River.

With a truce in place between Cao Cao and Sun Quan, the south is calm and the focus of military action is in the northwest, specifically Hanzhong district, named for the river that bisects it west to east. A glance at a map shows the importance of the region. To the north, Hanzhong borders on the district of the commander of the Capital Districts, where both capitals, Chang'an and Luoyang, are situated. To the east, Hanzhong touches the northern districts of Jingzhou. At the western end of the province, on the River Han, is the city of Nanzheng; that is where Cao Cao's trusted general Xiahou Yuan was stationed. The river's western branch leads some two hundred kilometers south to Jiameng Pass, crucial gateway between north and west, which Liu Xuande controls. A straight line southwest from Jiameng to Chengdu, capital of the Riverlands, measures another two hundred kilometers approximately. Midway between Jiameng and Chengdu is the county of Fuxian. South of Jiameng, on the western branch of the Han is Langzhong.

2. This escort was an imperial prerogative. "The chariots of the five seasons [were] each painted one color of the five elements, green, red, yellow, white, or black." See *HHS* ("Yu fu"), p. 3644.

3. In the sixty-year cycle the five *hai* years are "pig" years.

4. This alludes to the legend with which the *PH* begins. Han Xin, of course, is reborn as Cao Cao; Kongming could be called the counterpart of Zhang Liang, but the *PH* names Kuai Tong as the reincarnation of Kongming. (See the afterword for a discussion of the rebirth of figures from the first Han reign in the last.)

CHAPTER 72

1. Mao (introductory note): "Kongming did not create the uncertainty that Cao Cao suffered from; Cao Cao himself did it. But the one man who could make Cao Cao uncertain was Kongming—who had burned him out at Bowang, thwarted him at Xinye, trapped him at the Black Forest [i. e., at Red Cliffs], and reduced him to begging for mercy on the Huarong Trail. Cao Cao had long feared Kongming. Anyone else's decoy troops would not have made him doubt himself."

2. Wei Qing and Huo Qubing defeated the Xiongnu for Emperor Wu (r. 140-87 B. C.).

3. This was shortly before Cao Cao led his army west to recover what Xu Huang had lost. Cao Cao's victory over the Wuhuan is recounted in chapter 33.

4. Historically, Cao's resentment of Yang Xiu might have had more to do with his association with Cao Zhi, the third son, now displaced as heir apparent in favor of Cao Pi.

5. Separated, the components of the characters yield this meaning.

6. The *TS* (p. 696) has Xiu say, "Our lord is a hammer in a sack" —the equivalent of a concealed weapon.

7. Mao (introductory note): "Kong Rong, Xun Wenruo, and Yang Xiu all died for their opposition to Cao Cao. But Yang Xiu's case differs from the others. Kong Rong refused to serve Cao and opposed him truly and justly [on the question of the Emperor and military campaigns], Xun Wenruo, however, began by serving Cao Cao, unmindful of truth and justice, and only later opposed him on principle [the question of his promotion to duke of Wei], Yang Xiu, in contrast, served Cao Cao unmindful of truth and justice, and he also opposed him unjustly. Yang Xiu, the son of [Grand Commandant] Yang Biao, lowered himself by serving Cao Cao. Then, having shamed his great family, he went and aroused Cao Cao's suspicions by supporting Cao Zhi, wrongly meddling in Cao Cao's family matters. Cao Cao must bear the blame for killing those who opposed him on principle. But would an honorable and reasonable man blame him for killing one who opposed him as Yang Xiu did? Rather, the blame lies with Xiu."

Cao Cao retreated to Chang'an, leaving Hanzhong in Liu Bei's hands, in the summer of A. D. 219.

CHAPTER 73

1. Shangyong was the easternmost part of Hanzhong. Due east about 175 kilometers in the neighboring province of Jingzhou was the city of Xiangyang, the focus of the next phase of struggle with Cao Cao. In this region the River Han was called the River Xiang.

2. The *TS* (p. 699) has a phrase, "imitating Yao's abdication to Shun," which is omitted here.

3. The *TS* version of Kongming's speech (p. 699) depicts a scene of disorder with "men of virtue and talent joining together in serving their lords at great risk, whether for fame or fortune. Now, my lord, if you care only about avoiding the criticism of others and cling to your sense of honor without acting, then all who serve you will lose heart." Xuande is urged to become a contender, but not described as a future dragon.

4. *TS* (p. 699): "The army will revolt."

5. Mao: "Whenever Xuande is self-effacing and reluctant to accept some honor, Zhang Fei comes forward, and most bluntly." *TS* (p. 700): "Zhang Fei said, 'If you do not become king, an age of heroes will turn into a dream.'"

For a comparison between Zhang Fei and the character Li Kui from the novel *Shuihu zhuan*, see

Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 430 n. 245.

6. Here the *TS* cites the entire memorial as it appears in Xuande's biography, "Xianzhu zhuan" (*SGZ*, p. 884), but with a most significant change. The document in the *SGZ* has 120 backers, the better-known of whom are listed by name—Ma Chao, Xu Jing, Pang Xi, She Yuan, Zhuge Liang, Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, Huang Zhong, Lai Gong, Fa Zheng, and Li Yan—with the leading lights of the Riverlands from Liu Zhang's previous administration preceding the Jingzhou group. The *TS* (p. 700) says that Kongming ordered Qiao Zhou to compose the memorial. In this version the order of names is changed: Zhuge Liang is the first signatory, followed by Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, Ma Chao, Huang Zhong, Lai Gong, Fa Zheng, and Li Yan; the old Riverlands guard is largely omitted. Ma Chao's importance seems to be his acceptability to both the Jingzhou group and the Yizhou group; hence, he is number one in the *SGZ* document, number four in the *TS*. Mao Zonggang dropped the document from his edition.

After the list of names the document cites a number of historical cases of rebellion by those brought up under the favor of the ruling house, and then goes on to describe how those rebellions were crushed by loyalist heroes. Cao Cao is described as the contemporary incarnation of the rebel, and Liu Xuande as the loyalist savior. Dong Cheng's imperially mandated effort to eliminate Cao Cao is cited.

The next section of the memorial discusses the importance of solidarity within the imperial family as the sine qua non of state security: "The house of Zhou, reflecting on the failures of its predecessors, honored those of its own clan with fiefs. The *Book of Odes* proclaimed the rightness of this course, and the dynasty enjoyed a lengthy rule. Likewise, the Han began by subdividing the territory to provide fiefs for the princes [of the blood], thus thwarting the Lü clan and establishing the great [Liu] clan patrimony."

The next section asserts that the crisis of authority after the defeat of Cao Cao in Hanzhong exceeded that at the end of the Former Han: "The strife at court and the danger to the imperial person chills every heart. Hence, your subjects make bold to follow an ancient precedent, enfeoffing [Liu] Bei as king of Hanzhong and appointing him chief commander to guide and reorganize the armed forces of the dynasty, reconfirm alliances, and exterminate vicious subversives. Our kingdom will be composed of Hanzhong, Ba, Shu, Guanghan, and Jianwei. Such an expedient may be arbitrarily undertaken provided it is in the interest of the sacred shrine to soil and grain. Afterward, when success vindicates our cause, we will retire and gladly make amends with our lives. Fearful and trembling, we press our heads to the ground, acknowledging our capital offense."

7. In his introductory note, Mao contrasts Xuande's advance to king of Hanzhong with his earlier offices: "Cao Cao, borrowing the Emperor's right of appointment, designated Xuande protector first of Xuzhou and then of Yuzhou. [Later] Sun Quan's duplicitous memorial was the basis for Xuande's protectorship of Jingzhou. But rule of the Riverlands Xuande gave to himself. Still, this was preferable to getting it from Cao Cao, a traitor whose appointments carried no moral weight. Xuande's title general of the Left and his lordship of Yicheng precinct resulted from imperial action. His king-ship of Hanzhong did not; it resulted from his own action. But in this case there is no difference between imperial action and Xuande's own action—because if Xuande should have succeeded in bringing the traitor Cao to justice, then the kingship would only have been what the Son of Heaven would have wanted to give him.... Hence, in the *Gangmu*, Zhu Xi says nothing critical

about Xuande's assumption of power in the Riverlands or about his accession to king of Hanzhong."

The other title Liu Bei took at this time, grand marshal (*dasima*), seems to be an allusion to certain earlier periods in Han history when the prime minister's office had become weak and the *dasima* took over as military guarantor of the Emperor. *Dasima* was not a regular title during the reign of Emperor Xian.

8. See SGZ, p. 886, for the original text, which this translation occasionally follows for clarity.

9. "Nine kingdoms" refers to the royal fiefs. See the "Gao Yao mo" in the *Shu jing*. See Bernhard Karlgren, "Glosses on the Book of Documents," *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 20 (1948): 107; and cf. James Legge, trans., *The Chinese Classics*, 2d ed., vol. 3, *The Shoo King* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1893-95), p. 69, and the "Xia benji" of the *SJ*. According to the "Xia benji," Gao Yao was selected by Great Yu, queller of the floods, as his chief minister and potential successor. But Gao Yao died before the transfer of power, and Yu's son became his father's heir and eventual successor. Thus began the era of devolution to the son. The allusion to this text in Liu Bei's memorial serves to emphasize the necessary subordination of the minister (Gao Yao; i. e., Cao Cao) to the family member (Liu Bei).

10. The memorial is dated in the *TS* to Jian An 24, 7th month (A. D. 219).

11. Cao's letter as cited in the *TS* (p. 703) is one of the strongest denunciations of Xuande on record. Perhaps this is why the Mao version has dropped it. In essence, Cao Cao tells Sun Quan that for a man of his status and integrity to be subject to a vassal (i. e., Xuande) in another province is a scandal and a shame; that the marriage of Lady Sun to Xuande is a second scandal; and that the surrender of Jingzhou to Xuande is a third. "For Liu Bei," Cao's letter goes on, "is an uncouth villain, who imposes upon and degrades others. His lightly given promises are rarely reliable, and he typically harbors cruel designs. He began by betraying his lord [the Emperor] and then revolted against Lü Bu. He abandoned his obligations to Yuan Shao and conveniently forgot the great debt he owed Liu Biao. He devoured the Riverlands and seized Hanzhong. He has spurned your favor and mine so spitefully that the common wood-gatherers and shepherds feel indignation. With this letter that Man Chong conveys to you, let all our old grudges be consigned to the past. Quickly raise a host of heroes to recover Jingzhou, both to save the dynasty from evil and to redeem your honor. After the victory, the Southland, the Riverlands, and the regions of Jingzhou connecting them will belong to you. Hanzhong and Xiangyang will be mine. This will seal our permanent amity and our mutual oath of nonencroachment.... Autumn, the eighth month, Jian An 24 [A. D. 219]."

12. This tactic proposed by Zhuge Jin will lead to the ruin of Kongming's project. It might be said that act 5 of the drama begins with this scene.

13. Huang Zhong was an Imperial Corps commander under Liu Biao when Liu was protector of Jingzhou. After Cao Cao occupied Jingzhou, he made Zhong a subordinate commander under the authority of the governor of Changsha, Han Xuan. When Liu Bei took over the southern districts of Jingzhou, Lord Guan led the campaign against Changsha and induced Huang Zhong to serve Xuande; later, Zhong followed Xuande to the Riverlands and distinguished himself in the field.

14. In the *TS* (p. 706) Lord Guan says, "I have wanted to attack Fan for a long time but have had no command from Lord Liu." This sentence may explain Lord Guan's impatience with the western leaders for giving priority to the consolidation of the Riverlands-Hanzhong region. It is likely, too, that Lord Guan was still smarting from the surrender of the three districts to Sun Quan four years earlier—an act of appeasement he had opposed. He must have been anxious to develop his own

position in the center and then lead the attack against Cao Cao, beginning with Cao's southern anchor, Fan. According to his biography (SGZ, p. 941), Lord Guan had a considerable network of "branch organizations" (*zhi dang*), including "bandits," with the result that "his might was felt throughout the northern heartland" and "Cao Cao was discussing moving the capital [Xuchang] to avoid his thrust."

[15.](#) See chapter 27.

[16.](#) There is some problem in identifying Jingzhou's reported nine districts (*jun*).

Xiangyang, created by Cao Cao, is basically Nanyang, which was Kongming's home district and the northernmost district of the province. The *HHS* lists six more districts (roughly clockwise): Nanjun, Jiangxia, Changsha, Guiyang, Lingling, and Wuling. Nine may be used here as a general number meaning "all."

CHAPTER 74

[1.](#) Mao: "Yu Jin's jealousy is retribution for Pang De's betrayal of Ma Chao."

[2.](#) The word for fish, *yu*, is a homophone for the *yu* of Yu Jin.

[3.](#) Mao: "I suspect that Pang De refused to surrender in order to protect his wife and children in the capital. Pang De had killed his sister-in-law and severed relations with his brother. But his wife and children, it seems, he could not abandon." According to his biography, Pang De's last words to Lord Guan were: "You miserable wretch! Why should I surrender? The whole empire respects the awful might of the king of Wei and his million-fold hosts. That Liu Bei of yours, with his mediocre ability, is no match for the king. I would be a ghost of this dynasty before I'd be a general of rebels and traitors" (SGZ, p. 546).

[4.](#) Mao: "If not for Man Chong's good counsel, Lord Guan would surely have taken Fan and controlled all the land below the Yellow River. And from such a superior position, Lord Guan would have been able to cope with the southern attack. But Man Chong advised, and Cao Ren heeded; is that not Heaven's will at work?"

[5.](#) Mao (introductory note): "That Fan does not fall means that Heaven will not restore the Han. When Shan Fu captured Fan [chap. 36] for Liu Bei, he lacked the military strength to hold the city and ended up abandoning it. But when Lord Guan laid siege to Fan, he had more than enough resources to take it, and the season, too, favored him. Reading how an arrow stopped him in midcourse makes one sigh again and again."

CHAPTER 75

[1.](#) Mao's introductory note suggests that Hua Tuo and Ji Ping (the physician killed in chapter 21 for an attempt on Cao Cao's life) are "one person" in their devotion to righteousness.

[2.](#) Mao (introductory note): "Cao Ren wanted to abandon Fan: Man Chong stopped him. Cao Cao wanted to leave the capital at Xuchang: Sima Yi stopped him. Had Cao Ren abandoned Fan, the region south of the Yellow River would have been thrown into turmoil. Had Cao Cao moved the capital, the region north of the Yellow River would have been thrown into turmoil.... Word of Lord Guan's victory over Xiangyang was sufficient to snatch the initiative from Cao Cao.... Guan failed to complete the conquest only because the right moment to act eluded him."

[3.](#) Mao (introductory note): "When Sun Quan took Lü Meng's advice, he became as much

a traitor to the Han as Cao Cao, king of Wei. If Sun Quan had taken advantage of Lord Guan's siege of Fan to conquer Xuzhou, thus dividing the north, the house of Han could have been restored and Cao Cao's treason crushed. But he forgot his oath, went back on his original covenant, and made a secret deal with Cao Cao to attack Lord Guan. And the cause? Nothing more than his struggle to gain Jingzhou!"

4. Mao (introductory note): "While Zhou Yu lived, Liu and Sun were antagonists. When Zhou Yu died, Liu and Sun had cooperative relations. While Lu Su was in office, Liu and Sun cooperated. When Lu Su died [and Lü Meng succeeded him], their relations became antagonistic again."

5. The *TS* (p. 726) renders the scene with dialogue: grateful to have been spared, the station guards cooperate and suggest a means of deception for entering the city. Presumably, Mao Zonggang wants to make the willingness of Lord Guan's men to betray him less obvious; by shifting from dialogue to prose narrative, he also reduces the vividness of the scene. The attack took place in the autumn of A. D. 219.

6. Apparently Jiangling, not Gong'an, was the functional provincial capital of this time; Xiangyang had been in Cao Cao's hands until Lord Guan recaptured it to prepare his attack on Fan.

7. See chapter 73.

8. Mao (introductory note): " This chapter begins with a description of Lord Guan suffering from his wound but acting as if uninjured. Then we go directly to a description of Lü Meng feigning an illness. First, we have Hua Tuo treating a real injury; then we have Lu Xun curing Lü Meng's feigned illness. Hua Tuo recognized the poison on the arrow and got rid of it—a case of using medicine against medicine. Lu Xun knew that Lü Meng was feigning illness and consequently told him to resign alleging illness—a case of using illness to cure illness. And there are even more remarkable things to come! Lord Guan had an ailing arm, and an ailing attitude as well—namely, his overestimation of himself and his arrogance toward all others. If Lu Xun had a method for eliminating Lü Meng's illness, he also had a method for aggravating Lord Guan's ailment—namely, rich gifts and honeyed words. Lü Meng resigned his office, and Lord Guan assumed he was free of a problem, a greater relief than the cure of his arm. And so he pulled out his southern defenses [for the siege at Fan], But by so doing, Lord Guan was more severely poisoned than by the arrow!

"Kongming cured Zhou Yu with a borrowed wind, and Pang Tong 'cured' the northern soldiers' [seasickness] by getting Cao Cao to link up his boats. Lu Xun worked both types [the cure and the 'cure']."

CHAPTER 76

1. In the *TS* (p. 728), Lord Guan threatens severe beatings for a delay of one or two days, death for a delay of three.

2. In the *TS* (p. 731), Cao Ren wants to pursue Lord Guan, but is dissuaded by an adviser, who argues, "Originally Sun Quan allied himself to Lord Guan... Now Lord Guan is defeated and his much-reduced army on the run. Let him survive for a while; it'll be a threat to Sun Quan! If you chase him and fail to capture him, Sun Quan may shift his hopes to him and start to look on us as his enemy again."

3. A Western Han general sent by Emperor Jing (r. 156-140 B. C.) to suppress the southern

rebellion organized by Liu Bi, king of Wu.

4. Ma Liang and Yi Ji have been sent to Chengdu for help. The *PH* (pp. 123-24) says that Liu Feng blocked the messengers as his revenge on Lord Guan for backing Shan instead of himself as heir to Xuande.

5. Mao (introductory note): "Zhang Liang used the songs of Chu to cause the troops [of Xiang Yu] to flee.... Lü Meng uses the men of Jingzhou to call away the men of Jingzhou." In this famous tragic scene Han Gao Zu incited desertion in the ranks of his main opponent, Xiang Yu, king of Chu, by having men of Chu in his own army sing songs in the Chu dialect. After this victory the way was clear to the establishment of the Han dynasty. The verse in the *TS* makes the same historical allusion.

6. In the *TS* (p. 735) this speech is fuller. Lord Guan is reported as saying, "Succession through the legitimate son is a time-honored principle. Why ask me such a question? Liu Feng is adopted. Send him off to a remote town and spare yourself great trouble in the family."

7. There is trouble underneath the question of Liu Bei's succession. In the *PH*, Kongming refuses to tell Liu Bei whether he prefers Liu Shan or Liu Feng and suggests that Liu Bei take the question to Lord Guan. Lord Guan favors Liu Shan, and so Liu Feng (who expected to succeed Liu Bei as ruler of Shu) believes Lord Guan has wronged him and vows to settle the score. He does so by blocking aid to Jingzhou when Lord Guan is defeated. In the *SGZ*, Liu Feng's adoption precedes the birth of Liu Shan. *Three Kingdoms* reverses this sequence, thus giving Liu Shan seniority of position (though not of age), in order to spare Liu Bei criticism for choosing the cadet brother as his heir. See Afterword, pp. 976—77.

Earlier, when Jingzhou was being threatened by Wei and Wu jointly, Guan Ping had urged his father to get help from Liu Bei. But Lord Guan said no, embarrassed at having won no honors in the western campaigns. Ignoring his father's wishes, Guan Ping wrote to Liu Bei, but his letters of appeal were all intercepted by Liu Feng. This is the *PH* version of the events leading to Lord Guan's fall. At an earlier point, when Lord Guan was fighting Cao Cao (at Qingni), Liu Bei at Jiameng received Sun Quan's appeal for help against Cao Cao. Unfortunately for Lord Guan, Liu Bei refused Sun Quan's appeal, choosing first to conquer Chengdu and hence the Riverlands.

8. The name of a hexagram in the *Book of Changes*. The top three lines, *kun*, stand for earth; the bottom three, *kan*, for water.

CHAPTER 77

1. The text here reads *hai*, the last earthly branch, which corresponds to the hours 9: 00 to 11: 00 p. m., and to the direction northwest.

2. Mai, downriver from Linju on the River Ju, was roughly between Dangyang and Jiangling.

3. This was the place where Pujing had once saved Lord Guan. See chapter 27.

4. The *TS* (p. 741) has Pujing saying, "In terms of your own particular conduct, long ago at Baima defile you stabbed to death an altogether unprepared and unsuspecting Yan Liang. How can he not bear rancor toward you down in the netherworld? What right have you to quibble about the treachery by which Lü Meng did you in? Why should this puzzle you?" The *TS* is referring to its own version of how Lord Guan killed Cao Cao's general Yan Liang: Yan Liang comes forth to parley and is suddenly cut down. See chapter 25 n. 14.

5. This plays on various connotations of the word *chi* (red, ruddy). Red was the symbolic color of Han.

6. The play here is on various meanings of *qing*, the color of nature: the clear lamp, the color of bamboo (the source of paper, i. e., history), the light of day, the east, and the *yang* strength of Lord Guan's sword, Green Dragon.

7. Hu Sanxing, principal editor of the *ZZTJ*, representing an early Yuan, pro-Cao view, argues (p. 2166) that Lord Guan would have been defeated by Cao Cao without the participation of the southern forces and that therefore Cao Cao was simply setting the two bandits (Lord Guan and Lü Meng) against each other.

8. Mao: "The very words that Cao spoke to Lord Guan at the Huarong pass [when Lord Guan spared him; see chapter 50]."

9. Huai Ying, daughter of Duke Mu of Qin, married Zi Yu, duke of Jin. After Zi Yu's death she was given to his uncle Chong Er, who became Duke Wen of Jin, the famed hegemon of the late seventh century B. C.

10. Mao (introductory note): "That phrase, 'Lord Guan, what has become of you?' is the equivalent of the profound teaching of the whole *Diamond Sutra*. For that matter, what has become of the Southland, the Riverlands, the kingdom of Wei, the division of the realm, and the greats who lived in those times? All who have existed cease to exist. And only those who do not 'exist' have permanent existence. To know what has become of Lord Guan means that his existence is eternal."

CHAPTER 78

1. The *TS* chapter title differs somewhat: "Cao Cao Kills the Superb Physician Hua Tuo; The Wei Crown Prince Cao Pi Seizes Power."

2. Mao: "Kongming shows resentment because Lord Guan ignored his advice to maintain amity with the Southland."

3. Mao: "Forgetting Wei, he mentions the south alone."

4. Mao: "Kongming speaks of Wei and Wu [north and south] together."

5. The heaven-touching sacred tree is a symbol of a dynasty's contact with and acceptance by Heaven.

6. See chapters 20 and 21.

7. Han rules by the symbolic element of fire; "on the fire" implies usurping the Han.

8. The *TS* (p. 751) adds the phrase "since the reign of Emperor An [a. d. 107-26]."

9. The original petition is in the *Wei lüe*; see *SGZ*, pp. 52-53.

10. Mao: "The implication is that the usurpation will be left to his son Pi." Zhou Wenwang refrained from overthrowing the reigning Shang dynasty even though he held two-thirds of the realm. His son, Wuwang, carried out the conquest and established the reign of Zhou.

11. Cao Cao had killed Ma Teng, and Teng's son Chao had vowed revenge. See chapter 57. Mao: "The dream must have occurred before Ma Teng's death... Even before Cao Pi's usurpation, there is an omen of the Sima clan."

12. *Lu* means good luck, salary, food (an ancient form of pay for officials). In fact, the omen refers to the Sima clan, which overthrew the Wei dynasty of the Cao clan and founded the Jin dynasty; i.e., the Ma (ma, "horse"), who are employed by the Cao, will feed upon the Cao (*cao*, "trough").

The three horses also refer to the three leaders of the Sima clan.

[13.](#) The Sima clan will establish the Jin dynasty after usurping the Wei dynasty in a. d. 263, then go on to absorb the Riverlands in a. d. 265 and the Southland in a. d. 280.

[14.](#) Mao: "To speak only of his house and not the imperial line shows the old traitor's cunning."

[15.](#) This luxurious touch is not found in the "Wudi ji" of the *SGZ* (p. 53), which emphasizes Cao's austerity in life and death: "They dressed his body in the clothes appropriate to the season; no valuables were buried with him." See also the *Wei shu* passage in the commentary on p. 54.

Mao (introductory note): "Some claim that in dividing the perfume among the women and then ordering them to sell shoes, Cao Cao was departing from his lifelong love of deception. They fail to realize this too was one of his deceptions.... At the brink of death what question could be more important than the imperial succession [i. e., of the Han Emperor Xian]. But Cao Cao, who provided to the smallest detail for each of his women, had not one word to say about the Han throne. This can only be because he wanted the world and later generations to believe that he had no thought of usurping the dynasty; rather, he let his progeny bear the blame that he avoided. That is what he meant by comparing himself to King Wen of the Zhou."

The presentation of perfume and the order to weave shoes are not in the *TS*. This is one of a small category of striking events that Mao Zonggang has added.

[16.](#) Mao (introductory note): "Cao Cao died in a *gengzi* year of the cycle [the five *zi* years in any sixty-year cycle have the sign of the rat]. And the month is *xuyin* [*yin* carries the sign of the tiger]. So the year of Cao's death was forecast by Zuo Ci when he spoke of an 'earth rat and a metal tiger' ten chapters back." He died March 15, a *gengzi* day.

[17.](#) This ode does not appear in the *TS*.

[18.](#) Mao: "There is no longer any interest in an imperial mandate."

[19.](#) Mao: "From the man who broke down a wall and dragged out the imperial consort, another instance of 'loyalty.'" The text of the decree appears in the *TS* (p. 756) dated Jian An 25, second month (A. D. 220). Hua Xin acted to prevent any interference in Cao Pi's accession through Emperor Xian.

CHAPTER 79

[1.](#) The *TS* chapter title differs: "In Anger the King of Hanzhong [Liu Xuande] Has Liu Feng Killed."

[2.](#) *Jianyidaifu* was the lowest grade of *daifu*, or imperial officer attending the emperor. All four grades of *daifu* were under the *guangluxun* (director of the palace), who managed the palace bureaucracy.

[3.](#) Mao (introductory note): "To see how the Cao clan was spared internecine struggle is to understand that Heaven no longer wished to preserve the sacrifices of the Han royal house. The weakling Cao Xiong is not worth mentioning; but Cao Zhang had some pretensions to valor and strategy, appearing at the city of Ye with a puissant force. And Cao Zhi, through his talent and reputation, had assembled many literary men in Linzi. They came perilously close to a civil war over Cao Pi's succession. If fraternal strife had broken out—such as that between Yuan Shao's sons, Tan and Shang, or Liu Biao's sons, Zong and Qi—the king of Hanzhong could have exploited the

divisions and attacked."

The Cao clan applied the rule *Li jian wei hou*, "Establish empresses from families without wealth and status," in an attempt to control strife within the clan.

4. It is as Emperor Wu (Wudi) that Cao Cao passes into history: the *SGZ* opens with the annals of Emperor Wu ("Wudi ji"). Mao (introductory note) discusses Cao Cao's posthumous title: "A name cannot be falsely appropriated; and a fact cannot be lied out of existence. Cao Cao had bequeathed to his son the task of the Zhou dynasty's King Wu [the Martial; i. e., the task of actually overthrowing the reigning dynasty], while comparing himself to King Wen [the Civil; i. e., the king who refrains from military action and remains loyal to the dynasty in power despite his own overwhelming popularity]. Nonetheless, Cao Pi saw things in the opposite way. He did not regard his father Cao Cao as a King Wen but gave him the posthumous title of King Wu. Certainly, Cao Cao tried to avoid the reputation of overthrower for himself and leave it for his successor. But the successor Pi, to avoid the name of overthrower, returned it to his ancestor. In that way the Wei dynasty's usurpation of the Han became Cao Cao's doing, not Cao Pi's. Cao Cao tried to fool others, but he couldn't fool his son. He tried to cover up his deed, but his son wouldn't cooperate."

5. Fa Zheng died in A. D. 220 at the age of forty-five after Cao Cao's armies were driven from Hanzhong; it was he who had arranged Liu Bei's takeover of the Riverlands. See *SGZ*, p. 961.

Fa Zheng's historical importance is somewhat overshadowed in the novel by the large role Zhuge Liang plays. See He You, "Zhuge Liang yu Fa Zheng," in Chengdushi Zhuge Liang yanjiuhui, ed., *Zhuce Liang yanjiu* (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1985), pp. 289-95.

6. At this point in the novel two titles are used for Xuande, king of Hanzhong and First Ruler (*Xianzhu*). The latter name (which appears in the title of his biography in the *SGZ*) is a posthumous recognition of his place as the first ruler of the Shu-Han dynasty. For simplicity's sake the word "king" is used in most cases. The *ZZTJ* uses the universal Hanzhu (ruler of Han) over the regional Xianzhu (first ruler), reflecting Liu Bei's conception of himself.

7. Fan Li served the king of Yue, but after the king achieved his goal, Li left his service and went into obscurity, saying, "The king is not one to enjoy victory with." Zifan, uncle to Patriarch Wen of Jin, accompanied his nephew through nineteen years of exile. When the patriarch was about to cross the river to return to his state, Uncle Fan took his leave, fearing that his faults alone would be remembered.

8. Wu Zixu, originally of the state of Chu, helped the king of Wu defeat the king of Yue during the Spring and Autumn period; later, calumny drove him to suicide. Meng Tian, despite fine service on the northern frontier, was driven to suicide by the slanders of Zhao Gao. Yue Yi served the state of Yan during a time of dramatic victories over Qi during the Spring and Autumn period.

9. A Wei title, created by combining two Qin offices, *sanqi* (detached cavalry) and *changshi* (regular attendant).

10. I. e., northern Jingzhou. The Wei formed a new imperial district called Xiangyangjun.

11. In this document (cited in the *TS*, p. 763) Meng Da makes these points to Liu Feng: (1) he, Feng, has had many conflicts with his foster father, Xuande; (2) he and Xuande are unrelated; (3) selection of Ah Dou (Xuande's natural son, Liu Shan) as heir apparent "has embittered men of true understanding"; (4) submitting to Cao Pi is wise and honorable, while resisting is foolishly dangerous; and (5) he can expect an excellent reception from the king of Wei.

12. Mao (introductory note): "Liu Feng's rebuff of Meng Da and Mi Fang's acquiescence to

Fu Shiren [who turned Fang against Lord Guan and helped Cao Cao gain Jingzhou] are altogether different. But if Liu Feng rebuffed Meng Da in the end, why didn't he to begin with? If Liu Feng was capable of executing Meng Da's messenger and not surrendering to the north, why did he originally listen to Meng Da's slander and refuse to help Lord Guan?... From Shangyong he could easily have helped Lord Guan in Mai. Not listening to Meng Da would not have cost him his life. It is too bad he didn't size up the situation earlier."

13. Mao (introductory note): "Despite Liu Feng's offense, the First Ruler [of Shu-Han, Xuande] was unjustified in killing him. Liu Feng's refusal to aid Lord Guan justified punishment, but his refusal to surrender to the Cao clan would have justified forgiveness. And his final rebuff of Meng Da was praiseworthy. Thus, his regrettable earlier acquiescence in Meng Da's treachery is pardonable. After losing an adopted brother, Xuande went on and killed an adopted son—a dubious idea. Further, Xuande did not [merely] summon Liu Feng and put him to death; instead, he caused the loss of fifty thousand soldiers and the territory of Shangyong, thereby compounding his error... something he would regret to the end of his days."

14. Mao (introductory note): "Comparing the configuration of circumstances in the Liu and Cao houses, what a gap there is between the serious and the frivolous. Xuande, a 'brother' of another surname, grieved for his younger brother's death. By contrast, Cao Pi, a brother of the same womb, was eager for his brothers' deaths. Xuande felt pain for the loss of an adopted brother and was heedless of compassion for his adopted son. Cao Pi sought his true brothers' deaths and was heedless of his natural mother's feelings of love."

15. This was Cao Cao's native district.

CHAPTER 80

1. The two elements of the graph *wei*, read individually, mean "[Han] consigned to the dead."

2. The name "Xuchang" for the city of Xu begins with Cao Pi's reign.

3. The *TS* has more lines spoken by Hua Xin, including the motif phrase, "The empire belongs to no one man but to all in the empire" (pp. 767-68). The abdication process went on from September to December of A. D. 220.

4. Cao Cao had married his daughter Jie to Emperor Xian.

5. Mao has transformed the *TS* here. On p. 768 the Empress says, "You call my brother a usurping traitor! What was your Supreme Ancestor [Liu Bang] if not a drunken lout, without standing, a nobody! Yet he stole the empire from the Qin! My father [Cao Cao] cleared the realm of rebels. My brother has many achievements to his credit. Why shouldn't he become emperor? You could never have held the throne in safety for more than thirty years without my father and brother." Here Luo Guanzhong is true to the *PH* tradition of hostility toward Liu Bang. Compare the opening of the *Qian Hanshu pinghua* as well as the *Sanguozhi pinghua*. Mao's depiction of Empress Cao is based on her annals in the *HHS*, p. 455; however, this portrait of virtue and loyalty is rejected as spurious by the commentator of the *ZZTJ*, Hu Sanxing (p. 2182).

6. This poem is added by Mao. The "Canon of Yao" describing Yao's legendary transfer of power to Shun, bypassing his own son, opens the canonical *Shu Jing*. This abdication (*shan*) myth was often cited by usurpationists in the Cao court to justify the removal of Emperor Xian. In the *TS* (p. 767), Hua Xin draws the analogy between Cao and Shun.

7. Mao: "He did not say that the throne could not be yielded. He said, 'Seek elsewhere.' " Thus, he intended that the Emperor vacate the throne."

8. The *TS* (pp. 769-70) records Wang Lang's memorial. It reads in part: "Reverently I have received your edict... abdicating to this vassal without merit. Respectfully I call your attention to the example of Xu You, who went into hiding rather than accept Yao's offer of the throne. For this Xu You was acclaimed ever after. This vassal, of little talent and slight virtue, could never receive the mandate of rule. In this plenteous age I beseech you to seek some man of great gifts to receive the abdication and thus spare me the censure of history."

Following this, Hua Xin suggests another part of the Yao-Shun myth for Emperor Xian to follow: "In ancient times Yao of Tang had two daughters.... When he offered to abdicate to Shun, Shun declined, and so Yao married both daughters to him. For this later ages hailed Yao for the virtue of great sagehood. Now Your Majesty, too, has two daughters. Why not emulate Yao and give them in marriage to the king of Wei [Cao Pi]? '... The two princesses were conveyed by carriage into the palace of the king of Wei." See the closing lines of the "Canon of Yao" (*Shu Jing*, "Yao dian"), which describe Yao's sending his daughters to marry into Shun's clan. Emperor Xian's second edict to Cao Pi is dated November 25, A. D. 220.

9. The *PH* (p. 126) places responsibility for the abdication directly on Cao Cao. Advising Emperor Xian concerning the succession problem, Cao Cao says, "Has not Your Majesty heard of Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang, who came to power because they had virtue?... All in the empire declare that your subject Cao Pi is worthy to be Son of Heaven." The *SGZ*, however, describes the abdication as devised by Cao Pi and carried out by Hua Xin and Zhang Yin.

10. Achilles Fang makes this December 10 in Ssu-ma Kuang [Sima Guang], *The Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms*, trans. and annot. Achilles Fang, Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies, no. 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952-65), 1: 37. Sima Guang follows other sources and dates the abdication of Emperor Xian to Cao Pi to the *yimao* day, the fifty-second of the cycle, or November 25.

11. From the standpoint of Wei chronology, Yan Kang is the name of the reign period that spans the death of Cao Cao (March 15, A. D. 220) and the usurpation of Cao Pi (December 10). As far as Wei is concerned, Yan Kang is the last Han reign period, and the last Jian An year is 24 (a. d. 219). The first Wei reign period, Huang Chu, is declared in the tenth month but retroactively covers the whole year, thus displacing Yan Kang in general chronologies. The words Huang Chu signify earth (associated with the color yellow) supplanting fire; that is, the inauguration of a new era according to Five Agents theory. The use of Jian An 25 for much of a. d. 220 by the Riverlands court signifies the continuation of Han chronology in defiance of Wei chronology.

12. Qiao Zhou was the teacher of Chen Shou, author of the *SGZ*. The *Jin shu* contains a biography of Chen Shou.

13. "The vapour of the Emperor appears red inside and yellow outside, and shows uniformity all round. It indicates the rise of an Emperor whenever it makes its appearance." Ho Peng Yoke, *The Astronomical Chapters of the Chin Shu*, *Le monde d'outre-mer passé et présent*, sér. 2: Documents, n° 9 (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1966), p. 144.

14. I. e., the middle of the western quarter of the sky.

15. *Zhong* and *yi*. The *TS* (p. 774) has *xiao* (filial piety) for *yi*.

16. The *ZZTJ* (p. 2185) gives prominence to the protest made by Fei Shi: "Your Majesty has

traveled far and wide gathering a loyal army to smite the traitors who have usurped the Han. Now to make yourself emperor before your great enemy is conquered is likely to confuse people. In the years before Han was founded, the Supreme Ancestor and Xiang Yu swore that the first to defeat Qin would be king of that region. But after the Supreme Ancestor had taken Xiangyang and captured Ziyang [the last Qin emperor], Xiang Yu still refused the honor due him. How much less should Your Majesty covet the emperorship when he has not been beyond the palace [of late]. Your course is unwise." This criticism was not welcomed by Liu Bei, and he demoted Fei Shi. See his biography in *SGZ*, p. 1016. The *PH*, *TS*, and *Three Kingdoms* do not contain this passage.

17. Northwest of Chengdu, according to the *TS* note.

18. May 15, A. D. 221.

19. Still preserving Emperor Xian's reign period, Jian An.

20. Not Lady Sun of Wu (the Southland), but the wife of the late Liu Mao, brother of Liu Zhang, from whom Xuande took the Riverlands. See *ZZTJ*, p. 2188.

21. From here on, Xianzhu, or First Ruler, is *Three Kingdoms'* designation for Liu Xuande, following the usage of the *SGZ*. *ZZTJ* uses the term Hanzhu, or Ruler of Han. Xianzhu will be sometimes translated Emperor.

CHAPTER 81

1. In the *PH* (p. 126), Kongming directly expresses opposition to an invasion of Wu.

2. Mao: "He protests Liu Bei's leading the expedition, not the expedition itself."

3. *TS* (p. 778): "The Emperor said, 'I will hold the army while a different plan is considered.'"

4. Here the *TS* adds: "Moreover, Lord Guan slighted the worthy and treated scholars with arrogance. He was rigid and self-important. That is what cost him his life; no Heaven ordained it."

5. *TS* "The first year of Zhang Wu, the fifth month [A. D. 221]."

6. 221. Achilles Fang gives August 6 to September 4 for the seventh month; see Ssu-ma Kuang [Sima Guang], *The Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms*, trans. and annot. Achilles Fang, Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies, no. 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952-65), 1: 50. The thirteenth day of the cycle, *bingzi* (not *bingyin*), would match August 14.

7. See chapter 2. Liu Xuande's first appointment was to Anxi.

8. Mao: "Liu Bei ignored Kongming's advice on taking over the Riverlands, but he took Fa Zheng's; so Fa Zheng should have been able to get Liu Bei to stop the march."

9. "Azure" (*qing*, the color of ever-renewing nature) implies eternal youth in Taoist mythology.

10. Mao (introductory note): "The First Ruler [Liu Bei] was determined to attack Wu. Kongming, having failed to dissuade him, hoped to use the old sage of Azure City Mountain to prevent him."

11. Mao (introductory note): "After the revered Lord Guan's ghost manifested itself, the story could have moved to the death of Liu Feng at the First Ruler's hands. Instead, between these two incidents the author unexpectedly inserted Cao Cao's illness, the killing of Hua Tuo, Cao Pi's establishment as heir to Cao Cao, king of Wei, and Cao Zhi's poem of protest.

"After the execution of Liu Feng, the story could have moved to the murder of Zhang Fei followed by Liu Bei's invasion of the Southland. However, the author inserted the abdication of Emperor Xian, the usurpation of Cao Pi, the reaction in Chengdu, and Kongming's arguments for attacking Wei.

Among these crossing branches and overlapping leaves of the narrative the seams are never apparent; not a line is out of place in these interwoven stories. Such technique recalls the great historian Sima Qian."

CHAPTER 82

1. The northern part of Jingzhou, called Xiangyang, had been held by Cao Cao all along.

2. I. e., Liu Bei.

3. Mao (introductory note): "The present Sun Quan is utterly unlike the former. How bold the first Sun Quan, when he drew his sword and sheared off a piece of a table [to demonstrate his determination to resist Cao Cao]! How feeble the present Sun Quan, bowing his head and submitting to Wei! Why the change? His blunder in Jingzhou and his split with Liu Bei."

Sun Quan's reference to the founder of the Han suggests that he had large ambitions. Xiang Yu gave the Han founder, Gao Zu, the kingship of Han (i. e., the land west of the River Han) as a consolation after denying him the prize rightfully his: the land within the passes. Gao Zu had to accept the inferior kingdom of Han, but he soon moved east again, conquered the land within the passes, overcame Xiang Yu's armies, and within four years established the new dynasty of Han. See the "Xiang Yu benji" and "Gao Zu benji" in the *SJ*.

4. The year after Liu Bei became king of Hanzhong, he named Huang Zhong one of the "Five Tiger Generals," thus putting him on a par with Lord Guan, Zhang Fei, Ma Chao, and Zhao Zilong. The following year the historical Huang Zhong died (*SGZ*, p. 948). The author of *Three Kingdoms* has fictionally extended Huang Zhong's life. Similarly, the exploits of Guan Xing and Zhang Bao, the sons of Lord Guan and Zhang Fei, are fictional additions. At the end of this chapter it is A. D. 222.

CHAPTER 83

1. See chapter 68 for the pre-raid feast and for Gan Ning's reconciliation with Ling Tong, whose father he had killed.

2. Mao (introductory note): "The Emperor's campaign against Sun Quan makes it certain that he will not spare Mi Fang [younger brother of the wife who threw herself into the well so that Zhao Zilong could save Ah Dou]. For if he showed no leniency toward Sun Quan, whose sister [Lady Sun, a later wife of Liu Bei] still lived, he would hardly show leniency to Mi Fang, whose sister was already dead. Looking at the situation another way, the Emperor's execution of Mi Fang meant that he would never relax his determination to destroy the Southland. If the Emperor would not spare Mi Fang, whose sister had sacrificed her life for Ah Dou, he would hardly forgive the brother of Lady Sun [Sun Quan], who had left his house without telling him."

3. The *TS* (p. 800) "... destroy Wu first, then take over Wei, emulating the restoration of Guang Wu [the first Later Han emperor]—this is my desire."

CHAPTER 84

1. The name means "White Emperor," as noted in chapter 82; later the town was renamed Yong'an, "Enduring Peace." See chap. 34, n. 11.

2. Mao (introductory note): " Compare Zhou Yu's use of fire to attack Cao Cao and Lu Xun's use of fire to attack Liu Bei: Lu Xun had more problems than Zhou Yu. In the first place, Zhou Yu received his command when the southern army was fittest, while Lu Xun received his command when the southern army had already suffered several reverses. In the second place, Zhou Yu had the support of Liu Bei against the northern enemy, while Lu Xun had a watchful predator to his north, Cao Pi. And in the third place, Zhou Yu had the help of Kongming, Pang Tong, Huang Gai, Kan Ze, and Gan Ning; Lu Xun had to contend with the doubts of Zhang Zhao, Gu Yong, Bu Zhi, Han Dang, and Zhou Tai....

"Lord Guan failed only because he disregarded Kongming's advice to maintain amity with Sun Quan. The Emperor was defeated for the same reason.... Zhuge Jin tried twice to persuade Lord Guan [to cooperate with the south] and tried once to persuade the Emperor. Although less talented than his brother Zhuge Liang, his understanding of the situation was largely the same."

The battle of Yiling has very little source material behind it in the SGZ; the majority of it is found in Lu Xun's biography. An introduction to the battle may be found in Cao Xuewei's article "Yiling zhi zhan de qingjie he renwu chuangzao," in *XK* 2 (1986): 254-63.

3. Mao: "Lu Xun had reckoned that no outside aid would be needed to end the siege of Yiling."

4. The words also mean "consort of a treacherous owl" ; "treacherous owl" was an epithet applied to Liu Bei.

5. This poem and the notice of Lady Sun's suicide are not in the *TS*, which says earlier that Lady Sun returned to the Southland. By this revision Mao Zonggang seeks to turn her into a devoted Confucian wife who follows her lord in death. For this he claims a historical basis in the *Xiao ji zhuan* (Tales of ill-fated consorts).

In Mao Zonggang's list of emendations, he mentions this revision (paragraph 2), together with his revision of the *TS* account of the conduct of Emperor Xian's consort (see chap. 80). Mao's text note says, "How firm of purpose was Lady Sun when she denounced the [pursuing] Southland soldiers! Her will may have weakened when she tried to take Ah Dou south with her, but her suicide here in grief for her husband [Liu Bei] shows her chaste honor undiminished."

6. There is a powerful description of the noise caused by the rolling of boulders on the floor of the Yangzi in John Hersey's *A Single Pebble* (New York: Knopf, 1956), p. 43.

7. Mao: "Lord Guan obligated Cao Cao when he released him on the Huarong Trail. Here Huang Chengyan similarly obligates Lu Xun at Fishbelly Meadow."

CHAPTER 85

1. A. D. 222. The reign title Zhang Wu, which the kingdom of Shu proclaimed, began in 221. Prior to that, Shu loyally followed the reign titles of Han Xiandi; thus, 220 was Jian An 25, and 221 was Jian An 26 (see *TS*, p. 775); Jian An 26 retroactively became Zhang Wu 1, which was proclaimed in May of that year. The *ZZTJ* follows the reign titles of Wei under Cao Pi: Huang Chu 1 is A. D. 220. *Three Kingdoms*, following Zhu Xi's *Gangmu*, indicates its support for the cause of Liu Bei when it uses Shu-Han reign titles. But at times in the narrative the reign titles of the other kingdoms will be found.

2. Both generals served Xiang Yu before joining Liu Bang's cause and helping him defeat Xiang Yu.

3. In the *TS* (p. 817) Liu Bei says to Kongming: "I must request that Your Excellency take responsibility for our cause." The *PH* says (p. 128): "The heir apparent was summoned before his father, who bade him prostrate himself before the lord of Wu [Kongming]. The lord of Wu attempted to raise the lad up, but the Emperor held his son down. The lord of Wu said, 'It is a capital offense for your vassal [to receive the heir apparent's obeisance]. ' The First Ruler said, 'The director general knows the story of Dan, duke of Zhou, who [as regent] protected King Cheng. ' The First Ruler continued, 'Ah Dou is too young to bear rule. If it is fitting, place him in power; if not, rule yourself. ' The lord of Wu said, 'What virtue have I for that? If Your Majesty entrusted the heir to me, my death would not suffice to requite the honor. ' The heir apparent [rose], advanced on his knees, and then prostrated himself. The Emperor said, 'Whenever the heir apparent has official business, let him consult with the director general. ' With these words, the Emperor passed away." The *SGZ* says that Liu Bei named Li Yan, chief of the Secretariat, as Ah Dou's second guardian (p. 891).

4. June 10, A. D. 220.

5. Cranes and herons are thought to return to the same nest in successive years.

6. This seven-character regulated verse is the fourth of a five-ode sequence, *Yonghuai guji*, "Songs to Remember Historic Sites," by the renowned mid-Tang poet Du Fu. A translation and discussion of the five poems may be found in Hans Frankel, *The Flowering Plum and the Palace Lady* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 116-24. The first three poems of the sequence lament, in turn, two poets and a palace beauty who suffer owing either to their sovereign's neglect or his misfortune. Mao Zonggang has substituted this one poem for a group of prose compositions and verses extolling Liu Bei (*TS*, pp. 818-20). The effect is to echo Liu Bei's tragic recognition that he should never have ignored Kongming's warnings about invading the Southland. The last line reads *Yiti junchen jisi tong*; one literal translation would be "As one body, liege and liege man, sacrificial services shared." The words *yiti*, "as one body," come from the *Yili*, "Sangfu zhuan," which explains that father and son, husband and wife, and brothers are "as one body" when their spirits are worshiped, hence the translation "in sacred union." Liege and vassal (*junchen*) are not included in the list, however; thus the line may be Du Fu's way of saying that the worshipers at the two neighboring shrines were treating Kongming as Liu Bei's true son or brother and therefore co-recipient of services to the late emperor. The phrase *yiti* occurs early in chapter 81 when Liu Bei says of the executed Lord Guan, "Yunchang is I—in sacred union," implying that he will be ritually remembered jointly with Lord Guan.

7. The *ZZTJ* always refers to Liu Bei as Hanzhu (ruler of Han), not Xianzhu (First Ruler) as in *SGZ*, or Shuzhu (ruler of Shu). Sima Guang was simply following the usage of the Shu leadership, not acknowledging Liu Bei as the legitimate Han emperor. Note that on occasion *Three Kingdoms* refers to the western kingdom as Shu-Han; note also that the second word in Liu Bei's posthumous temple title, Zhao Lie, contains the fire element. Liu Shan is called Houzhu, Later Ruler, usually translated here as Second Ruler or Second Emperor; he reigned until A. D. 263.

8. Mao (introductory note): "From the First Ruler's words committing Liu Shan to Kongming's guidance, we can tell that the campaign against Wei was more important to him than the campaign against Wu. The ruler said to Kongming, 'You are ten times more able than Cao Pi. ' Why did he not say 'than Sun Quan'? I would answer, because the Cao clan's Wei dynasty was Han's mortal enemy. When the First Ruler said, 'If Liu Shan deserves support, support him; if not, assume the

throne yourself, ' it was as if he were saying 'If he is able to suppress the rebels, support him; if not, then take over. ' The emphasis is on suppressing the rebels [in the north],... Did the First Ruler really mean for Kongming to assume his throne? In one sense, yes; in another, no. To have Kongming usurp as Cao Pi did is something the First Ruler could never have permitted himself to suggest. He had to have said what he did to Kongming in order to strengthen his commitment to support Liu Shan, but also to let Liu Shan know that he had to respect and obey Kongming absolutely." According to Li Yan's biography (SGZ, p. 999), the dying Liu Xuande decreed by edict that Li Yan and Zhuge Liang should jointly support and guide the new ruler, Liu Shan.

The *SGZ* and the *ZZTJ* as well as *Three Kingdoms* (especially the *TS*) suggest some opposition in the Riverlands to an offensive strategy against the north. However, there is no record of the kind of full-scale debate in the Riverlands over the war policy that took place in the Southland between Zhang Zhao and Zhou Yu before the battle at Red Cliffs.

9. In the next several chapters Kongming will settle the potential conflict between the Southern Man people and the new Riverlands government. In their civil wars the Chinese used Man nations as early as the Spring and Autumn period (see *HHS*, p. 2831). In A. D. 223 uprisings in the Riverlands had already begun under Huang Yong after he learned of Liu Bei's illness; later, the news of Liu Bei's death led to outbreaks in the Nanzhong districts in the south of the province. See Ssuma Kuang [Sima Guang], Achilles Fang, trans., *The Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms* 1: 153, 160.

10. Liu Shan was also seventeen.

11. It was lese majesty for Kongming to have caused the Emperor to come to him.

12. Mao (introductory note): "Yi Yin [served the king of Shang] after three invitations; Kongming [agreed to serve] after three visits [from a humbled Liu Bei], making him another Yi Yin. Lü Wang [i. e., Jiang Ziya] was angling in the river [when called to serve the king]; Kongming is contemplating fish, making him another Lü Wang."

13. Mao (introductory note): "Gao Zu slew the white serpent and founded his career. Guang Wu arose in White Water Village and revived the Han. The First Ruler entered White Emperor city [Baidi] to die and gave his son into the care of Kongming.... From the peach garden to this point is one great line of development. The First Ruler's life ends here; Kongming's will commence a new phase. His previous conquest of the Riverlands and Hanzhong fulfilled [the forecast he made] when Liu Bei visited him in his thatched hut. His subsequent achievements—capturing Meng Huo and leading the army out of Qishan—stem from his acceptance of responsibility for the orphan heir. Thus, this chapter marks the transition between two large portions of the story."

CHAPTER 86

1. A. D. 222. The reign title Huang Wu combines the first character of Wei's reign title (Huang Chu) and the second of Shu's (Zhang Wu), as if to acknowledge neutrally both calendars in Wu's own. Sun Quan did not formally declare himself emperor until A. D. 229. At the end of 221, Emperor Cao Pi of Wei ordered Sun Quan made king (*wang*), rejecting the alternative course of advancing Sun Quan in military rank and honoring him as a lord (*hou*) with a fief of ten thousand households (*ZZTJ*, p. 2193).

2. The narrative goes back to the Southland court when Cao Pi was organizing an invasion of the west (see chap. 85).

3. Deng Zhi's arrival is dated by the *ZZTJ* (p. 2217) to the tenth month of A. D. 223, five

months after Liu Shan succeeded Liu Bei.

4. Li Yiji went to Qi to persuade the king of Qi, Tian Guang, to submit to Liu Bang. The king agreed and suspended military preparations. Han Xin, Liu Bang's general, chose this moment to attack, and the king boiled Li Yiji alive, thinking he had betrayed him.

At this time Sun Quan owed fealty to Cao Pi.

5. Mao: "He not only shows no fear, he speaks of the Southland's fear! How artful!"

6. Mao: "He speaks of the Southland's interest, not the Riverlands'. How artful!"

7. Mao: "Deng Zhi asks first to know Sun Quan's mind. In this lies his art."

8. Mao: "Deng Zhi's art lies in reverting to hard words."

9. Mao: "Deng Zhi contrives to have Sun Quan make the request to *him*. Artful beyond description!"

10. Mao: "Deng Zhi is the one posing difficulties! Exquisitely artful!"

11. Mao: "This shows Kongming's continuing concern for the late Emperor's wish to attack the Southland."

12. Mao: "And said not a word."

13. Mao: "Speaking before the king of the Southland, Deng Zhi never once alluded to the Riverlands' attack on the Southland. But here, to the Southland envoy, Kongming repairs the 'omission. '"

14. From *Shi jing*, ode 241, "Huang yi."

15. From *Shi jing*, ode 184, "He ming."

16. From *Shi jing*, ode 229, "Bai hua."

17. This version of the mythological war between Gong Gong and Zhuan Xu comes from the "Tian wen" section of the *Huainan zi*.

18. Mao: "At the Battle of Red Cliffs Cao Cao already had Jingzhou, so his forces could cross from there. In this case Jingzhou was in Sun Quan's hands, so northern forces on the Huai had to come across from Guangling."

19. A. D. 224; the year is named by the Wei calendar.

20. *Zhongjun huwei*: a Wei, not a Han, title.

21. *Shangshu puye*: traditionally, the Secretariat's principal authority was the *ling*; the *puye* was second to him.

Throughout the Han and into the Wei the secretariat was increasing in staff and complexity of functions. See Yang Hongnian, *Han Wei zhidu congkao* (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshu, 1985), pp. 91-93.

22. Mao: "Unlike Cao Pi, Sun Quan is deeply devoted to his brothers."

23. In the tenth month of 224 the Emperor returned to Xuchang (*ZZTJ*, p. 2221).

24. In the late summer of 223 in Yizhou district (present-day Jinning of Yunnan province), Yong Kai initiated an armed rebellion. At the critical moment when Liu Shan succeeded Liu Bei, Yong Kai murdered the Shu-Han-appointed governor of Yizhou, Zheng Mao, then arrested Zheng Mao's successor, Zhang Yi, and sent him to the Southland in exchange for Sun Quan's support. Sun Quan reciprocated by appointing Yong Kai governor of Yongchang. The SGZ (p. 894) places Deng Zhi's visit to the Southland to reestablish friendship with the Riverlands *after* Yong Kai's rebellion.

According to the *ZZTJ* (p. 2216), the chief official at Yongchang, Lü Kai, barred Yong Kai's entrance. As a result, Yong Kai had a native of the district, Meng Huo, incite the southern tribes

CHAPTER 87

1. The year is A. D. 225. Jian Xing ("Commence the [Dynastic] Revival" or simply "New Beginning") is the reign title of Liu Bei's son Liu Shan, Second Emperor of Shu-Han. Kongming will return to Chengdu from these wars in the fall of the same year (chap. 91).

2. Mao (introductory note): "After the peace with Wu, Kongming should have followed up with an attack on Wei. Instead, he began the southern march. Why? I would reply, Cao Pi wanted to borrow Sun Quan's army to attack the Riverlands. Cao Pi also wanted to borrow Meng Huo's Man troops to attack the Riverlands. The Riverlands had succeeded in turning the Southland troops north against Wei but could not do the same with Meng Huo's troops. Rather, Kongming had to invest all his efforts in eliminating the threat Meng Huo posed, because a precipitate attack on the north would have exposed the Riverlands to Meng Huo from the south. Thus, both in concluding peace with Wu and in attacking the Man, Kongming's ultimate objective remained Wei."

The Man had also approached the Southland for troops. After the Riverlands' first successful downriver attacks on the Southland, Man agents from Wuqi in Wuling sought military assistance from Sun Quan (*ZZTJ*, p. 2191).

CHAPTER 88

1. Mao: "One may conclude that Kongming [unlike Liu Bei] would never have been burned out at Xiaoting." Mao's preceding note says, "At Xiaoting, Liu Bei also pitched camp in a shady wood; Kongming's camps, however, are not connected."

2. The Han sphere.

3. Mao (introductory note): "Kongming's purpose in showing Meng Huo around the base area is actually to lure him into making an attack."

4. By the Tang poet Hu Zeng (TS, p. 853). The "three calls" on Kongming refer to Liu Bei's visits to his Longzhong farm to solicit his service (chap. 37).

CHAPTER 89

1. Ma Yuan, who reconquered the area (the former Southern Viet kingdom) for the Chinese in A. D. 44 after the uprising of the Trung sisters. The first General Who Tames the Deeps in this area was Lu Bode; he overcame the Southern Viets for Han Wudi in 111 B. C.

2. According to the TS, this poem is by Sima Wen.

3. The TS (p. 859) has the last line read: "Remember the gravity of the cause of Han." Mao Zonggang tends to "correct" the TS's secular language of political power with the moralistic language of imperial authority.

4. The poem uses "Wu hou" (lord of Wu), not "Kongming."

5. Geng Gong was the hero of a desperate battle against the northern Xiongnu during the reign of Han Mingdi (A. D. 58-75).

CHAPTER 90

1. The legendary fire god.

2. Typically, Han conquerors controlled minority regions by establishing districts and appointing Han bureaucrats to govern them. Kongming's strategy of psychological subjugation (*fluxin*) aimed at "going to the local chieftains and giving them office." See the extract from the *Han jin chunqiu* in SGZ, p. 921. The description of Kongming's strategy in *Three Kingdoms* is historical. But according to the slightly different picture presented in the SGZ, the original rebellion of Yong Kai did not attract many adherents and some Man peoples aided Kongming in suppressing the rebels. *Three Kingdoms* has enhanced the scale of the rebellion, as well as Kongming's methods of suppressing it. See Liu Chunfan, *Zhuge Liang zhuan* (Beijing: Zhongguo qingnian chubanshe, 1986), pp. 102-15.

The *PH* account differs significantly from the *Three Kingdoms* account: "Half a year after Liu Shan succeeded Liu Bei as emperor, the Man king Meng Huo sent a Man general for the ten legions that Liu Bei had [earlier] borrowed. The Man general said, 'What are you trying to get from us?' Director General Kongming kept him for fifteen days in a guesthouse before sending him away with valuable gifts. The young ruler [Liu Shan] asked Kongming to devise measures against the Man general should he come again."

The *PH* says further that Meng Huo instigated three district governors (*taishou*)—Yong Kai, Lü Kai, and Du Qi—to revolt against the Riverlands on account of the ten unreturned legions. During one battle Du Qi said to Kongming, "Zhuge, you are unprincipled. You killed our sovereign Liu Zhang. Why shouldn't I revolt?" (pp. 129-30).

According to the *Han Jin chunqiu*, however, Kongming had no military or economic support from the Man until after his successful southern campaign; *Three Kingdoms* follows this source.

Qiu Zhensheng points out elements of superstition and Han chauvinism in *Three Kingdoms'* treatment of the campaign and notes that certain minorities reverse the legend by celebrating Meng Huo for organizing various local peoples in the struggle against Zhuge Liang and for capturing and releasing Zhuge Liang seven times. See *ZHT*, pp. 238-39; and cf. the "obligating release" of Cao Cao by Lord Guan.

1. The familiar *mantou* or steamed buns.

2. A. D. 225: Jian Xing (Commence the Revival) is the Second Emperor's first reign period.

3. *TS* (p. 876): "... as if waiting to serve his father." Mao: "The situation resembles Emperor Xian's reception of Cao Cao."

4. A. D. 226. The *TS* (p. 877) first gives the year according to the Wei calendar: Huang Chu 7.

5. *Wen*, a basic term for Chinese culture, may be translated as "civil order" ; it forms a contrastive pair with the term *wu*, "martial might." Cao Cao, Pi's father, was posthumously titled Wu Huangdi, August Emperor Wu. The Chinese word *huang* conventionally translated "august" literally means "high and shining like the sun." It is the *-no* in the Japanese *tennō*, "emperor." Cao Cao's temple name was Tai Zu, or Great Ancestor, just as Liu Bang was called Gao Zu, or Supreme Ancestor. Cao Pi's death is dated to June 29. Wen Zhao means Reflector of Emperor Wen; *zhao* contains the graph for sun.

6. The title *dajiangjun* is translated "supreme commander" in military contexts; in earlier chapters it was translated "regent" or "regent-marshal." Since Cao Zhen had responsibility for the heir, the translation "regent-marshal" is used in his case.

7. "Submerged dragon" suggests a potential sovereign.

8. Liu Bang suspected Han Xin of disloyalty and on the pretext of a pleasure tour went to Yunmeng to see him. There Liu Bang tricked Han Xin into receiving him, and then arrested him on the spot. Later Liu Bang released him and made him lord of Huaiyin. See Ssu-ma Ch'ien [Sima Qian], *Records of the Grand Historian of China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 1: 109, 229.

9. Mao: "Kongming's instruction to the Second Emperor concerns two institutions, the palace and the ministries. If the Emperor lets the palace [or court] officials become too intimate, and the ministerial [or bureau] officials become estranged, then opportunists will have access to him but worthy men will not. This is how emperors Huan and Ling came to grief."

10. Xiang Chong was the only commander to bring his forces home intact after the disastrous campaign against the Southland.

11. Slightly amended, following the text in Zhuge Liang's biography in the *SGZ*, p. 920.

12. Mao's introductory note says: "The *Gangmu* headline reads, 'The Han prime minister, Zhuge Liang, lord of Wuxiang, orders the army to wage just war on Wei.' Thus, this memorial first expresses the great principle [*dayi*] of smiting the traitor [Cao clan]." According to the Wei calendar, it was the third month of Tai He (Grand Harmony) or A. D. 227. The Wei reign title changed with the accession of the new emperor, Cao Rui.

13. Qiao Zhou was the mentor of Chen Shou, author of the *SGZ*.

14. These offices mainly replicate the Han bureaucracy; most bureaucratic innovations were made in the Wei kingdom.

15. The fourth or fifth day of May in A. D. 227.

16. According to Pei Songzhi's interlinear note to the biography of Li Yan, citing Chen Shou's *Zhugeliang ji* (*SGZ*, p. 999), Li Yan urged Zhuge Liang to assume the Nine Dignities (i. e., become king, or *wang*). Zhuge Liang rejected the idea and reiterated his dedication to the Second Emperor. On the awarding of the Nine Dignities to Cao Cao, see chapter 61 n. 5; on the awarding of

the Nine Dignities to Sun Quan, see chapter 82.

17. Xiahou Yuan died in battle in A. D. 218 when Liu Bei drove Cao Cao's forces from Hanzhong.

CHAPTER 92

1. Summer, the fourth month of the fifth year of the Shu-Han reign period Jian Xing (A. D. 227) (TS, p. 885).

2. Cao Cao's son-in-law.

3. I. e., Chang'an.

4. Wei Yan is a character of particular importance for understanding the last years of Kongming's career as well as the events after his death. Liu Bei had made him responsible for Hanzhong, or "East Riverlands," the crucial region between Shu and Guanzhong, and he knew the terrain well. See Shen Bojun, "Lun Wei Yan," in *LWJ*, p. 176.

5. Mao (introductory note): "In this chapter we find the military exploits of Zhao Zilong, which are the 'consummation of his purposes.' What does this phrase mean? When the First Ruler assumed the throne, Zhao Zilong urged him to attack Wei at once. When the First Ruler attacked Wu [instead], he put Zhao Zilong in the rear because his heart was not in waging war on Wu. But in the campaign against Wei, Kongming put Zhao Zilong in the van because the warrior's heart was in it."

6. Mao (introductory note): "In Jiang Wei the Riverlands had someone who ultimately took up arms against the Wei as an heir to Kongming's policy. Even before Kongming's Qishan campaigns against the Wei, the author inserts the man who will campaign against the Wei [after the six Qishan campaigns]. Intending later to use a character positively, the author introduces him in a negative light—as an enemy of the Riverlands in the service of the Wei.... Thus, we come to a realization of the author's method of narrative organization."

CHAPTER 93

1. Mao (introductory note): "Kongming used Jiang Wei's mother to control him in much the same way that Cao Cao used Shan Fu's mother to control him. But Cao Cao forged the mother's letter to lure the son; Kongming did not have to forge a letter.... Shan Fu yielded only to his mother, but not to Cao Cao. Jiang Wei yields not only to his mother, but also to Kongming."

2. Imperial and nonimperial locutions are mixed here. *Three Kingdoms* refers here to Cao Rui as *zhu* (ruler) instead of *di* or *tianzi* (emperor), and uses his *ming* (name) in order to deny his universal (*tianxia*) legitimacy.

3. Wang Lang's death is dated by the *ZZTJ* to the second year of Tai He, eleventh month, i. e., late 228 or early 229. The cause and circumstances are not mentioned, but it is unlikely that he accompanied Cao Zhen on this campaign. Indeed, judging from the *ZZTJ* as well as Cao Zhen's biography (SGZ, p. 281), the revolt of the three towns is followed directly by the crucial defeat of Kongming's picked commander Ma Su. Why has Luo Guanzhong interposed a dramatic rhetorical duel between Kongming and Wang Lang?

It was Wang Lang who, together with Hua Xin, persuaded Cao Pi to create the Wei regime; Lang's long years of loyal service to Han and Wei and his intrepid opposition to the "Shu traitors" (SGZ, p.

411) are detailed in his biography. Advancing his death one year and giving Kongming a memorable moral victory over the venerable Wei vassal perhaps cushions the humiliating defeat at Jieting—which came at a time of growing doubt in the Riverlands about Kongming's pursuit of Liu Bei's original quest.

CHAPTER 94

1. I. e., in February of A. D. 228.

2. The Palace of Enduring Peace was where Liu Bei had passed away.

3. *Sanqi changshi* is a Wei title. "The Qin dynasty appointed *sanqi*, detached cavalry, and *chang-shi*, regular attendants. The former rode behind the imperial carriage; the latter had personal access to the sovereign. Both offices were held in addition to another appointment [*jia guan*]. Early in the Eastern Han the position of *sanqi* was abolished, and all *changshi* positions were filled by eunuchs.

Now the *sanqi* has been reestablished and combined with the *changshi* to form one office whose function is to offer moral remonstrance, not to take charge of administrative business. "From note to ZZTJ, p. 2178, under Huang Chu 1, the first reign year for Cao Cao (A. D. 220).

4. Mao: "Meng Da's murder of Liu Feng is avenged." Sima Yi captured Xincheng and killed Meng Da between February 23 and March 23, A. D. 228.

5. Mao (introductory note): "Had the Wei ruler not employed Sima Yi again, Meng Da would have survived and the two capitals [Chang'an and Luoyang] could have been attacked. If the two capitals had been attacked, the Cao dynasty, Wei, could have been destroyed. That the dynasty was not destroyed then and there was Sima Yi's achievement. Nonetheless, the saving of Wei led directly to the usurping of Wei. So by using the Sima Yi to counter Han [Shu, or the Riverlands], the Wei barred the tiger at the front only to admit the wolf at the rear. At the outset of Sima Yi's renewed service to the Wei, the author introduces Yi's brave and forthright sons not, it would seem, because they aided the Wei, but rather because they foreshadow its doom."

Meng Da's last stand is treated differently in the *PH* (p. 133): Meng Da agrees to rejoin the Riverlands camp; Sima Yi marches against him. Meng Da writes Zhuge Liang for help; Zhuge Liang does not come. Meng Da writes Liang a second time; still he does not come. Meng Da realizes Zhuge Liang's purpose and speaks of falling into his trap; Meng Da hangs himself.

In the longer view, the civil wars between Wei and Shu created the conditions for Qiang and Di (another non-Han people) dominance in northern China in the fourth century.

CHAPTER 95

1. Mao (introductory note): "With this chapter the opposition between Sima Yi and Kongming begins. Engagement is in Kongming's interest; avoidance of battle works to Sima Yi's advantage."

2. Mao (introductory note): "The previous chapter told how Meng Da lost Shangyong by ignoring Kongming's advice. This chapter tells how Ma Su lost Jieting by ignoring Kongming's advice. The loss of Shangyong left Kongming without hope of advancing. The loss of Jieting nearly left him without a place of retreat. Why? Without Jieting, Yangping Pass was not secure. If Yangping Pass was not safe, advance became fruitless and retreat costly.... Thus, Nan'an, Anding, and

Tianshui had to be sacrificed; Winnow Basket Gorge had to be evacuated; and the stores at Xicheng had to be removed. The previous victories, from the capture of Xiahou Mao... to the defeat of Cao Zhen [all that Kongming had achieved since returning from the southern expedition against the Man] now came to naught. Alas."

The Zi-Wu Gorge was a passage cut in the Wang Mang era across the Southern or Qinling Mountains, which divide Guanzhong from Hanzhong to the south. See Pan Ku [Ban Gu], *History of the Former Han Dynasty*, trans. Homer H. Dubs (Baltimore: The Waverly Press, 1938-55), 3: 212.

The historical Sima Yi was not at the western front for the "vacant city ruse" but at the more important southern front with the Southland. Sima Yi did not come to the western front until Kongming's fourth offensive (see chap. 100). The fictional tradition tends to attach more importance to the Wei-Shu conflict than to the Wei-Wu conflict, and *Three Kingdoms* accordingly builds up the Kongming-Sima Yi rivalry and the events of A. D. 228.

CHAPTER 96

1. Gun was executed for failing to control the floods, but his son Yu (or Great Yu), mastered the waters and subsequently succeeded Shun as emperor. The *SGZ* (p. 984) says that Ma Su died in prison. Historically, the defeat at Jieting may have cost Kongming a speedy conquest of Chang'an. The defeat resulted directly from his assignment of Jieting's defense to Ma Su. In making this assignment, Kongming not only went against Liu Xuande's warning about Ma Su; he also ignored the majority of his advisers who had argued that Wei Yan, not Ma Su, be given authority to defend Jieting. Ma Su was the younger brother of Ma Liang, with whom Kongming had had an extremely close relationship; see the note by Pei Songzhi, *SGZ*, p. 983.

2. In 206 B. C., at the start of his campaign against Xiang Yu, Liu Bang needed to slip his forces past Chencang. To help Liu Bang accomplish this maneuver, Han Xin built a cliffside plank road that diverted Xiang Yu's attention, allowing Liu Bang to reach his destination. See *SJ*, "Gao Zu benji."

3. Yangzhou was the official Han (and now Wei) provincial name for the Southland region.

4. Huan was the main city of Lujiang, a district which was the center of a long strip of Southland territory above the Yangzi. The northern part of Lujiang was in Wei hands.

5. Lu Xun was renowned for foiling Liu Bei's invasion of the Southland (chap. 84).

CHAPTER 97

1. The triumph at Hanshui refers to Zilong's rescue of Kongming. On the eve of the battle at Red Cliffs, Zilong picked up Kongming and ferried him out of the Southland. For the rescue of the Second Emperor (Ah Dou), see chapter 41.

2. This refers to the early years of Emperor Xian's reign; Liu Yao was made inspector of Yangzhou in A. D. 194. A few lines below, the translation follows the *TS* (p. 936), which reads Sun Ce, not Sun Quan.

3. Mao (introductory note): "The first petition was to guide Liu Shan, the second petition to answer critics.... The first petition concerned itself with domestic issues, the second with external affairs."

Many scholars doubt the authenticity of Kongming's second petition, in part because Zhao Zilong's

death is dated in his *SGZ* biography to the following year. The document is preserved in the *Han Jin chunqiu* of Xi Zuochi, via Pei Songzhi's notes to the *SGZ* (p. 923). Neither the *SGZ* itself nor the *Wen xuan* includes it; Sima Guang, however, places it in the *ZZTJ* under the year A. D. 228. Ma Zhijie, "Hou chu shi biao de zuozhe wenti," attributes the piece to Zhuge Liang's nephew, Zhuge Ke; see *Wen shi*, no. 17 (1983): 264-69. Also see Zhuge Ke's biography in the *SGZ*, especially p. 1435.

The Cong and the Sou, mentioned a few lines below, are non-Han peoples who come from the Ba and Shu regions, respectively, of the Riverlands. The Black Qiang were named for the color of their clothing.

4. Dated in the *TS* to the eleventh month of Jian Xing 6 (between December 14, A. D. 228, and January 12, A. D. 229). Mao (introductory note): "Since the defeat at Jieting and the execution of Ma Su, voices in the Riverlands had been raised in favor of maintaining peace in the kingdom and opposing the war against Wei. Kongming, however, held that only by waging war against Wei could peace in the Riverlands be made secure."

5. Mao: "Sima Yi is a fine judge of men if this is the kind he recommends."

6. Mao: "Ma Su could not hold Jieting with thirty thousand; but Hao Zhao held Chencang with three thousand—because Jieting had no wall and Chencang did."

7. Mao: "Sima Yi took Jieting, but Kongming could not take Chencang. The reason lies in the difference between the defenders as well as the site." Chencang commands the middle section of the Wei River; farther west, Tianshui and then Nan'an command the river's western end.

8. Mao (introductory note): "Zhou Fang 'surrendered' to Wei, and Cao Xiu believed him. Jiang Wei 'surrendered' to Wei, and Cao Zhen believed him. The incidents are analogous, except that Zhou Fang 'surrendered' by letter and in person, Jiang Wei only by letter....

"Meng Da gave allegiance to Shu as a man of Shu, and Kongming believed him. Jiang Wei gave allegiance to Wei as a man of Wei, and Cao Zhen believed him. The incidents are analogous, except that Kongming judged rightly, Cao Zhen wrongly. Meng Da's surrender was genuine, but his plan failed; Jiang Wei's surrender was false, but his plan worked. In this respect the incidents are not analogous."

CHAPTER 98

1. It was not the third day of the cycle (*bingyin*), but the thirty-third (*bingshen*), according to the *SGZ* (p. 1134). Achilles Fang equates it to June 23, A. D. 229; see Ssu-ma Kuang [Sima Guang], *The Chronicle of the Three Kingdoms*, trans. and annot. Achilles Fang, Harvard-Yenching Institute Studies, no. 6 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1952-65), 1: 291.

2. From "Imperial [*huang*, yellow] Might" to "Imperial Dragon."

3. Zhuge Ke, a nephew of Zhuge Liang, is often supposed to be the author of Kongming's "Second Petition on Taking the Field" (chap. 97) because it resembles Ke's polemic against Wei, the "Zheng Wei lun." See *SGZ*, p. 1134; see also chap. 97, n. 3. Zhuge Ke's anti-Wei militance and Sun Quan's anti-Wei leadership come through more sharply in the historical than in the fictional traditions.

4. Zhuge Ke alludes here to Zhang Zhao's long record of favoring accommodation with the north (note his conflict with Zhou Yu before the battle at Red Cliffs). The reference to Jiang Ziya, the military leader who guided the Zhou dynasty founder to power, emphasizes Zhang Zhao's timidity.

5. In the *TS* (p. 951), Sima Yi begins with these words: "Years before, Sun Quan defended Wu from below the Great River with help from no one. He was satisfied [to hold his region] and harbored no further ambition. After that, when Lu Xun took Jingzhou, Sun Quan said he had gone too far. Now, however, Sun Quan has declared himself emperor, but his people remain uneasy. He will not dare to risk military action."

6. Mao: "Not wanting the Emperor to reclaim the seal but wanting Cao Zhen instead to yield the seal on his own demonstrates Sima Yi's skill in handling Cao Zhen. Not waiting for the Emperor to confer the seal but saying instead, 'I'll go for it myself,' demonstrates Sima Yi's contempt for the Emperor."

7. Mao (introductory note): "The descriptions of Kongming's seven captures and seven releases of Meng Huo form a sequence, and herein lies their genius. The descriptions of Kongming's six offensives from the Qishan hills are not connected however, and therein lies their genius. Between the first and second offensives comes Lu Xun's defeat of Wei.... Between the second and third, Sun Quan declares himself emperor.... We often find that the *Zuo zhuan* narratives concerning a particular kingdom branch out to include narratives of other kingdoms, thus providing richer detail. And Sima Qian's *Shi ji* often branches out to lateral events in a particular narrative, thus making its accounts fuller. *Three Kingdoms* holds it own with those great histories.

"Among [the rulers of] the three kingdoms, Sun Quan was the last to declare himself emperor. Why? Because circumstances barred it. Sun Quan did not declare himself emperor while Cao Cao still lived simply because Cao Cao would have used the authority of Emperor Xian to attack him. When Cao Pi declared himself emperor, Sun Quan could have done so too, but with Shu attacking Wu, such a rash move would have added strength to the attackers and cut off aid from Wei. But once Shu befriended Wu, and Wei separated from Wu; once Shu felt pressure from Wei, and Wei suffered defeat by Shu, *then* Sun Quan seized the chance to become the Son of Heaven....

"Wu had acknowledged itself a vassal to Wei and received the Nine Dignities from Wei because Wu was seeking Wei's aid in attacking Shu. But once Sun Quan declared himself emperor, Wu and Wei could never cooperate again.... This meant the isolation of Wu as well as Wei. Thus, Kongming's plan to befriend Wu may be rightly regarded as a plan to devour Wu."

Sometime in July of A. D. 229, "the leader of the Southland and the representative of Han [i. e., Shu] formally divided the territory of Wei between them. The treaty assigned Yuzhou, Qingzhou, Xuzhou, and Youzhou to the south; and Yanzhou, Jizhou, Bingzhou, and Liangzhou to Han. The administrative district [i. e., the *sizhou*, the territory that contained the two capitals] was divided at Hangu Pass" (*ZZTJ*, p. 2254). The account of this agreement in the *SGZ* (p. 1134) is even fuller and depicts Sun Quan personally dividing the territory of Wei. A trace of this agreement between Wu and Shu remains in the *TS* (p. 949); no indication whatever remains in the Mao edition of this formal acceptance by Shu-Han of Wu's equal sovereignty. However, the primary southern source, the "Wuzhu zhuan" (Life of Sun Quan), contains the text of this "Han-Wu" covenant. (Clearly, the Riverlands—Shu—called itself Han.) The covenant is based on a common moral denunciation of the third Wei emperor, Cao Rui, for stealing power in the manner of Cao Pi, and it concludes with a provision for mutual military assistance (*SGZ*, pp. 1134-35). The personal preeminence of Sun Quan, uncontested after Liu Bei's death, is expressed in these pages of the *SGZ*.

1. The Qishan hills mark the western front of the kingdom of Wei. Control of this region assures for Wei the security of the land within the passes, and also offers a forward position for an attack south toward Chengdu.

2. Dated in the *TS* (p. 955) to Jian Xing 7, summer, 6th month (A. D. 229). See also *ZZTJ*, p. 2252.

3. Wei Yan had had primary responsibility for the Hanzhong region; see chapter 73.

4. Here *dajiangjun* is translated "chief general" because the context is military; "regent" or "regent-marshal" will still be used in a court context.

5. Jiange Pass, "Saber Gateway," is the gateway to the road to Chengdu.

6. The moon governs all *yin* phenomena, such as rain; the star mansion Net can be associated with the geographical area of the ancient state of Jin; and Jin is the name of the dynasty the Sima house will found.

7. This was the advice given by Li Zuoju to the king of Zhao when arguing for a surprise attack on Han Xin's supply line. Later, his advice led Han Xin to conquer Yan.

8. The last Shang king was Zhou (not to be confused with the Zhou of the house of Zhou).

9. See *ZZTJ*, pp. 2261-63, under the eighth month of Jian Xing 8 (a. d. 230).

10. Mao (introductory note): "On his first sortie from the Qishan hills, the Lord of Wu [i. e., Kongming] returned at once because Jieting had already fallen. He returned after the second sortie because he failed to capture Chencang. On this the third sortie he captured Chencang... and went on to defeat Wei in several battles. There was no reason to return, but he did so because of the death of Zhang Bao."

CHAPTER 100

1. The *TS* chapter title is "Zhuge Liang's Fourth Sortie from the Qishan Hills."

2. The "plank roads" are the wooden bridge-roads found fastened onto cliffsides throughout western China.

3. Chen Shi's son, Shou, is the author of the *SGZ*.

4. Jian Xing 8, 8th month (A. D. 230), by the Shu-Han calendar (*TS*, p. 970).

5. Mao (introductory note): "Thus that [dependency on eunuchs] which Zhao Lie [Liu Bei] lamented and detested in Han Emperors Huan and Ling, his son, the Second Emperor, now enters into."

6. Yu Xu was an Eastern Han governor who used this tactic successfully against the Qiang.

7. Kongming lived for ten more years after returning from the southern campaigns against the Man to Chengdu in late A. D. 225. The reader may find it convenient to have a list of the key historical events to A. D. 231.

In the summer of A. D. 226 Cao Pi died, and his son, Cao Rui, succeeded him. Rui, however, was a weak figure: his guardians controlled him; and no strong maternal family backed him. The accession of the new Wei sovereign offered Kongming an opportunity to wage war. Kongming may also have felt that his success against the Man nation would lead to successes against the stronger of the foreign peoples in the north, the Qiang and the Di, who had settled in the Qishan area, i. e., north of the River Wei and west of Chang'an. In A. D. 227 Kongming submitted his first "Petition on Taking the Field" to the Second Emperor, Liu Shan of Shu-Han. This same year Kongming also made progress in winning

back the allegiance of the defector Meng Da, who had lost confidence in the Wei government after Cao Pi's death. Allying with Meng Da would have given Kongming a salient against the Wei kingdom. However, in early A. D. 228 Sima Yi learned of Meng Da's disloyalty, attacked his city, Xicheng, and killed him (see chap. 94).

Despite the death of Meng Da, Kongming commenced his first campaign from the Qishan hills in the spring of A. D. 228. His effort was rewarded by the gain of three key towns—Tianshui, Nan'an, and Anding—north and west of Chang'an. Chang'an was shaken. Kongming could attack it from Hanzhong in the south and from the three towns in the west. The Wei emperor, Cao Rui, visited the city personally. The Wei generals Cao Zhen and Zhang He counterattacked the Riverlands' newly established positions. In the fighting Kongming's commander Ma Su lost the crucial site of Jieting (often read Xiaoting), and the three towns reverted to Wei control. At Kongming's own request the Second Emperor demoted him as punishment for these losses.

Early the following year (A. D. 229) Kongming besieged Chencang but failed to take it and withdrew. A few months later Kongming began the third offensive, seizing Wudu and Yinping and driving back Guo Huai. This was Kongming's first real victory in the northern expedition, and the Second Emperor restored his titles in recognition of it. Wudu was the administrative center of Wudu district (south Liangzhou in the Han, northwest Yizhou in the Three Kingdoms period); Yinping was a key point for exercising control over the Di and Qiang nations, whose cooperation was indispensable to any effort whether by Shu or by Wei to stabilize local rule and protect Chang'an. (Presumably, Kongming's success in winning the allegiance of the Man enhanced his prestige with the Di and Qiang.) In June of A. D. 229 Sun Quan declared himself emperor of the Southland (Wu).

In A. D. 230 the Wei emperor, Cao Rui, decided on a major offensive against the Riverlands, summoning Sima Yi from the southern to the western front. Unceasing heavy rains stalled the effort (chaps. 99, 100), and Sima Yi retreated. In the beginning of A. D. 231 Kongming began his next offensive (called the "fourth" by the *TS*; not the offensive beginning chap. 100, but the one beginning chap. 101).

Kongming's offensives from the Qishan hills have been interpreted in a variety of ways. Some scholars believe the campaigns weakened Shu, others that they assured its survival for another generation. Some scholars argue that Kongming should have followed Wei Yan's advice and struck directly at Chang'an through the Zi-Wu Gorge. Others claim that Kongming's indirect approach through the Qishan hills succeeded as an offensive defense of Shu. See Yang Weili, "Lun Zhuge Liang beifa," Peng Nian and Hou Cheng, *Wuchu Qishan shuping*, and Tang Jinyu, "Jiang Wei fa Wei yu Zhuge Liang de zhanlue sixiang," in *Zhuce Liang yanjiu*, Chengdushi Zhuge Liang yanjiuhui, ed. (Chendgu: Ba Shu shushe, 1985), pp. 226-49. See also Shi Nianhai, "Lun Zhuge Liang de gongshou celue," *Heshan ji* (Beijing: Shenghuo dushu xinzhishi Sanlian shudian, 1963), pp. 280-301.

CHAPTER 101

1. The *TS* (p. 975) reads: "On previous campaigns a good many soldiers felt resentment." Yang Yi will later become Kongming's successor.
2. "Grand Harmony" (A. D. 231); it was the fifth expedition according to the *TS* (p. 975).
3. Mao: "Sima Yi gradually comes to resemble Cao Cao."
4. Marshal Tianpeng, a folk deity.

5. Since ancient times the Chinese have computed days and years by means of two sets of characters, the ten "heavenly stems" and the twelve "earthly branches." In a complete sequence each stem will pair with six (always the same six) of the branches to form a cycle of sixty. For further explanation, see George A. Kennedy, *ZH Guide* (New Haven: Yale University, Sinological Seminar, 1953), pp. 16-17. The Six Jia and the Six Ding refer to the six branch combinations with the *ding* stem (*mao, chou, hai, you, wei, si*) and the six branch combinations with the *jia* stem (*zi, xu, shen, wu, chen, yin*). The *ding* combinations were described in Taoist texts as *yin* or female in nature, the *jia* combination as *yang* or male. Whoever could command these agents of nature (*yin* and *yang*) could control both the external weather and the spiritual self. See the index under *liu chia* and *liu ting* in James R. Ware, *Alchemy, Medicine, and Religion in the China of A. D. 320: The Nei P'ien of Ko Hung* (New York: Dover Publications, reprint of the 1966 M. I. T. Press edition, 1981).

According to an ancient fairy tale, Fei Changfang of the Later Han possessed a Taoist skill that enabled him to travel to meet various people a thousand *li* apart in the space of a single day; he called his technique "shrinking the land." (Footnote to the Renmin wenzue chubanshe edition of the *Sanguo yanyi* [Beijing, 1973], p. 875.)

6. "Horse," *ma*, refers to Sima Yi; "river deer," *zhang*, refers to Zhang He. The Mumen (Treegate) road ambush occurred in midsummer, A. D. 231.

7. Qiao Zhou was the mentor of Chen Shou, author of the *SGZ*. Later, Qiao Zhou will urge the Second Ruler to submit to Wei.

CHAPTER 102

1. "The sixteen stars of K'uei [Kui, or Legs, the fifteenth lunar mansion]... form the arsenal of the heavens... [and] govern the employment of military strength to ward off attack" ; Ho Peng Yoke, *The Astronomical Chapters of the Chin Shu*, Le monde d'outre mer passé et présent, sér. 2: Documents, n° 9 (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1966), p. 100.

2. In Jian An 24 Cao Cao rescued Cao Ren from Fan, where Lord Guan had him under siege. Cao Cao stationed his troops at Mopo.

3. Qing Long 1 dates to A. D. 233.

4. *Xingjun sima*, a Wei title, derives from *xing sima* in the *Zhou li*.

5. For the Dance of Yu and the importance of the Dipper to early Taoist ritual, see Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 239-42.

6. See chapter 101, n. 50.

7. It was about six hundred *li* from Saber Gateway to Ye Gorge.

8. I. e., about four to five hundred *jin*.

9. This tentative interpretation of the text is guided by an article in *Tongji daxue xuebao* 16 (1988): 301-16, entitled "Muniu liuma bianyi," by Chen Congzhou of Tongji University's Department of Architecture and Lu Jingyan of the Department of Mechanical Engineering.

After acknowledging the many doubtful points about the vehicle, the authors suggest that both the bull and the horse were wheelbarrows, specially improved to travel the wooden plank roads built along steep cliffs as well as the hilly western terrain. The wooden plank roads were also called "five-span roads" ; only a one-wheeled vehicle would have the maneuverability to negotiate them.

On steep hills an improved braking system was essential. The authors believe that the four legs were struts which extended from each corner of the vehicle and served to brace it up or down hills (see the opening sentence of Kongming's description).

The puzzling phrase "every six spans the porters advance, the bull advances four paces" is explained as referring to the six spans of the wheel, which the authors estimate to have had a diameter of two spans; such a large wheel would have conserved the porters' energy.

10. The preceding description of the parts for making a wooden bull concerns itself with the form and function of the vehicle. There follows a section called "How to Make a Gliding Horse," which is a list of measurements for assembling those parts; a translation is not attempted here.

The authors of the article mentioned in note 9 above regard the gliding horse as a smaller variant of the wooden bull. They suggest that the bull was made to be drawn by man or beast and could bear a considerable load, while the horse, meant to be pushed, carried lighter cargo.

In all likelihood, the authors say, these vehicles were relatively simple machines and the materials for their construction were prepared during the three-year lull before this campaign (A. D. 231-34).

CHAPTER 103

1. Mao (introductory note): "Before Kongming's second sortie from the Qishan hills, Wei had attacked Wu and suffered defeat. At the time of the sixth sortie, Wu attacked Wei and suffered defeat. Why did Wu succeed in defense but fail in offense? Because Wu had no determination to suppress the traitors!... In the first case, Wei withdrew from Wu fearing attack by Shu on the west. But Wu, facing no such threat, withdrew precipitately after losing a single battle to Wei. Kongming's reliance on Wu was an empty illusion. How sad!"

2. The following two paragraphs appear in the *TS*: "After Kongming had returned to his base on the south bank of the River Wei and settled into his camp, Wei Yan protested to him: 'Ma Dai blocked the rear exit of Gourd Gorge. But for that Heaven-sent rain I and my five hundred men would have perished in the fires.' (Kongming meant for Wei Yan to die with Sima Yi; the unexpected rain saved them. Later, when he was dying, Kongming left Ma Dai with a plan for killing Wei Yan.) In great anger Kongming criticized Ma Dai, saying, 'Wei Yan is a great general. When I gave you the plan, I told you only to burn out Sima Yi. What did you mean by trapping Wei Yan in the gorge? It is our court's great good fortune that the sudden storm saved him. Had things gone wrong, I would have lost my right arm!' Kongming rebuked him severely and said, 'Guards! Remove and execute him' (p. 1001).

"The other commanders prostrated themselves before Kongming's tent and pleaded again and again before Kongming relented and spared Ma Dai. He had Ma Dai stripped and punished with forty strokes on the back, deprived of his positions as General Who Subdues the North and lord of Chencang, and reduced to an unregistered army servant. After this public denunciation Ma Dai returned to his former base. Kongming secretly sent Fan Jian there to inform him, 'The prime minister knows you for a loyal and honorable general, and so he desires that you carry out this secret plan. In future your achievement will be of the first rank. But you are to blame the incident on Yang Yi so as to resolve the enmity between yourself and Wei Yan.' Ma Dai received the plan with enthusiasm and the following day forced himself to go to see Wei Yan and acknowledge his fault:

T would never have done such a thing to you; it was planned by Senior Adviser Yang Yi. ' Wei Yan, who detested Yang Yi, went directly to Kongming and said, 'I desire the services of Ma Dai as my subordinate commander. ' Kongming refused at first, but agreed after repeated requests" (p. 1002).

3. *Shanhe*, "land," literally translates "mountains and rivers." The Sima family brought an end to the Three Kingdoms era between A. D. 265, when it founded the Jin dynasty, and A. D. 280, when it incorporated the Southland.

4. In the case of the headdress, the conceit is that Sima Yi is as cloistered in his fort as an unmarried woman safely secluded in her boudoir (*gui*); see *Zhuge Kongming quanji* (Hong Kong: Guang zhi shuju, n. d.), p. 134.

5. It was not part of the duties of Bing Ji, a Former Han prime minister, to find out why the people had died. But he did bear official responsibility for food production and so, seeing a panting ox when the weather was not hot, he worried that some abnormality of climate might affect the harvest. (Footnote to the Renmin wen wenxue chubanshe edition of *Sanguo yanyi* [Beijing, 1973], p. 899 n. 3.)

6. Another famous prime minister of the Former Han period; Chen Ping concerned himself with supervision only and did not deign to interest himself in the functions of any particular office. (Footnote to the edition of *Sanguo yanyi* cited above, p. 899 n. 4.)

7. Triple Platform (*santai*) comprises six stars in Ursa Major, arranged in pairs. Upper Platform (*shangtai*) controls fate. Ho Peng Yoke, *The Astronomical Chapters of the Chin Shu*, *Le monde d'outre mer passé et présent, sér. 2: Documents, n° 9* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1966), p. 80.

8. I. e., twelve years, the time it takes Jupiter, the year star (*sui*), to circle the sky. The Northern Dipper was imagined as an imperial carriage, a higher power able to overrule decisions of the lower Triple Platform (*santai*), the seats of the Three Elders (*sangong*).

CHAPTER 104

1. The *Zhuge Liang ji*, compiled by Chen Shou in A. D. 274.

2. All sources say that Kongming died in the eighth month, which began on September 11, A. D. 234; neither the *ZZTJ* (p. 2296) nor the *SGZ* (p. 925) gives the date. A noteworthy coincidence is "the interment of Emperor Xian on September 30 with the ceremonial dignity befitting a Han Son of Heaven" (*HHS*, p. 391). Like Kongming, Emperor Xian was fifty-four years old. The duke of Shanyang [i. e., Emperor Xian] had died on April 21, A. D. 234, and he was posthumously honored with the temple name Xian (see *HHS*, p. 391, *SGZ*, pp. 101-2, and *ZZTJ*, p. 2295). Fifteen years earlier, Emperor Xian was demoted to duke of Shanyang by the first Wei emperor, Cao Pi. In recounting the deposing of the Emperor, *Three Kingdoms* (chap. 80) says that when rumors of Emperor Xian's death reached the Riverlands, Liu Bei donned mourning garments; afterward, he declared himself emperor of Han.

3. A meteor's fall was almost always ominous. Sometimes meteors were called *mingxing* (mandated stars) because they carried the will of Heaven down to earth. See Edward H. Schafer, *Pacing the Void* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), p. 98. (This poem is not in Du Fu's complete works.)

4. Wo, here translated "ensconced," can also mean "lying low" or "sleeping" ; Sleeping Dragon was an epithet for Kongming. "A fish finding water" (i. e., physical or political survival) is a

metaphor for Liu Bei's winning Kongming to his cause.

5. "Heavenly Han" (*tian Han*) is the Milky Way (the River Han in the heavens); *lin*, or "heavy rain," means a minister who saves his lord. (Dragons were thought to be the cause of rain.)

6. I. e., Kongming protected the Second Emperor. The "calls to war" refer to the "Petition on Taking the Field" and the "Second Petition on Taking the Field," which have become literary classics.

7. Mao (introductory note): "Guan Zhong revered the Zhou dynasty and is credited with saving it from overthrow; Yue Yi preserved the kingdom of Yan and succeeded in restoring it after its house was terminated. Kongming compared himself to them because he had both aims."

8. Mao (introductory note): "Some may wonder if Kongming had supernatural powers: the Eightfold Ramparts Maze, the wooden bulls and gliding horses—all somehow seem made by gods or immortals. Yet he could not escape his own death. Why? Kongming was not like Zuo Ci or Li Yi, invulnerable to death, a transcendent divine. Kongming was mortal, a worthy sage in the world of men... He did not make use of the unknowable and leave the world wondering. He made use of the knowable and left the world a model."

CHAPTER 105

1. Ye Gorge, southwest of present-day Meixian in Shaanxi, is the northern end of a passage some 470 *li* long, the southern end of which ends in Bao Gorge; thus, Ye and Bao were also called the northern and southern gorges respectively. See Miao Yue, *Sanguozhi daodu* (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1987), p. 258 n. 2. The Zi-Wu Gorge runs parallel to the Ye-Bao passage about 100 *li* to the east; see chap. 95 n. 2.

2. Hanzhong's seat of government.

3. Liu Bei, the founder (*kai*), and Liu Shan, the successor (*ji*).

4. The single plume may refer to Kongming's feather fan.

5. If successful, Kongming would have surpassed Xiao He and Cao Shen, famous prime ministers to Han Gao Zu. Chen Shou judges Kongming to be "second only to Guan Zhong and Xiao He" ; see SGZ, p. 934. As a young man Kongming had compared himself to Guan Zhong and Yue Yi, neither one a Han figure; see SGZ, p. 911

6. Baidi, "White Emperor," had been renamed Yong'an, "Enduring Peace," by Liu Bei. The text reads Jinling, not Jianye; see chap. 120, n. 10.

7. The title, *taiyu*, had not been used before by the Wei court. After having prevented Zhuge Liang from taking Chang'an and Luoyang, Sima Yi was sent on a campaign against Gongsun Yuan in the northeast. He received the title when he returned from that campaign. Though lofty-sounding, the appointment was made to reduce his power.

8. According to tradition, Yuan Wengzhong was a man of the Qin regime who stood thirteen spans tall. The First Emperor of Qin assigned him to guard the northern border, and he struck fear into the Xiongnu people. After Wengzhong's death, the Emperor cast a bronze statue of him; and so bronze or stone statues of great size came to be called *wengzhong*. (Footnote to the Renmin wenxue chubanshe edition of *Sanguo yanyi* [Beijing, 1973], p. 917, n. 2.)

9. Shanglin Park, a copy of the imperial hunting grounds outside Chang'an.

10. Mao (introductory note): "After Kongming's death the anxiety of lord and vassals in Wu

can be imagined: They would have said, 'No one will aid us [against Wei] now.' After Kongming's death the elation of Wei can be imagined: They would have said, 'No one will menace us now.' This explains why Wu fortified its border posts and the north undertook large-scale construction."

CHAPTER 106

1. To distinguish different names that appear identical in *pinyin* romanization, variations of spelling will be used. Here the name Wei Yan is spelled Wey Yan so that the reader will not confuse this character with the Riverlands hero of earlier chapters. In the following chapters Sun Qian will be spelled Suen Qian and Lu Zhi will be spelled Lu Zhi.

2. Cao Shuang's father, Cao Zhen, originally a Qin, was adopted into the Cao family. Cao Fang was adopted by Cao Rui. Mao (introductory note): "Cao Cao's father was adopted; Cao Pi's grandson was also adopted."

3. "Spectacular Commencement" (A. D. 239).

4. "Correct Beginning."

5. The *sanji changshi* replaced the *changshi* (or *zhongchangshi*), permanent household attendants or eunuchs, who played so great a part in the early years of Emperor Xian's reign. The Wei dynasty allowed eunuchs to serve only at low levels of the bureaucracy; Shu-Han permitted them to serve at higher levels because they perpetuated Han institutions. *Sanji* was cavalry not affiliated to a military unit.

6. "Qing ying," or "Black Flies," is the title of *Shi jing*, ode 219, which warns of ruin through an enemy's slander. The quotation comes from the hexagram called "Modesty" (*qian*) in the *Book of Changes*.

7. "Auspicious Peace" (A. D. 249); a decade has passed since Cao Fang's enthronement.

8. Mao (introductory note): "A dead Kongming presented as a living man was used to frighten Sima Yi; and a live Sima presented as a dying man was used to satisfy Cao Shuang."

CHAPTER 107

1. Sima Yi was no longer the grand commandant; he had been made imperial guardian and thus had no official military office.

2. The son of Xin Pi.

3. Minister of agriculture, one of Cao Shuang's inner council; he was nicknamed "Store of Wisdom."

4. The preceding paragraph and closing verse are not in the TS. Instead, there are two verses lamenting the folly of Cao Shuang (p. 1045). Shuang was the last effective leader of the Cao clan.

5. Mao (introductory note): "Guan Lu foreknew that Cao Shuang's adherents would die; Xianying knew that Sima Yi would prevail over Cao Shuang. Yet Guan Lu's foreknowledge is less remarkable than Xianying's.... That Xin Chang should preserve his integrity by heeding his elder sister's counsel is not so remarkable; that a daughter of the Xiahou clan should assert her conviction [not to remarry] in opposition to her father is most remarkable.

"Guan Lu knew men through divination and body language. As a woman, Xianying [foresaw Sima's victory over the Cao clan] by different methods. Xin Chang supplemented his

understanding with a woman's. The womanly conviction of the daughter of the Xiahou proved stronger than Xin Chang's convictions as a man."

6. Mao: "This recalls the granting of the Nine Dignities to the patriarch of Wei [Cao Cao]."

7. A Wei, not a Han, province; Yongzhou occupied the *sanfu* (three prefectures around the western capital that included Jingtao, Fufeng, and Fengxu). Yongzhou was initially established as a defensive measure against Shu.

8. Mao: "Xiahou Ba wants to punish the traitors to Wei; Jiang Wei will soon borrow him to help punish the traitors to Han."

9. Mao: "As Kongming was helped by [the defecting] Jiang Wei, so Jiang Wei is helped by Xiahou Ba."

10. Mao (introductory note): "This chapter shows how the Sima usurpation of Wei begins to emerge from the house of Cao's failure to govern; it also shows how the entry of Xiahou Ba into the Riverlands is the beginning of Jiang Wei's campaigns against Wei. However, Xiahou Ba's intentions are not Jiang Wei's intentions. Xiahou Ba wants to fight the Sima clan and to use Shu-Han to save the Cao clan. Jiang Wei wants to fight the Cao clan and to use Xiahou Ba to annihilate the Wei dynasty. Jiang Wei's mind is thus one with the Martial Lord's [Kongming]."

CHAPTER 108

1. "Red Crow" (A. D. 241).

2. Lu Xun, famous for checking Liu Bei's invasion of the Southland, had held the office of prime minister. For Zhuge Ke, see chap. 98.

3. "Grand Origin" (A. D. 251).

4. "Continuing Brilliance" (A. D. 252); Sun Quan's reign had begun in 229 when he had declared himself emperor.

5. "Commence the Revival" or "New Beginning" (A. D. 252)—an echo of the last reign title (in Shu) under which Kongming served.

6. Mao (introductory note): "Cao Pi waged war on Liu Shan during the mourning [for Liu Bei]; Cao Fang, also, waged war on Sun Liang during the mourning. In the former case Cao Pi authorized the invasion; in the latter Sima Shi, not Cao Fang, authorized the invasion."

7. Mao (introductory note): "Why did Ding Feng succeed in the Dongxing campaign while Zhuge Ke failed in the Xincheng campaign? Southland defense against Wei attack always succeeded while offensives against Wei failed. This is amply illustrated by the outcome of former campaigns. Zhou Yu's defense at Red Cliffs was the first victory; Sun Quan's offensive against Hefei, the first defeat. The Southland's second victory came defending Ruxu against Cao Cao; the second defeat was suffered when Zhang Liao held Xiaoyao Ford against the southerners.... Such was the situation in the days when Sun Quan lived and Zhou Yu, Lu Su, Lü Meng, or Lu Xun had command. To aim for the heartland during the time of Sun Liang was virtually futile."

8. Sun Jian, father of Sun Quan, was the founder of the Southland.

9. Mao (introductory note): "Sima Yi, a member of a nonroyal clan, had Cao Shuang, a royal clansman, killed; Sun Jun, a royal clansman, had Zhuge Ke, a member of a nonroyal clan, killed."

CHAPTER 109

1. Yangping Pass (also known as Yang'ankou) is slightly west of Dingjun Mountain and near the River Mian.
2. Two famous instances of armies defeated by entrapment. In 342 B. C. (early Warring States period) Pang Juan of Wei was lured from the siege of Han and ambushed at Maling; he cut his throat. Han Xin is said to have attacked Xiang Yu at Nine Mile Mountain.
3. Water will save Sima Zhao just as it saved his father; fire, symbol of Han, no longer reigns.
4. Mao (introductory note): "Jiang Wei's first attack on the northern heartland was made possible by the split in the royal Cao clan caused by Xiahou Ba's defection; Jiang Wei's second attack on the north was made possible by Zhuge Ke's invasion of the north in keeping with the Shu-Wu alliance. Neither of Jiang Wei's attacks succeeded because, in the first case, they relied on the Qiang, and the Qiang did not come; in the second case, the Qiang came but turned and fought for the enemy.... With Kongming dead, how could the Qiang ever aid the Liu?"
5. Mao: "This comparison of Sima Shi to Cao Cao foreshadows the usurpation."
6. Wang Mang usurped the Former Han and founded his own Xin or "New" dynasty; it lasted from A. D. 9 to 25, when the Later Han displaced it. Dong Zhuo put Emperor Xian on the throne after deposing his brother. Mao: "Why not frankly say Cao Cao?"
7. Cao Cao had her dragged off and executed. See chapter 66.
8. Yi Yin banished King Tai Jia for three years; when Tai Jia repented, Yi Yin restored his throne. Tai Jia was an early Shang sovereign, nephew of the preceding emperor. Huo Guang (d. 68 B. C.) was regent for Emperor Zhao (r. 86-72 B. C.). Upon the death of Emperor Zhao, Huo Guang placed Zhao's nephew, the Changyi prince, on the throne. When the prince proved unable to rule, Huo Guang replaced him with a grand nephew of the late Emperor.
9. Mao (introductory note): "Like Cao Fang, Emperor Xian had a secret edict [written in blood]. Like Empress Zhang of the Wei, Empress Fu of the Han was put to death. During the Han the plot of Dong Cheng and Fu Wan was discovered; during the Wei Zhang Qi's plot likewise was discovered. The cunning of retribution lies in its comprehensive coverage. What those who came before have done, those who come after will repeat, and with a vengeance. [After all,] Cao Cao did not depose Emperor Xian for the girdle oath, but Sima Shi went further and deposed Cao Fang.... Heaven takes pleasure in second comings and in redoubled effects.... It shows the cunning of the Creative Force that the retribution for a renegade vassal should come from the mouths of his offspring rather than men of far future times.... Thus, we need give no further heed to Buddhist doctrines of hell and reincarnation."
10. Cao Cao murdered Emperor Xian's consort Fu Wan in chapter 66.
11. "Correct Origin" (A. D. 254).
12. The revolt of Wei commanders Guanqiu Jian and Wen Qin, and those of Xiahou Ba earlier and Zhuge Tan later, were among the local actions against the displacement of the Cao clan by the Sima in Luoyang.

CHAPTER 110

1. "Correct Origin" (A. D. 255).
2. As a general serving Emperor Jing of the Former Han, Zhou Yafu suppressed the revolt of the seven kingdoms in the south.

CHAPTER 111

1. The *TS* has "and earn the bitter resentment in the Riverlands" for the final phrase; Fan Jian is identified as a member of Kongming's staff and an assistant to Dong Jue.

2. From "Correct Origin" to "Sweet Dew" (A. D. 256). In Chinese *ganlu* (sweet dew) "spells" Ambrosia.

3. In 264, one year after taking power, the Sima clan succeeded in abolishing the "soldier-tiller" acreage overseers, the *diannong*; they became *taishou*, governors. Xu Delin, *Sanguo shi jianghua* (Hong Kong: Wenchang shuju, n. d.), p. 118.

CHAPTER 112

1. Zhang Liang (Zifang) was Han Gao Zu's main strategist.

2. Mao: "Troops had been removed from one gate to allow Zhuge Dan to escape. They failed to anticipate that troops would come in." Quan I (Yi) distinguishes son from uncle, Quan Yi.

3. See preceding footnote; the influx of troops led to a food shortage.

4. Mao (introductory notes): "[Dan] never received the [help from the element water that Sima Yi received] when it rained all day at Shangfang Gorge [extinguishing Kongming's mines and firebombs],... Nor did he receive the help that Sima Yi did from the overflowing well on Iron Cage Mountain. This shows the mind of Heaven [in not making the water element available].... This is why Qiao Zhou wrote his essay on enemy kingdoms.... In later times those who were determined to avenge their kingdoms were drawn to Kongming's 'Petitions on Taking the Field' ['Chu shi biao'] and not Qiao Zhou's essay ['Chou guo lun']."

5. Wen Qin is one of the southern volunteers still inside.

6. Mao: "When Guanqiu Jian took punitive action against Sima Shi, he had to be on guard against a rear attack by the Southland. But Zhuge Dan's action against Sima Zhao had the Southland's support."

7. "Dew on the Leaf" refers to a dirge on the transiency of things. Cao Cao wrote a famous ode to the melody. Tian Heng killed himself rather than submit to a new master. His troops followed him in death.

8. I. e., Henei, Henan, Hedong—the three capital districts on the Yellow River.

9. Yan Xi (Continuing Brilliance) 21 became Jing Yao (Spectacular Starlight) 1 in A. D. 258. Jiang Wei's attack on the northern forces described in this chapter, however, occurred in Yan Xi 20 (A. D. 257). (Footnote to the Renmin wenzue chubanshe edition of *Sanguo yanyi* [Beijing, 1973], p. 971 n. 3.)

10. *Zhongsan daifu*, an office established by Wang Mang. During the Eastern Han there were four *daifu*: *guanglu*, *taizhong*, *zhongsan*, and *jianyi*. Qiao Zhou was thus a *daifu* of the third degree. See Yang Hongnian, *Han Wei zhidu congkao* (Wuhan: Wuhan daxue chubanshe, 1985), p. 98.

11. The Hong Canal. The two agreed to return to their respective domains, Liu Bang to the west, Xiang Yu to the east. This was in 202 B. C. just before the final defeat of Xiang Yu.

12. Li Jue and Guo Si kidnaped Emperor Xian (see chap. 13).

CHAPTER 113

1. Mao (introductory note): "Emperor Xian plotted to execute an all-powerful minister, but his plotting came to light through Imperial Brother-in-Law Dong Cheng and again through Imperia Father-in-Law Fu Wan.... In the case of Sun Liang, the plot came to light through the imperial brother-in-law and the imperial father-in-law, thus combining in one incident the two incidents [involving Emperor Xian].... As the novel reaches the final chapters, the reader will find incidents which recapitulate those of the early chapters."

2. Yi Yin of the Shang is regarded as having acted justifiably when he sent his sovereign into exile. Huo Guang blocked the accession of Liu He, prince of Changyi, and arranged for the enthronement of Emperor Xuan in 73 B. C.

3. The southernmost province, Jiaozhou, comprised southern Guangxi and Guangdong, the Red River delta (of present-day Vietnam), and a coastal strip below the delta, perhaps as far south as the seventeenth parallel. The Southland's ruling house of Sun had a keen commercial interest in and active diplomatic relations with Jiaozhou.

4. See chapter 112, n. 9. The *ZZTJ* (p. 2451) reports that Jiang Wei weakened Shu's forward defense in Hanzhong by abandoning the network of outposts established by Kongming. Jiang Wei shifted his forces westward into three military townships, Hanshou, Yuecheng, and Hancheng, "prefiguring the fall of the kingdom of Shu," in the words of the Yuan annotator of the *ZZTJ*, Hu Sanxing. As a result of these decades of war in the northwest, the Qiang, Di, and other peoples came to dominate the region.

5. Mao: "These two figures have not been mentioned since the First Ruler [Liu Bei] solicited the services of Kongming [see chap. 37]; how artful of the author all of a sudden to evoke them here."

6. Yue Fei was a Song general. In 1127, after the northern heartland was occupied by Jurchen armies, the Song court was driven south. Yue Fei was one of those who championed the cause of retaking the lost territory.

CHAPTER 114

1. Pillowing the fallen liege's head was a vassal's ritual gesture to honor him.

2. Mao (introductory note): "Cai He and Cai Zhong were Cai Mao's real brothers, and yet Zhou Yu did not trust them [see chap. 47]. Wang Guan was not of Wang Jing's clan; how could Jiang Wei not have anticipated an impersonation? Even if Jiang Wei had trusted Wang Guan, surely Xiahou Ba would have recognized him. Thus, Deng Ai's plan was easier to expose than Cao Cao's. Kongming knew that Zheng Wen's defection was false, and he immediately execute him; as a result Kongming suffered no loss. Jiang Wei knew Wang Guan's defection was false, but he did not execute him; how could he not suffer a loss? Wang Guan's burning the grain and the wooden plank roads was no different from Jiang Wei's burning them himself. Thus, Jiang Wei proved himself less wise than Kongming. In the novel, sometimes a late event has more serious consequences than an early one: only those who read the later chapters can compare the gravity of both events. Sometimes a plan described late in the novel is not so well executed as one described earlier: only those who read the later chapters can compare the executions of both plans."

CHAPTER 115

1. Mao: "Just like Yue Fei." See chap. 113, n. 6.

2. Zhang Rang was a leader of the eunuchs under Emperor Ling (see the first chapters of the novel). Zhao Gao was the eunuch who murdered the second Qin emperor, Er Shi (r. 209-206 B. C.). Cf. the Liu Tao incident in chap. 2.

3. Mao: "This is the ninth punitive expedition against the kingdom of Wei."

4. Mao (introductory note): "Here the Riverlands campaigns against Wei end, and the Wei campaigns against the Riverlands begin—confirming Kongming's theory that 'if Han did not destroy the traitor, the traitor would destroy Han.' Before Liu Bei entered the Riverlands, he saw Kongming's map, and subsequently he obtained Zhang Song's map. As Sima Zhao prepares to occupy the Riverlands, he first sees Deng Ai's map of Tazhong, and subsequently he obtains Zhong Hui's map of the whole kingdom."

5. Mao: "The original idea was to have Deng Ai tie up Jiang Wei's forces while Zhong Hui secretly invaded the Riverlands. As it turned out, Zhong Hui tied up Jiang Wei's forces while Deng Ai invaded the Riverlands."

6. Mao: "Here we see the reason Liu Ye avoided mentioning an expedition against the Riverlands."

7. Mao (introductory note): "As one reaches these final chapters, one hears echoes of the novel's opening lines: the yellow dragon visible in a well is a sign that recalls the green serpent on the imperial throne; Cao Fang's song about the yellow dragon is a poem that recalls the lines of the Emperor when he watched the flying swallows.... In terms of specific events, Jiang Wei's desire to eliminate the eunuch Huang Hao obviously recalls the Ten Eunuchs and the example of Emperor Ling."

CHAPTER 116

1. The character *yan* of Yan Xing, "Fires Revive" (the character consists of two "fire" elements, one over the other), often symbolized the Han.

2. Mao (introductory note): "The sorceress's sham projection of the god's words recalls the way the Yellow Scarves bewitched the masses with false doctrine in the first chapter. Huang Hao's concealment of Jiang Wei's petitions similarly recalls the way [eunuch leader] Zhang Rang concealed the Yellow Scarves' disturbances to deceive Emperor Ling [see chap. 1]."

3. Mao (introductory note): "This chapter records Wei's successes against Shu, but the principal party is Sima Zhao. Thus, it is not Wei's success but Jin's. The extinction of Wei came after the extinction of Shu, but Cao Fang had been deposed and Cao Mao murdered; even if Cao Huan had a breath or two of life left in him, the ruling house was entirely Jin, not Wei.... Prior to this campaign, Wei had attacked Shu twice. The first time was during Cao Pi's reign: five field armies fell apart before a battle was joined. The second time was during Cao Rui's reign: the army at Chencang met heavy rains and returned to Luoyang. This shows that Heaven did not want Han extinguished by Wei."

CHAPTER 117

1. The *TS* (pp. 1128-29) notes: "'Two fires first spring forth' indicates the first year of Yan Xing [A. D. 263] by the Shu-Han calendar: the character *yan* is formed of two 'fire' elements [see chap. 116, n. 1]; *xing* means 'spring forth.' 'A man will cross' shows that Zhuge Liang foresaw that

Deng Ai would pass. 'Two warriors contend' refers to the graph *shi* in the styles of both Deng Ai and Zhong Hui."

2. Dated in the TS to the eleventh month of Yan Xing 1: probably in the beginning of A. D. 264.
3. Dongchuan, "East Rivers," refers to Hanzhong.
4. Actually Feng; the spelling is varied here to avoid confusion with the chief commander Ding Feng.

CHAPTER 118

1. I. e., the Riverlands' Nanzhong region: Yuesui, Zhuti, Zangge, Yunnan, Xinggu, Jianning, and Yongchang (*ZZTJ*, p. 2472).
2. Qiao Zhou was formerly the grand historian. See chap. 91, n. 13. Mao: "Earlier Qiao Zhou had helped persuade Liu Zhang to surrender [the Riverlands to Liu Bei]."
3. Mao (introductory note): "The Martial Lord lived in his son and grandson beyond his lifetime. The First Emperor [Liu Bei] had no [worthy] son, but his grandson served for one; and so the First Emperor lived again [in him]. Suppose the prince of Beidi had been the Second Emperor. Then Shu would have devoured Wu and extinguished Wei, and the Han would not have passed into history."
4. An ancient ceremony of surrender.
5. In this Tang poem by Li Shangyin "the brothers" refers to Lord Guan and Zhang Fei. Jinli, or "Damasktown," is a fancy name for Chengdu. Zhuge Liang often sang songs in the Liangfu mode, and visitors to his temple honored his memory with their own performances.
6. Mao: "This is a false surrender. Jiang Wei's claim that he has surrendered unwillingly shows his mastery of deceit."
7. Mao: "As honored guest, Jiang Wei maintained a formal distance; but as brothers, the two became close friends."
8. Here Yizhou refers not, as before, to the district (*jun*) but to the entire province of the Riverlands (Xichuan or Shu) restored to central (i. e., Wei dynasty) control. Yizhou was also a province during the Han dynasty.
9. Mao: "The edict speaks only of enfeoffing Deng Ai but does not mention enfeoffing Liu Shan [the Second Emperor], because Sima Zhao does not want Deng Ai to have sole power in the Riverlands."
10. Mao (introductory note): "Upon the death of the Martial Lord, Yang Yi and Wei Yan submitted rival memorials. Upon the fall of Chengdu, Zhong Hui and Deng Ai submit rival memorials."

CHAPTER 119

1. Kuai Tong had advised Han Xin to support neither the kingdom of Han (i. e., Liu Bang) against the kingdom of Chu (i. e., Xiang Yu) nor Chu against Han, but to exploit the Chu-Han war by creating a third kingdom of his own. Han Xin rejected Kuai Tong's advice. Remaining loyal to Liu Bang, Han Xin helped him defeat Xiang Yu and found the Han dynasty. However, a few years after the founding of the Han, Liu Bang had Han Xin arrested and executed.
2. After the kingdom of Yue took its revenge by conquering the kingdom of Wu, Fan Li

urged Wen Zhong to retire from politics with a famous phrase: "When the sky has no more birds, the fine bows are put away; when the cunning hare has been caught, the tracker hounds are cooked."

3. The Taoist transcendent Chi Songzi, or Master Red Pine, was a rainmaker for the mythical sovereign Shen Nong. According to legend he was impervious to fire. At the end of his biography, Zhang Liang, one of Liu Bang's chief advisers, says that he wants to leave behind the affairs of the world and ramble off with Master Red Pine; see *SJ*, "Liuhou shijia."

4. This line means that Jiang Wei was committed not to return to Chengdu until the armies of Wei were defeated. The Mao edition is more protective than the *TS* of the reputation of Jiang Wei, since he carried on Kongming's policy of war against Wei. The *TS* (p. 1148) adds a line after this poem, "Thus, with a single plan Jiang Wei killed three worthy men [Deng Ai, Deng Zhong, and Zhong Hui]" ; the *TS* uses the same words to title this chapter. It is not that the *TS* is notably critical of the Shu-Han war party, but it includes more anti-war views. For the diverse judgments on Jiang Wei, see *SGZ*, pp. 1068-69; *ZZTJ*, p. 2481; and *TS*, p. 1149.

5. This is Lord Guan's grandson; he holds his grandfather's first title.

6. *Zhongshu* (Palace Documents) is the name of the department to which the deputy imperial executive belonged. When Cao Cao declared himself king of Wei, he created in his palace the office of *mishu* (Confidential Documents), a kind of Secretariat separate from the Han court's *shanghsu*. After establishing the Wei dynasty, the house of Cao renamed the *mishu* the *zhongshu*; as a Cao family executive organ, the *zhongshu* coexisted with the *shangshu* (Secretariat).

7. This paragraph is not in the *TS*.

8. Mao: "This may remind the reader of the time when Cao Cao was honored as king of Wei."

9. This refers to Dong Zhuo's dethroning of Emperor Shao (Liu Bian) at the beginning of the novel.

10. September 11, A. D. 264.

11. Mao: "Sima Zhao clearly follows the example of Cao Cao; Sima Yan, the example of Cao Pi."

12. Mao (introductory note): "Wei was doomed, not by Jin but by itself. Why so? When Sima Yan forced the Wei ruler out of power, he said 'How do I compare to Cao Pi? How does my father compare to Cao Cao?' The fact is that Wei taught Sima Yan usurpation, and thus we may say that Wei doomed itself. Further, not only did Wei doom itself but Han also doomed it. Why so? When Sima Yan received the abdication he said, 'I take revenge for Han; I am following the precedent of Han.' So the fact is that Han taught him to receive the abdication, and thus we may say that Han too doomed Wei."

13. February 6, A. D. 265.

14. Cao Pi enfeoffed Emperor Xian as lord of Shanyang after his abdication; before becoming emperor, Xian had been prince of Chenliu.

CHAPTER 120

1. Dated in the *TS* to Yong An (Enduring Peace), year 7 (A. D. 264) by the southern calendar.

2. Xing is also the given name of the prime minister.

3. During the Han dynasty Yangzhou was the provincial name of the Southland; use of the name emphasizes the area's subordination to the northern dynasty.

4. I. e., A. D. 280; the previous *gengzi* year had been A. D. 220.

5. In the TS (pp. 1154-55) this memorial is dated to the tenth month of Xian Ning, year 2 (A. D. 276); it is twenty-two rather than four lines long. The opening sentence reads: "The late Emperor pacified Ba-Shu to the west and kept peace with Wu-Kuai, thus bringing the realm to the verge of an era of armistice. But then Wu betrayed its allegiance to us, and border conflict reappeared. Heaven ordains..." The *TS* lacks the preceding narrative concerning Yang Hu's hunting parties and his fraternizing with Lu Kang.

6. Mao (introductory note): "The northern forces were reluctant to attack the south because previous attempts had always ended in failure. Zhou Yu was victorious at Red Cliffs, and Lu Xun at Xiaoting; Xu Sheng at Nanxu, and Zhu Huan at Jiangling; Zhou Fang at Stonetown, and Ding Feng at Xutang. The south had always appeared formidable indeed. No one anticipated that the previous string of defeats would end with a single easy victory."

7. I. e., Zhang Ti refused to save his own life by betraying the master who trusted him.

8. The text of the last two paragraphs is not found in the *TS*. The invasion began at the turn of the year A. D. 279/280.

9. Mao (introductory note): "The three kingdoms formed when the Han royal house declined. The Han royal house declined when the eunuchs abused the sovereign and officials subverted the government. This great novel begins with Zhang Rang and Zhao Zhong and ends with Huang Hao and Cen Hun in order to issue a warning about eunuchs [in government]."

10. Jingling is another name for Jianye. The poet is Liu Yuxi; see his *Xisai shan huaigu*. The period between Han and Sui (i. e., between A. D. 220 and 581) came to be known by a variety of names: the period of disunity, the period of Northern and Southern Dynasties, and also the Six Dynasties period. This last name refers to the six southern houses that made their capital at Jinling, i. e., Wu (the Southland), Eastern Jin, Liu-Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen.

11. This refrain from *Shi jing*, ode 65, "Shu li," ends each of the poem's three stanzas. "Shu li," the first poem in the "Wang feng" section, has been traditionally understood as a lament for the old capital of the Western Zhou dynasty after the ruling house had moved east and lost its dominion over the other kingdoms.

12. Mao: "Concluding with the three rulers rather than with Sima Yan gives the three kingdoms the last word."

13. These are the enfeoffment titles of the last rulers of Wei, Wu, and Shu (i. e., Cao Huan, Sun Hao, and Liu Shan) after they had relinquished their thrones.

14. Only the last line of the ballad differs in the *TS*: "With unity [restored], the primal forces of creation belong again to Jin."

Mao (introductory note): "This chapter records the end of the period of division; it does not record the beginning of the period of unification. The emphasis is not on Jin but on the three kingdoms, whose unification may be projected ahead to Jin, just as the division of Han was traced back to emperors Huan and Ling... As the novel focuses on Han, it could have ended with the fall of Han. But Wei usurped Han. To end the tale before Han's enemy had itself met its fate would be to leave the reader unsatisfied. The novel could have ended with the fall of Wei, but Han's ally was Wu. To end the tale before Han's ally had fallen would be to leave the reader with an incomplete picture. So the tale had to end with the fall of Wu."

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