Romance of Three Kingdoms

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Chapter 1
Three Heroes Swear Brotherhood In The Peach Garden;
One Victory Shatters The Rebels In Battlegrounds.

Domains under heaven, after a long period of division, tends to unite; after a long period of union, tends to divide. This has been so since antiquity. When the rule of the Zhou Dynasty weakened, seven contending kingdoms sprang up¹, warring one with another until the kingdom of Qin prevailed and possessed the empire². But when Qin’s destiny had been fulfilled, arose two opposing kingdoms, Chu and Han, to fight for the mastery. And Han was the victor³.

The rise of the fortunes of Han began when Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor⁴ slew a white serpent to raise the banners of uprising, which only ended when the whole empire belonged to Han (BC 202). This magnificent heritage was handed down in successive Han emperors for two hundred years, till the rebellion of Wang Mang caused a disruption⁵. But soon Liu Xiu the Latter Han Founder restored the empire⁶, and Han emperors continued their rule for another two hundred years till the days of Emperor Xian, which were doomed to see the beginning of the empire’s division into three parts, known to history as The Three Kingdoms.

But the descent into misrule hastened in the reigns of the two predecessors of Emperor Xian---Emperors Huan and Ling---who sat in the Dragon Throne about the middle of the second century.

Emperor Huan paid no heed to the good people of his court, but gave his confidence to the Palace eunuchs⁷. He lived and died, leaving the scepter to Emperor Ling, whose advisers were Regent Marshal Dou Wu and Imperial Guardian Chen Fan⁸. Dou Wu and Chen Fan, disgusted with the abuses of the eunuchs in the affairs of the state, plotted the destruction for the power-abusing eunuchs. But Chief Eunuch Cao Jie was not to be disposed of easily. The plot leaked out, and the honest Dou Wu and Chen Fan were put to death, leaving the eunuchs stronger than before.

It fell upon the day of full moon of the fourth month, the second year, in the era of Established Calm (AD 168), Wang Mang (BC 45-AD 23) was regent and a nephew of the empress dowager Wang. He assumed the throne from AD 9 to 23.

₅Up to this time AD 168, China had had five dynasties: Mythology (BC 5000-2200), Xia Dynasty (BC 2200-1700), Shang Dynasty (BC 1700-1050), Zhou Dynasty (BC 1050-221), Qin Dynasty (BC 221-206), and Han Dynasty (BC 206-AD 220). The Age of Seven States was BC 475-221, which was also known as the Warring States Period. The seven main states were Qin, Chu, Yan, Qi, Wei, Zhao, and Han.

₆At the end of the Warring States Period, Qin conquered other states, and consolidated the empire. The first emperor of Qin is credited with the building of the Great Wall in large scale.

₇Qin ruled for only one and a half generations, then the old states emerged again.

₈Liu Bang (or Gao Zu) (BC 26-19) was the founder of Han Dynasty, aka Western Han (capital in Changan). From a farmer family. His first office was assistant to a magistrate in Pei. Joined peasant rebellions against Qin Dynasty. Fought under Chu banner. Became a general, then ennobled as King of Han. In BC 206 Liu Bang defeated Xiang Yu and won the empire.
that Emperor Ling went in state to the Hall of Virtue. As he drew near the throne, a rushing whirlwind arose in the corner of the hall and, lo! from the roof beams floated down a monstrous black serpent that coiled itself up on the very seat of majesty. The Emperor fell in a swoon. Those nearest him hastily raised and bore him to his palace, while the courtiers scattered and fled. The serpent disappeared.

But there followed a terrific tempest, thunder, hail, and torrents of rain, lasting till midnight and working havoc on all sides. Two years later the earth quaked in Capital Luoyang, while along the coast a huge tidal wave rushed in which, in its recoil, swept away all the dwellers by the sea. Another evil omen was recorded ten years later, when the reign title was changed to Radiant Harmony (AD 178): Certain hens suddenly crowed. At the new moon of the sixth month, a long wreath of murky cloud wound its way into the Hall of Virtue, while in the following month a rainbow was seen in the Dragon Chamber. Away from the capital, a part of the Yuan Mountains collapsed, leaving a mighty rift in the flank.

Such were some of various omens. Emperor Ling, greatly moved by these signs of the displeasure of Heaven, issued an edict asking his ministers for an explanation of the calamities and marvels.

Court Counselor Cai Yong replied bluntly: “Falling rainbows and changes of fowls’ sexes are brought about by the interference of empresses and eunuchs in state affairs.”

The Emperor read this memorial with deep sighs, and Chief Eunuch Cao Jie, from his place behind the throne, anxiously noted these signs of grief. An opportunity offering, Cao Jie informed his fellows, and a charge was trumped up against Cai Yong, who was driven from the court and forced to retire to his country house.

With this victory the eunuchs grew bolder. Ten of them, rivals in wickedness and associates in evil deeds, formed a powerful party known as the Ten Regular Attendants---Zhang Rang, Zhao Zhong, Cheng Kuang, Duan Gui, Feng Xu, Guo Sheng, Hou Lan, Jian Shuo, Cao Jie, and Xia Yun.

One of them, Zhang Rang, won such influence that he became the Emperor’s most honored and trusted adviser. The Emperor even called him “Foster Father”. So the corrupt state administration went quickly from bad to worse, till the country was ripe for rebellion and buzzed with brigandage.

At this time in the county of Julu was a certain Zhang family, of whom three brothers bore the name of Zhang Jue, Zhang Ba, and Zhang Lian, respectively. The eldest Zhang Jue was an unclassed graduate, who devoted himself to medicine. One day, while culling simples in the woods, Zhang Jue met a venerable old gentleman with very bright, emerald eyes and fresh complexion, who walked with an oak-wood staff. The old man beckoned Zhang Jue into a cave and there gave him three volumes of The Book of Heaven.

“This book,” said the old gentleman, “is the Essential Arts of Peace. With the aid of these volumes, you can convert the world and rescue humankind. But you must be single-minded, or, rest assured, you will greatly suffer.”

With a humble obeisance, Zhang Jue took the book and asked the name of his benefactor.

“I am Saint Hermit of the Southern Land,” was the reply, as the old gentleman disappeared in thin air.

Zhang Jue studied the wonderful book eagerly and strove day and night to reduce its precepts to practice. Before long, he could summon the winds and command the rain, and he became known as the Mystic of the Way of Peace.

In the first month of the first year of Central Stability (AD 184), there was a terrible pestilence that ran throughout the
land, whereupon Zhang Jue distributed charmed remedies to the afflicted. The godly medicines brought big successes, and soon he gained the title of the Wise and Worthy Master. He began to have a following of disciples whom he initiated into the mysteries and sent abroad throughout all the land. They, like their master, could write charms and recite formulas, and their fame increased his following.

Zhang Jue began to organize his disciples. He established thirty-six circuits, the larger with ten thousand or more members, the smaller with about half that number. Each circuit had its chief who took the military title of General. They talked wildly of the death of the blue heaven and the setting up of the golden one; they said a new cycle was beginning and would bring universal good fortune to all members; and they persuaded people to chalk the symbols for the first year of the new cycle on the main door of their dwellings.

With the growth of the number of his supporters grew also the ambition of Zhang Jue. The Wise and Worthy Master dreamed of empire. One of his partisans, Ma Yuanyi, was sent bearing gifts to gain the support of the eunuchs within the Palace.
To his brothers Zhang Jue said, “For schemes like ours always the most difficult part is to gain the popular favor. But that is already ours. Such an opportunity must not pass.”

And they began to prepare. Many yellow flags and banners were made, and a day was chosen for the uprising. Then Zhang Jue wrote letters to Eunuch Feng Xu\(^9\) and sent them by one of his followers, Tang Zhou, who alas! betrayed his trust and reported the plot to the court. The Emperor summoned the trusty Regent Marshal He Jin and bade him look to the issue. Ma Yuanyi was at once taken and beheaded. Feng Xu and many others were cast into prison.

The plot having thus become known, the Zhang brothers were forced at once to take the field. They took up grandiose titles: Zhang Jue the Lord of Heaven, Zhang Ba the Lord of Earth, and Zhang Lian the Lord of Human. And in these names they put forth this manifesto:

“The good fortune of the Han is exhausted, and the Wise and Worthy Man has appeared. Discern the will of Heaven, O ye people, and walk in the way of righteousness, whereby alone ye may attain to peace.”

Support was not lacking. On every side people bound their heads with yellow scarves and joined the army of the rebel Zhang Jue, so that soon his strength was nearly half a million strong, and the official troops melted away at a whisper of his coming.

Regent Marshal and Guardian of the Throne, He Jin, memorialized for general preparations against the Yellow Scarves, and an edict called upon everyone to fight against the rebels. In the meantime, three Imperial Commanders—Lu Zhi, Huangfu Song, and Zhu Jun—marched against them in three directions with veteran soldiers.

Meanwhile Zhang Jue led his army into Youzhou, the northeastern region of the empire\(^10\). The Imperial Protector\(^11\) of Youzhou was Liu Yan, a scion of the Imperial House. Learning of the approach of the rebels, Liu Yan called in Commander Zhou Jing to consult over the position.

Zhou Jing said, “They are many and we few. We must enlist more troops to oppose them.”

Liu Yan agreed, and he put out notices calling for volunteers to serve against the rebels. One of these notices was posted up in the county of Zhuo, where lived one man of high spirit.

This man was no mere bookish scholar, nor found he any pleasure in study. But he was liberal and amiable, albeit a man of few words, hiding all feeling under a calm exterior. He had always cherished a yearning for high enterprise and had cultivated the friendship of humans of mark. He was tall of stature. His ears were long, the lobes touching his shoulders, and his hands hung down below his knees. His eyes were very big and prominent so that he could see backward past his ears. His complexion was as clear as jade, and he had rich red lips.

He was a descendant of Prince Sheng of Zhongshan whose father was the Emperor Jing\(^12\), the fourth emperor of the Han Dynasty. His name was Liu Bei. Many years before, one of his forbears had been the governor of that very county, but had lost his rank for remissness in ceremonial offerings. However, that branch of the family had remained

\(^9\)One of the Ten Regular Attendants.

\(^10\) Ancient China was divided into nine administrative regions or zhöu’s. Each region had a capital city, often of the same name. The nine regions were Bingzhou, Jingzhou, Jizhou, Liangzhou, Qingzhou, Xuzhou, Yizhou, Youzhou, and Yuzhou. Over the time more regions were created. During the Three Kingdoms period, there were already more than nine regions. A few of the new regions were Xizhou, Yangzhou, and Yongzhou. (see map)

\(^11\) Imperial Protector was the highest office in an administrative region.

\(^12\) Reigned BC 157-141.
saddened him, and he sighed as he read it.

Suddenly a rasping voice behind him cried, “Sir, why sigh if you do nothing to help your country?”

Turning quickly he saw standing there a man about his own height, with a bullet head like a leopard’s, large eyes, a swallow pointed chin, and whiskers like a tiger’s. He spoke in a loud bass voice and looked as irresistible as a dashing horse. At once Liu Bei saw he was no ordinary man and asked who he was.

“Zhang Fei is my name,” replied the stranger. “I live near here where I have a farm; and I am a wine seller and a butcher as well; and I like to become acquainted with worthy people. Your sighs as you read the notice drew me toward you.”

Liu Bei replied, “I am of the Imperial Family, Liu Bei is my name. And I wish I could destroy these Yellow Scarves and restore peace to the land, but alas! I am helpless.”

“I have the means,” said Zhang Fei. “Suppose you and I raised some troops and tried what we could do.”

This was happy news for Liu Bei, and the two betook themselves to the village inn to talk over the project. As they were drinking, a huge, tall fellow appeared pushing a hand-cart along the road. At the threshold he halted and entered the inn to rest awhile and he called for wine.

“And be quick!” added he. “For I am in haste to get into
the town and offer myself for the army.”

Liu Bei looked over the newcomer, item by item, and he noted the man had a huge frame, a long beard, a vivid face like an apple, and deep red lips. He had eyes like a phoenix’s and fine bushy eyebrows like silkworms. His whole appearance was dignified and awe-inspiring. Presently, Liu Bei crossed over, sat down beside him and asked his name.

“I am Guan Yu,” replied he. “I am a native of the east side of the river, but I have been a fugitive on the waters for some five years, because I slew a ruffian who, since he was wealthy and powerful, was a bully. I have come to join the army here.”

Then Liu Bei told Guan Yu his own intentions, and all three went away to Zhang Fei’s farm where they could talk over the grand project.

Said Zhang Fei, “The peach trees in the orchard behind the house are just in full flower. Tomorrow we will institute a sacrifice there and solemnly declare our intention before Heaven and Earth, and we three will swear brotherhood and unity of aims and sentiments: Thus will we enter upon our great task.”

Both Liu Bei and Guan Yu gladly agreed.

All three being of one mind, next day they prepared the sacrifices, a black ox, a white horse, and wine for libation. Beneath the smoke of the incense burning on the altar, they bowed their heads and recited this oath:

“We three---Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei---though of different families, swear brotherhood, and promise mutual help to one end. We will rescue each other in difficulty; we will aid each other in danger. We swear to serve the state and save the people. We ask not the same day of birth, but we seek to die together. May Heaven, the all-ruling, and Earth, the all-producing, read our hearts. If we turn aside from righteousness or forget kindliness, may Heaven and Human smite us!”

They rose from their knees. The two others bowed before Liu Bei as their elder brother, and Zhang Fei was to be the youngest of the trio. This solemn ceremony performed, they slew other oxen and made a feast to which they invited the villagers. Three hundred joined them, and all feasted and drank deep in the Peach Garden.
The next day weapons were mustered. But there were no horses to ride. This was a real grief. But soon they were cheered by the arrival of two horse dealers with a drove of horses.

“Thus does Heaven help us!” said Liu Bei.

And the three brothers went forth to welcome the merchants. They were Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang from Zhongshan. They went northwards every year to buy horses. They were now on their way home because of the Yellow Scarves. The brothers invited them to the farm, where wine was served before them. Then Liu Bei told them of the plan to strive for tranquillity. Zhang Shiping and Su Shuang were glad and at once gave the brothers fifty good steeds, and beside, five hundred ounces of gold and silver and one thousand five hundred pounds of steel fit for the forging of weapons.

The brothers expressed their gratitude, and the merchants took their leave. Then blacksmiths were summoned to forge weapons. For Liu Bei they made a pair of ancient swords; for Guan Yu they fashioned a long-handled, curve blade called Green-Dragon Saber, which weighed a full one hundred twenty pounds; and for Zhang Fei they created a ten-foot spear called Serpent Halberd. Each too had a helmet and full armor.

When weapons were ready, the troop, now five hundred strong, marched to Commander Zhou Jing, who presented them to Imperial Protector Liu Yan. When the ceremony of introduction was over, Liu Bei declared his ancestry, and Liu Yan at once accorded him the esteem due to a relation.

Before many days it was announced that the rebellion had actually broken out, and a Yellow Scarves chieftain, Cheng Yuanzhi, had invaded the region with a body of fifty thousand rebels. Liu Yan bade Zhou Jing and the three brothers to go out to oppose them with the five hundred troops. Liu Bei joyfully undertook to lead the van and marched to the foot of the Daxing Hills where they saw the rebels. The rebels wore their hair flying about their shoulders, and their foreheads were bound with yellow scarves.

When the two armies had been drawn up opposite each other, Liu Bei rode to the front, Guan Yu to his left, Zhang Fei to his right.

Flourishing his whip, Liu Bei began to hurl reproaches at the rebels, crying, “O malcontents! Why not dismount and be bound?”

Their leader Cheng Yuanzhi, full of rage, sent out one general, Deng Mao, to begin the battle. At once rode forward Zhang Fei, his serpent halberd poised to strike. One thrust and Deng Mao rolled off his horse, pierced through the heart. At this Cheng Yuanzhi himself whipped up his steed and rode forth with sword raised ready to slay Zhang Fei. But Guan Yu swung up his ponderous green-dragon saber and rode at Cheng Yuanzhi. At the sight, fear seized upon Cheng Yuanzhi, and before he could defend himself, the great saber fell, cutting him in halves.
Two heroes new to war's alarms,
Ride boldly forth to try their arms.
Their doughty deeds three kingdoms tell,
And poets sing how these befell.

Their leader fallen, the rebels threw away their weapons and fled. The official soldiers dashed in among them. Many thousands surrendered and the victory was complete. Thus this part of the rebellion was broken up.

On their return, Liu Yan personally met them and distributed rewards. But the next day, letters came from Imperial Protector Gong Jing of Qingzhou Region saying that the rebels were laying siege to the chief city and it was near falling. Help was needed quickly.

“I will go,” said Liu Bei as soon as he heard the news. And he set out at once with his own soldiers, reinforced by a body of five thousand under Zhou Jing. The rebels, seeing help coming, at once attacked most fiercely. The relieving force being comparatively small could not prevail and retired some ten miles, where they made a camp.

“They are many and we but few,” said Liu Bei to his brothers. “We can only beat them by superior strategy.”

So they prepared an ambush. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, each with a goodly party, went behind the hills, right and left, and there hid. When the gongs beat they were to move out to support the main army.

These preparations made, the drums rolled noisily for Liu Bei to advance. The rebels also came forward. But Liu Bei suddenly retired. Thinking this was their chance, the rebels pressed forward and were led over the hills. Then suddenly the gongs sounded for the ambush. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei poured out from right and left as Liu Bei faced around to meet the rebels. Under three-side attack, the rebels lost heavily and fled to the walls of Qingzhou City.
But Imperial Protector Gong Jing led out an armed body to attack them, and the rebels were entirely defeated and many slain. Qingzhou was no longer in danger.

Though fierce as tigers soldiers be,
Battle are won by strategy.
A hero comes; he gains renown,
Already destined for a crown.

After the celebrations in honor of victory were over, Commander Zhou Jing proposed to return to Youzhou.

But Liu Bei said, “We are informed that Imperial Commander Lu Zhi has been struggling with a horde of rebels led by Zhang Jue at Guangzong. Lu Zhi was once my teacher, and I want to go help him.”

So Liu Bei and Zhou Jing separated, and the three brothers with their troops made their way to Guangzong. They found Lu Zhi’s camp, were admitted to his presence, and declared the reason of their coming. The Commander received them with great joy, and they remained with him while he made his plans.

At that time Zhang Jue’s one hundred fifty thousand troops and Lu Zhi’s fifty thousand troops were facing each other. Neither had had any success.

Lu Zhi said to Liu Bei, “I am able to surround these rebels here. But the other two brothers, Zhang Ba and Zhang Lian, are strongly entrenched opposite Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun at Yingchuan. I will give you a thousand more troops, and with these you can go to find out what is happening, and we can then settle the moment for concerted attack.”

So Liu Bei set off and marched as quickly as possible to Yingchuan. At that time the imperial troops were attacking with success, and the rebels had retired upon Changshe. They had encamped among the thick grass.

The battle continued until dawn. Zhang Lian and Zhang Ba, with a group of flying rebels, found a way of escape. But suddenly a troop of soldiers with crimson banners appeared to oppose them. Their leader was a man of medium stature with small eyes and a long beard. He was Cao Cao, a Beijuo man, holding the rank of Cavalry Commander. His father was Cao Song, but he was not really a Cao. Cao Song had been born to the Xiahou family, but he had been brought up
As a young man Cao Cao had been fond of hunting and delighted in songs and dancing. He was resourceful and full of guile. An uncle, seeing the young fellow so unsteady, used to get angry with him and told his father of his misdeeds. His father remonstrated with him.

But Cao Cao made equal to the occasion. One day, seeing his uncle coming, he fell to the ground in a pretended fit. The uncle alarmed ran to tell his father, who came, and there was the youth in most perfect health.

“But your uncle said you were in a fit. Are you better?” said his father.

“I have never suffered from fits or any such illness,” said Cao Cao. “But I have lost my uncle’s affection, and he has deceived you.”

Thereafter, whatever the uncle might say of his faults, his father paid no heed. So the young man grew up licentious and uncontrolled.

A man of the time named Qiao Xuan said to Cao Cao, “Rebellion is at hand, and only a man of the greatest ability can succeed in restoring tranquillity. That man is yourself.”

And He Yong of Nanyang said of him, “The dynasty of Han is about to fall. He who can restore peace is this man and only he.”

Cao Cao went to inquire his future of a wise man of Runan named Xu Shao.

“What manner of man am I?” asked Cao Cao.

The seer made no reply, and again and again Cao Cao pressed the question.

Then Xu Shao replied, “In peace you are an able subject; in chaos you are a crafty hero!”

Cao Cao greatly rejoiced to hear this.

Cao Cao graduated at twenty and earned a reputation of
Lu Zhi explained, “I had surrounded the rebels and was on the point of smashing them, when Zhang Jue employed some of his supernatural powers and prevented my victory. The court sent down Eunuch Zhuo Feng to inquire into my failure, and that official demanded a bribe. I told him how hard pressed we were and asked him where, in the circumstances, I could find a gift for him. He went away in wrath and reported that I was hiding behind my ramparts and would not give battle and that I disheartened my army. So I was superseded by Dong Zhuo, and I have to go to the capital to answer the charge.”

This story put Zhang Fei into a rage. He was for slaying the escort and setting free Lu Zhi. But Liu Bei checked him.

“The government will take the due course,” said Liu Bei. “You must not act hastily!”

And the escort and the three brothers went two ways.

It was useless to continue on that road to Guangzong, so Guan Yu proposed to go back to Zhuo, and they retook the road. Two days later they heard the thunder of battle behind some hills. Hastening to the top, they beheld the government soldiers suffering great loss, and they saw the countryside was full of Yellow Scarves. On the rebels’ banners were the words Zhang Jue the Lord of Heaven written large.

“We will attack this Zhang Jue!” said Liu Bei to his brothers, and they galloped out to join in the battle.

Zhang Jue had worsted Dong Zhuo and was following up his advantage. He was in hot pursuit when the three brothers dashed into his army, threw his ranks into confusion, and drove him back fifteen miles. Then the brothers returned

13 One of the Ten Regular Attendants
with the rescued general to his camp.

“What offices have you?” asked Dong Zhuo, when he had leisure to speak to the brothers.

“None,” replied they.

And Dong Zhuo treated them with disrespect. Liu Bei retired calmly, but Zhang Fei was furious.

“We have just rescued this menial in a bloody fight,” cried Zhang Fei, “and now he is rude to us! Nothing but his death can slake my anger.”

Zhang Fei stamped toward Dong Zhuo’s tent, holding firmly a sharp sword.

Dong Zhuo

As it was in olden time so it is today,
The simple wight may merit well,
Officialdom holds sway;
Zhang Fei, the blunt and hasty,
Where can you find his peer?
But slaying the ungrateful would
Mean many deaths a year.

Dong Zhuo’s fate will be unrolled in later chapters.
Gao Sheng, who was unhorsed. At this Liu Bei signaled the main army to advance.

Then Zhang Ba, while still mounted, loosened his hair, grasped his sword, and uttered his incantations. Thereupon began the wind to howl and the thunder to roll, while a dense black cloud from the heavens settled upon the field. And therein seemed to be horsemen and footmen innumerable, who swept to attack the imperial troops. Fear came upon them, and Liu Bei led off his troops, but they were in disorder and returned defeated.

Zhu Jun and Liu Bei considered the matter.

“Zhang Ba uses magic,” said Zhu Jun. “Tomorrow, then, will I prepare counter magic in the shape of the blood of slaughtered swine and goats. This blood shall be sprinkled upon their hosts from the precipices above by soldiers in ambush. Thus shall we be able to break the power of their shamanic art.”

So it was done. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei took each a thousand troops and hid them on the high cliffs behind the hills, and they had a plentiful supply of the blood of swine and goats and all manners of filthy things. And so next day, when the rebels with fluttering banners and rolling drums came out to challenge, Liu Bei rode forth to meet them. At the same moment that the armies met, again Zhang Ba began his magic and again the elements began to struggle together. Sand flew in clouds, pebbles were swept along the ground, black masses of vapor filled the sky, and rolling masses of foot and horse descended from on high. Liu Bei turned, as before, to flee and the rebels rushed on. But as they pressed through the hills, the trumpets blared, and the hidden soldiers exploded bombs, threw down filth and spattered blood. The masses of soldiers and horses in the air fluttered to the earth as fragments of torn paper, the wind ceased to blow, the thunder subsided, the sand sank, and the
pebbles lay still upon the ground.

Zhang Ba quickly saw his magic had been countered and turned to retire. Then he was attacked on the flanks by Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, and in rear by Liu Bei and Zhu Jun. The rebels were routed. Liu Bei, seeing from afar the banner of Zhang Ba The Lord of Earth, galloped toward it but only succeeded in wounding Zhang Ba with an arrow in the left arm. Wounded though he was, Zhang Ba got away into the city of Yangcheng, where he fortified himself and was besieged by Zhu Jun.

Scouts, sent out to get news of Huangfu Song, reported: “Commander Huangfu Song had been very successful, and Dong Zhuo had suffered many reverses. Therefore the court put Huangfu Song in the latter’s place. Zhang Jue had died before Huangfu Song’s arrival. Zhang Lian had added his brother’s army to his own, but no headway could be made against Huangfu Song, whose army gained seven successive victories. And Zhang Lian was slain at Quyang. Beside this, Zhang Jue’s coffin was exhumed, the corpse beheaded, and the head, after exposure, was sent to Capital Luoyang. The common crowd had surrendered. For these services Huangfu Song was promoted to General of the Flying Chariots\(^1\) and the Imperial Protector of Jizhou\(^2\).

“Huangfu Song did not forget his friends. His first act after he had attained to power was to memorialize the Throne

\(^1\)General of the Flying Chariots was the second highest military office, just below Regent Marshal.

\(^2\)Imperial Protector was the highest office in an administrative region or zhou. Ancient China was divided into nine regions. Each region had a capital city, often of the same name. The nine regions were Bingzhou, Jingzhou, Jizhou, Liangzhou, Qingzhou, Xuzhou, Yizhou, Youzhou, and Yuzhou. Over the time more regions were created. During the Three Kingdoms period, there were already more than nine regions. A few of the new regions were Xizhou, Yangzhou, and Yongzhou. (see map)
was then invested. When famine pressed upon the besieged, they sent a messenger to offer to surrender, but Zhu Jun refused the offer.

Said Liu Bei to Zhu Jun, “Seeing that the founder of the Han Dynasty, Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor, could welcome the submissive and receive the favorable, why reject these?”

“The conditions are different,” replied Zhu Jun. “In those old days disorder was universal and the people had no fixed lord. Wherefore submission was welcomed and support rewarded to encourage people to come over. Now the empire is united, and the Yellow Scarves are the only malcontents. To receive their surrender is not to encourage the good. To allow brigands, when successful, is to give way to every license, and to let them surrender when they fail is to encourage brigandage. Your plan is not a good one.”

Liu Bei replied, “Not to let brigands surrender is well. But the city is surrounded as by an iron barrel. If the rebels’ request be refused, they will be desperate and fight to the death, and we can hardly withstand a myriad of such men. Moreover, in the city there are many times that number, all doomed to death. Let us withdraw from one corner and only attack the opposite. They will all assuredly flee and have no desire to fight. We shall take them.”

Zhu Jun saw that the advice was good and followed it. As predicted the rebels ran out, led by Han Zhong. The besiegers fell upon them as they fled, and Han Zhong was slain. The rebels scattered in all directions. But the other two rebel chieftains, Zhao Hong and Sun Zhong, came with large reinforcements, and as they appeared very strong, the imperial soldiers retired, and the new body of rebels reentered Wancheng.

The court commanded the successful Zhu Jun to lead his veteran and successful troops to destroy the rebels. He at once marched toward the city of Wancheng which the rebels were holding. When Zhu Jun arrived, Han Zhong went to oppose him. Zhu Jun sent Liu Bei and his brothers to attack the southwest corner of the city. Han Zhong at once led the best of his troops to defend the city. Meanwhile Zhu Jun himself led two thousand of armored horsemen to attack the opposite corner. The rebels, thinking the city being lost, abandoned the southwest and turned back into the city to help the defenders. Liu Bei pressed hotly in their rear, and they were utterly routed. They took refuge in the city which

3At the end of Qin Dynasty, anarchy ruled the empire. Uprisings were everywhere, and Liu Bang was one of the rebel leaders.
Zhu Jun encamped three miles from the city and prepared to attack. Just then there arrived a body of horse and foot from the east. At the lead was one general with a broad open face, a body as an alert tiger’s, and a torso as a lofty bear’s. His name was Sun Jian. He was a native of Fuchun in the old state of Wu, a descendant of the famous Sun Zi the Strategist⁴.

When he was seventeen, Sun Jian was with his father on the River Qiantang and saw a party of pirates, who had been plundering a merchant, dividing their booty on the river bank.

“We can capture these!” said he to his father.

So, gripping his sword, he ran boldly up the bank and cried out to this side and that as if he was calling his men to come on. This made the pirates believe the soldiers were on them and they fled, leaving their booty behind them. He actually killed one of the pirates. In this way be became known and was recommended for office.

Then, in collaboration with the local officials, he raised a band of one thousand and helped to quell the rebellion of one Xu Chang, who called himself the Sun Emperor and had ten thousand supporters. The rebel’s son Xu Hao was also slain with his father. For this Sun Jian was commended by Imperial Protector Zang Min in a memorial to the Throne, and he received further promotion to the post of magistrate of Yandu, then of Xuyi, and then of Xiapi.

When the Yellow Scarves rebellion began, Sun Jian gathered together the youths of his village, some of the merchant class, got a troop of one thousand five hundred of veteran soldiers and took the field. Now he had reached the

⁴Sun Zi (aka Sun Wu, Suntzu, Sun-tzu, Sun tzu) the author of the famed treatise The Art of War. A general of Wu in the Spring and Autumn period, Sun Zi made her the mightiest state during his lifetime by defeating Chu and conquering Yue. His treatise the Art of War is still avidly read today by many.
Zhu Jun welcomed Sun Jian gladly and ordered him to attack the south gate of Wancheng. The north and the west gates were simultaneously attacked by Liu Bei and Zhu Jun, but the east gate was left free to give the rebels a chance of exit. Sun Jian was the first to mount the wall and cut down more than twenty rebels with his own sword. The rebels ran, but the leader Zhao Hong rode directly at Sun Jian with his spear ready to thrust. Sun Jian leaped down from the wall, snatched away the spear and with it knocked Zhao Hong from the horse. Then Sun Jian, mounting Zhao Hong’s horse, rode hither and thither, slaying as he went.

The rebels fled north. Meeting Liu Bei, they declined to fight and scattered. But Liu Bei drew his bow, fitted an arrow, and shot their leader Sun Zhong, who fell to the ground. The main army of Zhu Jun came up, and after tremendous slaughter, the rebels surrendered. Thus was peace brought to the ten counties about the Nanyang area.

Zhu Jun returned to Capital Luoyang, was promoted to the General of the Flying Cavalry, and received the governorship of Henan. He did not forget those who had helped him to win victory. Thus he reported the merits of Liu Bei and Sun Jian to the Throne.

Sun Jian, having influential friends and connections to support him, quickly got an appointment to a post of Commander of Changsha and went to assume the new office. But Liu Bei, in spite of Zhu Jun’s memorial, waited in vain for preferment, and the three brothers became very sad.

Walking along one day in the capital, Liu Bei met a court official, Zhang Jun, to whom he related his services and told his sorrows. Zhang Jun was much surprised at this neglect and one day at court spoke to the Emperor about it.

Said he, “The Yellow Scarves rebelled because the eunuchs sold offices and bartered ranks. There was employment only for their friends, punishment only for their enemies. This led to rebellion. Wherefore it would be well to slay the Ten Eunuchs and expose their heads and proclaim what had been done throughout the whole empire. Then reward the worthy. Thereby the land would be wholly tranquil.”

But the eunuchs fiercely opposed this and said Zhang Jun was insulting the Emperor, and the Emperor bade the guards thrust Zhang Jun out.

However, the eunuchs took counsel together and one said, “Surely someone who rendered some service against rebels resents being passed over.”

So they caused a list of unimportant people to be prepared for preferment by and by. Among them was Liu Bei, who received the post of magistrate of the county of Anxi, to which he proceeded without delay after disbanding his army and sending them home to their villages. He retained

5General of the Flying Cavalry was the second highest military office, just below Regent Marshal, and of the same rank as General of the Flying Chariots.
two dozens or so as escort.

The three brothers reached Anxi, and soon the administration of the county was so reformed and the rule so wise that in a month there was no law-breaking. The three brothers lived in harmony, eating at the same table and sleeping on the same couch. But when Liu Bei was in public sessions or in company of others, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei would stand in attendance, were it even a whole day.

Four months after their arrival, there came out a general order for the reduction of the number of military officers holding civil posts, and Liu Bei began to fear that he would be among those thrown out. In due course the inspecting official, Du Biao by name, arrived and was met at the boundary. But to the polite obeisance of Liu Bei, he made no return, save a wave of his whip as he sat on his horse. This made Guan Yu and Zhang Fei furious. But worse was to follow.

When the inspector had arrived at his lodging, he took his seat on the dais, leaving Liu Bei standing below. After a long time he addressed Liu Bei.

“Magistrate, what was your origin?”

Liu Bei replied, “I am descended from Prince Sheng of Zhongshan. Since my first fight with the Yellow Scarves rebels at Zhuo County, I have been in some thirty battles, wherein I gained some trifling merit. My reward was this office.”

“You lie about your descent, and your statement of services is false!” roared the inspector. “Now the court has ordered the reduction of your sort of low class and corrupt officials.”

Liu Bei muttered to himself and withdrew. On his return to the magistracy, he took council with his secretaries.

“This pompous attitude only means the inspector wants a bribe,” said they.

“I have never wronged the people to the value of a single coin: Then where is a bribe to come from?”

Next day the inspector had the minor officials before him and forced them to bear witness that their master had oppressed the people. Liu Bei time after time went to rebut this charge, but the doorkeepers drove him away and he could not enter.

Now Zhang Fei had been all day drowning his sorrow in wine and had drunk far too much. Calling for his horse he rode out past the lodging of the inspector, and at the gate saw a small crowd of white-haired people weeping bitterly. He asked why.

They said, “The inspector has compelled the underlings to bear false witness against our magistrate, with the desire to injure the virtuous Liu Bei. We came to beg mercy for him but are not permitted to enter. Moreover, we have been beaten by the doorkeepers.”

This provoked the irascible and half intoxicated Zhang Fei to fury. His eyes opened wide until they became circles; he ground his teeth; in a moment he was off his steed, had forced his way past the scared doorkeepers into the building, and was in the rear apartments. There he saw Imperial Inspector Du Biao sitting on high with the official underlings in bonds at his feet.

“Oppressor of the people, robber!” cried Zhang Fei. “Do you know me?”

But before the inspector could reply, Zhang Fei had had him by the hair and had dragged him down. Another moment he was outside and firmly lashed to the hitching post in front of the building. Then breaking off a switch
from a willow tree, Zhang Fei gave his victim a severe thrashing, only staying his hand when the tenth switch was too short to strike with.

Liu Bei was sitting alone, communing with his sorrow, when he heard a shouting before his door. He asked what the matter was.

They told him, “General Zhang Fei had bound somebody to a post and was thrashing him!”

Hastily going outside, Liu Bei saw who the unhappy victim was and asked Zhang Fei the reason.

“If we do not beat this sort of wretch to death, what may we expect?” said Zhang Fei.

“Noble Sir, save me!” cried the inspector.

Now Liu Bei had always been kindly and gracious, wherefore he bade his brother release the officer and go his way.

Then Guan Yu came up, saying, “Brother, after your magnificent services you only got this petty post, and even here you have been insulted by this fellow. A thorn bush is no place for a phoenix. Let us slay this fellow, leave here, and go home till we can evolve a bigger scheme.”

Liu Bei contented himself with hanging the official seal about the inspector’s neck, saying, “If I hear that you injure the people, I will assuredly kill you. I now spare your life, and I return to you the seal. We are going.”

The inspector went to the governor of Dingzhou and complained, and orders were issued for the arrest of the brothers, but they got away to Daizhou and sought refuge with Liu Hu, who sheltered them because of Liu Bei’s noble birth.

By this time the Ten Regular Attendants had everything in their hands, and they put to death all who did not stand in with them. From every officer who had helped to put down the rebels they demanded presents; and if these were not forthcoming, he was removed from office. Imperial Commanders Huangfu Song and Zhu Jun both fell victims to these intrigues and were deprived from offices, while on the other hand the eunuchs received the highest honors and rewards. Thirteen eunuchs were ennobled, including Zhao Zhong who was added to the rank of General of the Flying Cavalry; Zhang Rang possessed most of the prize farms around the capital. The government grew worse and worse, and everyone was irritated.

Rebellions broke out in Changsha led by Ou Xing, and in Yuyang led by Zhang Ju and Zhang Chun. Memorials were sent up in number as snow flakes in winter, but the Ten suppressed them all. One day the Emperor was at a feast in one of the gardens with the Ten, when Court Counselor Liu Tao suddenly appeared showing very great distress. The Emperor asked what the matter was.

“Sire, how can you be feasting with these when the empire is at the last gasp?” said Liu Tao.

“All is well,” said the Emperor. “Where is anything wrong?”

Said Liu Tao, “Robbers swarm on all sides and plunder the cities. And all is the fault of the Ten Eunuchs who sell offices and injure the people, oppress loyal officials and deceive their superiors. All virtuous ones have left the services and returned to their places, and are building and

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6Two of the Ten Regular Attendants
Chapter 2

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guarding their positions. More regional offices have been sought than imperial appointments. Central authority is being undermined by local interests. Misfortune is before our very eyes!”

At this the eunuchs pulled off their hats and threw themselves at their master’s feet.

“If Minister Liu Tao disapproves of us,” they said, “we are in danger. We pray that our lives be spared and we may go to our farms. We yield our property to help defray military expenses.”

And they wept bitterly.

The Emperor turned angrily to Liu Tao, saying, “You also have servants: Why can’t you bear with mine?”

And thereupon the Emperor called to the guards to eject Liu Tao and put him to death.

Liu Tao cried aloud, “My death matters nothing. The pity is that Han Dynasty, after four centuries of reign, is falling fast!”

The guards hustled him away and were just about to carry out the Emperor’s order when a minister stopped them, shouting, “Strike not! Wait till I have spoken with His Majesty.”

It was the Minister of the Interior, Chen Dan. He went in to the Emperor, to whom he said, “For what fault is Counselor Liu Tao to be put to death?”

“He has vilified my servants and has insulted me,” said the Emperor.

“All the empire would eat the flesh of the eunuchs if they could, and yet, Sire, you respect them as if they were your parents. They have no merit, but they are created nobles. Moreover, Feng Xu was in league with the Yellow Scarves. Unless Your Majesty looks to it, the state will crumble!”

“There was no proof against Feng Xu,” replied the Emperor. “About the Ten Eunuchs, are there none faithful among them?”

Chen Dan beat his forehead on the steps of the throne and did not desist from remonstrance. Then the Emperor grew angry and commanded his removal and imprisonment with Liu Tao. That night Liu Tao and Chen Dan were murdered.

Then the eunuchs sent a forged edict to Sun Jian making him Governor of Changsha, with orders to suppress the rebellion of Ou Xing. In less than two months Sun Jian reported the county all tranquil. For this he was created Lord of Wucheng.

Further, Liu Yu was made Imperial Protector of Youzhou to move against Yuyang and suppress Zhang Ju and Zhang Chun. Liu Hu of Daizhou recommended Liu Bei to Liu Yu. Liu Yu welcomed Liu Bei and gave him rank of commander and sent him against the rebels. He fought with and worsted them and entirely broke their spirit. Zhang Chun was cruel, and his leaders turned against him. One of his officers then slew him and brought in his head, after which the others submitted. The other leader Zhang Ju saw that all was lost and killed himself.

Yuyang being now tranquil, Liu Bei’s services were reported to the Throne, and he received full pardon for the insult to the imperial inspector. He was made Deputy
Magistrate of Xiami, then Commanding Officer of Gaotang. Then Gongsun Zan praised Liu Bei’s former services, and he was promoted to Magistrate of Pingyuan. This place was very prosperous, and Liu Bei recovered something of his old manner before the days of adversity. Liu Yu also received preferment and was promoted to Grand Commander.

In the summer of the six year of Central Stability (AD 189), Emperor Ling became seriously ill and summoned He Jin into the Palace to arrange for the future. He Jin had sprung from a humble family of butchers, but his sister had become a concubine of rank and borne a son to the Emperor, named Liu Bian. After this she became Empress He, and He Jin became the powerful Regent Marshal.

The Emperor had also greatly loved a beautiful girl, Lady Wang, who had borne him a son named Liu Xian. Empress He had poisoned Lady Wang from jealousy, and the baby had been given into the care of Empress Dong, who was the mother of Emperor Ling. Lady Dong was the wife of Liu Chang, Lord of Jiedu. As time went on and the Emperor Huan had no son of his own, he adopted the son of Liu Chang, who succeeded as the Emperor Ling. After his accession, Emperor Ling had taken his own mother into the Palace to live and had conferred upon her the title of Empress Dowager.

Empress Dong had always tried to persuade her son to name Liu Xian as the Heir Apparent, and in fact the Emperor greatly loved the boy and was disposed to do as his mother desired. When his end was near, one of the eunuchs, Jian Shuo, said, “If Liu Xian is to succeed, He Jin must be killed to prevent countermoves.”

The Emperor saw this too. He placed Jian Shuo in command of the eight armies of the West Garden in order to

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7 Regent Marshal was the highest military office, while Imperial Guardian was the highest civilian office.
check Liu Bian’s supporters. And he summoned He Jin to come to him.

But at the very gate of the Forbidden City, He Jin was warned of his danger by Commander Pan Yin who said, “This must be a trap of Jian Shuo to destroy you!”

He Jin rushed back to his quarters and called many of the ministers to his side, and they met to consider how to put the eunuchs to death.

At this assembly a man spoke against the plot, “The influence of the eunuchs dates back a century and a half, during the reigns of Emperors Chong and Zhi. It has spread like a noxious weed in all directions. How can we hope to destroy it? Above all keep this plot secret, or our whole clans will be exterminated.”

He Jin eyed down and saw General of Military Standards Cao Cao.

He Jin was very angry at this speech and cried, “What do inferiors like you know of the ways of government?”

And in the midst of the confusion Pan Yin came to say: “The Emperor is no more. The eunuchs have decided to keep the death a secret and forge a command to the Regent Marshal to come into the Palace to settle the succession. Meanwhile to prevent trouble they have inscribed the name of Prince Xian on the roll.”

And as Pan Yin finished speaking, the edict arrived summoning He Jin.

“The matter for the moment is to set up the rightful heir,” said Cao Cao. “We can deal with the traitors later.”

“Who dare to join me in supporting the rightful heir---Prince Bian?” asked He Jin, the Regent Marshal.

At once one stood forward, crying, “Give me five thousand veterans, and we will break into the Palace, set up the true heir, slay the eunuchs, and sweep clean the government! Then peace will come to the empire.”

The energetic speaker was Yuan Shao, son of the former Minister of the Interior Yuan Feng and nephew of Imperial Guardian Yuan Wei. Yuan Shao then held the rank of Imperial Commander.

He Jin mustered five thousand royal guards. Yuan Shao put on complete armor and took command. He Jin, supported by He Yong, Xun You, Zheng Tai, and more than thirty other ministers and high-rank officials, went into the Palace. In the hall where lay the coffin of the late Emperor, they placed Liu Bian on the throne. After the ceremony was over and all had bowed before the new Emperor, Yuan Shao went in to arrest Eunuch Jian Shuo. Jian Shuo in terror fled into the Palace garden and hid among the shrubs, where he was discovered and murdered by Guo Sheng, one of the Ten Eunuchs. The guards under Jian Shuo’s command all surrendered.

Yuan Shao said, “Their gangs have broken. The most opportune moment is now to slay all the eunuchs!”

But Zhang Rang and the eunuchs of the Ten scented the danger and rushed to see Empress He.

They said, “The originator of the plan to injure your brother was Jian Shuo: Only he was concerned and no other. Now the Regent Marshal, on Yuan Shao’s advice, wishes to slay everyone of us. We implore your pity, O Your Majesty!”

“Fear not!” said Empress He, whose son had just become
Emperor, “I will protect you.”

She sent for her brother, and said, “You and I are of lowly origin, and we owe our good fortune to the eunuchs. The misguided Jian Shuo is now dead, and need you really put all the others to death as Yuan Shao advises?”

And He Jin obeyed her wish. He explained to his party, saying, “The real offender, Jian Shuo, has met his fate, and his clan will be punished. But we need not exterminate the whole party nor injure his colleagues.”

“Slay them, root and branch,” cried Yuan Shao, “or they will ruin you!”

“I have decided,” said He Jin, coldly. “Say no more.”

Within a few days He Jin became Chair of the Secretariat, and his associates received high offices.

Now Empress Dong summoned the eunuch Zhang Rang and his party to a council.

Said she, “It was I who first brought forward the sister of He Jin. Today her son is on the throne, and all the officials are her friends, and her influence is enormous. What can we do?”

Zhang Rang replied, “Your Highness should administer the state from ‘behind the veil’; create the late Emperor’s son Liu Xian a prince; give your brother, the Imperial Uncle Dong Chong, a high rank, and place him over the army; and use us. That will do it.”

Empress Dong approved. Next day she held a court and issued an edict in the sense proposed. She made Liu Xian Prince of Chenliu and Dong Chong General of the Flying Cavalry\(^8\), and she allowed the eunuchs again to participate in state affairs.

When Empress He saw this, she prepared a banquet to which she invited her rival Empress Dong.

In the middle of the feast, when all were well warmed with wine, Empress He rose and offered a cup to her guest, saying, “It is not fitting that we two should meddle in state affairs. In the beginning of the Han Dynasty, when Empress Lu laid hands upon the government, all her clans were put to death\(^9\). We ought to remain content, immured in our palaces, and leave state affairs to the state officials. That would be well for the country, and I trust you will act thus.”

But Empress Dong only got angry, saying, “You poisoned Lady Wang out of jealousy. Now, relying upon the fact that your son sits on the throne and that your brother is powerful, you speak these wild words. I will command that your brother be beheaded, and that can be done as easily as I turn my hand!”

Empress He in her turn became wroth and said, “I tried to persuade you with fair words. Why get so angry?”

“You low born daughter of a butcher, what do you know of offices?” cried Empress Dong.

\(^8\)General of the Flying Cavalry was the second highest military office, just below Regent Marshal, and of the same rank as General of the Flying Chariots.

\(^9\)Empress Lu was wife of Liu Bang, the Han Founder. After Liu Bang’s death, she held imperial authority. She appointed members of her own family to highly important positions of state and clearly hoped to substitute her own family for the reigning Liu family. But these plans were frustrated on her death (BC 180).
And the quarrel waxed hot.

The eunuchs persuaded the ladies to retire. But in the night Empress He summoned her brother into the Palace and told him what had occurred. He went out and took counsel with the principal officers of state. Next morning a court was held and a memorial was presented, saying:

“Empress Dong, being the foster mother of Liu Xian, Prince of Chenliu, a regional prince---only a collateral---cannot properly occupy any part of the Palace. She is to be removed into her original fief of Hejian and is to depart immediately.”

And while they sent an escort to remove Empress Dong, a strong guard was placed about the Imperial Uncle Dong Chong’s dwelling. They took away his seal of office and he, knowing this was the end, killed himself in his private apartments. His dependents, who wailed his death, were driven off by the guards.

The eunuchs Zhang Rang and Duan Gui, having lost their patroness, sent large gifts to He Jin’s younger brother, He Miao, and his mother, Lady Wuyang, and thus got them to put in a good word to Empress He so as to gain her protection. And so they gained favor once more at court.

In the sixth month of that year, the secret emissaries of He Jin poisoned Empress Dong in her residence in the country. Her remains were brought to the capital and buried in Wen Tombs. He Jin feigned illness and did not attend the funeral.

Commander Yuan Shao went one day to see He Jin, saying, “The two eunuchs, Zhang Rang and Duan Gui, are spreading the report outside that you has caused the death of the late empress and is aiming at the throne. This is an excuse for you to destroy them. Do not spare them this time, or you will pay like Dou Wu and Chen Fan, who in the previous reign missed their chance because the secret had not been kept, and they paid by their own deaths. Now you and your brother have many commanders and officers behind, so that the destruction of the eunuchs can be but an ease. It is a heaven-sent opportunity. Delay no further!”

But He Jin replied, “Let me think it over.”

He Jin’s servants overheard the discussion and secretly informed the intended victims, who sent further gifts to the younger brother He Miao.

Corrupted by these, He Miao went in to speak with his sister Empress He and said, “The General is the chief support of the new Emperor, yet he is not gracious and merciful but thinks wholly of slaughter. If he slays the eunuchs without cause, it may bring about revolution.”

Soon after He Jin entered and told her of his design to put the eunuchs to death.

She argued with him, “Those officials look after palace affairs and are old servants. To kill the old servants just after the death of their master would appear disrespectful to the dynasty’s ancestral temple.”

And as He Jin was of a vacillating mind, he murmured assent and left her.

“What about it?” said Yuan Shao on meeting him. “She will not consent. What can be done?”

“Call up an army and slay them. It is imperative. Never mind her consent!”

“That is an excellent plan,” said He Jin. And he sent orders all round to march soldiers to the capital.

But Secretary Chen Lin objected, “Nay! Do not act without due consideration. The proverb says ‘To cover the eyes and snatch at swallows is to fool oneself.’ If in so small a matter you cannot attain your wish, what of great affairs? Now by virtue of the emperor and with the army under your hand, you are like prancing tiger and soaring dragon: You
may do as you please. To use such enormous powers against the eunuchs would bring victory as easily as lighting up a furnace to burn a hair. Only act promptly: Use your powers and smite at once, and all the empire will be with you. But to summon forces to the capital, to gather many bold warriors into one spot, each with different schemes, is to turn our weapons against our own person, to place ourselves in the power of another. Nothing but failure can come of it, and havoc will ensue.”


Then one of those about He Jin suddenly clapped his hands, laughing, “Solving this issue is as easy as turning over one’s hand! Why so much talk?”

The speaker was Cao Cao.

Wouldst thou withdraw wicked people from thy prince’s side,
Then seek counsel of the wise people of the state.

What Cao Cao said will be disclosed in later chapters.

Chapter 3
In Wenming Garden, Dong Zhuo Denounces Ding Yuan;
With Red Hare, Li Su Bribes Lu Bu.

What Cao Cao said was this: “The eunuch evil is of very old standing, but the real cause of the present trouble is in the improper influence allowed them by the emperors and the misplaced favoritism they have enjoyed. But a gaoler would be ample force to employ against this kind of evil, and getting rid of the main culprits is quite enough. Why increase confusion by summoning troops from the regions? Any desire to slay all of them will speedily become known, and the plan will fail.”

“Then, Cao Cao, you have some scheme of your own to further,” said He Jin with a sneer.

Cao Cao left the meeting, proclaiming, “The one who throws the world into chaos is He Jin!”

Then He Jin sent swift, secret letters far and wide to several bases.

It must be recalled that Dong Zhuo had failed in his attempt to destroy the Yellow Scarves rebellion. He would have been punished if he had not bribed the Ten Eunuchs heavily for their protection. Later, through connections in the capital, he obtained rapid promotions from General to General of the Front Army, to Lord of Aoxiang, to Imperial Protector in the western region of Xizhou and Commander of an army of two hundred thousand troops. But Dong Zhuo was treacherous and disloyal at heart. So when he received the summons to the capital, he rejoiced greatly and lost no time in obeying it. He left a son-in-law, Commander Niu Fu, to look after the affairs of Xizhou and set out for Luoyang. Dong Zhuo took with him a huge army and four generals---Li Jue, Guo Si, Zhang Ji, and Fan Chou.

Dong Zhuo’s adviser and son-in-law, Li Ru, said, “Though
a formal summons has come, there are many obscurities in it. It would be well to send up a memorial stating plainly our aims and intentions. Then we can proceed.”

So Dong Zhuo composed something like this:

“My servant knows that the continual rebellions owe their origin to Zhang Rang and the Regular Attendants of the Inner Bureau, who act counter to all recognized precepts. Now to stop the ebullition of a pot the best way is to withdraw the fire; to cut out an abscess, though painful, is better than to nourish the evil. I have dared undertake a military advance on the capital, with thy permission, and now pray that Zhang Rang and the other eunuchs be removed for the happiness of the dynasty and of the empire.”

He Jin read this memorial and showed it to his partisans.

Then said Minister Zheng Tai, “A fierce wild beast: If he comes, his prey will be humans!”

He Jin replied, “You are too timorous: You are unequal to great schemes.”

But Lu Zhi also said, “Long have I known this man. In appearance innocent, he is a very wolf at heart. Let him in, and calamity enters with him. Stop him, do not let him come, and thus will you avoid upheaval.”

He Jin was obstinate, and both Zheng Tai and Lu Zhi gave up their posts and retired, as did more than half the ministers of state, while He Jin sent a warm welcome to Dong Zhuo, who soon camped at Shengchi Lake and stationed there without further action.

Zhang Rang and the eunuchs knew this move was directed against them and said, “This is He Jin’s plot. If we do not strike first, our whole clans shall be exterminated.”

So they hid a band of fifty armed ruffians at the Gate of Grand Virtue in the Palace of Happiness, where the Empress
Whereupon both Yuan Shao and Cao Cao chose five hundred best men under their command, at whose head they placed Yuan Shu, a brother of Yuan Shao. Yuan Shu, clad in mail, drew up his troops outside the Forbidden City’s entrance, while Yuan Shao and Cao Cao, holding swords, went as escort.

When He Jin neared the Palace of Happiness, the officers from the Inner Bureau said, “The orders are to admit the Regent Marshal and none other.”

So the escort was detained outside. He Jin went in proudly. At the Gate of Grand Virtue, he was met by Zhang Rang and Duan Gui, and their followers quickly closed in around him. He Jin began to feel alarmed.

Then Zhang Rang in a harsh voice began to revile him: “What crime had Empress Dong committed that she should have been put to death? And when the Mother of the Country was buried, who feigned sickness and did not attend? We raised you and your paltry, huckstering family to all the dignity and wealth you have, and this is your gratitude! You would slay us. You call us sordid and dirty: Who is the cleaner?”

He Jin was panic stricken and looked about for a way lived, then they went in to see her.

They said, “The General, feigning to act under command, has called up armies to the capital to destroy us. We pray you, Your Majesty, pity and save us!”

“Go to the General and confess your faults,” said the Empress.

“If we did, then should we be cut to mincemeat! Rather summon the General into your presence and command him to cease. If he will not, then we pray but die in your presence.”

Empress He issued the requisite command.

He Jin was just going to her when Secretary Chen Lin advised him not to enter, saying, “The eunuchs are certainly behind the order and mean your harm.”

But He Jin could only see the command of the Empress and was oblivious to all else. Said he, “Clearly, this is an edict from the Empress. What harm?”

“Our plot is no longer a secret,” said Yuan Shao. “Still you may go if you are ready to fight your way in.”

“Get the eunuchs out first!” said Cao Cao.

“Silly children!” said He Jin. “What can they do against the man who holds the forces of the empire in his palm?”

Yuan Shao said, “If you will go, then we will come as a guard, just as a precaution.”

He Jin was panic stricken and looked about for a way
to escape, but all gates had been shut. The eunuchs closed him in, and then the assassins appeared and cut He Jin into halves.

*Closing the days of the Hans, and the years of their rule were near spent,*

*Stupid and tactless was He Jin, yet stood he highest in office,*

*Many were they who advised him, but he was deaf as he heard not,*

*Wherefore fell he a victim under the swords of the eunuchs.*

So He Jin died. Yuan Shao and Cao Cao waited long. By and by, impatient at the delay, they called through the gate, “Thy carriage awaits, O General!”

For reply the head of He Jin was flung over the wall. A decree was proclaimed: “He Jin has contemplated treachery and therefore has been slain! It pardons his adherents.”

Yuan Shao shouted, “The eunuchs have slain the High Minister. Let those who will slay this wicked party come and help me!”

Then one of He Jin’s generals, Wu Kuang, set fire to the gate. Yuan Shu at the head of his guards burst in and fell to slaying the eunuchs without regard to age or rank. Yuan Shao and Cao Cao broke into the inner part of the Palace. Four of the eunuchs---Zhao Zhong, Cheng Kuang, Xia Yun, and Guo Sheng---fled to the Blue Flower Lodge where they were hacked to pieces. Fire raged, destroying the buildings.

Four of the Ten Regular Attendants---Zhang Rang, Duan Gui, Cao Jie, and Hou Lan---led by Zhang Rang carried off the Empress, Emperor Bian, and Prince Xian of Chenliu toward the North Palace.

Lu Zhi, since he had resigned office, was at home, but hearing of the revolution in the Palace he donned his armor, took his spear, and prepared to fight.

He saw Eunuch Duan Gui hurrying the Empress along and called out, “You rebel, how dare you abduct the Empress?”

The eunuch fled. The Empress leaped out of a window and was taken to a place of safety.

General Wu Kuang burst into one of the inner halls where he found He Miao, sword in hand.

“You also were in the plot to slay your own brother,” cried Wu Kuang. “You shall die with the others!”

“Let us kill the plotter against his elder brother!” cried many.

He Miao looked around: His enemies hemmed him in on every side. He was hacked to pieces.

Yuan Shu bade his soldiers scatter and seek out all the families of the eunuchs, sparing none. In that slaughter many beardless men were killed in error.

Cao Cao set himself to extinguish the fires. He then begged Empress He to undertake the direction of affairs, and soldiers were sent to pursue Zhang Rang and rescue the
portent, he hastily dressed and went forth to look about him.
Then he saw a bright light shooting up from a heap of straw.
He hastened thither and then saw two youths lying behind it.
“To what household do you belong, young gentlemen?”
asked the farmer.
The Emperor was too frightened to reply, but his
companion said, “He is the Emperor. There was a revolution
in the Forbidden City, and we ran away. I am his brother,
Prince of Chenliu.”

Zhang Rang, seeing that he was lost, jumped into the
river, where he was drowned.
The two boys ignorant of the meaning of all this confusion
and terrified out of their senses, dared not utter a cry. They
crept in among the rank grass on the river bank and hid. The
soldiers scattered in all directions but failed to find them.
So they remained till the fourth watch, shivering with cold
from the drenching dew and very hungry. They lay down in
the thick grass and wept in each other’s arms, silently, lest
anyone should discover them.
“This is no a place to stay in,” said Prince Xian. “We
must find some way out.”
So the two children knotted their clothes together and
managed to crawl up the bank. They were in a thicket of
thorn bushes, and it was quite dark. They could not see any
path. They were in despair when, all at once, millions of
fireflies sprang up all about them and circled in the air in
front of the Emperor.
“Heaven is helping us,” said Prince Xian.
They followed whither the fireflies led and gradually got
into a road. They walked till their feet were too sore to go
further, when, seeing a heap of straw near the road, they
crept to it and lay down.
This heap of straw was close to a farm house. In the
night, as the farmer was sleeping, he saw in a vision two
bright red suns drop behind his dwelling. Alarmed by the

The farmer bowed again and again and said, “My name
is Sui Lie. My brother Sui Yi is the former Minister of the
Interior. My brother was disgusted with the behavior of the
eunuchs and so resigned and hid away here.”
The two lads were taken into the farm, and their host on
his knees served them with refreshment.
It has been said that Min Gong had gone in pursuit of
Eunuch Duan Gui. By and by Min Gong overtook Duan
Gui and cried, “Where is the Emperor?”
“He disappeared! I do not know where he is!”
Min Gong slew Duan Gui and hung the bleeding head
on his horse’s neck. Then he sent his troops searching in all
Yuan Shao rode out in advance.
“Who are you?” said Yuan Shao.
From under the shade of an embroidered banner rode out a leader, saying, “Do you have the Emperor?”
The Emperor was too panic stricken to respond, but the Prince of Chenliu rode to the front and cried, “Who are you?”
“Dong Zhuo, Imperial Protector of Xizhou Region.”

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“Dong Zhuo, Imperial Protector of Xizhou Region.”

Though the emperor doesn’t rule, though the prince no office fills,
Yet a brilliant cavalcade comes along from Beimang Hills.

The cavalcade had not proceeded far when they saw coming towards them a large body of soldiers with fluttering banners hiding the sun and raising a huge cloud of dust. The officials turned pale, and the Emperor was greatly alarmed.
“Have you come to protect the Chariot or to steal it?” said Prince Xian.
“I have come to protect,” said Dong Zhuo.
“If that is so, the Emperor is here: Why do you not dismount?”

Dong Zhuo hastily dismounted and made obeisance on the left of the road. Then Prince Xian spoke graciously to him. From first to last the Prince had carried himself most perfectly so that Dong Zhuo in his heart admired his behavior, and then arose the first desire to set aside the Emperor in favor of the Prince of Chenliu.

They reached the Palace the same day, and there was an affecting interview with Empress He.

But when they had restored order in the Palace, the Imperial Hereditary Seal, the special seal of the Emperor, was missing.

Dong Zhuo camped without the walls, but every day he was to be seen in the streets with an escort of mailed soldiers so that the common people were in a state of constant trepidation. He also went in and out of the Palace careless of all the rules of propriety.

Commander of the Rear Army Bao Xin spoke of Dong Zhuo’s behavior to Yuan Shao, saying, “This man harbors some evil design and should be removed.”

“Nothing can be done till the government is more settled,” said Yuan Shao.

Then Bao Xin saw Minister of the Interior Wang Yun and asked what he thought.

“Let us talk it over,” was the reply.

Bao Xin said no more but he left the capital and retired to the Taishan Mountains.

Dong Zhuo induced the soldiers of the two brothers He Jin and He Miao to join his command, and privately spoke to his adviser Li Ru about deposing the Emperor in favor of the Prince of Chenliu.

“The government is really without a head. There can be no better time than this to carry out your plan. Delay will spoil all. Tomorrow assemble the officials in the Wenming Garden and address them on the subject. Put all opponents to death, and your prestige is settled.”

So spoke Li Ru, and the words pleased Dong Zhuo mightily.

So the next day Dong Zhuo spread a feast and invited many guests. As all the officers went in terror of him, no one dared be absent. Dong Zhuo himself rode up to the garden last of all and took his place with his sword girded on. When the wine had gone round several times, Dong Zhuo stopped the service and the music and began to speak.

“I have something to say. Listen quietly all of you!”

All turned towards him.

“The emperor is lord of all. If he lacks dignity and behaves in an unseemly manner, he is no fitting inheritor of the ancestral prerogatives. He who is now on the throne is a weakling, inferior to the Prince of Chenliu in intelligence and love of learning. The Prince is in every way fitted for the throne. I desire to depose the Emperor and set up the Prince in his place. What think you?”

The assembly listened in perfect silence, none daring at first to utter a word of dissent. But one dared; for suddenly
a guest stood up in his place, smote the table and cried.

“No! No! Who are you that you dare utter such bold words? The Emperor is son of the late Emperor and has done no wrong. Why then should he be deposed? Are you a rebel?”

The speaker was Ding Yuan, Imperial Protector of Bingzhou.

Dong Zhuo glared at Ding Yuan, roaring, “There is life for those who are with me, death for those against!”

Dong Zhuo drew his sword and made for the objector. But the watchful Li Ru had noticed standing behind Ding Yuan a particularly dangerous looking henchman of his, who was now handling his halberd threateningly, and whose eyes were blazing with anger.

So Li Ru hastily interposed, saying, “But this is the banquet chamber, and state affairs should be left outside. The matters can be fully discussed tomorrow.”

His fellow guests persuaded Ding Yuan to leave, and after his departure Dong Zhuo said, “Is what I said just and reasonable?”

“You are mistaken, Illustrious Sir,” said Lu Zhi. “Of old Emperor Tai Jia of the Shang Dynasty was unenlightened.

Wherefore the sage Minister Yi Yin\(^1\) immured him in the Tong Palace till he reformed. Later the Prince of Changyi ascended the throne, and in twenty-seven days he committed more than three thousand categorical faults. Wherefore Regent Marshal Huo Guang\(^2\) declared in the ancestral temple that the Prince of Changyi was deposed. Our present Emperor is young, but he is intelligent, benevolent, and wise. He has not committed a single fault. You, Sir, are an imperial protector of a frontier region and not a metropolitan official and have had no experience in state administration. Neither have you the pure intentions of Yi Yin and Huo Guang which qualified their actions. The Teacher said: ‘Only with Yi Yin’s purpose can one act like Yi Yin. Otherwise, such a deed is treason.’”

Dong Zhuo angrily drew his sword to slay the bold Lu

\(^1\)Yi Yin was was helper and prime minister of King Tang, the founder of Shang Dynasty. After King Tang’s death, Yi Yin served his sons and grandson. Soon after Tai Jia, King Tang’s grandson, ascended the throne, he committed many faults, and Yi Yin, acting as regent, exiled Tai Jia to Tong Palace—the burial place of King Tang. After three years Yi Yin returned him the throne. Tai Jia eventually became an enlightened emperor. Shang Dynasty lasted for 650 years (BC 1700-1050). It was this act of Yi Yin rather than his services in building up an empire that has made him immortal. Whether he did right in temporarily dethroning the king was open to question, until a final verdict was rendered by Mencius who thought that his ends amply justified his means. This historical event attests the extent of the power exercised by a prime minister in those days.

\(^2\)Huo Guang (BC 70 – 68) a general and regent of Han. After Emperor Wu died, Huo Guang became regent to three successive emperors, and the second one had been the Prince of Changyi, who was on the throne for only twenty-seven days. Huo Guang had the Prince of Changyi declared unfit to rule and deposed him. Even though Huo Guang contributed much to the empire’s stabilization, after he died, he was distanced by the emperor and most of his family were executed for conspiracy charges.
had donned an embroidered thousand-flower fighting robe, a pheasant-tailed helmet, and breast plate, and round his waist was a gleaming jade belt with a lion’s head clasp. With spear set he rode close behind his master Ding Yuan.

Ding Yuan, riding forth, pointing his finger at Dong Zhuo, began to revile him.

“Unhappy indeed was this state when the eunuchs became so powerful that the people were as if trodden into the mire under their feet. Now you, devoid of the least merit, dare to talk of deposing the rightful emperor and setting up another. Minister Lu Zhi is the cynosure of the whole country, and his violent death would stir the hearts of all people!” said Court Counselors Cai Yong and Peng Bo.

Dong Zhuo then stayed his hand.

Then said Wang Yun, “A great question like the deposition and substitution of emperors is not one to be decided after a wine party. Let it be put off till another time.”

So the guests dispersed. Dong Zhuo stood at the gate with drawn sword watching them depart. Standing thus, Dong Zhuo noticed a spearman galloping to and fro on a fiery steed and asked Li Ru who that was.

“That is Lu Bu, the adopted son of Ding Yuan. You must keep out of his way, my lord.”

Dong Zhuo went inside the gate so that he could not be seen. But next day they reported to him that Ding Yuan had come out of the city with a small army and was challenging to a battle. Dong Zhuo, with his army, went forth to accept the challenge. And the two armies were drawn up in proper array.

Lu Bu was a conspicuous figure in the forefront. His hair was arranged under a handsome headdress of gold, and he
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Romance of Three Kingdoms

He was admitted forthwith.
“Worthy brother, have you been well since we last met?” greeted Li Su while bowing.
“How long it is since we last saw each other!” replied Lu Bu, bowing in return. “And where are you now?”
“I am a general in the Imperial Tiger Army. When I learned you were a strong supporter of the Throne, I could not say how I rejoiced. I have come now to present to you a really fine horse, a five-hundred-mile-a-day horse, one that crosses rivers and goes up mountains as if they were the level plain. Its name is Red Hare. It will be a fitting aid to your valor.”

Lu Bu bade his guards lead out the horse.
It was of a uniform color like glowing-sun red---not a hair of another color.
It measured ten spans from head to tail and from hoof to neck eight spans. When it neighed, the sound filled the empyrean and shook the ocean.

Mark ye the steed swift and tireless, see the dust, spurned by his hoofs, rising in clouds,
Now it swims the river, anon climbs the hill, rending the purple mist asunder,
Scornful it breaks the rein, shakes from its head the jeweled bridle,
It is as a fiery dragon descending from the highest heaven.

Dong Zhuo could not reply for Lu Bu, eager for the fight, rode straight at him. Dong Zhuo fled and Ding Yuan’s army came on. The battle went in Ding Yuan’s favor, and the beaten troops retired ten miles and made another camp. Here Dong Zhuo called his officers to a council.
“This Lu Bu is a marvel,” said Dong Zhuo. “If he were only on my side, I would defy the whole world!”
At this a man advanced saying, “Be content, O my lord! I am a fellow villager of his and know him well: He is valorous, but not crafty; he will let go principles, when he sees advantages. With this little, blarneying tongue of mine, I can persuade him to put up his hands and come over to your side.”

Dong Zhuo was delighted and gazed admiringly at the speaker. It was Li Su, a general in the Imperial Tiger Army.
“What arguments will you use with him?” asked Dong Zhuo.
“You have a fine horse, Red Hare, one of the best ever bred. I must have this steed, and gold and pearls to win his heart. Then will I go and persuade him. He will certainly abandon Ding Yuan’s service for yours.”
“What think you?” said Dong Zhuo to his adviser Li Ru.
“One cannot grudge a horse to win an empire,” was the reply.
So they gave Li Su what he demanded---a thousand ounces of gold, ten strings of beautiful pearls, a jeweled belt, and Red Hare---and these accompanied Li Su on his visit to his fellow villager.

Li Su reached the camp and said to the guard, “Please tell General Lu Bu that a very old friend has come to visit him.”

Mark ye the steed swift and tireless, see the dust, spurned by his hoofs, rising in clouds,
Now it swims the river, anon climbs the hill, rending the purple mist asunder,
Scornful it breaks the rein, shakes from its head the jeweled bridle,
It is as a fiery dragon descending from the highest heaven.
Lu Bu was delighted with the horse and said, “What return can I hope to make for such a creature?”

“What return can I hope for? I came to you out of a sense of what is right,” replied Li Su.

Wine was brought in and they drank.

“We have seen very little of each other, but I am constantly meeting your honorable father,” said Li Su.

“You are drunk,” said Lu Bu. “My father has been dead for years.”

“Not so; I spoke of Ding Yuan, the man of the day.”

Lu Bu started. “Yes, I am with him, but only because I can do no better.”

“Sir, your talent is higher than the heavens, deeper than the seas. Who in all the world does not bow before your name? Fame and riches and honors are yours for the taking. And you say you can do no better than remain a subordinate!”

“If I could only find a master to serve,” said Lu Bu.

“The clever bird chooses the branch whereon to perch; the wise servant selects the master to serve. Seize the chance when it comes, for repentance ever comes too late.”

“Now you are in the government. Who think you is really the bravest of all?”, asked Lu Bu.

“I despise the whole lot except Dong Zhuo. He is one who respects wisdom and reveres scholarship; he is discriminating in his rewards and punishments. Surely he is destined to be a really great man.”

Lu Bu said, “I wish that I could serve him, but there is no way, I fear.”

Then Li Su produced his pearls and gold and the jeweled belt and laid them out before his host.

“What is this? What does it mean?” said Lu Bu.

“Send away the attendants,” requested Li Su. And he went on, “Dong Zhuo has long respected your bravery and sent these by my hand. Red Hare was also from him.”

“But, if he loves me like this, what can I do in return?”

Li Su said, “If a stupid fellow like me can be a general in the Imperial Tiger Army, it is impossible to say what honors await you.”

“I am sorry I can offer him no service worth mentioning.”

Li Su said, “There is one service you can do, and an extremely easy one to perform; but you would not render that.”

Lu Bu pondered long in silence, then he said, “I might slay Ding Yuan and bring over his soldiers to Dong Zhuo’s side. What think you of that?”

“If you would do that, there could be no greater service. But such a thing must be done quickly.”

And Lu Bu promised his friend that he would do the deed and come over on the morrow.

So Li Su took his leave. That very night, at the second watch, Lu Bu entered, sword in hand, into his master’s tent. He found Ding Yuan reading by the light of a solitary candle.

Seeing who came in, Ding Yuan said, “My son, what is afoot?”

“I am a bold hero,” said Lu Bu. “Do not think I am willing to be a son of yours!”

“Why this
“He who is above us being weak and irresolute is unfit for the duties of his high place. Wherefore I, as of old did Yi Yin and Huo Guang, will set aside this Emperor giving him the title of Prince of Hongnong, and I will place on the throne the present Prince of Chenliu. And those who do not support me will suffer death.”

Fear seized them in its grip and they were silent, all but Yuan Shao who said, “The Emperor was innocent of any fault, and to set him aside in favor of a commoner was rebellion and nothing else!”

“The empire is in my hands!” cried Dong Zhuo. “When I choose to do this thing, who will dare to say nay? Think you my sword lacks an edge?”

“If your sword is sharp, mine is never blunt!” said Yuan Shao as his sword flashed out of the sheath.

The two men stood face to face amid the feasters.

When Ding Yuan by treacherous murder died,
The loss was great to Yuan Shao’s side.

The fate of Yuan Shao will be disclosed in later chapters.
Chapter 4
The Deposition Of The Emperor: Prince Of Chenliu Becomes Emperor;
Schemes Against Dong Zhuo: Cao Cao Presents A Sword.

Dong Zhuo was on the point of slaying Yuan Shao, but Li Ru checked him, saying, “You must not kill rashly while the business hangs in the balance.”

Yuan Shao, his sword still unsheathed, left the assembly. He hung up the seals of his office at the east gate and went to Jizhou Region.

Dong Zhuo said to Imperial Guardian Yuan Wei, “Your nephew behaved improperly, but I pardon him for your sake. What think you of my scheme?”

“What you think is right,” was the reply.

“If anyone opposes the great scheme, he will be dealt with by military law!” said Dong Zhuo.

The ministers, thoroughly dreaded, promised obedience, and the feast came to an end.

Dong Zhuo asked Counselor Zhou Bi and Commander Wu Qiong what they thought of the flight of Yuan Shao.

Zhou Bi said, “He left in a state of great anger. In such a state of excitement much harm may ensue to the present state of affairs, especially as the Yuan family have been noted for their high offices for four generations, and their proteges and dependents are everywhere. If they assemble bold people and call up their clients, all the valiant warriors will be in arms, and the east region of the Huashang Mountains will be lost. You had better pardon Yuan Shao and give him a post. He will be glad at being forgiven and will do no harm.”

Wu Qiong said, “Yuan Shao is fond of scheming, but he fails in decision and so is not to be feared. But it would be
well to give him rank and thus win popular favor.”

Dong Zhuo followed this advice, and within that day sent a messenger to offer Yuan Shao the governorship of Bohai.

On the first day of the ninth month, the Emperor was invited to proceed to the Hall of Virtue where was a great assembly of officials.

There Dong Zhuo, sword in hand, faced the gathering and said, “The Emperor is a weakling unequal to the burden of ruling this land. Now listen ye to the document I have prepared!”

And Li Ru read as follows:

“The dutiful Emperor Ling too soon left his people. The emperor is the cynosure of all the people of this land. Upon the present Emperor Bian, Heaven has conferred but small gifts: In dignity and deportment he is deficient, and in mourning he is remiss. Only the most complete virtue can grace imperial dignity. Empress He has trained him improperly, and the whole state administration has fallen into confusion. Empress Dong died suddenly and no one knew why. The doctrine of the three bonds---Heaven, Earth, and Human---and the continuity of Heaven and Earth interdependence have both been injured.

“But Liu Xian, Prince of Chenliu, is sage and virtuous beside being of handsome exterior. He conforms to all the rules of propriety: His mourning is sincere, and his speech is always correct. Eulogies of him fill the empire. He is well fitted for the great duty of consolidating the rule of Han.

“Now therefore the Emperor is deposed and created Prince of Hongnong, and Empress He retires from the administration.

“I pray the Prince of Chenliu to accept the throne in conformity with the decrees of Heaven and Earth, the desires of people, and the fulfillment of the hopes of humankind.”

This having been read, Dong Zhuo bade the officials lead the Emperor down from the throne, remove his seal, and cause him to kneel facing the north, styling himself faithful servant of the Throne and requesting commands. Moreover Dong Zhuo bade Empress He strip off her royal dress of ceremony and await the imperial command. Both victims of this oppression wept bitterly, and every minister present was deeply affected.

One minister put his discontent into words, crying, “The false Dong Zhuo is the author of this insult, which I will risk my life to wipe away!”

And with this he rushed at Dong Zhuo threatening with his ivory baton of office.

It was Chair of the Secretariat Ding Guan. Dong Zhuo had Ding Guan removed and summarily put to death. Before his death, Ding Guan ceased not to rail at the oppressor, nor
was he frightened at death.

_The rebel Dong Zhuo conceived the foul design_  
_To thrust the King aside and wrong his line._  
_With folded arms the courtiers stood, save one_  
_Ding Guan, who dared to cry that wrong was done._

Then the emperor designate, Prince of Chenliu, went to the upper part of the hall to receive congratulations. After this the former Emperor---now Prince of Hongnong---, his mother, and the Imperial Consort, Lady Tang, were removed to the Palace of Forever Calm. The entrance gates were locked against all comers.

It was pitiful! There was the young emperor, after reigning less than half a year, deposed and another put in his place. The new Emperor was Liu Xian, the second son of the late Emperor Ling. He was nine years of age, five years younger than his deposed brother. The new reign-style was changed to Inauguration of Tranquility, the first year (AD 190).

Becoming the Prime Minister, Dong Zhuo was most powerful and arrogant. When he bowed before the Throne, he did not declare his name. In going to court he did not hasten. Booted and armed he entered the reception halls. He amassed a wealth exceeding any other’s.

His adviser, Li Ru, impressed upon Dong Zhuo constantly to employ people of reputation so that he should gain public esteem. So when they told him Cai Yong was a man of talent, Dong Zhuo summoned him. But Cai Yong would not go. Dong Zhuo sent a message to him that if he did not come, he and his whole clan should be exterminated. Then Cai Yong gave in and appeared. Dong Zhuo was very gracious to him and promoted him thrice in a month. Cai Yong became High Minister. Such was the generosity of the tyrant.
Meanwhile the deposed ruler, his mother, and his consort were immured in the Palace of Forever Calm and found their daily supplies gradually diminishing. The deposed Emperor wept incessantly. One day a pair of wallows gliding to and fro moved him to verse:

“Spring and the green of the tender grass,
Flushes with joy as the swallows pass;
The wayfarers pause by the rippling stream,
And their eyes will new born gladness gleam;
With lingering gaze the roofs I see
Of the Palace that one time sheltered me.
But those whom I sheltered in all righteousness,
Let’s not stay in silence when the days pass useless?”

The messenger, sent by Dong Zhuo from time to time to the palace for news of the prisoners, got hold of this poem and showed it to his master.

“So he shows his resentment by writing poems, eh! A fair excuse to put them all out of the way,” said Dong Zhuo.

Li Ru was sent with ten men into the palace to consummate the deed. The three were in one of the upper rooms when Li Ru arrived. The Emperor shuddered when the maid announced the visitor’s name.

Presently Li Ru entered and offered a cup of poisoned wine to the Emperor. The Emperor asked what this meant.

“Spring is the season of blending and harmonious interchange, and the
achievement to his master who bade them bury the victims without the city. After this Dong Zhuo's behavior was more atrocious than before. He spent his nights in the Palace, defiled the imperial concubines there, and even slept on the Dragon Couch.

Once he led his soldiers out of the city to Yangcheng when the villagers, men and women, were assembled from all sides for the annual spring festival. His troops surrounded the place and plundered it. They took away booty by the cart loads, and women prisoners and more than one thousand severed heads. The procession returned to Capital Luoyang and published a story that they had obtained a great victory over some rebels. They burned the heads beneath the walls,
and the women and jewelry were shared out among the soldiers.

A general named Wu Fu was disgusted at this ferocity and sought a chance to slay Dong Zhuo. Wu Fu constantly wore a breastplate underneath his court dress and carried in conceal a sharp dagger. One day when Dong Zhuo came to court, Wu Fu met him on the steps and tried to stab him. But Dong Zhuo was a very powerful man and held Wu Fu off till Lu Bu came to his help. Lu Bu struck down the assailant.

“Who told you to rebel?” said Dong Zhuo.

Wu Fu glared at him and cried, “You are not my prince, I am not your minister: Where is the rebellion? Your crimes fill the heavens, and every person would slay you. I am sorry I cannot tear you asunder with chariots to appease the wrath of the world!”

Dong Zhuo bade the guards take him out and hack him to pieces. Wu Fu only ceased railing as he ceased to live.

That loyal servant of the latter days of Han. 
His valor was high as the heavens, in all ages unequaled; 
In the court itself would he slay the rebel, great is his fame! 
Throughout all time will people call him a hero.

Thereafter Dong Zhuo always went well guarded.
At Bohai, Yuan Shao heard of Dong Zhuo’s misuse of power and sent a secret letter to Minister of the Interior Wang Yun:

“That rebel Dong Zhuo outrages Heaven and has deposed his ruler. Common people dare not speak of him: That is understandable. Yet you suffer his aggressions as if you knew naught of them. How then are you a dutiful and loyal minister? I have assembled an army and desire to sweep clean the royal habitation, but I dare not lightly begin the task. If you are willing, then find an opportunity to plot against this man. If you would use force, I am at your command.”

The letter arrived but Wang Yun could see no chance to plot against Dong Zhuo.

One day while among the throng in attendance, mostly people of long service, Wang Yun said to his colleagues, “This is my birthday, I pray you come to a little party in my humble cot this evening.”

“We certainly will,” they cried, “and wish you long life.”

That night the tables were spread in an inner room, and his friends gathered there. When the wine had made a few rounds, the host suddenly covered his face and began to weep.

The guests were aghast.

“Sir, on your birthday too, why do you weep?” said they.

“It is not my birthday,” replied Wang Yun. “But I wished to call you together, and I feared lest Dong Zhuo should suspect, so I made that the excuse. This man insults the Emperor and does as he wishes so that the imperial prerogatives are in imminent peril. I think of the days when our illustrious founder destroyed the Qin, annihilated Chu, and obtained the empire. Who could have foreseen this day when that Dong Zhuo has subjugated all to his will? That is
why I weep.”
Then they all wept with him.

Seated among the guests, however, was Cao Cao, who did not join in the weeping but clapped his hands and laughed aloud.

“If all the officers of the government weep till dawn, and from dawn weep till dark, will that slay Dong Zhuo?” said Cao Cao.

Wang Yun turned on him angrily.

“Your forbears ate the bounty of the Hans. Do you feel no gratitude? You can laugh?”

“I laughed at the absurdity of an assembly like this being unable to compass the death of one man. Foolish and incapable as I am, I will cut off his head and hang it at the gate as an offering to the people.”

Wang Yun left his seat and went over to Cao Cao.

“These later days,” Cao Cao continued, “I have bowed my head to Dong Zhuo with the sole desire of finding a chance to destroy him. Now he begins to trust me, and so I can approach him sometimes. You have a sword with seven precious jewels which I would borrow, and I will go into his palace and kill him. I care not if I die for it.”

“What good fortune for the world that this is so!” said Wang Yun.

With this Wang Yun himself poured out a goblet for Cao Cao who drained it and swore an oath. After this the treasured sword was brought out and given to Cao Cao who hid it under his dress. He finished his wine, took leave of the guests, and left the hall. Before long the others dispersed.

The next day Cao Cao, with this short sword girded on, came to the palace of the Prime Minister.

“Where is the Prime Minister?” asked he.

“In the small guest room,” replied the attendants.

So Cao Cao went in and found his host seated on a couch.

Lu Bu was at his side.

“Why so late, Cao Cao?” said Dong Zhuo.

“My horse is out of condition and slow,” replied Cao Cao.

Dong Zhuo turned to his henchman Lu Bu.

“Some good horses have come in from the west. You go and pick out a good one as a present for him.”

And Lu Bu left.

“This traitor is doomed!” thought Cao Cao. He ought to have struck then, but Cao Cao knew Dong Zhuo was very powerful, and he was afraid to act. He wanted to make sure of his blow.

Now Dong Zhuo’s corpulence was such that he could not remain long sitting, so he rolled over couch and lay face inwards.

“Now is the time,” thought the assassin, and he gripped the good sword firmly.

But just as Cao Cao was going to strike, Dong Zhuo happened to look up and in a mirror he saw the reflection of Cao Cao behind him with a sword in the hand.

“What are you doing, Cao Cao?” said Dong Zhuo turning
suddenly. And at that moment Lu Bu came along leading a horse.

Cao Cao in a flurry dropped on his knees and said, “I have a precious sword here which I wish to present to Your Benevolence.”

Dong Zhuo took it. It was a fine blade, over a foot in length, inlaid with the seven precious signs and very keen—a fine sword in very truth. Dong Zhuo handed the weapon to Lu Bu while Cao Cao took off the sheath which he also gave to Lu Bu.

Then they went out to look at the horse. Cao Cao was profuse in his thanks and said he would like to try the horse. So Dong Zhuo bade the guards bring saddle and bridle. Cao Cao led the creature outside, leapt into the saddle, laid on his whip vigorously, and galloped away eastward.

Lu Bu said, “Just as I was coming up, it seemed to me as if that fellow was going to stab you, only a sudden panic seized him and he presented the weapon instead.”

“I suspected him too!” said Dong Zhuo.

Just then Li Ru came in and they told him.

“Cao Cao has no family here in the capital but lodges quite alone and not far away,” said Li Ru. “Send for him. If he comes forthwith, the sword was meant as a gift. But if he makes any excuses, he had bad intentions. And you can arrest him.”

They sent four prison warders to call Cao Cao.

They were absent a long time and then came back, saying, “Cao Cao had not returned to his lodging but rode in hot haste out of the eastern gate. To the gate commander’s questions he replied that he was on a special message for the Prime Minister. He went off at full speed.”

“His conscience pricked him and so he fled. There is no doubt that he meant assassination!” said Li Ru.

“And I trusted him so well!” said Dong Zhuo in a rage.

“There must be a conspiracy afoot. When we catch him, we shall know all about it,” said Li Ru.

Letters and pictures of the fugitive Cao Cao were sent everywhere with orders to catch him. A large reward in money was offered and a patent of nobility, while those who sheltered him would be held to share his guilt.

Cao Cao traveled in hot haste toward Qiao, his home county. On the road at Zhongmou, he was recognized by the guards at the gate and made prisoner. They took him to the Magistrate. Cao Cao declared he was a merchant, named Huang Fu. The Magistrate scanned his face most closely and remained in deep thought.

Presently the Magistrate said, “When I was at the capital seeking a post, I knew you as Cao Cao. Why do you try to conceal your identity?”

The Magistrate ordered Cao Cao to the prison till the morrow when he could send Cao Cao to the capital and claim the reward. He gave the soldiers wine and food as a reward.

About midnight the Magistrate sent a trusty servant to bring the prisoner into his private rooms for interrogation.

“They say the Prime Minister treated you well. Why did
you try to harm him?” said Magistrate.

“How can swallows and sparrows understand the flight of the crane and the wild goose? I am your prisoner and to be sent to the capital for a reward. Why so many questions?”

The Magistrate sent away the attendants and turning to the prisoner said, “Do not despise me. I am no mere hireling; only I have not yet found the lord to serve.”

Said Cao Cao, “My ancestors enjoyed the bounty of Han, and should I differ from a bird or a beast if I did not desire to repay them with gratitude? I have bowed the knee to Dong Zhuo that thereby I might find an opportunity against him, and so remove this evil from the state. I have failed for this time. Such is the will of Heaven.”

“And where are you going?”

“Home to my county. Thence I shall issue a summons calling all the bold people to come with forces to kill the tyrant. This is my desire.”

Thereupon the Magistrate himself loosened the bonds of the prisoner, led him to the upper seat, and bowed, saying, “I am called Chen Gong. My aged mother and family are in the east county of Dongjun. I am deeply affected by your loyalty and uprightness, and I will abandon my office and follow you!”

Cao Cao was delighted with this turn of affairs. Chen Gong at once collected some money for the expenses of their journey and gave Cao Cao a different dress. Then each took a sword and rode away toward Qiao.

Three days later at eventide they reached Chenggao. Cao Cao pointed with his whip to a hamlet deep in the woods and said, “There lives my uncle, Lu Boshe, a sworn-brother of my father. Suppose we go and ask news of my family and seek shelter for the night?”

“Excellent!” said his companion Chen Gong, and they rode over, dismounted at the farm gate and entered.

Lu Boshe greeted them and said to Cao Cao, “I hear the government has sent stringent orders on all sides to arrest you. Your father has gone into hiding to Chenliu. How has this all come about?”

Cao Cao told him and said, “Had it not been for this man here with me, I should have been already hacked to pieces.”

Lu Boshe bowed low to Chen Gong, saying, “You are the salvation of the Cao family. But be at ease and rest, I will find you a bed in my humble cottage.”

Lu Boshe then rose and went into the inner chamber where he stayed a long time. When he came out, he said, “There is no good wine in the house. I am going over to the village to get some for you.”

And he hastily mounted his donkey and rode away. The two travelers sat a long time. Suddenly they heard at the back of the house the sound of sharpening a knife.

“Home to my county. Thence I shall issue a summons calling all the bold people to come with forces to kill the tyrant. This is my desire.”

“Excellent!” said his companion Chen Gong, and they rode over, dismounted at the farm gate and entered.
Cao Cao and Chen Gong at once mounted and rode away. Soon they met their host Lu Boshe coming home, and over the saddle in front of him they saw two vessels of wine. In his hands he carried fruits and vegetables.  
“Why are you going, Sirs?” Lu Boshe called to them.  
“Wanted people dare not linger,” said Cao Cao.  
“But I have bidden them kill a pig! Why do you refuse my poor hospitality? I pray you ride back with me.”  
Cao Cao paid no heed, urging his horse forward. But he suddenly drew his sword and rode back after Lu Boshe.  
“Who is that coming along?” called Cao Cao.  
Lu Boshe turned and looked back, and Cao Cao at the same instant cut Lu Boshe down.  
Chen Gong was frightened.  
“We were wrong enough before,” cried Chen Gong.  
“What now is this?”  
“When he got home and saw his family killed, think you he would bear it patiently? If he had raised an alarm and followed us, we should have been killed.”  
“To kill deliberately is very wrong,” said Chen Gong.  

Rather we let down the world than the world let us down!” was the reply.
Chapter 5
Cao Cao Appeals To The Powerful Lords;
The Three Brothers Fight Against Lu Bu.

At the close of the last chapter, Chen Gong was about to slay Cao Cao. But Chen Gong reflected, “I joined him to do righteous things. Now if I killed him, I would only do unrighteousness, and the people would condemn me. I rather leave in silence.”

Rising from his bed before the sunrise, Chen Gong mounted his horse and rode away eastward to his home county of Dongjun.

Cao Cao awoke with the day and missed his companion. Thought he, “Chen Gong thinks me brutal because of a couple of egoistic phrases I used, and so he has gone. I ought to push on too and not linger here.”

So Cao Cao traveled as quickly as possible toward Qiao. When he saw his father, he related what had happened and said he wanted to dispose of all the family property and enlist soldiers with the money.

“Our possessions are but small,” said his father, “and not enough to do anything with. However, there is a graduate here, one Wei Hong, careless of wealth but careful of virtue, whose family is very rich. With his help we might hope for success.”

A feast was prepared, and Wei Hong was invited.

Cao Cao made him a speech: “The Hans have lost their lordship, and Dong Zhuo is really a tyrant. He flouts his prince and is cruel to the people, who gnash their teeth with rage. I would restore the Hans, but my means are insufficient. Sir, I appeal to your loyalty and public spirit.”

Wei Hong replied, “I have long desired this but, so far, have not found a person fit to undertake the task. Since you, Cao Cao, have so noble a desire, I willingly devote all my property to the cause.”

This was joyful news, and the call to arms was forthwith prepared and sent far and near. So they established a corps of volunteers and set up a large white recruiting banner with the words Loyalty and Honor inscribed thereon. The response was rapid, and volunteers came in like rain drops in number.
One day came a certain Yue Jing from Yangping and another Li Dian from Julu. These two were appointed to Cao Cao’s personal staff. Another was one Xiahou Dun from Qiao. He was descended from Xiahou Ying\(^1\) of old. Xiahou Dun had been trained from his early boyhood to use the spear and the club. When only fourteen he had been attached to a certain master-in-arms. One day one person spoke disrespectfully of his master, and Xiahou Dun killed that person. For this deed, however, he had to flee and had been an exile for some time. Now he came to offer his services, accompanied by his cousin Xiahou Yuan. Each brought a thousand trained soldiers. Really these two were brothers of Cao Cao by birth, since Cao Cao’s father was originally of the Xiahou family, and had only been adopted into the Cao family.

A few days later came Cao Cao’s two cousins, Cao Ren and Cao Hong, each with one thousand followers. These two were accomplished horsemen and trained in the use of arms.

Then drill began, and Wei Hong spent his treasure freely in buying clothing, armor, flags, and banners. From all sides poured in gifts of grain.

When Yuan Shao received Cao Cao’s call to arms, he collected all those under his command to the number of thirty thousand. Then he marched from Bohai to Qiao to take the oath to Cao Cao. Next a manifesto was issued:

“Cao Cao and his associates, moved by a sense of duty, now make this proclamation. Dong Zhuo defies Heaven and Earth. He is destroying the state and injuring his prince. He pollutes the Palace and oppresses the people. He is vicious and cruel. His crimes are heaped up. Now we have received a secret command to call up soldiers, and we are pledged to cleanse the empire and destroy the evil-doers. We will raise a volunteer army and exert all our efforts to maintain the dynasty and succor the people. Respond to this, O Nobles, by mustering your soldiers.”

Many from every side answered the summons as the following list shows:

1. Governor of Nanyang---Yuan Shu
2. Imperial Protector of Jizhou Region---Han Fu
3. Imperial Protector of Yuzhou Region---Kong Zhou
4. Imperial Protector of Yanzhou Region---Liu Dai
5. Governor of Henei---Wang Kuang
6. Governor of Chenliu---Zhang Miao
7. Governor of Dongjun---Qiao Mao
8. Governor of Shanyang---Yuan Yi
9. Lord of Jibei---Bao Xin
10. Governor of Beihai---Yuan Shao
11. Governor of Guangling---Zhang Chao
12. Imperial Protector of Xuzhou Region---Tao Qian
13. Governor of Xiliang---Ma Teng
14. Governor of Beiping---Gongsun Zan
15. Governor of Shangdang---Zhang Yang
16. Governor of Changsha---Sun Jian
17. Governor of Bohai---Yuan Shao

These contingents varied in size, from ten thousand to thirty thousand, but each was complete in itself with its officers, civil and military, and battle-leaders. They were heading for Capital Luoyang.

The Governor of Beiping, Gongsun Zan, while on his way with his force of fifteen thousand, passed through the county of Pingyuan. There he saw among the mulberry trees a yellow flag under which marched a small company. When they drew nearer, he saw the leader was Liu Bei.

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\(^1\)Xiahou Ying (?-173) a major general of Liu Bang. Ennobled as the Marquis of Ruyin and commonly called the Lord of Tang.
“Since things are so, let us pack and go,” said Guan Yu. So without more ado, the three brothers, with a few horsemen, joined Gongsun Zan and marched with him to join the great army.

One after another the feudal lords came up and encamped. Their camps extended over seventy miles and more. When all had arrived, Cao Cao, as the head, prepared sacrificial bullocks and horses and called all the lords to a great assembly to decide upon their plan of attack.

Then spoke the Governor of Henei, Wang Kuang, “We have been moved by a noble sense of right to assemble here. Now must we first choose a chief and bind ourselves to obedience.”

Then said Cao Cao, “For four generations the highest offices of state have been filled by members of the Yuan family, and their clients and supporters are everywhere. As a descendant of ancient ministers of Han, Yuan Shao is a suitable man to be our chief lord.”

Yuan Shao again and again declined this honor. But they all said, “It must be he! There is no other!” And then he agreed.

So the next day a three-story altar was built, and they planted about it the banners of all parties in five directions of space. And they set up white yaks’ tails and golden axes and emblems of military authority and the seals of leadership round about.

All being ready, the chief lord was invited to ascend the altar. Clad in ceremonial robes and girded with a sword, Yuan Shao reverently ascended. There he burned incense, made obeisance and recited the oath:

“The House of Han has fallen upon evil days, the bands of imperial authority are loosened. The rebel minister, Dong Zhuo, takes advantage of the discord to work evil, and
calamity falls upon honorable families. Cruelty overwhelms simple folks. We, Yuan Shao and his confederates, fearing for the safety of the imperial prerogatives, have assembled military forces to rescue the state. We now pledge ourselves to exert our whole strength and act in concord to the utmost limit of our powers. There must be no disconcerted or selfish action. Should any depart from this pledge, may he lose his life and leave no posterity. Almighty Heaven and Universal Earth and the enlightened spirits of our forebears, be ye our witnesses!"

The reading finished, Yuan Shao smeared the blood of the sacrifice upon his lips and upon the lips of those who shared the pledge. All were deeply affected by the ceremony and many shed tears.

This done, the chief lord was supported down from the high place and led to his tent, where he took the highest place and the others arranged themselves according to rank and age. Here wine was served.

Presently Cao Cao said, “It behooves us all to obey the chief we have this day set up, and support the state. There must be no feeling of rivalry or superiority based upon numbers.”

Yuan Shao replied, “Unworthy as I am, yet as elected chief I must impartially reward merit and punish offenses. Let each see to it that he obeys the national laws and the army precepts. These must not be broken.”

“Only thy commands are to be obeyed!” cried all.

Then Yuan Shao said, “My brother, Yuan Shu, is appointed Chief of the Commissariat. He must see to it that the whole camp is well supplied. But the need of the moment is a van leader who shall go to River Si Pass and provoke a battle. The other forces must take up strategic positions in support.”

Then the Governor of Changsha, Sun Jian, offered himself for this service.

“You are valiant and fierce, and equal to this service!” said Yuan Shao.

The force under Sun Jian set out and presently came to River Si Pass. The guard there sent a swift rider to the capital to announce to the Prime Minister the urgency of
Ever since Dong Zhuo had secured his position, he had given himself up to luxury without stint. When the urgent news reached Adviser Li Ru, he at once went to his master, who much alarmed called a great council.

Lu Bu stood forth and said, “Do not fear, my father. I look upon all the lords beyond the Pass as so much stubble. And with the warriors of our fierce army, I will put everyone of them to death and hang their heads at the gates of the capital!”

“With your aid I can sleep secure!” said Dong Zhuo.

But someone behind Lu Bu broke in upon his speech, saying, “An ox-cleaver to kill a chicken! There is no need for the General to go: I will cut off their heads as easily as I would take a thing out of my pocket!”

Dong Zhuo looked up and his eyes rested on a stalwart man of fierce mien, lithe and supple as a beast. He had round head like a leopard and shoulders like an ape’s. His name was Hua Xiong of Guanxi. Dong Zhuo rejoiced at Hua Xiong’s bold words and at once appointed him Commander of the Valiant Cavalry and gave him fifty thousand of horse and foot. Hua Xiong and three other generals—Li Su, Hu Zhen, and Zhao Cen—hastily moved toward River Si Pass.

Among the feudal lords, Bao Xin, the Lord of Jibei, was jealous lest the chosen Van Leader Sun Jian should win too great honors. Wherefore Bao Xin endeavored to meet the foe first, and so he secretly dispatched his brother, Bao Zhong, with three thousand by a bye road. As soon as this small force reached the Pass, they offered battle.

Fast reacting, Hua Xiong at the head of five hundred armored horsemen swept down from the Pass, crying, “Flee not, rebel!”

But Bao Zhong was afraid and turned back. Hua Xiong came on, his arm rose, the sword fell, and Bao Zhong was cut down from his horse. Most of Bao Zhong’s company were captured. Bao Zhong’s head was sent to the Prime Minister’s palace. Hua Xiong was promoted to Commander in Chief.

Sun Jian presently approached the Pass. He had four generals: Cheng Pu of Tuyin whose weapon was an iron-
spined lance with snake-headed blade; Huang Gai of Lingling who wielded an iron whip; Han Dang of Lingzhi using a heavy saber; and Zu Mao of Wujun who fought with a pair of swords.

Commander Sun Jian wore a helmet of fine silver wrapped round with a purple turban. He carried across his body his sword of ancient ingot iron and rode a dappled horse with flowing mane.

Sun Jian advanced to the Pass and hailed the defenders, crying, “Helpers of a villain! Be quick to surrender!”

Hua Xiong bade Hu Zhen lead five thousand out against Sun Jian. Cheng Pu with the snaky lance rode out from Sun Jian’s side and engaged. After a very few bouts, Cheng Pu killed Hu Zhen on the spot by a thrust through the throat. Then Sun Jian gave the signal for the main army to advance. But from the Pass, Hua Xiong’s troops rained down showers of stones, which proved too much for the assailants, and they retired into camp at Liangdong. Sun Jian sent the report of victory to Yuan Shao.

Sun Jian also sent an urgent message for supplies to the commissary.

But a counselor said to the Controller Yuan Shu, “This Sun Jian is a very tiger in the east. Should he take the capital and destroy Dong Zhuo, we should have a tiger in place of a wolf. Do not send him grain. Starve his troops, and that will decide the fate of that army.”

And Yuan Shu gave ears to the detractor and sent no grain or forage. Soon Sun Jian’s hungry soldiers showed their disaffection by indiscipline, and the spies bore the news to the defenders of the Pass.

Li Ru made a plot with Hua Xiong, saying, “We will launch tonight a speedy attack against Sun Jian in front and rear so that we can capture him.”

Hua Xiong agreed and prepared for the attack. So the soldiers of the attacking force were told off and given a full meal. At dark they left the Pass and crept by secret paths to the rear of Sun Jian’s camp. The moon was bright and the wind cool. They arrived about midnight and the drums beat an immediate attack. Sun Jian hastily donned his fighting gear and rode out. He ran straight into Hua Xiong and the two warriors engaged. But before they had exchanged many passes, Li Ru’s army came up from behind and set fire to whatever would burn.

Sun Jian’s army were thrown into confusion and fled in disorder. A melee ensued, and soon only Zu Mao was left at Sun Jian’s side. These two broke through the Pass and fled. Hua Xiong coming in hot pursuit, Sun Jian took his bow and let fly two arrows in quick succession, but both missed. He fitted a third arrow to the string, but drew the bow so fiercely that it snapped. He cast the bow to the earth and set off at full gallop.

Then spoke Zu Mao, “My lord’s purple turban is a mark that the rebels will too easily recognize. Give it to me, and I will wear it!”

So Sun Jian exchanged his silver helmet with the turban for his general’s headpiece, and the two men parted, riding different ways. The pursuers looking only for the purple
for our guidance, rashly went to attack the enemy: He was slain and with him many of our soldiers. Now Sun Jian has been defeated. Thus our fighting spirit has suffered and what is to be done?"

Everyone was silent. Lifting his eyes, Yuan Shao looked round from one to another till he came to Gongsun Zan, and then he remarked three men who stood behind Gongsun Zan’s seat. They were of striking appearance as they stood there, all three smiling cynically.

"Who are those men behind you?” said Yuan Shao.

Gongsun Zan told Liu Bei to come forward, and said, “This is Liu Bei, Magistrate of Pingyuan and a brother of mine who shared my humble cottage when we were students.”

“It must be the Liu Bei who broke up the Yellow Scarves rebellion,” said Cao Cao.

“It is he,” said Gongsun Zan, and he ordered Liu Bei to make his obeisance to the assembly, to whom Liu Bei then related his services and his origin, all in full detail.

“Since he is of the Han line, he should be seated,” said Yuan Shao, and he bade Liu Bei sit.

Liu Bei modestly thanked him, declining.

Said Yuan Shao, “This consideration is not for your fame and office. I respect you as a scion of the imperial family.”

So Liu Bei took his seat in the lowest place of the long line of lords. And his two brothers with folded arms took their stations behind him.
Even as they were at this meeting came in a scout to say that Hua Xiong with a company of mail-clad horsemen was coming down from the Pass. They were flaunting Sun Jian’s captured purple turban on the end of a bamboo pole. The enemy was soon hurling insults at those within the stockade and challenging them to fight.

“Who dares go out to give battle?” said Yuan Shao.

“I will go,” said Yu She, a renown general of Yuan Shu, stepping forward.

So Yu She went, and almost immediately one came back to say that Yu She had fallen in the third bout of Hua Xiong.

Fear began to lay its cold hand on the assembly.

Then Imperial Protector Han Fu said, “I have a brave warrior among my army. Pan Feng is his name, and he could slay this Hua Xiong.”

So Pan Feng was ordered out to meet the foe. With his great battle-ax in his hand, Pan Feng mounted and rode forth. But soon came the direful tidings that General Pan Feng too had fallen. The faces of the gathering paled at this.

“What a pity my two able generals, Yan Liang and Wen Chou, are not here! Then should we have someone who would not fear this Hua Xiong,” said Yuan Shao.

He had not finished when from the lower end a voice tolled, “I will go, take Hua Xiong’s head, and lay it before you here!”

All turned to look at the speaker. He was tall and had a long beard. His eyes were those of a phoenix and his eyebrows thick and bushy like silkworms. His face was a swarthy red and his voice deep as the sound of a great bell.

“Who is he?” asked Yuan Shao.

Gongsun Zan told them it was Guan Yu, brother of Liu Bei.

“And what is he?” asked Yuan Shao.

“He is in the train of Liu Bei as a mounted archer.”

“What! An insult to us all!” roared Yuan Shu from his place. “Have we no leader? How dare an archer speak thus before us? Let us beat him forth!”

But Cao Cao intervened. “Peace, O Yuan Shu! Since this man speaks great words, he is certainly valiant. Let him try. If he fails, then we may reproach him.”

“Hua Xiong will laugh at us if we send a mere archer to fight him,” said Yuan Shao.

“This man looks no common person. And how can the enemy know he is but a bowman?” said Cao Cao.

“If I fail, then can you take my head,” spoke Guan Yu.

Cao Cao bade them heat some wine and offered a cup to Guan Yu as he went out.

“Pour it out,” said Guan Yu. “I shall return in a little space.”

Guan Yu went with his weapon in his hand and vaulted into the saddle. Those in the tent heard the fierce roll of the drums and then a mighty sound as if skies were falling and earth rising, hills trembling and mountains tearing asunder. And they were sore afraid. And while they were listening with ears intent, lo! the gentle tinkle of horse bells, and Guan Yu returned, throwing at their
Then Guan Yu set aside the wine cup till he should have displayed his valor;
And the wine was still warm when Hua Xiong had been slain.

Cao Cao was greatly excited at this success.
But Zhang Fei’s voice was heard, shouting, “My brother has slain Hua Xiong.
What are we waiting for? Why not break through the Pass and seize Dong Zhuo?
Could there have been a better time?”

Again arose the angry voice of Yuan Shu, “We high officials are too meek and yielding. Here is the petty follower of a small magistrate daring to flaunt his prowess before us! Expel him from the tent, I say.”

But again Cao Cao interposed, “Shall we consider the station of him who has done a great service?”
“If you hold a mere magistrate in such honor, then I simply withdraw,” said Yuan Shu.
“Is a word enough to defeat a grand enterprise?” said Cao Cao.

Then he told Gongsun Zan to lead the three brothers back to their own camp, and the other chiefs then dispersed. That night Cao Cao secretly sent presents of meat and wine to soothe the three after this adventure.
When Hua Xiong’s troops straggled back and told the story of defeat and death, Li Ru was greatly distressed. He wrote urgent letters to his master who called in his trusted advisers to a council.

Li Ru summed up the situation, saying, “We have lost our best leader, and the rebel power has thereby become very great. Yuan Shao is at the head of this confederacy, and his uncle, Yuan Wei, is holder of the office of Imperial Guardianship. If those in the capital combine with those in the country, we may suffer. Therefore we must remove them. So I request you, Sir Prime Minister, to place yourself at the head of your army and break this confederation.”

Dong Zhuo agreed and at once ordered his two generals, Li Jue and Guo Si, to take five hundred troops and surround the residence of Imperial Guardian Yuan Wei, slay every soul regardless of age, and hang the head of Yuan Wei outside the gate as trophy. And Dong Zhuo commanded two hundred thousand troops to advance in two armies. The first fifty thousand were under Li Jue and Guo Si, and they were to hold River Si Pass. They should not necessarily fight. The other one hundred fifty thousand under Dong Zhuo himself went to Tiger Trap Pass. His counselors and commanders--Li Ru, Lu Bu, Fan Chou, Zhang Ji, and others--marched with the main army.

Tiger Trap Pass is fifteen miles from Capital Luoyang. As soon as they arrived, Dong Zhuo bade Lu Bu take thirty thousand soldiers and make a strong stockade on the outside of the Pass. The main body with Dong Zhuo would occupy the Pass.

News of this movement reaching the confederate lords. Yuan Shao summoned a council.

Said Cao Cao, “The occupation of the Pass would cut our armies in two; therefore, we must oppose Dong Zhuo’s army on the way.”

So eight of the commanders---Wang Kuang, Qiao Mao, Bao Xin, Yuan Yi, Kong Rong, Zhang Yang, Tao Qian, and Gongsun Zan---were ordered to go in the direction of the Tiger Trap Pass to oppose their enemy. Cao Cao and his troops moved among them as reserve to render help where needed.

Of the eight, Wang Kuang, the Governor of Henei, was the first to arrive, and Lu Bu went to give battle with three thousand armored horsemen. When Wang Kuang had ordered his army, horse and foot, in battle array, he took his station under the great banner and looked over at his foe. Lu Bu was a conspicuous figure in front of the line. On his head was a triple curved headdress of ruddy gold with pheasant tails. He wore a warring velvet-red robe of Xichuan silk embroidered with thousand flowers, which was overlapped by golden mail adorned with a gaping animal’s head, joined by rings at the sides and girt to his waist with a belt fastened by a beautiful lion-head clasp. His bow and arrows were slung on his shoulders, and he carried a long heavy trident halberd. He was seated on his snorting steed Red Hare. Indeed Lu Bu was the man among humans, as Red Hare was the horse among horses.

“Who dares go out to fight him?” asked Wang Kuang turning to those behind him.

In response a valiant general from Henei named Fang Yue spurred to the front, his spear set ready for battle. Lu Bu and Fang Yue met: Before the fifth bout Fang Yue fell under a thrust of the trident halberd, and Lu
While the council was in progress again came Lu Bu to challenge them, and again the commanders moved out against him. This time Gongsun Zan, flourishing his spear, went to meet the enemy. After a very few bouts Gongsun Zan turned and fled; Lu Bu following at the topmost speed of Red Hare. Red Hare was a five-hundred-mile-a-day horse, swift as the wind. The lords watched Red Hare gained rapidly upon the flying horseman, and Lu Bu’s halberd was poised ready to strike Gongsun Zan just behind the heart. Just then dashed in a third rider with round glaring eyes and a bristling mustache, and armed with a ten-foot spear. Bu dashed forward. Wang Kuang’s troops could not stand and scattered in all directions. Lu Bu went to and fro slaying all he met. He was irresistible.

Luckily, two other troops led by Qiao Mao and Yuan Yi came up and rescued the wounded Wang Kuang, and Lu Bu pulled back. The three, having lost many troops, withdrew ten miles and made a stockade. And before long the remaining five commanders came up and joined them. They held a council and agreed Lu Bu was a hero no one could match.

And while they sat there anxious and uncertain, it was announced that Lu Bu had returned to challenge them. They mounted their horses and placed themselves at the heads of eight forces, each body in its station on the high ground. Around them was the opposing army in formation, commanded by Lu Bu, innumerable horse and foot, with splendid embroidered banners waving in the breeze.

They attacked Lu Bu. Mu Shun, a general of Governor Zhang Yang, rode out with his spear set, but soon fell at the first encounter with Lu Bu. This frightened the others. Then galloped forth Wu Anguo, a general under Governor Kong Rong. Wu Anguo raised his iron mace ready at his rival. Lu Bu whirling his halberd and urging on his steed came to meet Wu Anguo. The two fought, well matched for ten bouts, when a blow from the trident halberd broke Wu Anguo’s wrist. Letting his mace fall to the ground he fled. Then all eight of the lords led forth their armies to his rescue, and Lu Bu retired to his line.

The fighting then ceased, and after their return to camp another council met.

Cao Cao said, “No one can stand against the prowess of Lu Bu. Let us call up all the lords and evolve some good plan. If only Lu Bu were taken, Dong Zhuo could easily be killed.”
“Stay, O twice bastard!” roared he, “I, Zhang Fei of Yan, await you!”

Seeing this opponent, Lu Bu left the pursuit of Gongsun Zan and engaged the new adversary. Zhang Fei was elated, and he rode forth with all his energies. They two were worthily matched, and they exchanged half a hundred bouts with no advantage to either side. Then Guan Yu, impatient, rode out with his huge and weighty green-dragon saber and attacked Lu Bu on the other flank. The three steeds formed a triangle and their riders battered away at each other for thirty bouts, yet still Lu Bu stood firm.

Then Liu Bei rode out to his brothers’ aid, his double swords raised ready to strike. The steed with the flowing mane was urged in at an angle, and now Lu Bu had to contend with three surrounding warriors at whom he struck one after another, and they at him, the flashing of the warriors’ weapons looking like the revolving lamps suspended at the new year. And the warriors of the eight armies gazed rapt with amazement at such a battle.

But Lu Bu’s guard began to weaken and fatigue seized him. Looking hard in the face of Liu Bei, Lu Bu feigned a fierce thrust thus making Liu Bei suddenly draw back. Then, lowering his halberd, Lu Bu dashed through the angle thus opened and got away.

But was it likely they would allow him to escape? They whipped their steeds and followed hard. The soldiers of the eight armies cracked their throats with thunderous cheers and all dashed forward, pressing after Lu Bu as he made for the shelter of the Tiger Trap Pass. And first among his pursuers were the three brothers.

An ancient poet has told of this famous fight in these lines:
Gripped in his mighty hand the long serpent halberd,  
His mustache bristled with anger, standing stiff like wire.  
His round eyes glared, lightning flashes darted from them.  
Neither quailed in the fight, but the issue was undecided.  
Guan Yu stood out in front, his soul vexed within him,  
His green-dragon saber shone white as frost in the sunlight,  
His bright colored fighting robe fluttered like butterfly wings,  
Demons and angels shrieked at the thunder of his horse hoofs,  
In his eyes was fierce anger, a fire to be quenched only in blood.  
Next Liu Bei joined the battle, gripping his twin sword blades,  
The heavens themselves trembled at the majesty of his wrath.  
These three closely beset Lu Bu and long drawn out was the battle,  
Always he warded their blows, never faltering a moment.  
The noise of their shouting rose to the sky, and the earth reechoed it,  
The heat of battle ranged to the frozen pole star.  
Worn out, feeling his strength fast ebbing, Lu Bu thought to flee,  
He glanced at the hills around and thither would fly for shelter,  
Then, reversing his halberd and lowering its lofty point,  
Hastily he fled, loosing himself from the battle;
Chapter 5

*With head low bent, he gave the rein to his courser, Turned his face away and fled to Tiger Trap Pass.*

The three brothers maintained the pursuit to the Pass. Looking up they saw an immense umbrella of black gauze fluttering in the west wind. “Certainly there is Dong Zhuo,” cried Zhang Fei. “What is the use of pursuing Lu Bu? Better far seize the chiefest rebel and so pluck up the evil by the roots!” And he whipped up his steed toward the Pass.

*To quell rebellion seize the leader if you can; If you need a wondrous service then first find a wondrous man.*

The following chapters will unfold the result of the battle.
Chapter 6
Burning The Capital, Dong Zhuo Commits An Atrocity; Hiding The Imperial Hereditary Seal, Sun Jian Breaks Faith.

Zhang Fei rode hard up to the Pass, but the defenders sent down stones and arrows like rain so that he could not enter, and he returned. The eight lords all joined in felicitations to the three brothers for their services, and the story of victory was sent to Yuan Shao, who ordered Sun Jian to make an immediate advance.

Thereupon Sun Jian with two trusty generals, Cheng Pu and Huang Gai, went over to the camp of Yuan Shu.

Tracing figures on the ground with his staff, Sun Jian said, “Dong Zhuo and I had no personal quarrel. Yet now I have thrown myself into the battle regardless of consequences, exposed my person to the risk of wounds and fought bloody battles to their bitter end. And why? That I might be the means of ridding my country of a rebel and--for the private advantage of your family. Yet you, heeding the slanderous tongue of certain counselor, formerly withheld the supplies absolutely necessary to me, and so I suffered defeat. How can you explain, General?”

Yuan Shu, confused and frightened, had no word to reply. He ordered the death of the slanderer to placate Sun Jian.

Then suddenly they told Sun Jian, “Some officer has come riding down from the Pass to see you, General. He is in the camp.”

Sun Jian therefore took his leave and returned to his own camp, where he found the visitor was Li Jue, one of the much trusted commanders of Dong Zhuo.

“Wherefore come you?” said Sun Jian.

Li Jue replied, “You are the one person for whom my master has respect and admiration, and he sends me to arrange a matrimonial alliance between the two families. He wishes that his daughter may become the wife of your son.”

“What! Dong Zhuo, that rebel and renegade, that subverter of the Throne! I wish I could destroy his nine generations as a thank-offering to the empire! Think you I would be willing to have an alliance with such a family? I will not slay you as I ought, but go, and go quickly! Yield the Pass and I may spare your lives. If you delay, I will grind your bones to powder and make mincemeat of your flesh!”

Li Jue threw his arms over his head and ran out. He returned to his master and told him what a rude reception he had met with. Dong Zhuo asked his adviser Li Ru how to reply to this.

Li Ru said, “Lu Bu’s late defeat had somewhat blunted the edge of our army’s desire for battle. It would be well to return to the capital and remove the Emperor to Changan, as the street children had been lately singing:

“A Han on the west, a Han on the east.
The deer (emperor) in Changan shall worry least.”

Li Ru continued, “If you think out this couplet, it applies to the present juncture. Half the first line refers to the founder of the dynasty, Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor, who became
Thus if you remove to Changan, there will be no need for anxiety.”

Dong Zhuo was exceedingly pleased and said, “Had you not spoken thus, I should not have understood!”

Then taking Lu Bu with him, Dong Zhuo started at once for Capital Luoyang.

Here he called all the officials to a great council in the Palace and addressed them, “After two centuries of rule here, the royal fortune has been exhausted, and I perceive that the aura of rule has migrated to Changan, whither I now desire to move the court. All you had better pack up for the journey.”

Yang Biao, Minister of the Interior, said, “I pray you reflect. The Land Within the Passes is all destruction. There is no reason to renounce the ancestral temples and abandon the imperial tombs here. I fear the people will be alarmed. It is easy to alarm them but difficult to pacify them.”

“Do you oppose the state plans?” said Dong Zhuo angrily.

Another official, Grand Commander Huang Wan, supported his colleague, “In the era of Recommencement (AD 23-25), Fan Chong of the Red Eyebrows rebels burned Changan to the ground and reduced the place to broken tiles. The inhabitants scattered all but a few. It is wrong to abandon these palaces here for a wasteland.”

Dong Zhuo replied, “The East of the Pass is full of sedition, and all the empire is in rebellion. The city of Changan is protected by the Yaohan Mountains and the Hangu Pass. Moreover, it is near Longyou, whence can be

1The Land Within the Passes, or Guanzhong, was the area surrounding Changan.

2In the ending years of Wang Mang’s usurpation, rebels ran the country. The Red Eyebrows rebels were one of the most active of the robber bands. They finally captured Changan, and Wang Mang was killed in the fighting.
was given to two of Dong Zhuo’s commanders, Li Jue and Guo Si. The people were sent off in bands, each band between two parties of soldiers, who drove them toward Changan. Enormous numbers fell by the road side and died in the ditches, and the escort plundered the fugitives and defiled the women. A wail of sorrow arose to the very sky.

Dong Zhuo’s final orders as he left Capital Luoyang were to burn the whole city: Houses, palaces, temples, and everything were devoured by the flames. The capital became but a patch of scorched earth.

Dong Zhuo sent Lu Bu to desecrate the tombs of the emperors and their consorts for the jewels therein, and the common soldiers took the occasion to dig up the graves of officials and plunder the cemeteries of the wealthy. The spoil of the city, gold and silver, pearls and silks, and beautiful ornaments, filled several thousand carts. With these and the persons of the Emperor and his household, Dong Zhuo moved off to the new capital in the first year of Inauguration of Tranquillity (AD 190).

Luoyang being thus abandoned, the general of Dong Zhuo at River Si Pass, Zhao Cen, evacuated that post of vantage, which Sun Jian at once occupied. Liu Bei and his brothers took Tiger Trap Pass and the confederate lords

easily brought timber, stone, brick, and building materials. In a month or so palaces can be erected. So an end to your wild words!”

Yet Minister of Works Xun Shuang raised another protest against disturbing the people, but Dong Zhuo overbore him also.

“How can I stop to consider a few common people when my scheme affects the empire?” said Dong Zhuo.

That day the three objectors---Yang Biao, Huang Wan, and Xun Shuang---were removed from their offices and reduced to the rank of commoners.

As Dong Zhuo went out to get into his coach, he met two other officers who made obeisance. They were the Chair of the Secretariat, Zhou Bi, and the Commander of the City Gates, Wu Qiong. Dong Zhuo stopped and asked them what they wanted.

Said Zhou Bi, “We venture to try to dissuade you from moving the capital to Changan.”

Dong Zhuo replied, “You two persuaded me to give Yuan Shao office. Now he has already turned traitor, and you are of the same party!”

And without more ado he bade his guards take both outside the city and put them to death. The command to remove to the new capital immediately was issued.

Speaking to Dong Zhuo, Li Ru pointed out, “We are short of money and food, and the rich people of Luoyang could be easily plundered. This is a good occasion to link them to the rebels and to confiscate their properties.”

Dong Zhuo sent five thousand troops out to plunder and slay. They captured many thousand wealthy householders and, having stuck flags on their heads saying they were Traitors and Rebels, drove them out of the city and put them to death. Their properties were all seized.

The task of driving forth the inhabitants, some millions,
laughed at his colleague’s foresight. He set out his troops in fighting order.

Cao Cao rode forward, crying, “Rebels, abductors, drovers of the people, where are you going?”

Lu Bu replied, “Treachery simpleton, what mad words are these?”

Then from Cao Cao army rode forth Xiahou Dun with his spear set, and Lu Bu and Xiahou Dun engaged. The combat had hardly begun when Li Ru with a cohort came in from the left. Cao Cao bade Xiahou Yuan meet this onslaught. However, on the other side appeared Guo Si and his company. Cao Cao sent Cao Ren against Guo Si. The onrush on three sides was too much to withstand, and Lu Bu’s army was overwhelming, so Xiahou Dun had to retire to the main line. Thereupon Lu Bu’s armored troops attacked and completed the defeat. The beaten army of Cao Cao turned toward Yingyang.

They got as far as the foot of a hill in the evening about the second watch, and the moon made it as light as day. Here they halted to reform. Just as they were burying the boilers to prepare a meal, there arose a great noise of shouting on all sides and out came the troops of Governor Xu Rong from the ambush fresh to attack.

Cao Cao, thrown into a flurry, mounted and fled. He ran right in the way of the waiting Xu Rong. Then he dashed off in another direction, but Xu Rong shot an arrow after him which struck him in the shoulder. The arrow still in the wound, Cao Cao fled for his life. As he went over the hill, two soldiers lying in wait among the grass suddenly dashed out and wounded his horse, which fell and rolled over. And as he slipped from
Cao Cao said, "I am doomed, good brother. Go and save yourself!"

"My lord, mount my horse quickly! I will go afoot," said Cao Hong.

"If those wretches come up, what then?" said Cao Cao.

"The world can do without Cao Hong, but not without you, my lord!"

"If I live, I shall owe you my life," said Cao Cao.

So he mounted.

Cao Hong tore off his own breastplate, gripped his sword, and went on foot after the horse. Thus they proceeded till the fourth watch when they saw before them a broad stream, and behind they still heard the shouts of pursuers drawing nearer and nearer.

"This is my fate," said Cao Cao. "I am really doomed!"

Cao Hong helped Cao Cao down from his horse. Then taking off his fighting robe and helmet, Cao Hong took the wounded man on his back and waded into the stream.

When they reached the further side, the pursuers had already gained the bank whence they shot arrows.

Cao Cao all wet pushed on. Dawn was near. They went on another ten miles
and then sat down to rest under a precipice. Suddenly loud shouting was heard and a party of horse appeared. It was Governor Xu Rong who had forded the river higher up. Just at this moment Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan, with several dozens men, came along.

“Hurt not my lord!” cried Xiahou Dun to Xu Rong, who at once rushed at him.

But the combat was short. Xu Rong speedily fell under a spear thrust of Xiahou Dun, and his troops were driven off. Before long Cao Cao’s other generals arrived. Sadness and joy mingled in the greetings. They gathered together the few hundreds of soldiers left and then returned to Luoyang.

When the confederate lords entered Luoyang, Sun Jian, after extinguishing the fires, camped within the walls, his own tent being set up near the Dynastic Temple. His people cleared away the debris and closed the rifted tombs. The gates were barred. On the site of the Dynastic Temple he put up a mat shed containing three apartments, and here he begged the lords to meet and replace the sacred tablets, with solemn sacrifices and prayers.

This ceremony over, the others left and Sun Jian returned to his camp. That night the stars and moon vied with each other in brightness. As Sun Jian sat in the open air looking up at the heavens, he noticed a mist spreading over the stars of the Constellation Draco.

“The Emperor’s star is dulled,” said Sun Jian with a sigh. “No wonder a rebellious minister disturbs the state, the people sit in dust and ashes, and the capital is a waste.”

And his tears began to fall.

Then a soldier pointing to the south said, “There is a beam of colored light rising from a well!”

Sun Jian bade his people light torches and descend into the well. Soon they brought up the corpse of a woman, not in the least decayed although it had been there many days. She was dressed in Palace clothing and from her neck hung an embroidered bag. Opening this a red box was found, with a golden lock, and when the box was opened, they saw a jade seal, square in shape, four inches each way. On it were delicately engraved five dragons intertwined. One corner had been broken off and repaired with gold. There were eight characters in the seal style of engraving which interpreted read:

I have received the command from Heaven: May my time be always long and prosperous.

Sun Jian showed this to his adviser, General Cheng Pu, who at once recognized it as the Imperial Hereditary Seal of the Emperor.
Cheng Pu said, “This seal has a history. In olden days Bian He\(^3\) saw a phoenix sitting on a certain stone at the foot of the Jing Mountains. He offered the stone at court. The King of Chu split open the stone and found a piece of jade. In the twenty-sixth year of Qin Dynasty (BC 221), a jade cutter made a seal from it, and Li Si\(^4\), the First Emperor’s Prime Minister, engraved the characters. Two years later, while the First Emperor was sailing in Dongting Lake, a terrific storm arrived. The Emperor threw the seal to the water as a propitiatory offering, and the storm immediately ceased. Ten years later again, when the First Emperor was making a progress and had reached Huaying, an old man by the road side handed a seal to one of the attendants saying, ‘This is now restored to the ancestral dragon!’ and had then disappeared. Thus the jewel returned to Qin.

“The next year the First Emperor died. Later Zi Ying, the last Emperor of Qin and grandson of the First Emperor, presented the seal to Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor, the founder of Han Dynasty. Two hundred years later, in Wang Mang’s rebellion, the Emperor’s mother, Lady Yuan, struck two of the rebels, Wang Xun and Su Xian, with the seal and broke off a corner, which was repaired with gold. Liu Xiu the Latter Han Founder got possession of it at Yiyang, and it has been regularly bequeathed hereafter.

“I heard this treasured seal had been lost during the trouble in the Palace when the Ten Regular Attendants hurried off the Emperor. It was missed on His Majesty’s

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3Bian He of the state of Chu (circa BC 800) found a jadestone in Jing Mountains and presented it to two Chu kings, but he was sentenced to amputation of both feet because the stone was thought as fake. When a new king took the throne, Bian He tried once more, and this time the stone was recognized as the purest kind of jade.

4Li Si (BC 280-208) was the statesman who was responsible for most of the radical political and cultural innovations made in Qin after BC 221.

return. Now my lord has it and certainly will come to the imperial dignity. But you must not remain here in the north. Quickly go home to Changsha, south of the Great River\(^5\), where you can lay plans for the accomplishment of the great design.”

“Your words exactly accord with my thoughts,” said Sun Jian. “Tomorrow I will make an excuse that I am unwell and get away.”

The soldiers were told to keep the discovery a secret. But one among them was a compatriot of the elected chief of the confederacy---Yuan Shao. He thought this might be of great advantage to him, so he stole away out of the camp and betrayed his master. He went to Yuan Shao’s camp, informed the secret, and received a liberal reward. Yuan Shao kept the informant in his own camp.

Next morning Sun Jian came to take leave, saying, “I am rather unwell and wish to return to Changsha.”

Yuan Shao laughed, saying, “I know what you are suffering from: It is called the Imperial Hereditary Seal!”

This was a shock to Sun Jian, and he paled but said, “Whence these words?”

Yuan Shao said, “The armies were raised for the good of the state and to relieve it from oppression. The seal is state property; and since you have got hold of it, you should publicly hand it over to me as chief. When Dong Zhuo has been slain, it must go back to the government. What do you mean by concealing it and going away?”

“How could the seal get into my hands?” said Sun Jian. “Where is the article out of the well near the Hall of Paragons?”

“I have it not: Why harass me thus?”

“Quickly produce it, or it will be the worst for you!”

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5The Yangtze or Yangzi river, which flows from west to east to the Pacific at Shanghai.
Sun Jian pointing toward the heavens as an oath said, “If I have this jewel and am hiding it myself, may my end be unhappy and my death violent!”

The lords all said, “After an oath like this, we think he cannot have it.”

Then Yuan Shao called out his informant.

“When you pulled that thing out of the well, was this man there?” asked he of Sun Jian.

Sun Jian’s anger burst forth, and he sprang forward to kill the man.

Yuan Shao also drew his sword, saying, “You touch that soldier and it is an insult to me!”

Behind Sun Jian, Generals Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang stepped forth; behind Yuan Shao, Generals Yan Liang and Wen Chou were ready to act. In a moment on all sides swords flew from their scabbards. But the confusion was stayed by the efforts of the others, and Sun Jian left the assembly. Soon he broke up his camp and marched to his own place.

Yuan Shao was not satisfied. He wrote to Jingzhou Region and sent the letter by a trusty hand to tell Imperial Protector Liu Biao to stop Sun Jian and take away the seal.

Just after this came the news of the defeat and misfortune of Cao Cao, and when he was coming home, Yuan Shao sent out to welcome him and conduct him into camp. They also prepared a feast to console him.

During the feast Cao Cao said sadly, “My object was for the public good, and all you gentlemen nobly supported me. My plan was to get Yuan Shao with his Henei troops to approach Mengching; and my force at Qiao to keep Chenggao; while the others of you to hold Suanzao, to close the passes of Huanyuan and Daigu, and to take possession of the granaries, to control the points of vantage, and thus to secure the Capital District. I planned for Yuan Shu with his Nanyang army to occupy the counties of Danshi and Xilin and go into Wu Pass to help the three supports. All were to fortify their positions and not to fight. Advantage lay in a diverse military coalition that could show the empire a possibility of dealing with the rebellion. We could have convinced the people to side with us against Dong Zhuo. Victory would have been ours at once. But then came delays and doubts and inaction, and the confidence of the people was lost, and I am ashamed.”

No reply was possible and the guests dispersed. Cao Cao saw that the others mistrusted him, and in his heart knew that nothing could be accomplished. So he led off his force to Yanzhou Region.

Then Gongsun Zan said to Liu Bei, “This Yuan Shao is an incapable, and things will turns chaotic. We had better go too.”

So he broke camp and went north. At Pingyuan he left Liu Bei in command and went to strengthen his own position and refresh his troops.

The Imperial Protector of Yanzhou, Liu Dai, wished to borrow grain of the Governor of Dongjun, Qiao Mao. Being denied, Liu Dai attacked the camp, killed Qiao Mao and took over all his army. Yuan Shao seeing the confederacy breaking up also marched away and went east.

On the way home, Sun Jian was passing through Jingzhou Region. The Imperial Protector of Jingzhou, Liu Biao, was a scion of the imperial house and a native of Shanyang.

6Liu Dai was the Imperial Protector of Yanzhou at that time.
Huang Gai dealt Cai Mao a blow with the iron whip on the armor just over the heart. Cai Mao turned his steed and fled, and Sun Jian got through with a sudden rush.

However, there arose the sound of gongs and drums on the hills behind, and there was Liu Biao in person with a large army.

Sun Jian rode straight up to him and bowing low spoke, “Why did you, on the faith of a letter from Yuan Shao, try to coerce the chief of a neighboring region?”

“You have concealed the state jewel, and I want you to restore it,” was Liu Biao’s reply.

“If I have this thing, may I die a violent death!”

“If you want me to believe you, let me search your baggage.”

“What force have you that you dare come to flout me thus?”

And only Liu Biao’s prompt retirement prevented a battle. Sun Jian proceeded on his way. But from the rear of the second hill an ambush suddenly discovered itself, and Kuai Yue and Cai Mao were still pursuing. Sun Jian seemed entirely hemmed in.

*What does a man to hold the state jewel for, If its possession lead to strife?*

How Sun Jian got clear of the difficulty will presently be told.

As a young man he had made friends with many famous people, and he and his companions were called the Eight Wise Ones. The other seven were:

1. Chen Xiang from Runan
2. Fan Pang from Runan
3. Kong Yu from Luting
4. Fan Kang from Bohai
5. Tan Fu from Shanyang
6. Zhang Jian from Shanyang
7. Cen Zhi from Nanyang

Liu Biao was friends with all these. He had three famous persons who helped him in the government of his region. They were Kuai Liang and Kuai Yue from Yanping, and Cai Mao from Xiangyang.

When Yuan Shao’s letter detailing the fault of Sun Jian arrived, Liu Biao ordered Kuai Yue and Cai Mao with ten thousand soldiers to bar the way. When Sun Jian drew near, the force was arranged in fighting order and the leaders were in the front.

“Why are you thus barring the road with armed troops?” asked Sun Jian.

“Why do you, a servant of Han, secrete the Emperor’s special seal? Leave it with me at once and you go free,” said Kuai Yue.

Sun Jian angrily ordered out General Huang Gai. On the other side Cai Mao rode forth with his sword set to strike. But after a few bouts...
Chapter 7
Yuan Shao Fights Gongsun Zan At The River Pan;
Sun Jian Attacks Liu Biao Across The Great River.

At the close of the last chapter Sun Jian was surrounded. However, aided by Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, and Han Dang, he eventually fought his way through, though with the loss of more than half his troops. Sun Jian he returned to the South Land, southeast of the Great River. Henceforward Sun Jian and Liu Biao were open enemies.

Yuan Shao was in Henei. Being short of supplies, he sent to borrow from the Imperial Protector of Jizhou, Han Fu, whence he obtained the wherewithal to support his army.

Then one of Yuan Shao’s advisers, Peng Ji, said to him, “You are really the strongest power here about. Why then depend upon another for food? Jizhou Region is rich and wide. Why not seize it?”

“I have no good plan,” replied Yuan Shao.

“You could secretly send a letter to Gongsun Zan, asking him to attack, promising him your support. Imperial Protector Han Fu of Jizhou, being incapable, must ask you to take over his region, and you will get it without lifting a finger.”

So the letter was sent. When Gongsun Zan saw therein the proposal to make a joint attack and divide the territory, he agreed to give

1The Yangtze or Yangzi river, which flows from west to east to the Pacific at Shanghai.
Gongsun Zan brought up all his force to the attack. Learning the movement, Yuan Shao sent out his army, and they met at River Pan. They halted on opposite sides of the river, over which was a bridge.

Gongsun Zan took his station on the bridge and cried to his enemy, "Renegade, how dared you mislead me?"

Yuan Shao rode to the other end of the bridge and, pointing at Gongsun Zan, replied, "Han Fu yielded place to me because he was unequal to the rule. What concern is it of yours?"

Gongsun Zan replied, "Formerly you were regarded as loyal and public spirited, and we chose you chief of the confederacy. Now your deeds prove you cruel and base and wolf-hearted in behavior. How can you look the world in the face?"

"Who will capture him?" cried Yuan Shao in a rage.

At once Wen Chou rode out with his spear set. Gongsun Zan rode down the bridge to the enemy’s side, where the two engaged. Ten bouts showed Gongsun Zan the terrible power of Wen Chou, and so he drew off. The enemy came on. Gongsun Zan took refuge within his formation, but Wen Chou cut his way in and rode this way and that, slaying...
right and left. The four best of Gongsun Zan’s generals offered joint battle, but one fell under the first stroke of the doughty warrior, and the other three fled. Wen Chou followed clearing through to the rear of the army. Gongsun Zan made for the mountains.

Wen Chou forced his horse to its utmost pace, crying hoarsely, “Down! Dismount and surrender!”

Gongsun Zan fled for life. His bow and quiver dropped from his shoulders, his helmet fell off, and his hair streamed straight behind him as he rode in and out between the sloping hills. Then his steed stumbled and he was thrown, rolling over and over to the foot of the slope.

Wen Chou was now very near and poising his spear for the thrust. Then suddenly came out from the shelter of a grassy mound on the left a general of youthful mien, but sitting his steed bravely and holding a sturdy spear. He rode directly at Wen Chou, and Gongsun Zan crawled up the slope to look on.

The new warrior was of middle height with bushy eyebrows and large eyes, a broad face and a heavy jowl, a youth of commanding presence. The two exchanged some fifty bouts and yet neither had the advantage. Then Gongsun Zan’s rescue force came along, and Wen Chou turned and rode away. The youth did not pursue.

Gongsun Zan hurried down the hill and asked the young fellow who he was.

He bowed low and replied, “My name is Zhao Yun from Changshan. I first served Yuan Shao; but when I saw that he was disloyal to his prince and careless of the welfare of the people, I left him and I was on my way to offer service to you. This meeting in this place is most unexpected.”

Gongsun Zan was very pleased, and the two went together to the camp, where they at once busied themselves with preparations for a new battle.

Next day Gongsun Zan prepared for fight by dividing his army into two wings. He had five thousand cavalry in the center, all mounted on white horses. Gongsun Zan had formerly seen service against the northern frontier tribes, the Qiang Peoples, where he always placed his white horses in the van of his army, and thus he had won the sobriquet of General Who Commands White Horses. The tribes held him so much in fear that they always fled as soon as the white horses, their sacred creatures, appeared.

On Yuan Shao’s side Yan Liang and Wen Chou were Leaders of the Van. Each had one thousand of archers and crossbowmen. They were set out half on either side, those on the left to shoot at Gongsun Zan’s right and those on the right to shoot at his left. In the center was Qu Yi with eight hundred bowmen and ten thousand of foot and horse. Yuan Shao took command of the reserve force in the rear.

In this fight Gongsun Zan employed his new adherent Zhao Yun for the first time and, as Gongsun Zan did not feel assured of Zhao Yun’s good faith, put him in command of a company at the rear. The Van Leader was Yan Guang, and Gongsun Zan himself commanded the center. He took his place on horseback on the bridge beside an enormous red standard on which was displayed the word Commanding General in gold embroidery.
Zhao Yun
From sunrise to noon the drums rolled for the attack, but Yuan Shao’s army made no move. Qu Yi made his bowmen hide under their shields. They heard the roar of explosions, the whistling of arrows, and the rattle of the drums, as Yan Guang approached from the other side, but Qu Yi and his men lay closer than ever and never stirred. They waited till Yan Guang had got close on them and then, as the sound of a bomb rent the air, the whole eight hundred men let fly their arrows in a cloud. Yan Guang was quite taken aback and would have retired, but Qu Yi rode furiously toward him, whirled up his sword and cut him down.

So Gongsun Zan’s army lost that battle. The two wings that should have come to the rescue were kept back by the bowmen under Yan Liang and Wen Chou. Yuan Shao’s troops advanced right up to the bridge. Then Qu Yi rode forward, slew the standard bearer, and hacked through the staff of the embroidered banner. Seeing this, Gongsun Zan turned his steed and galloped away.

Qu Yi followed. But just as he caught up the fugitive, there came prancing forth Zhao Yun, who rode directly at him with spear ready to strike. After a few bouts Qu Yi was laid in the dust. Then Zhao Yun attacked the soldiers and turned the tide. Plunging forward on this side, dashing in on that, he went through as if there were no antagonists and, seeing this, Gongsun Zan turned and came again into the fight. The final victory was on his side.

From the scouts sent to find out how the battle went, Yuan Shao heard the good news of Qu Yi’s success in slaying the standard bearer, capturing the flag, and his pursuit. So Yuan Shao took no further care but rode out with his General Tian Feng and a few guards to look on at the enemy and enjoy his victory.

“Ha ha!” Yuan Shao laughed. “Gongsun Zan is an incapable.”

But even as Yuan Shao spoke, he saw in front the redoubtable Zhao Yun. His guards hastened to prepare their bows, but before they could shoot, Zhao Yun was in their midst, and men were falling before him wherever he went.

The others fled. Gongsun Zan’s army then gathered round and hemmed in Yuan Shao.

Tian Feng then said to his master, “Sir, take refuge in this empty building here!”

But Yuan Shao dashed his helmet to the ground, crying, “The brave one rather faces death in the battle than seeks
Liu Bei and Zhao Yun were made acquainted with each other, and a warm affection sprang up from the very first so that they were always together.

Yuan Shao had lost that battle, and Gongsun Zan would not risk another. They strengthened their defenses, and the armies lay inactive for over a month. In the meantime news of the fighting had reached Capital Changan, and Dong Zhuo was told.

His adviser, Li Ru, went to see his master and said, “The two active leaders of today are Yuan Shao and Gongsun Zan, who are at grips at River Pan. Pretend you have an imperial command to make peace between them, and both will support you out of gratitude for your intervention.”

“Good!” said Dong Zhuo.

So he sent the Imperial Guardian, Ma Midi, and the Minister of the Inner Bureau, Zhao Qi, on the mission. When these men were arriving at the North of Yellow River, Yuan Shao sent out to welcome them thirty miles from his headquarters and received the imperial command with the greatest respect. Then the two officers went to Gongsun Zan and made known their errand. Gongsun Zan sent letters to his adversary proposing friendship. The two emissaries returned to report their task accomplished. Gongsun Zan drew off his army. He also sent up a memorial eulogizing Liu Bei, who was raised to the rank of Governor of Pingyuan.

The farewell between Liu Bei and Zhao Yun was affecting. They held each other’s hands a long time, their eyes streaming with tears, and could not tear themselves apart.
“I want revenge on my own part. What care I for his help?” said Sun Jian.

He dispatched Huang Gai to prepare a river fleet, arm and provision them. Big warships were to take horses on board. The force soon set out.

News of these preparations came to Liu Biao, and he hastily summoned his advisers and warriors.

Kuai Liang told him to be free from anxiety, and said, “Put General Huang Zu at the head of the Jiangxia army to make the first attack and you, Sir, support him with the forces from Xiangyang. Let Sun Jian come riding the rivers and straddling the lakes: What strength will he have left after arriving here?”

So Liu Biao bade Huang Zu prepare to march, and a great army was assembled.
Here it may be said that Sun Jian had four sons, all the issue of his wife who was of the Wu family. Their names in order were Sun Ce, Sun Quan, Sun Yi, and Sun Kuang. Sun Jian had a second wife who was the sister of his first wife. And the second wife bore him a son and a daughter, the former called Sun Lang, the latter Sun Ren. Sun Jian had also adopted a son from a Yu family and named him Sun Hu. And he had a younger brother named Sun Jing.

As Sun Jian was leaving on this expedition, his brother Sun Jing with all his six sons stood in front of Sun Jian’s steed and dissuaded him, saying, “Dong Zhuo is the real ruler of the state, for the Emperor is a weakling. The whole country is in rebellion, everyone is scrambling for territory. Our area is comparatively peaceful, and it is wrong to begin a war merely for the sake of a little resentment. I pray you, brother, think before you start.”

Sun Jian replied, “Brother, say no more. I desire to make my strength felt throughout the empire, and shall I not avenge my injuries?”

“Then father, if you must go, let me accompany you,” said the eldest son Sun Ce.

This request was granted, and father and son embarked to go to ravage the city of Fankou.

Now Huang Zu had placed archers and crossbowmen along the river bank. When the ships approached, a flight of arrows met them. Sun Jian ordered his troops to remain under cover in the ships, which then sailed to and fro, drawing the fire for three days. Several times the ships pretended to land, and this drew showers of arrows from the bank. At last the arrows of the defenders were all shot away and Sun Jian, who collected them, found he had many myriads. Then with a fair wind Sun Jian’s troops shot them back to the enemy. Those on the bank were thrown into great disorder and retired. The army then landed. Two divisions led by Cheng Pu and Huang Gai set out for Huang Zu’s camp along different roads, and between them marched Han Dang. Under this triple attack Huang Zu was worsted. He left Fankou and hastened to Dengcheng.

Leaving the ships under the command of Huang Gai, Sun Jian led the pursuing force. Huang Zu came out of his city and drew up for battle in the open country. When Sun Jian had disposed his army, he rode out to the standard. Sun Ce, clad in armor, placed himself beside his father.

Huang Zu rode out with two generals---Zhang Hui from Jiangxia and Chen Sheng from Xiangyang.

Flourishing his whip, Huang Zu abused his enemy, “You swarm of rebels from Changsha! Why do you invade the land of a scion of the ruling house?”

Zhang Hui challenged to combat, and Han Dang went out to accept. The two champions fought thirty bouts, and then Chen Sheng, seeing his fellow general becoming exhausted, rode to his aid. Sun Jian saw Chen Sheng coming, laid aside his spear, reached for his bow, and shot an arrow wounding Chen Sheng in the face. He fell from his horse. Panic seized upon Zhang Hui at the fall of his comrade, and he could no longer defend himself. Then Han Dang with a slash of his sword clove Zhang Hui’s skull in twain.

Both having fallen, Cheng Pu galloped up to make prisoner of Huang Zu, who threw off his helmet, slipped from his steed, and mingled for safety among his troops.
Sun Jian led on the attack and drove the enemy to the Han River where he ordered Huang Gai to move the fleet upriver and moor there.

Huang Zu led his defeated troops back and told Liu Biao, saying, “Sun Jian was too strong for my army.”

Kuai Liang was called in to advise, and he said, “Our newly defeated soldiers have no heart for fighting now. Therefore we must fortify our position, while we seek help from Yuan Shao. Then we can extricate ourselves.”

“A stupid move!” said Cai Mao. “The enemy is at the city gates: Shall we fold our hands and wait to be slain? Give me troops and I will go out and fight to the finish.”

So Cai Mao was placed in command of ten thousand troops and went out to the Xian Hills where he drew up his battle line. Sun Jian led the invaders, now flushed with success.

When Cai Mao approached, Sun Jian looked at him and said, “He is brother-in-law to Liu Biao. Who will capture him?”

Cheng Pu set his iron-spined lance and rode out. After a few bouts Cai Mao turned and fled. Sun Jian’s army rode in and slaughtered till corpses filled the countryside, and Cai Mao took refuge in Xiangyang.

Kuai Liang said, “Cai Mao ought to be put to death by military law. This defeat was due to his obstinacy.”

But Liu Biao was unwilling to punish the brother of his newly wedded wife.

Sun Jian surrounded Xiangyang and assailed the walls daily. One day a fierce gale sprang up, and the pole bearing his standard was broken.

“Very inauspicious!” said Han Dang. “We ought to go back.”

Sun Jian said, “I have won every battle and the city is on the point of falling. Shall I return because the wind felled a flagstaff?”

He flouted the advice and attacked the walls still more vigorously.

Within the city the defenders had seen an omen. Kuai Liang told Liu Biao, “Last night I saw that a great star fall into the sky corresponding to Sun Jian’s territory. I calculated that it inferred the fall of Sun Jian.”

Then Kuai Liang advised Liu Biao to seek help from Yuan Shao as quickly as possible.
Sun Jian was in his tent when he heard shouting, and a soldier came to report: “There was a group of horsemen going out from the city!”

Sun Jian at once mounted and rode out with thirty horsemen to discover the cause. Lu Gong’s troops had already hidden themselves in the thick woods. Sun Jian rode ahead of his escort, and soon he found himself alone and close to the enemy. He called out to them to halt. Lu Gong at once turned back and came as if to fight. But they had only exchanged a single pass when Lu Gong again fled, taking the road among the hills. Sun Jian followed but soon lost sight of his foe.

Sun Jian turned up the hill. Then the gongs clanged and down the hills fell showers of stones, while from among the trees the arrows flew in clouds. Sun Jian was hit by several arrows and a huge stone crushed in his head. Both he and his steed were killed. Sun Jian was only thirty-seven years old at his death.

His escort was overpowered and every man of them slain. Then Lu Gong let off a series of bombs, the sign of success, as agreed. At this signal Huang Zu, Kuai Yue, and Cai Mao led three armies out of the city and fell upon the Changsha troops, throwing them into the utmost confusion.

When Huang Gai heard the sound of battle, he led up the troops from the ships. He met Huang Zu and took Huang Zu prisoner after a brief fight.

Cheng Pu set out to bear the sad news to Sun Ce. While he was seeking a way out, he came across Lu Gong. Cheng Pu at once put his horse at full speed and engaged Lu Gong.
After a few bouts Lu Gong went down under a spear thrust. The battle became general and continued till daylight broke, when each drew off his army. Liu Biao withdrew into the city.

When Sun Ce returned to the river, he heard that his father had perished in the fight, and his body had been carried within the enemy’s walls. He uttered a great cry, and the army joined him with wailing and tears.

“How can I return home leaving my father’s corpse with them?” cried Sun Ce.

Huang Gai said, “We have Huang Zu as our prisoner. Let one enter the city and discuss peace, giving up our prisoner for our lord’s body.”

He had barely finished speaking when an officer in the army, Huan Ji, offered himself as messenger, saying, “I am an old friend of Liu Biao. I volunteer to take the mission.”

Sun Ce agreed. So Huan Ji went and peace was discussed.

Liu Biao told Huan Ji, saying, “The body is already laid in a coffin and ready to be delivered as soon as Huang Zu returned. Let us both cease fighting and never again invade each other’s territories.”

Huan Ji thanked him and took his leave.

But as Huan Ji went down the steps, Kuai Liang suddenly broke in, saying, “No, no! Let me speak and I will see to it that not a single enemy can survive. I pray you first put this man to death and then to employ my means.”

Pursuing his enemy, Sun Jian dies;
On a peaceful mission, Huan Ji is threatened.

The fate of the ambassador will be disclosed in a later chapter.
In Changsha, the southern territory of the Great River\textsuperscript{1}, Sun Ce set himself to the task of ruling well. Being humble and generous, he invited to his side humans of wisdom and valor and so bore himself that all the best and bravest of the country gathered about him.

Meanwhile, Dong Zhuo at Capital Changan, when he heard of the death of the turbulent Sun Jian, said, “An evil that pressed hard upon my heart has been removed!”

He asked what children Sun Jian had left, and when they told him the eldest was but seventeen, he dismissed all anxiety from his thoughts.

From this time forward his arrogance and domineering spirit waxed worse and worse. He styled himself “Imperial Rector,” a name full of honor, and in all his behavior aped imperial state. He created his younger brother, Dong Min, Lord of Huazhou and made him Commander of the Left Army. A nephew, Dong Huang, was made Court Counselor and placed in command of the Palace Guard, and everyone of his clan, young or old, was ennobled. Eighty miles from the capital Dong Zhuo laid out a city called Meiwo, an exact replica of Changan, with its palaces, granaries, treasuries, and magazines, and employed a quarter of a million people to build it. Here he accumulated supplies sufficient for twenty years. He selected eight hundred of the most beautiful maidens and sent them to dwell in his new city. The stores of wealth in every form were incalculable. All his family and retainers found quarters in this new city.

Dong Zhuo visited his city at intervals of a month or so, and every visit was like an imperial progress, with booths by the roadside to refresh the officials and courtiers who attended him to the northwest Royal Gate and saw him start.

On one occasion Dong Zhuo spread a great feast for all those assembled to witness his departure; and while it was in progress, there arrived a large number of rebels from the north who had voluntarily surrendered. The tyrant had them brought before him as he sat at table and meted out to them wanton cruelties. The hands of this one were lopped off, the feet of that; one had his eyes gouged out; another lost his tongue. Some were boiled to death. Shrieks of agony arose to the very heavens, and the courtiers were faint with terror. But the author of the misery ate and drank, chatted and smiled as if nothing was going on.

Another day Dong Zhuo was presiding at a great gathering of officers who were seated in two long rows. After the wine had gone up and down several times, Lu Bu entered and whispered a few words in his master’s ear.

Dong Zhuo smiled and said, “He was always so. Take Minister Zhang Wan outside.”

The others all turned pale. In a little time a serving man brought the head of their fellow guest on a red dish and showed it to their host. They nearly died with fright.

“Do not fear,” said Dong Zhuo smiling. “Minister Zhang Wan was in league with Yuan Shu to assassinate me. A letter he wrote fell by mistake into the hands of my son, so I have had him put to death. You gentlemen, who have no reason, need have no fear.”

The officials hastened to disperse. One of them, Minister of the Interior Wang Yun, who had witnessed all this,

\par
\textsuperscript{1}The Yangtze or Yangzi river, which flows from west to east to the Pacific at Shanghai.
Chapter 8

Romance of Three Kingdoms

returned to his palace very pensive and much distressed. The same evening, a bright moonlight night, he took his staff and went strolling in his private garden. Standing near one of the creeper trellises, he gazed up at the sky and the tears rolled down his cheeks. Suddenly he heard a rustle in the Peony Pavilion and someone sighing deeply. Stealthily creeping near, he saw there one of the household singing girls named Diao Chan.

This maiden had been brought up in his palace, where she had been taught to sing and dance. At twenty-one, she was then just bursting into womanhood, a pretty and clever girl whom Wang Yun regarded more as a daughter than a dependant.

After listening for some time, Wang Yun suddenly called out, “What mischief are you up to there, you naughty girl?”

The maiden dropped on her knees in terror, saying, “Would thy unworthy handmaid dare to do anything wrong?”

“Then what are you sighing about out here in the darkness?”

“May thy handmaid speak from the bottom of her heart?”

“Tell me the whole truth. Do not conceal anything.”

And the girl said, “Thy handmaid has been the recipient of bountiful kindness. She has been taught to sing and dance and been treated so kindly that were she torn in pieces for her lord’s sake, it would not repay a thousandth part. She has noticed lately that her lord’s brows have been knit in distress and knows it is on account of the state troubles. But she has not dared to ask. This evening she seemed sadder than ever, and she was miserable on her lord’s account. But she did not know she would be seen. Could she be of any use she would not shrink from a myriad deaths.”

A sudden idea came to Wang Yun, and he stuck the ground with his staff. And he said, “Who would think that the fate of Han lay on your palm? Come with me!”

The girl followed him into the house. Then he dismissed all the waiting attendants, placed Diao Chan on a chair and bowed before her. She was frightened and threw herself on the ground, asking in terror what it all meant.

Said Wang Yun, “You can sympathize with the people of Han,” and the fount of his tears opened afresh.

“Thy handmaid has promised not to recoil from death itself. You may use my poor self in any way, and I must do...
But if this gets abroad then we are all lost!"

"Fear not," said she. "If thy handmaid does not show gratitude, may she perish beneath a myriad swords!"

"Thank you, thank you!" said Wang Yun.

Then Wang Yun took from the family treasury many pearls and bade a cunning jeweler make therewith a fine golden headdress, which was sent as a present to Lu Bu. He was delighted and came to thank the donor. When Lu Bu arrived, he was met at the gate by Wang Yun himself and within found a table full of dainties for his delectation. He was conducted into the private apartments and placed in the seat of honor.

Lu Bu said, "I am but a simple officer in the palace of a minister. You are an exalted officer of state. Why am I treated thus?"

"Because in the whole land there is no hero your equal. Poor Wang Yun bows not to an officer's rank; poor Wang Yun bows to his ability."

This gratified Lu Bu mightily, and his host continued to praise and flatter and ply him with wine and to talk of the virtues of the Prime Minister and his henchman.

Lu Bu laughed and drank huge goblets.

Presently most of the attendants were sent away, only a few kept to press the guest to drink.

When the guest was very mellow, Wang Yun suddenly said, "Let her come in!"

Soon appeared two attendants, dressed in white, leading between them the exquisite and fascinating Diao Chan.

"Who is this?" said Lu Bu startled into sobriety.

"This is my little girl, Diao Chan. You will not be annoyed at my familiarity, will you? But you have been so very friendly, I thought you would like to see her."

Wang Yun bade Diao Chan present a goblet of wine, and her eyes met those of the warrior.

Wang Yun feigning intoxication said, "My little child begs you, General, to take a cup or two. We all depend upon you, all our house."

Lu Bu begged Diao Chan to sit down. She pretended to wish to retire. Her master pressed her to remain, saying that she might do so since the guest was a dear friend. So she took a seat modestly near her master.

Lu Bu kept his gaze fixed upon the maid, while he swallowed cup after cup of wine.

"I should like to present her to you as a handmaid: Would you accept?" said Wang Yun.

The guest started up.

"If that is so, you may rely upon my abject gratitude," said Lu Bu.

"We will choose a propitious day ere long and send her to the palace."

Lu Bu was overjoyed. He could not keep his eyes off Diao Chan, and loving glances flashed from her liquid eyes.

However the time came for the guest to leave, and Wang
Diao Chan
Yun stood by while Dong Zhuo stepped out of his chariot, and Dong Zhuo and a host of one hundred armed guards crowded into the hall. Dong Zhuo took his seat at the top, his suite fell into two lines right and left, while Wang Yun stood humbly at the lower end. Dong Zhuo bade his people conduct Wang Yun to a place beside himself.

Said Wang Yun, “The great Prime Minister’s abundant virtue is as the high mountains. Neither the ancient sages---Yi Yin\(^1\) and the Duke of Zhou\(^2\)---could attain thereto.”

Dong Zhuo smiled. They bore in the dishes and the wine, and the music began. Wang Yun plied his guest with assiduous flattery and studied deference. When it grew late and the wine had done its work, Dong Zhuo was invited to the inner chamber. So he sent away his guards and went. Here the host raised a goblet and drank to his guest, saying, “From my youth up I have understood something of Yi Yin\(^1\) and the Duke of Zhou\(^2\)---could attain thereto.”

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Wang Yun thanked him. Then Wang Yun went home and prepared in the reception hall a feast in which figured every delicacy from land and sea. Beautiful embroideries surrounded the chief seat in the center, and elegant curtains were hung within and without. At noon next day, when the Prime Minister arrived, Wang Yun met him at the gate in full court costume. Wang Yun thanked him. Then Wang Yun went home and prepared in the reception hall a feast in which figured every delicacy from land and sea. Beautiful embroideries surrounded the chief seat in the center, and elegant curtains were hung within and without. At noon next day, when the Prime Minister arrived, Wang Yun met him at the gate in full court costume.

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\(^1\) Yi Yin was was helper and prime minister of King Tang, the founder of Shang Dynasty. After King Tang’s death, Yi Yin served his sons and grandson. Soon after Tai Jia, King Tang’s grandson, ascended the throne, he committed many faults, and Yi Yin, acting as regent, exiled Tai Jia to Tong Palace---the burial place of King Tang. After three years Yi Yin returned him the throne. Tai Jia eventually became an enlightened emperor. Shang Dynasty lasted for 650 years (BC 1700-1050). It was this act of Yi Yin rather than his services in building an empire that has made him immortal. Whether he did right in temporarily dethroning the king was open to question, until a final verdict was rendered by Mencius who thought that his ends amply justified his means. This historical event attests the extent of the power exercised by a prime minister in those days.

\(^2\) Duke of Zhou was brother of King Wu, who was the founder of Zhou Dynasty. After King Wu’s death, the Duke of Zhou served his young son as regent. The Duke of Zhou completely ended the Shang domination, and he helped establish the Zhou administrative framework, which served as a model for future Chinese dynasties. Zhou Dynasty lasted for 800 years (BC 1050-221).
“Excellent!” said the guest.

Then a curtain was lowered. The shrill tones of reed instruments rang through the room, and presently some attendants led forward Diao Chan, who then danced on the outside of the curtain.

A poem praises her:

For a palace this maiden was born,
So timid, so graceful, so slender,
Like a tiny bird flitting at morn
Over the dew-laden lily buds tender.

Were this exquisite maid only mine,
For never a mansion I’d pine.

Another poem runs thus:

The music falls, the dancer comes, a swallow gliding in,
A dainty little damsel, soft as silk;
Her beauty captivates the guest yet saddens him within,
For he must soon depart and leave her there.

She smiles; no gold could buy that smile, no other smiled so,
No need to deck her form with jewels rare.
But when the dance is over and coy glances come and go,
Then who shall be the chosen of the fair?

The dance ended. Dong Zhuo bade them lead the maiden in, and she came, bowing low as she approached him. He was much taken with her beauty and modest grace.

“How dare I expect this?” said Dong Zhuo.

“From the days of old, those who walk in the way have replaced those who deviate therefrom; those who lack virtue have fallen before those who possess it. Can one escape fate?”

“If indeed the decree of Heaven devolves on me, you shall be held the first in merit!” said Dong Zhuo.

Wang Yun bowed. Then lights were brought in and all the attendants were dismissed, save the serving maids to hand the wine. So the evening went on.

Presently Wang Yun said, “The music of these everyday musicians is too commonplace for your ear, but there happens to be in the house a little maid that might please you.”

-Diao Chan

3King Yao, King Shun, and King Yu (BC 2400-2200) were the three ideal rulers in ancient China. They ascended the throne by their virtues and merits, and not by heritage. King Yu was also the founder of the Xia Dynasty.
Soon after Dong Zhuo took his leave, and Wang Yun accompanied him the whole way.

After he had taken leave, Wang Yun mounted to ride homeward. Half way he met two lines of guards with red lamps who were escorting Lu Bu who was on horseback and armed with his trident halberd.

Seeing Wang Yun, Lu Bu at once reined in, stopped, seized him by the sleeve, and said angrily, “You promised Diao Chan to me, and now you have given her to the Prime Minister: What foolery is this?”

Wang Yun checked him, saying, “This is no place to talk; I pray you come to my house.”

So they went together, and Wang Yun led Lu Bu into a private room.

After the usual exchange of polite greetings, Wang Yun said, “Why do you find fault with me, General?”

“Somebody told me that you had sent Diao Chan to the Prime Minister’s palace in a covered carriage: What does it mean?”

“Of course you do not understand. Yesterday when I was at court, the Prime Minister told me he had something to talk to me about in my own house. So naturally I prepared for his coming, and while we were at dinner he said, ‘I have heard something of a girl named Diao Chan whom you have promised to my son Lu Bu. I thought it was mere rumor so I wanted to ask if it was true. Beside I should like to see her.’ I could not say no, so she came in and made her bow to the lord of lords. Then he said that it was a lucky day and he would take her away with him and betroth her to you. Just think, Sir: When the Prime Minister had come himself, could I stop him?”

“You were not so very wrong,” said Lu Bu. “But for a time I had misunderstood you. I owe you an apology.”

“The girl has a small trousseau, which I will send as soon

Dong Zhuo was delighted and praised her warmly. She was told to present a goblet of wine to the guest which he took from her hands and then asked her age.

She replied, “Thy unworthy handmaid is twenty-one.”

“A perfect little fairy!” said Dong Zhuo.

Then Wang Yun rose and said, “If the Prime Minister would not mind, I should like to offer him this little maid.”

“How could I be grateful enough for such a kindness!”

“She would be most fortunate if she could be your servant,” said Wang Yun.

Dong Zhuo thanked his host warmly.

Then the orders were given to prepare a closed carriage and convey Diao Chan to the Prime Minister’s palace.

You stand, a dainty maiden,
Your cherry lips so bright,
Your teeth so pearly white,
Your fragrant breath love-laden;
Yet is your tongue a sword;
Cold death is the reward
Of loving thee, O maiden.

Soon after Dong Zhuo took his leave, and Wang Yun accompanied him the whole way.

After he had taken leave, Wang Yun mounted to ride homeward. Half way he met two lines of guards with red lamps who were escorting Lu Bu who was on horseback and armed with his trident halberd.

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“You were not so very wrong,” said Lu Bu. “But for a time I had misunderstood you. I owe you an apology.”

“The girl has a small trousseau, which I will send as soon
“If there is nothing, you may go,” said Dong Zhuo.

Lu Bu sulkily withdrew.

Dong Zhuo now thought of nothing but his new mistress and for more than a month neglected all affairs, devoting himself entirely to pleasure. Once he was a little indisposed, and Diao Chan was constantly at his side, never even undressing to show her solicitude. She gratified his every whim. Dong Zhuo grew more and more fond of her.

One day Lu Bu went to inquire after his father’s health. Dong Zhuo was asleep, and Diao Chan was sitting at the head of his couch. Leaning forward she gazed at the visitor, with one hand pointed to her heart, the other at Dong Zhuo asleep, and her tears fell. Lu Bu felt heartbroken. Dong Zhuo drowsily opened his eyes; and seeing his son’s gaze fixed on something behind him, he turned over and saw who it was.

He angrily rebuked his son, saying, “Dare you make love to my beauty?”

He told the servants to turn Lu Bu out, shouting, “Never let him enter here again!”

Lu Bu went off home very wrath. Meeting Li Ru, he told Li Ru the cause of his anger.

The adviser hastened to see his master and said, “Sir, you aspire to be ruler of the empire. Why then for a small fault do you blame the General? If he turns against you, it is all over.”

“What can I do?” said Dong Zhuo.

“Recall him tomorrow; treat him well; overwhelm him with gifts and fair words; and all will be well.”

So Dong Zhuo did so. He sent for Lu Bu and was very gracious and said, “I was irritable and hasty yesterday owing to my illness and I wronged you, I know. Forgive me.”

He gave Lu Bu three hundred ounces of gold and twenty rolls of brocade. And so the quarrel was made up. But though
Lu Bu’s body was with his adopted father Dong Zhuo, his heart was with his promised bride Diao Chan.

Dong Zhuo having quite recovered went to court again, and Lu Bu followed him as usual. Seeing Dong Zhuo deep in conversation with the Emperor, Lu Bu, armed as he was, went out of the Palace and rode off to his chief’s residence. He tied up his steed at the entrance and, halberd in hand, went to the private apartment to seek his love. He found Diao Chan, and she told him to go out into the garden where she would join him soon. He went, taking his halberd with him, and he leaned against the rail of the Phoenix Pavilion to wait for Diao Chan.

After a long time she appeared, swaying gracefully as she made her way under the drooping willows and parting the flowers as she passed. She was exquisite, a perfect fairy from the Palace of the Moon.

Tears were in her eyes as she came up and said, “Though I am not the Minister’s real daughter, yet he treated me as his own child. The desire of my life was fulfilled when he plighted me to you. But oh! to think of the wickedness of the Prime Minister, stealing my poor self as he did. I suffered so much. I longed to die, only that I had not told you the real truth. So I lived on, bearing my shame as best as I could but feeling it mean still to live. Now that I have seen you, I can end it all. My poor sullied body is no longer fit to serve a hero. I can die before your eyes and so prove how true I am!”

Thus speaking she seized the curving rail and started into the lily pond. Lu Bu caught her in his strong arms and wept as he held her close.

“I knew it: I always knew your heart,” he sobbed. “Only we never had a chance to speak.”

She threw her arms about Lu Bu.

“If I cannot be your wife in this life, I will in the ages to come,” she whispered.

“If I do not marry you in this life, I am no hero,” said he.

“Every day is a year long. O pity me! Rescue me! My lord!”

“I have only stolen away for a brief moment, and I am afraid that old rebel will suspect something, so I must not stay too long,” said Lu Bu.

Diao Chan clung to his robe, saying, “If you fear the old thief so much, I shall never see another sunrise.”
Lu Bu stopped.

“Give me a little time to think,” said he.

And he picked up his halberd to go.

“In the deep seclusion of the harem, I heard the stories of your prowess. You were the one man who excelled all others. Little did I think that you of all heroes would rest content under the dominion of another.”

And tears rained again!

A wave of shame flooded his face. Leaning his halberd against the railing, he turned and clasped the girl to his breast, soothing her with fond words. The lovers held each other close, swaying to and fro with emotion. They could not bring themselves to say farewell.

In the meantime Dong Zhuo missed his henchman, and doubt filled his heart. Hastily taking leave of the Emperor, he mounted his chariot and returned to his palace. There at the gate stood Lu Bu’s well known steed Red Hare, riderless. Dong Zhuo questioned the doorkeepers, and they told him the General was within. He sent away his attendants and went alone to the private apartments. Lu Bu was not there. He called Diao Chan, but there was no reply. He asked where she was, and the waiting maids told him she was in the garden among the flowers.

So Dong Zhuo went into the garden, and there he saw the lovers in the pavilion in most tender talk. Lu Bu’s trident halberd was leaning on the railing beside him.

A howl of rage escaped Dong Zhuo and startled the lovers. Lu Bu turned, saw who it was, and ran away. Dong Zhuo caught up the halberd and ran in pursuit. But Lu Bu was fleet of foot while his master was very stout. Seeing no hope of catching the runaway, Dong Zhuo hurled the halberd. Lu Bu fended it off and it fell to the ground. Dong Zhuo picked it up and ran on. But by this time Lu Bu was far ahead. Just as Dong Zhuo was running out at the garden gate, he dashed full tilt against another man running in, and down he went.

Surged up his wrath within him as the billows heavenward leap.

Crashed his unwieldy body to earth in a shapeless heap.

We shall presently see who the other runner was.
Chapter 9
Lu Bu Kills Dong Zhuo For Wang Yun;
Li Jue Attacks The Capital On Jia Xu’s Advice.

The person who collided with the irate Dong Zhuo was his most trusty adviser Li Ru. Li Ru had not fallen in spite of the shock and at once scrambled to help Dong Zhuo to regain his feet and led him inside to the library, where they sat down.

“What were you coming about?” said Dong Zhuo.

“Happening to be passing your gates, I heard that you had gone into your private garden to look for your adopted son. Then came Lu Bu running and crying out that you wanted to kill him, and I was coming in as fast as I could to intercede for him when I accidentally collided with you. I am very sorry. I deserve death.”

“The wretch! How could I bear to see him toying with my fair one? I will be the death of his yet.”

“Your Graciousness is making a mistake. It is the ‘plucked tassel’ story over again. But if you remember the banquet of old time where all guests were to tear the tassels of their hats. In that banquet, King Zhuang of Chu made no fuss about the liberties taken with his queen, although the hat-tassel in her hand betrayed the culprit Jiang Xiong. His restraint stood him good stead, for the same Jiang Xiong saved his life when he was hemmed in by the soldiers of Qin. After all Diao Chan is only a handmaid, but Lu Bu is your trustiest friend and most dreaded commander. If you took this chance of making the girl over to him, your kindness would win his undying gratitude. I beg you, Sir, to think over it well.”

Dong Zhuo hesitated a long time. He sat murmuring to himself. Presently he said, “What you say is right. I must think over it.”

Li Ru felt satisfied. He took leave of his master and went away. Dong Zhuo went to his private rooms and called Diao Chan.

“What were you doing there with Lu Bu?” said he.

She began to weep, saying, “Thy handmaid was in the garden among the flowers, when he rushed in on me. I was frightened and ran away. He asked why I ran away from a son of the family and pursued me right to the pavilion, where you saw us. He had that halberd in his hand all the time. I felt he was a vicious man and would force me to his will, so I tried to throw myself into the lily pond, but he caught me in his arms and held me so that I was helpless. Luckily just at that moment you came and saved my life.”

“Suppose I send you to him,” said Dong Zhuo. Stunned, she pleaded with tears, “What have thy handmaid done? My honor of serving only Your Highness could not bear being given to a mere underling! Never! I would rather die.”

And with this she snatched down a dagger hanging on the wall to kill herself.

Dong Zhuo plucked it from her hand and, throwing his
arms about her, and cried, “I was only joking!”
She lay back on his breast hiding her face and sobbing bitterly.
“This is the doing of that Li Ru,” said she. “He is much too thick with Lu Bu. He suggested that, I know. Little he cares for the Imperial Rector’s reputation or my life. Oh! I could eat him alive.”
“Do you think I could bear to lose you?” said Dong Zhuo.
“Though you love me yet I must not stay here. That Lu Bu will try to ruin me if I do. I fear him.”
“We will go to Meiwo tomorrow, you and I, and we will be happy together and have no cares.”
She dried her tears and thanked him. Next day Li Ru came again to persuade Dong Zhuo to send the damsel to Lu Bu.
“This is a propitious day,” said Li Ru.
“He and I standing in the relation of father and son. I cannot very well do that,” said Dong Zhuo. “But I will say no more about his fault. You may tell him so and soothe him as well as you can.”
“You are not being beguiled by the woman, are you?” said Li Ru.
Dong Zhuo colored, saying, “Would you like to give your wife to some body else? Do not talk about this any further. It would be better not to.”
Li Ru left the chamber. When he got outside, he cast his eyes up to heaven, saying, “We are dead people, slain by the hand of this girl!”
When a scholar of history reached this episode he wrote a verse or two:

Just introduce a woman,
Conspiracies succeed;

Of soldiers, or their weapons,
There really is no need.
They fought their bloody battles,
And doughty deeds were done;
But in a garden summer house
The victory was won.

The order was given to journey to Meiwo, and the whole body of officers assembled to add luster to the start. Diao Chan, from her carriage, saw Lu Bu among the crowd. She at once dropped her eyes and assumed an appearance of deepest melancholy. After the cavalcade started and when her carriage had almost disappeared in the distance, the disappointed lover reined in his steed on a mount whence he could watch the dust that rose around it. Unutterable sadness filled his heart.

Suddenly a voice said, “Why do you not accompany the Prime Minister, General, instead of standing here and sighing?”
It was Wang Yun.
“I have been confined to the house by illness these few days,” continued he, “so I have not seen you. But I had to struggle out today to see the Prime Minister set off. This meeting is most fortunate. But why were you sighing?”
“Just on account of that daughter of yours,” said Lu Bu. Feigning great astonishment, Wang Yun said, “So long a time and yet not given to you!”
“The old ruffian has fallen in love with her himself.”
“Surely this cannot be true.”
Lu Bu related the whole story while Wang Yun listened, silent, but stamping on the ground as with irritation and perplexity.
After a long time Wang Yun said, “I did not think he was such a beast.”
Taking Lu Bu by the hand, Wang Yun said, “Come to my house, and we will talk it over.”

So they went away together to the house and retired to a secret room. After some refreshments, Lu Bu told the whole story of the episode in Phoenix Pavilion just as it happened.

Wang Yun said, “He seems to have corrupted my little girl and has stolen your wife. He will be an object of shame and ridicule to the whole world. And those who do not laugh at him will laugh at you and me. Alas! I am old and powerless and can do nothing. More pitied than blamed! But you, General, you are a warrior, the greatest hero in the world. Yet you have been put to this shame and exposed to this contempt.”

A wave of fierce wrath rolled up in Lu Bu. Banging the table he shouted and roared.

His host ostentatiously tried to calm him, saying, “I forgot myself. I should not have spoken like that. Do not be so angry, I pray!”

“I will kill the wretch, I swear it! In no other way can I wash away my shame.”

“No, no! Do not say such a thing,” said Wang Yun, putting his hand over the other’s mouth. “You will bring trouble on poor me and my family.”

“When one is born great, one cannot be patient for long under another person’s domination,” said Lu Bu.

“It needs someone greater than the Prime Minister to limit the scope of such talents as yours.”

Lu Bu said, “I would not mind killing the old wretch were it not for the relation in which we stand. I fear to provoke the hostile criticism of posterity.”

Wang Yun shook his head, saying, “Your name is Lu Bu; his is Dong Zhuo. Where was the paternal feeling when he threw the halberd at you?”

“I had been misled if you had not said that,” said Lu Bu hotly.

Wang Yun saw the effect of his words and continued, “It would be a loyal deed to restore the House of Han, and history would hand down your name to posterity perpetually fragrant. If you lend your aid to Dong Zhuo, you will be a traitor and your name will be tainted through all ages.”

Lu Bu rose from his place and bowed to Wang Yun.

“I have decided,” said he. “You need not fear, Sir.”

“But yet you may fail and bring upon yourself misfortune,” said Wang Yun.

Lu Bu drew his dagger, pricking his arm, and swearing by the blood that flowed.

Wang Yun fell on his knees and thanked him.

“Then the Han sacrifices will not be cut off, and you will be their savior. But this must remain a secret, and I will tell you how the plot shall be worked out.”

Lu Bu took leave with great emotion.

Wang Yun took into his confidence two colleagues,
And Li Su snapped an arrow in twain as register of his oath.

“If this succeeds, what glorious rank will be yours!” said Wang Yun.

Next day Li Su, with a small escort, set out for Meiwo and announced himself as bearer of a decree. He was conducted into Dong Zhuo’s presence. After he had made his obeisance, Dong Zhuo asked what the decree was.

“His Majesty has recovered and wishes his ministers to meet him in the Palace to consider the question of his abdication in your favor. That is what this summons means.”

“What does Wang Yun think of the scheme?”

“Wang Yun has already begun the construction of the Terrace of Abdication and only awaits my lord’s arrival.”

“Last night I dreamed a dragon coiled round my body,” said Dong Zhuo greatly pleased, “and now I get this happy tidings! I must not neglect the opportunity.”

So Dong Zhuo gave instructions to his four trusted generals for the safekeeping of his city. Li Jue, Guo Si, Fan Chou, and Zhang Ji were to guard Meiwo with three thousand troops of the Flying Bear Army. Then Dong Zhuo announced his intention of starting on the morrow.

“When I am Emperor, you shall be Commander of the Capital District,” said he.

“Your minister thanks you,” said Li Su.

Dong Zhuo went to bid farewell to his ninety-year-old mother.

“Whither are you going, my son?” asked she.

“I go to receive the abdication of Han; and soon you will be the Empress.”

“Anyone about to become the Mother of the State must
his chamber. He entered and proceeded to his own palace, where Lu Bu came to congratulate him.

“When I sit on the throne, you shall command the whole armies of the empire, horse and foot,” said Dong Zhuo.

That night Dong Zhuo slept in the midst of his escort. In the suburbs that evening some children at play were singing a little ditty, and the words drifted into the bedchamber on the wind.

“The grass in the meadow looks fresh now and green,
Yet wait but ten days, not a blade will be seen.”

The song sounded ominous but Li Su was again prepared with a happy interpretation: “It only means that the Lius are about to disappear, and the Dongs to be exalted.”

Next morning at the first streak of dawn, Dong Zhuo prepared for his appearance at court. On the way he saw a Taoist, dressed in a black robe and wearing a white turban, who carried in his hand a tall staff with a long strip of white cloth attached. At each end of the cloth was drawn a mouth.\(^1\)

“What is the meaning of this?” said Dong Zhuo.

“He is a madman,” said Li Su, and he told the guards to drive the fellow away.

Dong Zhuo turned to Li Su and asked what these things portended.

“It means that you are going to receive the abdication of the Hans, which is to renew all things: To mount the jeweled chariot and sit in the golden saddle.”

And Dong Zhuo was pleased and convinced with this answer. During the second day’s journey a violent gale sprang up, and the sky became covered with a thick mist.

“What does this mean?” said Dong Zhuo.

The wily Li Su had an interpretation for this also, saying, “You are ascending to the place of the dragon: There must be bright light and lurid vapor to dignify your majestic approach.”

Dong Zhuo had no more doubts. He presently arrived and found many officials waiting without the city gate to receive him, all but Li Ru who was ill and unable to leave

\(^1\) The staff, the cloth, and the mouths formed the Chinese characters, implied the name of Lu Bu.
The lust of blood awakened, Lu Bu urged the slaughter of Li Ru, who had been the confidant of the murdered Prime Minister, and Li Su volunteered to go in search of him. But just then a shouting was heard at the gates, and it was told them that a household servant had brought Li Ru in bonds. Wang Yun ordered his immediate execution in the market place.

Dong Zhuo’s head was exposed in a crowded thoroughfare. He was very fat, and the guards made torches by sticking splints into the body, spilling the corpse’s grease over the ground. The passers-by pelted the head and spurned the body with their feet.

Wang Yun ordered a force of fifty thousand under Lu Bu, Huangfu Song, and Li Su to destroy Meiwo. Learning the news of their master, Li Jue, Guo Si, Fan Chou, and Zhang Ji fled west swiftly through the night with their Flying Bear Army to Liangzhou Region.

When arriving Meiwo, Lu Bu’s first deed was to take Diao Chan into his charge. Then they slew every member of the Dong family, sparing none, not even Dong Zhuo’s aged mother. The heads of Dong Zhuo’s brother Dong Min and his nephew Dong Huang were publicly displayed in the market place.

A sympathetic poet has written a few lines in pity:

Await the time, O noble, and be king,
Or failing, reap the solace riches bring;
Heaven never is partial, but severely just,
Meiwo stood strong, yet now it lies in dust.

The wealth was enormous—several hundred thousand ounces
of gold, millions of silver coins, pearls, gems, silks, velvets, furs, grain stores.

When they returned to report success, Wang Yun rewarded and feasted the soldiers. Banquets were held in the Ministry Hall to which all the officials were invited. They drank and congratulated each other. While the feasting was in progress it was announced that someone had come and was wailing over Dong Zhuo’s corpse exposed in the market place.

“Dong Zhuo has been put to death,” said Wang Yun, angrily. “Every body is glad to be rid of him, and yet one is found to lament over him. Who is this?”

So Wang Yun gave orders to arrest the mourner and bring him in. Soon he was brought in, and when they saw him all were startled. For he was no other than Imperial Historian Cai Yong.

Wang Yun spoke to Cai Yong angrily, “Dong Zhuo has been put to death as a rebel, and all the land rejoices. You, a Han minister, instead of rejoicing, weep for him. Why?”

Cai Yong confessed his fault, saying, “I am without talent, yet know what is right. I am not the man who turns my back on the dynasty and toward Dong Zhuo. Yet once I experienced his kindness, and I could not help mourning for him. I know my fault is grave, but I pray you regard the reasons. If you will leave my head and only cut off my feet, you may use me to continue the History of Han, whereby I may have the good fortune to be allowed to expiate my fault.”

All were sorry for Cai Yong, for he was a man of great

Cai Yong had had an illustrious career as a court official. When Dong Zhuo took over the court, Cai Yong resigned his post as a minister. Later on, Dong Zhuo wanted to increase the influence of the government over the local lords, and so he invited Cai Yong back, threatening if Cai Yong had refused he would have put to death Cai Yong’s whole family. (chapter 4) Cai Yong’s daughter Cai Yan was a well-known poetess.
talents, and they begged that he might be spared.

The Imperial Guardian, Ma Midi, secretly interceded for him, saying, “Cai Yong is famous as a scholar, and he can write glorious history, and it is inadvisable to put to death a man renowned for rectitude without consideration.”

But in vain, for the High Minister was now strong and obdurate.

Wang Yun said, “Centuries ago, Emperor Wu spared Sima Qian and employed him on the annals, with the result that many slanderous stories have been handed down to us. This is a trying period of great perplexity, and we dare not let a specious fellow like this wield his pen in criticism of those about the court of a youthful prince and abuse us as he will.”

Remonstrance and appeal being vain, Ma Midi retired. But he said to his colleagues, “Is Wang Yun then careless of the future? Worthy people are the mainstay of the state; laws are the canons of action. To destroy the mainstay and nullify the laws is to hasten destruction.”

As was just said Wang Yun was obdurate. Cai Yong whose offense was an expression of gratitude was thrown into prison and there strangled. The people of that day wept for Cai Yong, for they refused to see any offense in what he had done, and death was a harsh punishment.

3Emperor Wu, aka Liu Che, (reigned BC 141-87) whose reign was longest among the Han emperors. Emperor Wu was perhaps the most influential Han emperor who concerned not only about expanding territory but also about developing trade with other countries (the Silk Road, for example). Emperor paid special attention to longevity, and his court often had elaborate rituals.

4Sima Qian (BC 145-85) astronomer, calendar expert, and the first great Chinese historian, noted for his authorship of the “Historical Records” or Shi Ji, which is considered to be the most important history of China down to the end of the 2nd century.
If we succeed, we control the court and the empire. There will be enough time to run away if we fail.”

The plan was adopted, and they spread abroad the story that Wang Yun intended to massacre the county.

Having thus thrown the people into a state of terror, they went a step farther and said, “There is no advantage in dying for nothing. Revolt and join us!”

So they cajoled the people into joining them and gathered a host equal to one hundred thousand. This horde was divided into four parts, and they all set out to raid Capital Changan. On the way they fell in with a son-in-law of their late chief, Imperial Commander Niu Fu, who marched five thousand troop from Xiliang. Niu Fu had set out to avenge his father-in-law, and he became the Van Leader of the horde.

As they advanced, the news came to Wang Yun, and he consulted Lu Bu.

“They are a lot of rats,” said Lu Bu. “Never mind how many there are of them. Be not in the least anxious.”

So Lu Bu and Li Su went to oppose them. The latter was in advance and met Niu Fu. They fought; Niu Fu was outmatched and retired after suffering a slaughter. But unexpectedly Niu Fu returned in a night attack, found Li Su quite unprepared and drove Li Su’s force some ten miles, slaying many.

Li Su reported the defeat, and Lu Bu raged at him, saying, “You have sullied my reputation as a warrior and destroyed our fighting spirit!”

And Lu Bu put Li Su to death, exposing his head at the camp gate.

Next day Lu Bu advanced his own force and engaged Niu Fu. He overwhemed Niu Fu and drove him off. That night Niu Fu called in his most trusted man, Hu Chier, to advise him.

Hu Chier said, “Lu Bu is too doughty a fighter for us to hope to overcome him. Our case is hopeless. Our best course is to desert these four generals, secrete their valuables, and leave the army with just a few of our followers.”

The plan of Hu Chier was adopted, and the two traitors and some others that very night packed up and made their way out of camp. They were only half a dozen. They came to a river and, while crossing, Hu Chier, tempted by the lust of wealth, slew his companion. Then he went to offer the head of Niu Fu to Lu Bu. Lu Bu inquired into the matter, and when a follower told him the truth, he put the double traitor Hu Chier to death.

Then Lu Bu advanced against the rebels and fell in with Li Jue’s force. Without giving them time to form in battle, Lu Bu attacked. Horses curvetting and spears set, the army dashed in irresistibly, and Li Jue, making no stand, fell back a long way. Li Jue took up a position under a hill fifteen miles away and thence sent to call his fellows to council.

Li Jue said, “Lu Bu though brave in battle is no strategist and so not really formidable. I will lead my troops to hold the mouth of the gorge, and every day I will incite him to attack; and when he comes toward me, General Guo Si can smite his rear, after the manner of Peng Yue when he fought against Chu. While thus I am alternating attack and retreat, Generals Fan Chou and Zhang Ji will march off in different directions toward Changan. Such an attack at two points must end both Wang Yun and Lu Bu.”

They set themselves to carry out this scheme. As soon as Lu Bu reached the hills, a force of Li Jue came out to attack him. Lu Bu made an angry dash toward the enemy who retired up the hills, whence they shot arrows and hurled stones like rain. Lu Bu’s troops halted. At this moment the report came

5Peng Yue (BC 2?196) a general of Liu Bang. He and Liu Bang had been close friends in their native Pei, where Liu Bang later held a minor office. Ennobled as King of Liang.
that the rear was being attacked and there appeared Guo Si. At once Lu Bu wheeled toward the new enemy, but immediately the rolling drums gave the signal to retire, and Lu Bu could not come to blows with them. As he called in his army, the gongs clanged on the other side and his former opponent Li Jue came to attack his front. But before Lu Bu could join battle, his rear was again assaulted by Guo Si, who in his turn drew off immediately.

Thus Lu Bu was baited till his bosom was near bursting with rage. The same tactics continued for several days. He could neither strike his enemies nor escape them. His troops had no rest.

In the midst of these distracting maneuver, a messenger rode up in hot haste to report: “The capital is in imminent danger from a double attack of Fan Chou and Zhang Ji.”

Lu Bu at once ordered a march to save the capital, which became a rout when both his opponents Li Jue and Guo Si came in pursuit. His loss was heavy.

He soon reached Changan and found the rebels there in enormous numbers and the city quite surrounded. Lu Bu’s attack had but little effect, and as his temper became more savage under defeat, many of his soldiers went over to the rebels.

He fell into deep melancholy. Then a remnant of Dong Zhuo’s adherents still in the city, led by Li Meng and Wang Fang, began to lend aid to the attackers; and by and by they secretly opened the city gate and the besiegers poured in. Lu Bu exerted himself to the utmost but could not stem the tide. At the head of some hundred horse, he dashed over to the Black Lock Gate and called out to Wang Yun, who was on the other side.

“‘The case is desperate now. Ride with me to a place of safety!’”

Wang Yun replied, “If I am gifted with the holy spirit of the state, I shall succeed in restoring the tranquillity which I desire. But if I have it not, then I offer my body a sacrifice. I will not quail before dangers. Send my thanks to the noble supporters beyond the Pass for their efforts, and bid them remember their country!”

Lu Bu urged Wang Yun again and again, but Wang Yun would not leave. Soon flames started up all over the city, and Lu Bu had to leave, abandoning his family to their fate. He fled to seek refuge with Yuan Shu.
Li Jue, Guo Si, and his fellow leaders gave full license to their ruffians, who robbed and murdered their fill. Many high officers perished. Ministers Chong Fu, Lu Kui, and Zhou Huan, Imperial Commanders Cui Lie and Wang Qin all died in the fighting.

In time the rebels penetrated to the inner part of the Palace, and the courtiers begged the Emperor to proceed to the Gate of Pervading Peace to try to quell the rioting.

At sight of the yellow umbrella, Li Jue and Fan Chou checked their armies, and they all shouted, “Wan shui! Long life! O Emperor!”

The Emperor stood by the tower and addressed them, “Nobles, what means it that you enter the capital in this unruly manner and without my summons?”

The two leaders looked up and said, “Dong Zhuo, Your Majesty’s Prime Minister, has been slain by Wang Yun, and we are here to avenge him. We are no rebels, Sire. Let us only have Wang Yun, and we draw off our troops.”

Wang Yun was actually among the courtiers and at the Emperor’s side.

Hearing this demand, Wang Yun said, “The plan was made for the benefit of the Throne. But as this evil has grown therefrom, Your Majesty will not grudge losing me. I have brought about evil, and I will go down to these rebels.”

The Emperor was torn with sorrow and wavered. But the faithful minister leaped from the wall, crying, “Wang Yun is here!”

The two leaders drew their swords, crying, “For what crime was our master slain?”

“His crimes filled the heavens and covered the earth; no tongue can tell them. The day he died was a day of rejoicing in the whole city as you well know,” said Wang Yun.

“And if he was guilty of some crime, what had we done not to be forgiven?”

“Seditious rebels, why bandy words? I am ready to die.”

And Wang Yun was slain at the foot of the tower.

Moved by the people’s sufferings,
Vexed at his prince’s grief,
Wang Yun compassed the traitor’s death,
That they might find relief.
Everyone knows him a hero,
Leal to the state always:
Living he guarded the princely towers,
His soul keeps guard today.

Having done the loyal minister to death at the Emperor’s feet, they proceeded to exterminate also his whole family. Everyone mourned.

Then said the ruffians to each other, “Having gone so far, what could be better than to make away with the Emperor and complete our scheme?”

The traitor condoned his crime,
Rebellion ought to cease;
But his licentious followers
Disturb the empire’s peace.
Chapter 10
Gathering Arms, Ma Teng Moves To Rescue The Emperor;
Commanding An Army, Cao Cao Marches to Avenges His Father.

In the last chapter the two arch rebels, Li Jue and Guo Si, proposed to murder Emperor Xian, but their followers Zhang Ji and Fan Chou opposed this.

“No. The people will not approve of his death now. Restore him to power, and get the leaguers inside Changan’s control. Remove his supporters, and then we can compass his death. And the empire shall be in our hands.”

So they ceased the attack. The Emperor again spoke from the tower, saying, “Why do you still remain? You have slain Wang Yun: Now withdraw these soldiers.”

Then Li Jue and Guo Si replied, “Your servants desire rank rewards for their good service to your dynasty.”

“And what ranks, Sirs?”

All four wrote their wishes and handed them up to the Emperor who had no choice but to accede to the request, and they were created:

Li Jue was appointed General of the Flying Cavalry, Lord of Chiyang, Commander of Capital District, Court Administrator, and granted Military Insignia.

Guo Si was appointed General of the Rear Army, Lord of Meiyang, Court Administrator, and granted Military Insignia.

The fate of the Emperor will be disclosed in the next chapter.
in the night. And yet a third time in another place but the earth rejected the remains. Meanwhile the thunder-fire had entirely consumed them. So it may be said justly that Heaven was exceedingly angry with Dong Zhuo.

So now Li Jue and Guo Si wielded the real power of the scepter, and they were hard upon the people. They also removed the attendants from the Palace and replaced them by their own creatures, who maintained a most perfect watch over every movement of the Emperor so that he was greatly hampered and embarrassed. All appointments and demotions were made by the two rebels. For the sake of popularity they especially summoned Zhu Jun to court, made him Minister of the Inner Bureau and associated him with the government.

One day came a report that the Governor of Xiliang, Ma Teng, and the Imperial Protector of Bingzhou, Han Sui, with one hundred thousand troops, are rapidly approaching the capital with the intention of attacking the rebels in the name of the Emperor.

Now these leaders from the west had laid careful plans. Ma Teng and Han Sui had sent trustworthy friends to the capital to find out who would support them. They had conspired with three officials—Court Counselors Ma Yu and Chong Shao, Fan Chou was appointed General of the Right Army and Lord of Wanian.

Zhang Ji was appointed General of the Flying Cavalry and Lord of Pingyan.

Li Meng and Wang Fang, for opening the city gates, were appointed Imperial Commanders.

After receiving ranks of nobility, Li Jue and Guo Si thanked the Emperor, and went away to camp at Xunung, the suburb of Changan. The inferior rebel leaders also were gratified with ranks. And once more the capital was free of troops.

Dong Zhuo’s followers, having so far succeeded, did not forget their late leader. They sought his corpse for burial, but only a few fragments were discoverable. Then they had sculptors engrave a statue of fragrant wood in his likeness, laid that out in proper form, and instituted a noble’s sacrifices and prayers. The remains were dressed in the robes of a prince, laid in a princely coffin for burial. They selected Meiwo for his tomb and having found an auspicious day conveyed the coffin thither.

But a terrific thunder storm came on at the time of inhumation, and the ground was flooded. The coffin was rived asunder, and the poor remains knocked out by thunders. A second time they buried the coffin, but a similar thing happened
Meng and Wang Fang left in high spirit. They made a camp ninety miles from Changan.

The force from the west arrived. Ma Teng and Han Sui led out their troops to the attack. They found their opponents Li Meng and Wang Fang in battle array.

Ma Teng and Han Sui rode to the front side by side. Pointing to the rebel leaders, the commanders abused them, crying, “Those are traitors! Who will capture them?”

Hardly were the words spoken when there came out a youth general with a clear, white complexion as jade, eyes like shooting stars, lithe of body and strong of limb. He was armed with a long spear and bestrode an excellent steed. This young leader was Ma Chao, son of Ma Teng, then seventeen years of age.

Though young he was a supreme valiance. Wang Fang, despising him on account of his youth, galloped forth to fight him. Before they had exchanged many passes Wang Fang was disabled and fell to a thrust of the young Ma Chao’s spear. The victor turned to retire into the formation, but Li Meng rode after Ma Chao to avenge his fallen
Ma Chao did not see Li Meng, but his father called out "You are followed!"

Hardly had Ma Teng spoken when he saw that the pursuer was a prisoner seated on his son's steed. Now Ma Chao had known he was followed, but pretended not to see, waiting till his enemy should have come close and lifted his spear to strike. Then Ma Chao suddenly wheeled about. The spear thrust met only empty air; and as the horses passed, Ma Chao's powerful arm shot out and pulled Li Meng from the saddle. Thus Li Meng and Wang Fang's soldiers were left leaderless and fled in all directions. The army of Ma Teng and Han Sui dashed in pursuit, and a complete victory was scored. They pressed into one of the passes and made a camp. Then they decapitated Li Meng and exposed his head.

When Li Jue and Guo Si heard that both the boastful generals had fallen under the hand of one young man, they knew that Jia Xu had given good advice and was gifted with clear prescience. So they valued his plans the more highly and decided to act on the defensive. They refused all challenges to combat.

Surely enough after a couple of months the supplies of the Xiliang force were all exhausted and the leaders began to consider retreat.

Just at this juncture a household servant of Ma Yu’s family betrayed his master and told of the conspiracy of the three court officials to assist the attackers. The two chiefs Li Jue and Guo Si in revenge seized the three conspirators--Ma Yu, Chong Shao, and Liu Fan---, with every member of their households, and beheaded them in the market place. The heads of the three were exposed at the front gate of the capital.

Being short of food and hearing of the destruction of their three adherents in the city, the only course for Ma Teng and Han Sui was to retreat. At once Zhang Ji went in pursuit of Ma Teng, and Fan Chou followed Han Sui. The retreating army under Ma Teng was beaten, and only by Ma Chao’s desperate efforts were the pursuers driven off.

Fan Chou pursued the other army. When he had come close, Han Sui rode boldly up and addressed him, saying, "You and I, Sir, are fellow villagers. Why then behave so unfriendly?"

Fan Chou replied, "I must obey the commands of my chief."

"I am here for the service of the state. Why do you press me so hard?" said Han Sui.

At this Fan Chou turned his horse, called in his troops, and left Han Sui in peace. Unwittingly a nephew of Li Jue had been a witness of this scene; and when he saw the enemy allowed to go free, he returned and told his uncle. Angry that his enemy had escaped, Li Jue would have sent an army to wreak vengeance on his general.

But his adviser Jia Xu again came in, saying, "The people are yet unsettled, it was dangerous to provoke another war. Instead, invite Fan Chou to a banquet and, while the feast was in progress, executing him for dereliction of duty."

This seemed good to Li Jue, so the banquet was prepared. Zhang Ji and Fan Chou accepted their invitations and went cheerfully.

Toward the latter part of the entertainment a sudden change came over their host Li Jue, and he suddenly asked Fan Chou, "Why have you been intriguing with Han Sui?"
shape of a resurgence of Yellow Scarves in Qingzhou. They came, under numerous chieftains, in the number of hundreds of thousand and plundered any place they reached.

Minister Zhu Jun said he knew of one who could destroy this sedition, and when asked who was the man he proposed, Zhu Jun said, “You want to destroy this horde of rebels; you will fail unless you get the service of Cao Cao.”

“And where is he?” asked Li Jue.

“He is Governor of Dongjun. He has a large army, and you have only to order him to act. The rising will be broken.”

A messenger went post haste with a command for Cao Cao and Bao Xin, Lord of Jibei, to act together in quelling the rebellion. As soon as Cao Cao received the court command, he arranged with his colleague first to attack the rebels at Shouyang. Bao Xin made a dash right into their midst and inflicting damage wherever he could, but he was killed in a battle. Cao Cao pursued the rebels as they fled. Ten thousand surrendered. Then Cao Cao put his quondam enemies in the van. When his army reached any place, many more surrendered and joined him. After three months of these tactics, he had won over many thousands, both of soldiers and ordinary folks.

Of these new adherents the strongest and boldest were made the Qingzhou Army, and the others were sent home to their fields. In consequence of these successes Cao Cao’s prestige and fame became very great and increased daily. He reported his success to Capital Changan and was rewarded with the title of General Who Guards the East.

At his headquarters in Yanzhou, Cao Cao welcomed wise counselors and bold warriors, and many gathered around him. Two clever persons, uncle and nephew, came

You are turning traitor, eh?”

The unhappy guest was taken aback. Before he could frame his words to reply, he saw the assassins rush out with swords and axes. In a moment all was over, and Fan Chou’s head lay beneath the table.

Scared beyond measure, his fellow-guest Zhang Ji groveled on the floor.

“Fan Chou was a traitor,” said the host, raising Zhang Ji by the arm, “and he has his deserts. You are my friend and need not fear.”

Li Jue gave Zhang Ji command of Fan Chou’s army with which Zhang Ji returned to his headquarters garrison in Hongnong.

No one of the leaders among the leaguers dared attempt an attack on the party newly risen from Dong Zhuo’s disaffection, while on the other hand Jia Xu never ceased to urge his masters to exert themselves for the welfare of the people and thus to tempt wise people to join them. And by these means the government began to prosper, and the court to reassert its authority.

However, a new trouble arose in the...
at the same time, both from Yanzhou, named Xun Yu and Xun You. The uncle had once been in the service of Yuan Shao.

Cao Cao rejoiced when he had won the elder Xun to his side, saying, “Xun Yu is my Zhang Liang2!”

He made Xun Yu a Marching General. The nephew Xun You was famed for his ability and had been in the court service when it was in Luoyang, but he had abandoned that career and retired to his village. Cao Cao made him a Military Instructor.

Xun Yu said to Cao Cao, “There is a certain wise person of Yanzhou somewhere, but I do not know in whose service he is.”

“Who is he?”

“Cheng Yu. He belongs to the eastern part of Yanzhou.”

“Yes; I have heard of him,” said Cao Cao.

So a messenger was sent to his native place to inquire. Cheng Yu was away in the hills engaged in study, but he came at Cao Cao’s invitation.

“I shall prove unworthy of your recommendation,” said Cheng Yu to his friend Xun Yu, “for I am rough and ignorant. But have you forgotten a fellow villager of yours, Guo Jia? He is really able. Why not spread the net to catch him?”

“I had nearly forgotten,” said Xun Yu suddenly.

So he told Cao Cao of this man, who was at once invited.

Guo Jia, discussing the world at large with Cao Cao, recommended Liu Ye from Henan, who was a descendant of Liu Xiu the Founder of Latter Han. When Liu Ye had arrived, he was the means of inviting two more: Man Chong from Shanyang, and Lu Qian from Wucheng, who were already known to Cao Cao by reputation. These two brought to their new master’s notice the name of Mao Jie from Chenliu, who also came and was given office. Then a famous leader, with his troop of some hundreds, arrived to offer service. This was Yu Jin of Taishan, an expert horseman and archer, and skilled beyond his fellows in every form of military exercise. He was made an army inspector.

Then another day Xiahou Dun brought a fellow to present to Cao Cao.

“He is from Chenliu and is named Dian Wei. He is the boldest of the bold, the strongest of the strong. He was one of Zhang Miao’s people, but quarreled with his tent companions and killed some dozens of them with his fists. Then he fled to the mountains where I found him. I was out shooting and saw him follow a tiger across a stream. I persuaded

2Zhang Liang, aka Zhang Zifang, the master strategist for Liu Bang. His family had served the state of Han as chief ministers during the Warring States period. It is said that he received the strategy book of Lu Wang from a mysterious old man. When he was young, Zhang Liang plotted to assassinate the First Emperor, but failed. He later rebelled against Qin. Joined Liu Bang (BC 206) to fight against Qin and then Chu. Recommended Han Xin to Liu Bang. Zhang Liang’s insights had earned him the name “The Teacher of Emperor”. After Liu Bang won the empire, Zhang Liang was ennobled as Lord of Liu, but did not take office, instead he resigned from political life and traveled.
him to join my troop, and I recommend him.”

“I see he is no ordinary man,” said Cao Cao. “He is fine and straight and looks very powerful and bold.”

“He is. He killed a man once to avenge a friend and carried his head through the whole market place. Hundreds saw him, but dared not come near. The weapon he uses now is a couple of spears, each weighs a hundred and twenty pounds, and he vaults into the saddle with these under his arm.”

Cao Cao bade the man give proof of his skill. So Dian Wei galloped to and fro carrying the spears. Then he saw away among the tents a huge banner swaying dangerously with the force of the wind and on the point of falling. A crowd of soldiers were vainly struggling to keep it steady. Down he leaped, shouted to the men to clear out and held the staff quite steady with one hand, keeping it perfectly upright in spite of the strong wind.

“This is old E Lai again!” said Cao Cao.

He gave Dian Wei a post in the headquarters and besides made Dian Wei presents of an embroidered robe he was wearing and a swift steed with a handsome saddle.

Cao Cao encouraged able people to assist him, and he had advisers on the civil side and valiant generals in the army. He became famous throughout the East of the Pass.

Now Cao Cao’s father, Cao Song, was living at Langye, whither he had gone as a place free from the turmoil of the partisan struggles. Cao Cao wished to be united with him. As a dutiful son, Cao Cao sent the Governor of Taishan, Ying Shao, to escort his father to Yanzhou. Old Cao Song read the letter with joy, and the family prepared to move. They were some forty in all, with a train of a hundred servants and many carts.

3E Lai, whose physical strength was extraordinary, was a general of King Zhou, the last king of Shang Dynasty.
Their road led through Xuzhou Region where the Imperial Protector, Tao Qian, was a sincere and upright man who had long wished to get on good terms with Cao Cao but, hitherto, had found no means of effecting a bond of union. Hearing that the family of the great man was passing through his region, Tao Qian went to welcome them, treated them with great cordiality, feasting and entertaining them for two days; and when they left, he escorted them to his boundary. Further he sent with them one General Zhang Kai with a special escort of five hundred.

The whole party reached the county of Huafei. It was the end of summer, just turning into autumn, and at this place they were stopped by a tremendous storm of rain. The only shelter was an old temple and thither they went. The family occupied the main rooms and the escort the two side wings. The men of the escort were drenched, angry, and discontented.

Then Zhang Kai called some of his petty officers to a secret spot and said, “We are old Yellow Scarves and only submitted to Tao Qian because there was no other choice. We have never got much out of it. Now here is the Cao family with no end of gear, and we can be rich very easily. We will make a sudden onslaught tonight at the third watch and slay the whole lot. Then we shall have plenty of treasure, and we will get away to the mountains.”

They all agreed. The storm continued into the night and as Cao Song sat waiting anxiously for signs of clearing, he suddenly heard a hubbub at the west end of the temple. His brother, Cao De, drawing his sword, went out to see what it was about, and Cao De was at once cut down. Cao Song seized one of the concubines by the hand, rushed with her through the passage toward the back of the temple so that they might escape. But the lady was stout and could not get through the narrow doors, so the two hid in one of the small outhouses at the side. However, they were seen and slain.

The unhappy Governor Ying Shao fled for his life to Yuan Shao. The murderers fled into the South of River Huai with their plunder after having set fire to the South Temple.

Cao Cao, whom the ages praise,
Slew his hosts on his former flight;
Nemesis never turns aside,
Murdered too his family died.

Some of the escort escaped and took the evil tidings to Cao Cao. When he heard it he fell to the earth with a great cry. They raised him.

With set teeth he muttered, “Tao Qian’s people have slain my father: No longer can the same sky cover us. I will sweep Xuzhou off the face of the earth. Only thus can I satisfy my vengeance.”

Cao Cao left one small army of thirty thousand under Xun Yu and Cheng Yu to guard the east headquarters and the three counties of Juancheng, Fanxia, and Dongjun. Then he set forth with all the remainder to destroy Xuzhou and avenge his father. Xiahou Dun, Yu Jin, and Dian Wei were Van Leaders with Cao Cao’s orders to slaughter all the inhabitants of each captured city.
Now the Governor of Jiujiang, Bian Rang, was a close friend of Tao Qian. Hearing Xuzhou was threatened, Bian Rang set out with five thousand troops to his friend’s aid. Angered by this move, Cao Cao sent Xiahou Dun to stop and kill Bian Rang while still on the march.

At this time Chen Gong was in office in Dongjun, and he was also on friendly terms with Tao Qian. Hearing of Cao Cao’s design to destroy the whole population, Chen Gong came in haste to see his former companion. Cao Cao, knowing Chen Gong’s errand, put him off at first and would not see him. But then Cao Cao could not forget the kindness he had formerly received from Chen Gong, and presently the visitor was called to his tent.

Chen Gong said, “They say you go to avenge your father’s death on Xuzhou, to destroy its people. I have come to say a word. Imperial Protector Tao Qian is humane and a good man. He is not looking out for his own advantage, careless of the means and of others. Your worthy father met his unhappy death at the hands of Zhang Kai. Tao Qian is guiltless. Still more innocent are the people, and to slay them would be an evil. I pray you think over it.”

Cao Cao retorted angrily, “You once abandoned me and now you have the impudence to come to see me! Tao Qian slew my whole family, and I will tear his heart out in revenge. I swear it! You may speak for your friend and say what you will. I shall be as if I heard not.”

Intercession had failed. Chen Gong sighed and took his leave.

He said, “Alas! I cannot go to Tao Qian and look upon his face.”

So Chen Gong rode off to the county of Chenliu to give service to Governor Zhang Miao.

Cao Cao’s army of revenge laid waste whatever place it passed through, slaying the people and desecrating their cemeteries.

When Tao Qian heard the terrible tidings, he looked up to heaven, saying, “I must be guilty of some fault before

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4Chen Gong is the magistrate who spared Cao Cao after Cao Cao failed to assassinate Dong Zhuo. Chen Gong and Cao Cao then traveled as fugitives to Qiao, but they parted haft way. (chapter 4)
Heaven to have brought this evil upon my people!”

He called together his officials to consult.

One of them, Cao Bao, said, “Now the enemy is upon us: We cannot sit and await death with folded hands. I for one will help you to make a fight.”

Tao Qian reluctantly sent the army out. From a distance he saw Cao Cao’s army spread abroad like frost and rushed far and wide like snow. In their midst was a large white flag and on both sides was written Vengeance.

When he had ranged his troops, Cao Cao rode out dressed in mourning white and abused Tao Qian.

But Tao Qian advanced, and from beneath his ensign he bowed low and said, “I wished to make friends with you, Illustrious Sir, and so I sent Zhang Kai to escort your family. I knew not that his rebel heart was still unchanged. The fault does not lie at my door as you must see.”

“You old wretch! You killed my father, and now you dare mumble this nonsense,” said Cao Cao.

And he asked who would go out and seize Tao Qian.

Xiahou Dun undertook this service and rode out. Tao Qian fled to the inner portion of his array; and as Xiahou Dun came on, Cao Bao went to meet him. But just as the two horses met, a hurricane burst over the spot, and the flying dust and pebbles threw both sides into the utmost confusion. Both drew off.

Tao Qian retired into the city and called his officers to council.

“The force against us is too strong,” said he. “I will give myself up as a prisoner and let him wreak his vengeance on me. I may save the people.”

But a voice was heard saying, “You have long ruled here, and the people love you. Strong as the enemy are, they are not necessarily able to break down our walls, especially when defended by you and your people. I have a scheme to suggest that I think will make Cao Cao die in a place where he will not find burial.”

These bold words startled the assembly, and they eagerly asked what the scheme was.

Making overtures for friendship, Tao Qian encountered deadly hate.

But, where danger seemed most threatening, he discovered safety’s gate.

The next chapter will disclose who the speaker was.
It was one Mi Zhu who said he knew how to defeat Cao Cao utterly. Mi Zhu came of a wealthy family of merchants in Donghai and trading in Luoyang. One day traveling homeward from that city in a carriage, he met an exquisitely beautiful lady trudging along the road, who asked him to let her ride. He stopped and yielded his place to her. She invited him to share the seat with her. He mounted, but sat rigidly upright, never even glancing in her direction. They traveled thus for some miles when she thanked him and alighted.

Just as she left she said, "I am the Goddess of Fire from the Southern Land. I am on my way to execute a decree of the Supreme God to burn your dwelling, but your extreme courtesy has so deeply touched me that I now warn you. Hasten homeward, remove your valuables, for I must arrive tonight."

Thereupon she disappeared. Mi Zhu hastily finished his journey and, as soon as he arrived, moved everything out of his house. Sure enough that night a fire started in the kitchen and involved the whole house. After this he devoted his wealth to relieving the poor and comforting the afflicted. Tao Qian gave him the magistracy office he then held.

The plan Mi Zhu proposed was this: "I will go to Beihai and beg Governor Kong Rong to help. Another should go to Qingzhou on a similar mission to get the help from Imperial Protector Tien Kai. If the armies of these two places march on Cao Cao, he will certainly retire."

Tao Qian accepted the plan and wrote two letters. He asked for a volunteer to go to Qingzhou, and a certain Chen Deng offered himself and, after he had left, Mi Zhu was formally entrusted with the mission to the north. Meanwhile
great Teacher Confucius. Kong Rong had been noted as a very intelligent lad, somewhat precocious. When ten years old he had gone to see Li Ying, the Governor of Henan, but the doorkeeper demurred to letting him in.

But when Kong Rong said, “I am Minister Li Ying’s intimate friend,” he was admitted.

Li Ying asked Kong Rong what relations had existed between their families that might justify the term intimate.

The boy replied, “Of old my ancestor Confucius questioned your ancestor, the Taoist sage Laozi, concerning ceremonies. So our families have known each other for many generations.”

Li Ying was astonished at the boy’s ready wit.

Presently High Minister Chen Wei visited, to whom Li Ying told the story of his youthful guest. “He is a wonder, this boy,” said Li Ying, pointing to Kong Rong.

Chen Wei replied, “It does not follow that a clever boy grows up into a clever man.”

The lad took him up at once saying, “By what you say, Sir, you were certainly one of the clever boys.”

The minister adviser and the governor all laughed, saying, “The boy is going to be a noble vessel.”

Thus from boyhood Kong Rong was famous. As a man he rose to be an Imperial Commander and was sent as Governor to Beihai, where he was renowned for hospitality. He used to quote the lines:

“Let the rooms be full of friends,
And the cups be full of wine.
That is what I like.”

After six years at Beihai the people were devoted to him. The day that Mi Zhu arrived, Kong Rong was, as usual, seated among his guests, and the messenger was ushered in without delay. In reply to a question about the reason of the visit, Mi Zhu presented Tao Qian’s letter which said that Cao Cao was pressing on Xuzhou City and the Imperial Protector prayed for help.

Then said Kong Rong, “Your master and I are good friends, and your presence here constrains me to go to his aid. However, I have no quarrel with Cao Cao either, so I will first write to him to try to make peace. If he refuses my offer, then I must set the army in motion.”

“Cao Cao will not listen to proposals of peace: He is too certain of his strength,” said Mi Zhu.

Kong Rong wrote his letter and also gave orders to muster his troops. Just at this moment happened another rising of the Yellow Scarves, ten thousand of them, and the ruffians began to rob and murder at Beihai. It was necessary to deal with them first, and Kong Rong led his army outside the city.

The rebel leader, Guan Hai, rode out to the front, saying, “I know this county is fruitful and can well spare ten thousand carts of grain. Give me that and we retire; refuse, and we will batter down the city walls and destroy every soul.”

Kong Rong shouted back, “I am a servant of the great Hans, entrusted with the safety of their land. Think you I will feed rebels?”

Guan Hai whipped his steed, whirled his sword around his head and rode forward. Zong Bao, one of Kong Rong’s generals, set his spear and rode out to give battle, but after a very few bouts Zong Bao was cut down. Soon the soldiers fell into panic and rushed pell-mell into the city for protection. The rebels then laid siege to the city on all sides. Kong Rong was very down-hearted; and Mi Zhu, who now saw no hope for the success of his mission, was grieved beyond words.
The sight from the city wall was exceeding sad, for the rebels were there in enormous numbers. One day standing on the wall, Kong Rong saw afar a man armed with a spear riding hard in among the Yellow Scarves and scattering them before him like chaff before the wind.

Before long the man had reached the foot of the wall and called out, “Open the gate!”

But the defenders would not open to an unknown man, and in the delay a crowd of rebels gathered round the rider along the edge of the moat. Suddenly wheeling about, the warrior dashed in among them and bowled over a dozen at which the others fell back. At this Kong Rong ordered the wardens to open the gates and let the stranger enter. As soon as he was inside, he dismounted, laid aside his spear, ascended the wall, and made humble obeisance to the Governor.

“My name is Taishi Ci, and I am from the county of Laihuang. I only returned home yesterday from the north to see my mother, and then I heard that your city was in danger from a rebel attack. My mother said you had been very kind to her and told me I should try to help. So I set out all alone, and here I am.”

This was cheering. Kong Rong already knew Taishi Ci by reputation as a valiant fighting man, although they two had never met. The son being far away from his home, Kong Rong had taken his mother, who dwelt a few miles from the city, under his especial protection and saw that she did not suffer from want. This had won the old lady’s heart and she had sent her son to show her gratitude.

Kong Rong showed his appreciation by treating his guest with the greatest respect, making him presents of clothing and armor, saddles and horses.

Presently said Taishi Ci, “Give me a thousand soldiers, and I will go out and drive off these fellows.”

“You are a bold warrior, but they are very numerous. It is
a serious matter to go out among them,” said Kong Rong. “My mother sent me because of your goodness to her. How shall I be able to look her in the face if I do not raise the siege? I would prefer to conquer or perish.”

“I have heard Liu Bei is one of the heroes in the world. If we could get his help, there would be no doubt of the result. But there is no one to send.”

“I will go as soon as I have received your letter.”

So Kong Rong wrote letters and gave them to his helper.

Taishi Ci put on his armor, mounted his steed, attached his bow and quiver to his girdle, took his spear in his hand, tied his packed haversack firmly to his saddle bow, and rode out at the city gate. He went quite alone.

Along the moat a large party of the besiegers were gathered, and they came to intercept the solitary rider. But Taishi Ci dashed in among them and cut down several and so finally fought his way through.

Guan Hai, hearing that a rider had left the city, guessed what his errand would be and followed Taishi Ci with a party of horsemen. Guan Hai spread them out so that the messenger rider was entirely surrounded. Then Taishi Ci laid aside his spear, took his bow, adjusted his arrows one by one and shot all round him. And as a rider fell from his steed with every twang of Taishi Ci’s bowstring, the pursuers dared not close in.

Thus he got clear away and rode in hot haste to Liu Bei. Taishi Ci reached Pingyuan, and after greeting his host in proper form he told how Kong Rong was surrounded and had sent him for help. Then he presented the letter which Liu Bei read.

“And who are you?” asked Liu Bei.

“I am Taishi Ci, a fellow from Laihuang. I am not related by ties of kin to Kong Rong, nor even by ties of neighborhood, but I am by the bonds of sentiment and I share his sorrows and misfortunes. The Yellow Scarves have invested his city, and he is distressed with none to turn to, and destruction is very near. You are known as humane, righteous, and eager to help the distressed. Therefore at his command I have braved all dangers and fought my way through his enemies to pray you save him.”

Liu Bei smiled, saying, “And does he know there is a Liu Bei in this world?”

So Liu Bei, together with Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, told off three thousand troops and set out to help raise the siege. When the rebel leader Guan Hai saw these new forces arriving, he led out his army to fight them, thinking he could easily dispose of so small a force.

The brothers and Taishi Ci with them sat on their horses in the forefront of their array. Guan Hai hastened forward. Taishi Ci was ready to fight, but Guan Yu had opened the combat. He rode forth and the two steeds met. The soldiers set up a great noise. After a few bouts Guan Yu’s green-dragon saber rose and fell, and with the stroke fell the rebel leader.

This was the signal for Zhang Fei and Taishi Ci to take a share, and they advanced side by side. With their spears ready they dashed in, and Liu Bei urged forward his force. The besieged Governor saw his doughty rescuers laying low the rebels as tigers among a flock of sheep. None
could withstand them, and he then sent out his own troops to join in the battle so that the rebels were between two armies. The rebels’ force was completely broken and many troops surrendered, while the remainder scattered in all directions.

The victors were welcomed into the city, and as soon as possible a banquet was prepared in their honor. Mi Zhu was presented to Liu Bei. Mi Zhu related the story of the murder of Cao Song by Zhang Kai, Cao Cao’s vengeful attack on Xuzhou, and his coming to beg for assistance.

Liu Bei said, “Imperial Protector Tao Qian is a kindly man of high character, and it is a pity that he should suffer this wrong for no fault of his own.”

“You are a scion of the imperial family,” said Governor Kong Rong, “and this Cao Cao is injuring the people, a strong man abusing his strength. Why not go with me to rescue the sufferers?”

“I dare not refuse, but my force is weak and I must act cautiously,” said Liu Bei.

“Though my desire to help arises from an old friendship, yet it is a righteous act as well. I do not think your heart is not inclined toward the right,” said Kong Rong.

Liu Bei said, “This being so, you go first and give me time to see Gongsun Zan from whom I may borrow more troops and horses. I will come anon.”

“You surely will not break your promise?” said the Governor.

“What manner of man think you that I am?” said Liu Bei. “The wise one said, ‘Death is common to all; the person without truth cannot maintain the self.’ Whether I get the troops or not, certainly I shall myself come.”

So the plan was agreed to. Mi Zhu set out to return forthwith while Kong Rong prepared for his expedition.

Taishi Ci took his leave, saying, “My mother bade me come to your aid, and now happily you are safe. Letters have come from my fellow townsman, Liu Yao, Imperial Protector of Yangzhou, calling me thither and I must go. I will see you again.”
Kong Rong pressed rewards upon Taishi Ci, but he would accept nothing and departed. When his mother saw him, she was pleased at his success saying she rejoiced that he had been able to prove his gratitude, and after this he departed for Yangzhou.

Liu Bei went away to his friend Gongsun Zan and laid before Gongsun Zan his design to help Xuzhou.

“Cao Cao and you are not enemies. Why do you spend yourself for the sake of another?” said Gongsun Zan.

“I have promised,” Liu Bei replied, “and dare not break faith.”

“I will lend you two thousand horse and foot,” said Gongsun Zan.

“Also I wish to have the services of Zhao Yun,” said Liu Bei.

Gongsun Zan agreed to this also. They marched away, Liu Bei’s own troops being in the front, and Zhao Yun, with the borrowed troops, being in rear.

In due course Mi Zhu returned saying that Kong Rong had also obtained the services of Liu Bei. The other messenger, Chen Deng, came back and reported that Tien Kai would also bring help. Then was Tao Qian’s heart set at ease.

But both the leaders, though they had promised aid, greatly dreaded their antagonist and camped among the hills at a great distance, fearful of coming too close to Cao Cao’s quarters. Cao Cao knew of their coming and divided his army into parts to meet them, so postponing the attack on the city itself.

Presently Liu Bei came up and went to see Kong Rong, who said, “The enemy is very powerful, and Cao Cao handles his army skillfully. We must be cautious. Let us make most careful observations before we strike a blow.”

“What I fear is famine in the city,” said Liu Bei. “They cannot hold out very long. I will put my troops with yours under your command, while I with Zhang Fei make a dash through to see Tao Qian and consult with him.”

Kong Rong approved of this, so he and Tien Kai took up positions on the ox-horn formation, with Guan Yu and Zhao Yun on either side to support them.

When Liu Bei and Zhang Fei leading one thousand troops made their dash to get through Cao Cao’s army, they got as far as the flank of his camp when there arose a great beating of drums, and horse and foot rolled out like billows on the ocean. The leader was Yu Jin.

Yu Jin checked his steed and called out, “You mad men from somewhere, where are you going?”

Zhang Fei heard Yu Jin but deigned no reply. He only rode straight to attack the speaker. After they had fought a few bouts, Liu Bei waved his double swords as signal for his troops to come on, and they drove Yu Jin before them. Zhang Fei led the pursuit and in this way they reached the city wall.

From the city wall, the besieged saw a huge banner embroidered in white Liu Bei of Pingyuan, and the Imperial Protector bade them open the gate for the rescuers to enter. Liu Bei was made very welcome, conducted to the residency,
and a banquet prepared in his honor. The soldiers also were feasted.

Tao Qian was delighted with Liu Bei, admiring his high-spirited appearance and clear speech. Tao Qian bade Mi Zhu offer Liu Bei the seal and insignia of the protectorship office. But Liu Bei shrank back startled.

“What does this mean?” said Liu Bei.

Tao Qian said, “There is trouble on every side, and the kingly rule is no longer maintained. You, Sir, are a member of the family and eminently fitted to support them and their prerogatives. I am verging on senility, and I wish to retire in your favor. I pray you not to decline, and I will report my action to the court.”

Liu Bei started up from his seat and bowed before his host, saying, “Scion of the family I may be, but my merit is small and my virtue meager. I doubt my fitness even for my present post, and only a feeling of doing right sent me to your assistance. To hear such speech makes me doubt. Surely you think I came with greed in my heart. May God help me no more if I cherished such a thought.”

“It is a poor old man’s real sentiment,” said Tao Qian.

Time after time Tao Qian renewed his offer to entrust the region of Xuzhou to Liu Bei, but Liu Bei kept refusing.

In the midst of this came Mi Zhu, saying, “The enemies had reached the wall, and something must be done to drive them off. The present matter could await a more tranquil time.”

Said Liu Bei, “I ought to write to Cao Cao to press him to raise the siege. If he refuses, we will attack forthwith.”

Orders were sent to the three camps outside to remain quiescent till the letter could reach Cao Cao.

It happened that Cao Cao was holding a council when a messenger with a war letter was announced. The letter was brought in and handed to him and, when he had opened and looked at it, he found it was from Liu Bei.

This is the letter, very nearly:

“Since meeting you outside the pass, fate has assigned us to different quarters of the world, and I have not been able to pay my respects to you. Touching the death of your noble father, it was owing to the vicious nature of Zhang Kai and due to no fault of Tao Qian. Now while the remnant of the Yellow Scarves is disturbing the lands, and Dong Zhuo’s partisans have the upper hand in the capital, I wish that you, Illustrious Sir, would regard the critical position of the court rather than your personal grievances, and so divert your forces from the attack on Xuzhou to the rescue of the state. Such would be for the happiness of that city and the whole empire.”

Cao Cao gave vent to a torrent of abuse: “Who is this Liu Bei that he dares write and exhort me? Beside, he means to be satirical.”
Cao Cao issued orders to put the bearer of the letter to death and to press on the siege.

But Guo Jia remonstrated, saying, “Liu Bei has come from afar to help Tao Qian, and he is trying the effect of politeness before resorting to arms. I pray you, my lord, reply with fair words that his heart may be lulled with a feeling of safety. Then attack with vigor and the city will fall.”

Cao Cao found this advice good, so he spared the messenger, telling him to wait to carry back his reply. While this was going on, a horseman came with news of misfortune: “Lu Bu has invaded Yanzhou, now holding Puyang. The three counties left—Juancheng, Fanxia, and Dongjun—are under severe attacks.”

When Li Jue and Guo Si, the two partisans of Dong Zhuo, succeeded in their attack on the capital, Lu Bu had fled to Yuan Shu. However, Yuan Shu looked askance at him for his instability and refused to receive him. Then Lu Bu went to try Yuan Shao, who was a brother of Yuan Shu. Yuan Shao accepted the warrior and made use of him in an attack upon Zhang Yan in Changshan. But his success filled him with pride, and his arrogant demeanor so annoyed the other commanders that Yuan Shao was on the point of putting him to death. To escape this Lu Bu had gone away to Zhang Yang, Governor of Shangdang, who accepted his services.

About this time Pang Shu, who had been hiding and protecting Lu Bu’s family in Changan since his disappearance, restored them to him. This deed angered Li Jue and Guo Si so that they put Pang Shu to death and wrote to Lu Bu’s protector to serve him the same. To escape this Lu Bu once again had to flee and this time joined himself to Zhang Miao, the Governor of Chenliu.

Lu Bu arrived just as Zhang Miao’s brother, Zhang Chao, was introducing Chen Gong.

Chen Gong said to Zhang Miao, “The rupture of the empire has begun, and warriors are seizing what they can. It is strange that you, with all the advantages of population and provisions you enjoy, do not strike for independence. Cao Cao has gone on an expedition against the east, leaving his own territory defenseless. Lu Bu is one of the fighting people of the day. If you and he together attacked and got Yanzhou, you could then proceed to the dominion.”

Zhang Miao was pleased and resolved to try. He ordered an attack, and soon Lu Bu was in possession of Yanzhou and its neighborhood, all but three small counties of Juancheng, Fanxia, and Dongjun—were under severe attacks.”

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1Zhang Yang was among the eighteen lords who rallied against Dong Zhuo at the Tiger Trap Pass.
of the imperial house. He is of lofty virtue and great talent. Let him then take over the rule of this region, and only too willingly I shall retire to have leisure to nurse my health."

Liu Bei replied, "I came at the request of Governor Kong Rong, because it was the right thing to do. Xuzhou is saved; but if I take it, surely the world will say I am a wicked man."

Mi Zhu said, "You may not refuse. The House of Han is falling, their realm is crumbling, and now is the time for doughty deeds and signal services. This is a fertile region, well populated and rich, and you are the man to rule over it."

"But I cannot accept," said Liu Bei.

"Imperial Protector Tao Qian is a great sufferer," said Chen Deng, "and cannot see to matters. You may not decline, Sir."

Said Liu Bei, "Yuan Shu belongs to a family of rulers, who have held the highest offices of state four times in three generations. The multitude people respects him. Why not invite him to this task?"

"Because Yuan Shu is a drying skeleton in a dark tomb: Not worth talking about. This opportunity is a gift from Heaven, and you will never cease to regret its loss," said Kong Rong.

So spoke Kong Rong, but still Liu Bei obstinately refused.

Tao Qian besought him with tears, saying, "I shall die if you leave me, and there will be none to close my eyes."

"Brother, you should accept the offer thus made," said Guan Yu.

"Why so much fuss?" said Zhang Fei. "We have not taken the place. It is he who wishes to give it you."

"You all persuade me to do what is wrong," said Liu Bei.

Seeing he could not persuade Liu Bei, Tao Qian then said, "As you are set in determination, perhaps you will consent to encamp at Xiaopei. It is only a little town, but thence you can keep watch and ward over the region."

They all with one voice prayed Liu Bei to consent, so he gave in. The feast of victory being now ended, the time came to say farewell. When Zhao Yun took his leave, Liu Bei held his hands alternately while dashing away the falling tears. Kong Rong and Tien Kai went home to their own places.

When Liu Bei and his brothers took up their abode in Xiaopei, they first repaired the defenses, and then they put out proclamations in order to calm the inhabitants.

In the meantime Cao Cao had marched toward his own region.

Cao Ren met and told him, "Lu Bu is very powerful, and he has Chen Gong as adviser. Yanzhou is as good as lost, with the exception of three counties which have been vigorously and desperately defended by Xun Yu and Cheng Yu."

Cao Cao said, "I own that Lu Bu is a bold fighter but nothing more; he has no craft. So we need not fear him seriously."

Then he gave orders to make a strong camp till they could think out some victorious plan.

Lu Bu, knowing of Cao Cao's return, called two of his subordinate generals, Xue Lan and Li Fang, to him and
assigned to them the task of holding the city of Yanzhou, saying, “I have long waited for opportunity to employ your skill. Now I give you ten thousand soldiers, and you are to hold the city while I go forth to attack Cao Cao.”

They accepted.

But Chen Gong, the strategist, came in hastily, saying, “General, you are going away; whither?”

“I am going to camp my troops at Puyang, that vantage point.”

“You are making a mistake,” said Chen Gong. “The two you have chosen to defend this city are unequal to the task. For this expedition remember that about sixty miles due south, on the treacherous road to the Taishan Mountains, is a very advantageous position where you should place your best men in ambush. Cao Cao will hasten homeward by double marches when he hears what has happened. If you strike when half his troops have gone past this point, you may seize him.”

Said Lu Bu, “I am going to occupy Puyang and see what develops. How can you guess my big plan?”

So Lu Bu left Xue Lan in command at Yanzhou and went away.

Now when Cao Cao approached the dangerous part of the road near the Taishan Mountains, Guo Jia warned him to take care as there was doubtless an ambush.

But Cao Cao laughed, saying, “We know all Lu Bu’s dispositions. Xue Lan is keeping the city. Do you think Lu Bu has laid an ambush? I shall tell Cao Ren to besiege Yanzhou, and I shall go to Puyang.”

In Puyang, when Chen Gong heard of the enemy’s approach, he spoke, saying, “The enemy will be fatigued with long marches, so attack quickly before they have time to recover.”

Lu Bu replied, “I, a single horseman, am afraid of none. I come and go as I will. Think you I fear this Cao Cao? Let him settle his camp; I will take him after that.”
In his camp Lu Bu was rejoicing for that day’s victory, when Chen Gong reminded him, saying, “The western camp is importance point, and it might be attacked.”

But Lu Bu replied, “The enemy will not dare approach after today’s defeat.”

“Cao Cao is a very able commander,” replied Chen Gong. “You must keep a good lookout for him lest he attack our weak spot.”

So arrangements were made for defense. Generals Gao Shun, Wei Xu, and Hou Cheng were ordered to march there.

At dusk Cao Cao reached the camp and began an immediate attack on all four sides. The defenders could not hold him off. They ran in all directions, and the camp was captured. Near the fourth watch, when the defending party came, Cao Cao sallied forth to meet them and met Gao Shun. Another battle then began and waged till dawn. About that time a rolling of drums was heard in the west, and they told Cao Cao that Lu Bu himself was at hand. Thereupon Cao Cao abandoned the attack and fled.

Gao Shun, Wei Xu, and Hou Cheng pursued him, Lu Bu taking the lead. Cao Cao’s two generals, Yu Jin and Yue Jing, attacked the pursuers but could not check them. Cao Cao went away north. But from behind some hills came out Zhang Liao and Zang Ba to attack. Lu Qian and Cao Hong were sent to stop the attackers, but Lu Qian and Cao Hong were both

opponents arrived and formed up in a circular area.

Lu Bu was in front, followed by eight of his generals, all strong men: Zhang Liao of Mayi, backed by Hao Meng, Cao Xing, and Cheng Lian; Zang Ba of Huaying, backed by Wei Xu, Song Xian, and Hou Cheng. They led an army of fifty thousand in total.

The drums began their thunderous roll, and Cao Cao, pointing to his opponent, said, “You and I had no quarrel, why then did you invade my land?”

“The empire of Han is the possession of all. What is your special claim?” said Lu Bu.

So saying, Lu Bu ordered Zang Ba to ride forth and challenge. From Cao Cao’s side the challenge was accepted by Yue Jing. The two steeds approached each other; two spears were lifted both together, and they exchanged near thirty blows with no advantage to either. Then Xiahou Dun rode out to help his colleague and, in reply, out went Zhang Liao from Lu Bu’s side. And they four fought.

Then fierce anger seized upon Lu Bu. Setting his trident halberd, he urged his Red Hare forward to where the fight was waging. Seeing him approach, Xiahou Dun and Yue Jing both fled, but Lu Bu pressed on after them, and Cao Cao’s army lost the day. Retiring ten miles, they made a new camp. Lu Bu called in and mustered his troops.

The day having gone against him, Cao Cao called a council, and Yu Jin said, “From the hill tops today I saw a camp of our enemies on the west of Puyang. They were but few men therein, and tonight after today’s victory, it will not be defended. Let us attack; and if we can take the camp, we shall strike fear into the heart of Lu Bu. This is our best plan.”

Cao Cao thought so too. He and six of his generals---Cao Hong, Li Dian, Mao Jie, Lu Qian, Yu Jin, and Dian Wei---and twenty thousand horse and foot left that night by a

secret road for the camp.

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defeated. Cao Cao sought safety in the west. Here again his 
retreat was met by Lu Bu’s four generals, Hao Meng, Cao 
Xing, Cheng Lian, and Song Xian.
The fight became desperate. Cao Cao dashed at the 
enemy’s array. The din was terrible. Arrows fell like pelting 
rain upon them, and they could make no headway.
Cao Cao was desperate and cried out in fear, “Who can 
save me?”
Then from the crush dashed out Dian Wei with his double 
spears, crying, “Fear not, my lord!”
Dian Wei leapt from his 
steed, leaned his double spears 
against a wall and laid hold of a 
handful of battle-axes. Turning 
to his followers he said, “When the ruffians are at ten paces, 
call out to me.”
Then he set off with mighty strides, plunging forward, 
careless of the flying arrows. Lu Bu’s horsemen followed, 
and when they got near, Dian Wei’s followers shouted, “Ten 
paces!”
“Five, then call!” shouted back Dian Wei, and went on.
Presently, “Five paces!”
Then Dian Wei spun round and flung the battle-axes. 
With every fling a man fell from the saddle and never a 
battle-ax missed.
Having thus slain ten or so the remainder fled, and Dian 
Wei quickly remounted his steed, set his twin spears and 
rushed again into the fight with a vigor that none could 
withstand. One by one his opponents yielded, and he was 
able to lead Cao Cao safely out of the press of battle. Cao 
Cao and his commanders went to their camp.
But as evening fell, the noise of pursuit fell on their ears,
Chapter 12
Tao Qian Thrice Offers Xuzhou To Liu Bei;
Cao Cao Retakes Yanzhou From Lu Bu.

The last chapter closed with Cao Cao in great danger. However, help came. Xiahou Dun with a body of soldiers found his chief, checked the pursuit, and fought with Lu Bu till dusk. Rain fell in torrents swamping everything; and as the daylight waned, they drew off and Cao Cao reached camp. He rewarded Dian Wei generously and advanced him in rank.

When Lu Bu reached his camp, he called in his adviser Chen Gong. Then Chen Gong proposed a new stratagem.

He said, “In Puyang there is a rich, leading family, Tian by name, who number thousands, enough to populate a whole county in themselves. Make one of these people go to Cao Cao’s camp with a pretended secret letter about Lu Bu’s ferocity, and the hatred of the people, and their desire to be rid of him. And by saying that only Gao Shun is left to guard the city, and they would help anyone who would come to save them. Thus our enemy Cao Cao will be inveigled into the city, and we will destroy him either by fire or ambush. His skill may be equal to encompassing the universe, but he will not escape.”

Lu Bu thought this trick might be tried, and they arranged for the Tian family letter to be sent.

Coming soon after the defeat, when Cao Cao felt uncertain what step to take next, the secret letter was read with joy. It promised interior help and said the sign should be a white flag with the word Rectitude written thereon.

“Heaven is going to give me Puyang!” said Cao Cao joyfully.

So he rewarded the messenger very liberally and began to prepare for the expedition.

Then came Liu Ye, saying, “Lu Bu is no strategist, but Chen Gong is full of guile. I fear treachery in this letter, and you must be careful. If you will go, then enter with only one third your army, leaving the others outside the city as a reserve.”

Cao Cao agreed to take this precaution. He went to Puyang, which he found gay with fluttering flags. Looking carefully he saw among them, at the west gate, the white flag with the looked-for inscription. His heart rejoiced.

That day, just about noon, the city gates opened, and two bodies of soldiers appeared as if to fight. Gao Shun was the front commander, and Hou Cheng the rear commander. Cao Cao told off his general, Dian Wei, to oppose them. Neither body, however, came on to full engagement but fell back into the city. By this move Dian Wei and his troops had been drawn close up to the drawbridge. From within the city several soldiers were seen taking any chance of confusion to escape and come outside.

To Cao Cao they said, “We are clients of the Tian family,” and they gave him secret letters stating:

“The signal will be given about the first watch setting by beating a gong. That will be the time to attack. The gates will be opened.”

So Cao Cao ordered Xiahou Dun to march to the left
Chapter 26

"I am looking for him," said Li Dian.

"Quick! Get help from outside," shouted Dian Wei. "I will seek him."

So Li Dian hastened for aid, and Dian Wei slashed his way in, looking on every side for Cao Cao. He was not to be found. Dashing out of the city, Dian Wei ran up against Yue Jing, who asked where their lord was.

"I have entered the city twice in search of him, but cannot find him," said Dian Wei.

"Let us go in together," said Yue Jing.

They rode up to the gate. But the noise of bombs from the gate tower frightened Yue Jing's horse so that it refused to pass. Wherefore Dian Wei alone went in, butting through the smoke and dashing through the flames. But he got in and searched on every side.

When Cao Cao saw his sturdy protector Dian Wei cut his way out and disappear leaving him surrounded, he again made an attempt to reach the north gate. On the way, sharply outlined against the glow, he saw the figure of Lu Bu coming toward him with his trident halberd ready to kill. Cao Cao covered his face with his hand, whipped up his steed and galloped past.

But Lu Bu came galloping up behind him and tapping him on the helmet with the halberd cried, "Where is Cao Cao?"

Cao Cao turned and, pointing to a dun horse well ahead, cried, "There; on that dun! That's he."

Hearing this Lu Bu left pursuing Cao Cao to gallop after the rider of the dun.

and Cao Hong to the right. Cao Cao led the main army—together with Xiahou Yuan, Li Dian, and Yue Jing—into the city.

Li Dian pressed upon his master the precaution, saying, "My lord should stay outside the city. Let us go in first."

But Cao Cao bade him be silent, saying, "If I do not go, who will advance?"

And so at the first watch Cao Cao led the way. The moon had not yet arisen. As he drew near the west gate, they heard a crackling sound, then a loud shouting, and then torches moved hither and thither. Next the gates were thrown wide open, and Cao Cao, whipping up his steed, galloped in.

But when he reached the state residence, he noticed the streets were quite deserted, and then he knew he had been tricked. Wheeling round his horse, he shouted to his followers to retire. This was the signal for another move. An explosion of a signal bomb was heard close at hand, and it was echoed from every side in a deafening roar. Gongs and drums beat all around with a roar like rivers rushing backward to their source, and the ocean boiling up from its depths. From two sides east and west came bodies of soldiers eager to attack, led by Lu Bu's generals Zhang Liao and Zang Ba.

Cao Cao dashed off toward the north only to find his way barred by Hao Meng and Cao Xing. Cao Cao tried for the south gate, but met enemies led by Gao Shun and Hou Cheng. Cao Cao's trusty commander Dian Wei, with fierce eyes and gritting teeth, at last burst through and got out, with the enemy close after him.

But when Dian Wei reached the drawbridge, he glanced behind him and missed his master. Immediately Dian Wei turned back and cut an alley inside. Just within he met Li Dian.

"Where is our lord?" cried Dian Wei.

"I am looking for him," said Li Dian.

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Hearing this Lu Bu left pursuing Cao Cao to gallop after the rider of the dun.
Thus relieved Cao Cao set off for the east gate. Then he fell in with Dian Wei, who took him under his protection and fought through the press, leaving a trail of death behind till they reached the gate. Here the fire was raging fiercely, and burning beams were falling on all sides. The earth element seemed to have interchanged with the fire element. Dian Wei warded off the burning pieces of wood with his lance and rode into the smoke making a way for his lord. Just as they were passing through the gate a flaming beam fell from the gate tower. Cao Cao just warded it off with his arm, but it struck his steed on the quarters and knocked the steed down. Cao Cao’s hand and arm were badly burned and his hair and beard singed. Dian Wei turned back to his rescue. Luckily Xiahou Yuan came along just then, and the two raised Cao Cao and set him on Xiahou Yuan’s horse. And thus they got him out of the burning city. But they had to go through heavy fighting till daybreak.

Cao Cao returned to his camp. His officers crowded about his tent, anxious for news of his health. He soon recovered and laughed when he thought of his escape.

“I blundered into that fool’s trap, but I will have my revenge,” said he.

“Let us have a new plan soon,” said Guo Jia.

“I will turn his trick to my own use. I will spread the false report that I was burned in the fire, and that I died at the fifth watch. He will come to attack as soon as the news gets abroad, and I will have an ambush ready for him in Maling Hills. I will get him this time.”

“Really a fine stratagem!” said Guo Jia.

So the soldiers were put into mourning, and the report went everywhere that Cao Cao was dead. And soon Lu Bu heard it, and he assembled his army at once to make a surprise attack, taking the road by the Maling Hills to his enemy’s camp.

As he was passing the hills, he heard the drums beating for an advance, and the ambushing soldiers leapt out all round him. Only by desperate fighting did he get out of the melee and with a sadly diminished force returned to his camp at Puyang. There he strengthened the fortifications and could not be tempted forth to battle.

This year locusts suddenly appeared, and they consumed every green blade. There was a famine, and in the northeast grain rose to fifty “strings” of cash a cart. People even took to cannibalism. Cao Cao’s army suffered from want, and he marched them to Juancheng. Lu Bu took his troops to Shanyang. Perforce therefore the fighting ceased.

In Xuzhou. Imperial Protector Tao Qian, over sixty years of age, suddenly fell seriously ill, and he summoned his confident, Mi Zhu, to his chamber to make arrangements for the future.

As to the situation the adviser said, “Cao Cao abandoned his attack on this place because of his enemy’s seizure of Yanzhou; and now they are both keeping the peace solely because of the famine. But Cao Cao will surely renew the attack in the spring. When Liu Bei refused to allow you to vacate office in his favor, you were in full vigor. Now you are ill and weak, and you can make this a reason for retirement. He will not refuse again.”

So a message was sent to the little garrison town
Xiaopei calling Liu Bei to a counsel on military affairs. This brought him with his brothers and a slender escort. He was at once called in to the sick man’s chamber. Quickly disposing of the inquiries about his health, Tao Qian soon came to the real object of his call for Liu Bei.

“Sir, I asked you to come for the sole reason that I am dangerously ill and likely to die at any time. I look to you, Illustrious Sir, to consider the Hans and their empire as more important than anything else, and so to take over the symbols of office of this region, the commission and the seal, that I may close my eyes in peace.”

“You have two sons, why not depute them to relieve you?” said Liu Bei.

“Both lack the requisite talents. I trust you will instruct them after I have gone, but do not let them have the guidance of affairs.”

“But I am unequal to so great a charge.”

“I will recommend to you one who could assist you. He is Sun Qian from Beihai who could be appointed to some post.”

Turning to Mi Zhu, Tao Qian said, “The noble Liu Bei here is the most prominent man of the time, and you should serve him well.”

Still would Liu Bei have put from him such a post, but just then the Imperial Protector, pointing to his heart to indicate his sincerity, passed away.

When the ceremonial wailing of the officials was over, the insignia of office were brought to Liu Bei. But he would have none of them. The following days the inhabitants of the town and country around crowded into the state residence, bowing and with tears, calling upon Liu Bei to receive the charge.

“If you do not, we cannot live in pence,” said they.

To these requests his brothers added their persuasion, till at length he consented to assume the administrative duties. He forthwith appointed Sun Qian and Mi Zhu as his Advisers, and Chen Deng his Secretary. He moved his army from Xiaopei to Xuzhou City, and he put forth proclamations to reassure the people.

He also attended to the burial ceremonies; he and all his army dressing in mourning. After the fullest sacrifices and ceremonies, a burial place for the late Imperial Protector was found close to the source of the Yellow River. The dead man’s testament was forwarded to court.
The news of the events in Xuzhou duly reached the ears of Cao Cao, then in Juancheng.

Said he, angrily, “I have missed my revenge. This Liu Bei has simply stepped into command of the region without expending half an arrow: He sat still and attained his desire. But I will put him to death and then dig up Tao Qian’s corpse in revenge for the death of my noble father!”

Orders were issued for the army to prepare for a new campaign against Xuzhou.

But Adviser Xun Yu remonstrated with Cao Cao, saying, “The Supreme Ancestor secured the Land Within the Passes and his illustrious successor on the throne, Liu Xiu, took Henei. They both first consolidated their position whereby they could command the whole empire. Their whole progress was from success to success. Hence they accomplished their great designs in spite of difficulties.

“Illustrious Sir, your Land Within the Passes and your Henei are Yanzhou and the Yellow River, which you had first, and which is of the utmost strategic point of the empire. If you undertake this expedition against Xuzhou leaving many troops here for defense, you will not accomplish your design; if you leave too few, Lu Bu will fall upon us. And finally if you lose this and fail to gain Xuzhou, whither will you retire? That region is not vacant. Although Tao Qian has gone, Liu Bei holds it; and since the people support him, they will fight to the death for him. To abandon this place for that is to exchange the great for the small, to barter the trunk for the branches, to leave safety and run into danger. I would implore you to reflect well.”

Cao Cao replied, “It is not a good plan to keep soldiers idle here during such scarcity.”

“If that is so, it would be more advantageous to attack the eastern counties of Chencheng, Yingchuan, and Runan, and feed your army on their supplies. The remnants of the Yellow Scarves, He Yi and Huang Shao, are there with stores and treasures of all kinds that they have amassed by plundering wherever they could. Rebels of their stamp are easily broken. Break them, and you can feed your army with their grain. Moreover, both the court and the common people will join in blessing you.”

This new design appealed strongly to Cao Cao, and he quickly began his preparations to carry it out. He left Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren to guard Juancheng, while his main body, under his own command, marched to seize Chencheng. This done they went to Runan and Yingchuan.

Now when the Yellow Scarves leaders, He Yi and Huang Shao, knew that Cao Cao was approaching. They came out in a great body to oppose him. They met at Goat Hill. Though the rebels were numerous, they were a poor lot, a mere pack of beasts without organization and lacking discipline. Cao Cao ordered his strong archers and vigorous crossbowmen to keep them in check.

Dian Wei was sent out to challenge. The rebel leaders chose a second-rate champion for their side, who rode out and was vanquished in the third bout. Then Cao Cao’s army pushed forward, and they made a camp at Goat Hill.

The following day the rebel Huang Shao himself led forth his army and made his battle array along a circle. A leader advanced on foot to offer combat. He wore a yellow turban on his head and a green robe. His weapon was an iron mace.

He shouted, “I am He Man, the devil who shoots across the sky. Who dare fight with me?”

Cao Hong uttered a great shout and jumped from the saddle to accept the challenge. Sword in hand he advanced on foot and the two engaged in fierce combat in the face...
of both armies. They exchanged some fifty blows, neither gaining the advantage. Then Cao Hong feigned defeat and ran away. He Man went after him. Just as he closed, Cao Hong tried a feint and then suddenly wheeling about, wounded his adversary. Another slash, and He Man lay dead.

At once Li Dian dashed forward into the midst of the Yellow Scarves and laid hands on the rebel chief Huang Shao whom he carried off captive. Cao Cao’s troops then set on and scattered the rebels. The spoil of treasure and food was immense.

The other rebel leader, He Yi, fled with a few hundred horsemen toward Kobei Hills. But while on their road thither there suddenly appeared a force led by a certain swashbuckler who shall be nameless for the moment. This bravo was a well-built man, thickset and stout. With a waist ten span in girth. He used a long sword.

He barred the way of retreat. He Yi set his spear and rode toward him. But at the first encounter the bravo caught He Yi under his arm and bore He Yi off a prisoner. All the rebels were terror-stricken, dropped from their horses and allowed themselves to be bound. Then the victor drove them like cattle into an enclosure with high banks.

Presently Dian Wei, still pursuing the rebels, reached Kobei Hills. The swashbuckler went out to meet him.

“Are you also a Yellow Scarves rebel?” said Dian Wei. “I have some hundreds of them prisoners in an enclosure here.”

“Why not bring them out?” said Dian Wei. “I will if you win this sword from my hand.”

This annoyed Dian Wei who attacked him. They engaged and the combat lasted for two long hours and then was still undecided. Both rested a while. The swashbuckler was the first to recover and renewed the challenge. They fought till dusk and then, as their horses were quite spent, the combat was once more suspended.

In the meantime some of Dian Wei’s men had run off to tell the story of this wondrous fight to Cao Cao who hastened in amazement, followed by many officers to watch it and see the result.

Next day the unknown warrior rode out again, and Cao Cao saw him. In Cao Cao’s heart he rejoiced to see such a doughty hero and desired to gain his services. So Cao Cao bade Dian Wei feign defeat.

Dian Wei rode out in answer to the challenge, and some thirty bouts were fought. Then Dian Wei turned and fled toward his own side. The bravo followed and came quite close. But a flight of arrows drove him away.

Cao Cao hastily drew off his men for one and a half miles and then secretly sent a certain number to dig a pitfall and sent troops armed with hooks to lie in ambush.

The following day Dian Wei was sent out with one hundred horse. His adversary nothing loath came to meet
rank of general and received ample rewards. The two rebel leaders, He Yi and Huang Shao, were executed. Runan and Yingchuan were now perfectly pacified.

Cao Cao withdrew his army and went back to Juancheng. Xiahou Dun and Cao Ren came out to welcome him, and they told him that spies had reported Yanzhou City to be left defenseless. Lu Bu’s generals, Xue Lan and Li Fang, had given up all its garrison to plundering the surrounding areas.

“Why does the defeated leader venture forth again?” cried he laughing.

The swashbuckler spurred forward to join battle, but Dian Wei, after a faint show of fighting, turned his horse and rode away. His adversary intent upon capture, took no care, and he and his horse all blundered into the pitfall. The hookmen took him captive, bound him, and carried him before Cao Cao.

As soon as he saw the prisoner, Cao Cao advanced from his tent, sent away the soldiers, and with his own hands loosened the leader’s bonds. Then he brought out clothing and dressed him, bade him be seated and asked who he was and whence he came.

“I am named Xu Chu. I am from Qiao. When the rebellion broke out, I and my relations of some hundreds built a stronghold within a rampart for protection. One day the robbers came, but I had stones ready for them. I told my relatives to keep on bringing them up to me and I threw them, hitting somebody every time I threw. This drove off the robbers. Another day they came and we were short of grain. So I agreed with them to an exchange of plow oxen against grain. They delivered the grain and were driving away the oxen when the beasts took fright and tore off to their pens. I seized two of oxen by the tail, one with each hand, and hauled them backwards a hundred or so paces. The robbers were so amazed that they thought no more about oxen but went their way. So they never troubled us again.”

“I have heard of your mighty exploits,” said Cao Cao. “Will you join my army?”

“That is my strongest desire,” said Xu Chu.

So Xu Chu called up his clan, some hundreds in all, and they formally submitted to Cao Cao. Xu Chu received the
country. They wanted him to go against it without loss of time.

"With our soldiers fresh from victory, the city will fall at a tap of the drum," said they.

So Cao Cao marched the army straight to the city. An attack was quite unexpected but the two leaders, Xue Lan and Li Fang, hurried out their few soldiers to fight. Xu Chu, the latest recruit, said he wished to capture these two and he would make of them an introductory gift.

The task was given him and he rode forth. Li Fang with his halberd advanced to meet Xu Chu. The combat was brief as Li Fang fell in the second bout. His colleague Xue Lan retired with his troops. But he found the drawbridge had been seized by Li Dian, so that he could not get shelter within the city. Xue Lan led his men toward Juye. But Lu Qian pursued and killed him with an arrow. His soldiers scattered to the four winds. And thus Yanzhou was recaptured.

Next Cheng Yu proposed an expedition to take Puyang. Cao Cao marched his army out in perfect order. The van leaders were Dian Wei and Xu Chu; Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan led the left wing; Li Dian and Yue Jing led the right wing; Yu Jin and Lu Qian guarded the rear. Cao Cao himself commanded the center.

When they approached Puyang, Lu Bu wished to go out in person and alone to attack, but his adviser Chen Gong protested, saying, "General, you should not go out until the arrival of the other officers."

"Whom do I fear?" said Lu Bu.

So he threw caution to the winds and went out of the city. He met his foes and he began to revile them. The redoubtable Xu Chu went to fight with him, but after twenty bouts neither combatant was any the worse.

"He is not the sort that one man can overcome," said Cao Cao.

And he sent Dian Wei to attack Lu Bu from another direction. Lu Bu stood the double onslaught. Soon after the flank commanders joined in---Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan attacking the left; Li Dian and Yue Jing surrounding the right. Lu Bu had six opponents. These proved really too many for him so he turned his horse and rode back to the city.

But when the members of the Tian family saw him coming back beaten, they raised the drawbridge. Lu Bu shouted, "Open the gates! Let me in!"

But the Tians said, "We have gone over to Cao Cao!"
This was hard to hear and the beaten man abused them roundly before he left. Chen Gong got away through the east gate taking with him the general’s family.

Thus Puyang came into Cao Cao’s hands, and for their present services the Tian family were pardoned their previous fault.

However, Liu Ye said, “Lu Bu is a savage beast. If let alive, he will be a great danger. Hunt him down!”

Liu Ye was ordered to keep Puyang. Wherefore Cao Cao determined to follow Lu Bu to Dingtao whither he had gone for refuge.

Lu Bu, Zhang Miao, and Zhang Chao were assembled in the city. Gao Shun and other generals were out foraging. Cao Cao army arrived but did not attack for many days, and presently he withdrew fifteen miles and made a stockade. It was the time of harvest, and he set his soldiers to cut the wheat for food. The spies reported this to Lu Bu who came over to see. But when he saw that Cao Cao’s stockade lay near a thick wood, he feared an ambush and retired. Cao Cao heard that Lu Bu had come and gone and guessed the reason.

“He fears an ambush in the wood,” said Cao Cao. “We will set up flags there and deceive him. There is a long embankment near the camp but behind it there is no water. There we will lay an ambush to fall upon Lu Bu when he comes to burn the wood.”

So Cao Cao hid all his soldiers behind the embankment except half a hundred drummers, and he got together many peasants to loiter within the stockade as though it was not empty.

Lu Bu rode back and told Chen Gong what he had seen.

“This Cao Cao is very crafty and full of wiles,” said the adviser. “Do not act.”

“I will use fire this time and burn out his ambush,” said Lu Bu.

Next morning Lu Bu rode out, and there he saw flags flying everywhere in the wood. He ordered his troops forward to set fire on all sides. But to his surprise no one rushed out to make for the stockade. Still he heard the beating of drums and doubt filled his mind. Suddenly he saw a party of soldiers move out from the shelter of the stockade. He galloped over to see what it meant.

Then the signal-bombs exploded; out rushed the troops and all their leaders dashed forward. Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Xu Chu, Dian Wei, Li Dian, and Yue Jing all attacked at once. Lu Bu was at a loss and fled into the open country.

One of his generals, Cheng Lian, was killed by an arrow of Yue Jing. Two thirds of his troops were lost, and the beaten remainder went to tell Chen Gong what had come to pass.

“We had better leave,” said Chen Gong. “An empty city cannot be held.”

So Chen Gong and Gao Shun, taking their chief’s family with them, abandoned Dingtao. When Cao Cao’s soldiers got into the city, they met with no resistance. Zhang Chao committed suicide by burning himself. Zhang Miao fled to Yuan Shu.

Thus the whole northeast fell under the power of Cao Cao. He immediately tranquilized the people and rebuilt the cities and their defenses.

Lu Bu in his retreat fell in with his generals, and Chen Gong also rejoined him, so that he was by no means broken.

“I have but small army,” said Lu Bu, “but still enough to break Cao Cao.”

And so he retook the backward road. Indeed:

*Thus does fortune alternate, victory, defeat,*

*The happy conqueror today, tomorrow, must retreat?*
Chapter 13
Li Jue and Guo Si Duel In Changan;
The Emperor Establishes Anyi The New Capital.

The last chapter told of the defeat of Lu Bu, and his gathering the remnant of his army at Dingtao. When all his generals had joined him, he began to feel strong enough to try conclusions with Cao Cao once again.

Said Chen Gong, who was opposed to this course, “Cao Cao is too strong right now. Seek some place where we can rest a time before trying.”

“Suppose I went to Yuan Shao,” said Lu Bu.

“Send first to make inquiries.”

Lu Bu agreed.
The news of the fighting between Cao Cao and Lu Bu had reached Jizhou, and one of Yuan Shao’s advisers, Shen Pei, warned him, saying, “Lu Bu is a savage beast. If he gets possession of Yanzhou, he will certainly attempt to add this region to it. For your own safety you should help to crush him.”

Wherefore Yuan Shao sent Yan Liang with fifty thousand troops to destroy Lu Bu. The spies heard this and at once told Lu Bu, who was greatly disturbed and called in Chen Gong.

“Go over to Liu Bei, who has lately succeeded to Xuzhou.”

Hence Lu Bu went thither.

Hearing this, Liu Bei said, “Lu Bu is a hero, and we will
I drifted about from one place to another, and none of the nobles east of the Huashang Mountains seemed willing to receive me. When Cao Cao with wicked ambition invaded this region and you, Sir, came to its rescue, I aided you by attacking Yanzhou and thus diverting a portion of his force. I did not think then that I should be the victim of a vile plot and lose my leaders and my soldiers. But now if you will, I offer myself to you that we may together accomplish great designs.”

Liu Bei replied, “When the late Tao Qian died, there was no one to administer Xuzhou, and so I assumed that task for a time. Now since you are here, General, it is most suitable that I step down in your favor.”

Whereupon Liu Bei handed the insignia and the seal of authority to Lu Bu. Lu Bu was on the point of accepting them, when he saw Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, who stood behind the Imperial Protector, glaring at him with angry eyes.

So Lu Bu put on a smile and said, “I may be something of a fighting man, but I could not rule a great region like this.”

Liu Bei repeated his offer. But Chen Gong said, “The strong guest does not oppress his host. You need not fear, Lord Liu Bei.”

Then Liu Bei desisted. Banquets were held and dwelling places prepared for the guest and his retinue.

As soon as convenient, Lu Bu returned the feast. Liu Bei went with his two brothers. Half through the banquet Lu Bu requested Liu Bei to retire to one of the inner private rooms, whither Guan Yu and Zhang Fei followed him. There Lu Bu bade his wife and daughter bow as to their benefactor. Here also Liu Bei showed excessive modesty.

Lu Bu said, “Good younger brother, you need not be so very modest.”
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Zhang Fei heard what Lu Bu said, and his eyes glared, crying, “What sort of a man are you that dares call our brother ‘younger brother’? He is one of the ruling family—a jade leaf on a golden branch. Come out, and I will fight you three hundred bouts for the insult.”

Liu Bei hastily checked the impulsive one, and Guan Yu persuaded him to go away. Then Liu Bei apologized, saying, “My poor brother talks wildly after he has been drinking. I hope you will not blame him.”

Lu Bu nodded, but said nothing. Soon after the guests departed. But as the host escorted Liu Bei to his carriage, he saw Zhang Fei galloping up armed as for a fray.

“Lu Bu, you and I will fight that duel of three hundred bouts!” shouted Zhang Fei.

Liu Bei bade Guan Yu check him. Next day Lu Bu came to take leave of his host.

“You, O Lord, kindly received me, but I fear your brothers and I cannot agree. So I will seek some other asylum.”

“General, if you go, the blame is mine. My rude brother has offended and must eventually apologize. In the meantime what think you of a temporary sojourn at the town where I was encamped for some time, Xiaopei? The place is small and mean, but it is near, and I will see to it that you are supplied with all you need.”

Lu Bu thanked him and accepted this offer. He led his troops there and took up residence. After he had gone, Liu Bei buried his annoyance, and Zhang Fei did not again refer to the matter.

That Cao Cao had subdued the east of the Huashang Mountains has been stated before. He memorialized the Throne and was rewarded with the title of General Who Exhibits Firm Virtue and Lord of Feiting. At this time the rebellious Li Jue was commanding the court, and he had made himself Regent Marshal, and his colleague Guo Si styled himself Grand Commander. Their conduct was abominable but no one dared to criticize them.

Imperial Guardian Yang Biao and Minister Zhu Jun privately talked with Emperor Xian and said, “Cao Cao has two hundred thousand troops and many capable advisers and leaders. It would be well for the empire if he would lend his support to the imperial family and help to rid the government of this evil party.”

His Majesty wept, “I am weary of the insults and contempt of these wretches and should be very glad to have them removed.”

“I have thought of a plan to estrange Li Jue and Guo Si and so make them destroy each other. Then Cao Cao could come and cleanse the court,” said Yang Biao.

“How will you manage it?” asked the Emperor.

“Guo Si’s wife, Lady Qiong, is very jealous, and we can take advantage of her weakness to bring about a quarrel.”

So Yang Biao received instruction to act, with a secret edict to support him. Yang Biao’s wife, Lady Kai, made an excuse to visit Lady Qiong at her palace and, in the course of conversation, said “There is talk of secret liaison between the General, your husband, and the wife of Minister Li Jue. It is a great secret, but if Minister Li Jue knew it, he might try to harm your husband. I think you ought to have very little to do with that family.”
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Lady Qiong was surprised but said, “I have wondered why he has been sleeping away from home lately, but I did not think there was anything shameful connected with it. I should never have known if you had not spoken. I must put a stop to it.”

By and by, when Lady Kai took her leave, Lady Qiong thanked her warmly for the information she had given.

Some days passed, and Guo Si was going over to the dwelling of Li Jue to a dinner.

Lady Qiong did not wish him to go and she said, “This Li Jue is very deep, and one cannot fathom his designs. You two are not of equal rank, and if he made away with you, what would become of your poor handmaid?”

Guo Si paid no attention, and his wife could not prevail on him to stay at home. Late in the afternoon some presents arrived from Li Jue’s palace, and Lady Qiong secretly put poison into the delicacies before she set them before her lord.

Guo Si was going to taste at once but she said, “It is unwise to consume things that come from outside. Let us try on a dog first.”

They did and the dog died. This incident made Guo Si doubt the kindly intentions of his colleague.

One day, at the close of business at court, Li Jue invited Guo Si to his palace. After Guo Si arrived home in the evening, rather the worse for too much wine, he was seized with a colic. His wife said she suspected poison and hastily administered an emetic, which relieved the pain.

Guo Si began to feel angry, saying, “We did everything together and helped each other always. Now he wants to injure me. If I do not get in the first blow, I shall suffer some injury.”

So Guo Si began to prepare his guards for any sudden emergency.

This was told to Li Jue, and he in turn grew angry, saying, “So Guo Si is doing so and so!”

Then Li Jue got his guards under way and came to attack Guo Si. Both houses had ten thousand, and the quarrel became so serious that they fought a pitched battle under the city walls. When that was over both sides turned to plunder the people.

Then a nephew of Li Jue, Li Xian, suddenly surrounded the Palace, put the Emperor and Empress in two carriages, and assigned Jia Xu and Zuo Ling to carry them off. The Palace attendants were made to follow on foot. As they went out of the rear gate, they met Guo Si’s army who began to shoot at the cavalcade with arrows. They killed many attendants before Li Jue’s army came up and forced them to retire.

The carriages were got out of the Palace and eventually reached Li Jue’s camp, while Guo Si’s soldiers plundered the Palace and carried off all the women left there to their camp. Then the Palace was set on fire.

As soon as Guo Si heard of the whereabouts of the Emperor, he came over to attack the camp of Li Jue. The Emperor between these two opposing factions was greatly
Slowly the Hans had declined but renewed their vigor with Liu Xiu,
Twelve were the rulers before him, followed him also twelve others.
Foolish were two of the latest, dangers surrounded the altars,
These were degenerate days, with authority given to eunuchs.
Then did He Jin the simple, the inept, who commanded the army,
Warriors call to the capital, wishing to drive out the vermin;
Though they drove out the leopards, tigers and wolves quickly entered.
All kinds of evil were wrought by a low class creature from Xizhou.
Wang Yun, honest of heart, beguiled this wretch with a woman,
Much desired of his henchman, thus sowing seeds of dissension.
Strife resulted, and peace no longer dwelt in the empire.
No one suspected that Li Jue and Guo Si would continue the evil,
Much to the sorrow of the Middle Kingdom; yet they stoved for a trifle.
Famine stalked in the Palace, grief for the clashing of weapons;
Why did the warriors strive? Why was the land thus partitioned?
They had turned aside from the way appointed of Heaven.
Kings must ponder these things; heavy the burden lies on them,
Chiepest in all the realm theirs is no common appointment,
Should the King falter or fail, calamities fall on the multitude people,
The empire is drenched with their blood, grisly ruin surrounds them.
Steeped in sorrow and sad, read you the ancient records;
Long is the tale of years; the tale of sorrow is longer.
Wherefore one who would rule, chiefly must exercise forethought.
This and a keen-edged blade, these must suffice to maintain one.

Guo Si’s army arrived, and Li Jue went out to give battle.
Guo Si’s troops had no success and retired. Then Li Jue
removed the imperial captives to Meiwo with his nephew Li Xian as gaoler.
Supplies were reduced, and famine showed itself on the faces of the eunuchs.
The Emperor sent to Li Jue to request five carts of rice and five sets of bullock bones
for his attendants.
Li Jue angrily replied, “The court gets food morning and evening. Why do they ask for more?”
He sent putrid meat and rotten grain, and the Emperor was very vexed at the new insult.
Imperial Counselor Yang Qi counseled patience, saying, “Li Jue is a base creature but, under the present circumstances, Your Majesty must put up with it. You may not provoke him.”
The Emperor bowed and was
silent, but the tears fell on his garments. Suddenly someone came in with the tidings that a force of cavalry, their sabers glittering in the sun, was approaching to rescue them. Then they heard the gongs beat and the roll of the drums.

The Emperor sent to find out who it was. But it was Guo Si, and the sadness fell again. Presently arose a great din. For Li Jue had gone out to do battle with Guo Si, whom he abused by name.

“I treated you well, and why did you try to kill me?” said Li Jue.

“You are a rebel, why should I not slay you?” cried Guo Si.

“You call me rebel when I am guarding the Emperor?”

“You have abducted him: Do you call that guarding?”

“Why so many words? Let us forgo a battle and settle the matter in single combat, the winner to take the Emperor and go.”

The two generals fought in front of their armies, but neither could prevail over the other.

Then they saw Yang Biao come riding up to them, crying, “Rest a while, O Commanders! For I have invited a party of officers to arrange a peace.”

Wherefore the two leaders retired to their camps. Soon Yang Biao, Zhu Jun, and sixty other officials came up and went to Guo Si’s camp. They were all thrown into confinement.

“We came with good intentions,” they moaned, “and we are treated like this.”

"Li Jue has run off with the Emperor; I have to have the officers,” said Guo Si.

“What does it mean? One has the Emperor, the other his officers. What do you want?” said Yang Biao.

Guo Si lost patience and drew his sword, but Commander Yang Mi persuaded him not to slay the speaker. Then Guo Si released Yang Biao and Zhu Jun but kept the others in the camp.

“She are we two officers of the Throne, and we cannot help our lord. We have been born in vain,” said Yang Biao to Zhu Jun.

Throwing their arms about each other, they wept and fell swooning to the earth. Zhu Jun went home, fell seriously ill and died.

Thereafter the two adversaries fought every day for nearly three months, each losing many soldiers.

Now Li Jue was irreligious and practiced magic. He often called witches to beat drums and summon spirits, even when in camp. Jia Xu used to remonstrate with him, but quite uselessly.

Yang Qi said to the Emperor, “That Jia Xu, although a friend of Li Jue, never seems to have lost the sense of loyalty to Your Majesty.”

Soon after Jia Xu himself arrived.

The Emperor sent away his attendants and said to Jia Xu, weeping the while, “Can you not pity the Hans and help me?”

Jia Xu prostrated himself, saying, “That is my dearest wish. But, Sire, say no more: Let thy servant work out a plan.”

The Emperor dried his tears, and soon Li Jue came in. He wore a sword by his side and strode straight up to the Emperor, whose face became the color of clay.

Then Li Jue spoke, “Guo Si has failed in his duty and
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same to the ‘Most Revered.’ Who is worse than the other?”

Li Jue angrily drew his sword and shouted, “Did the Son of Heaven send you to mock and shame me?”

But his commander, Yang Feng, checked him.

“Guo Si is still alive,” said Yang Feng, “and to slay the imperial messenger would be giving him a popular excuse to raise an army against you. And all the nobles would join him.”

Jia Xu also persuaded Li Jue, and gradually his wrath cooled down. Huangfu Li was urged to go away.

But Huangfu Li would not be satisfied with failure. As he went out of the camp, he cried loudly, “Li Jue will not obey the Emperor’s command. He will kill his prince to set up himself!”

Counselor Hu Miao tried to shut Huangfu Li’s mouth, saying, “Do not utter such words. You will only bring hurt upon yourself.”

But Huangfu Li shrieked at him also, saying, “You also are an officer of state, and yet you even back up the rebel. When the prince is put to shame, the minister dies. That is our code. If it be my lot to suffer death at the hands of Li Jue, so be it!”

And Huangfu Li imprisoned the court officers. He wished to slay Your Majesty, and you would have been captured but for me.”

The Emperor joined his hands together in salute and thanked Li Jue. Li Jue went away.

Before long Huangfu Li entered. The Emperor, knowing him as a man of persuasive tongue and that he came from the same county as Li Jue, bade him go to both factions to try to arrange peace.

Huangfu Li accepted the mission and first went to Guo Si, who said, “I would release the officers if Li Jue would restore the Emperor to full liberty.”

Huangfu Li then went to the other side. To Li Jue he said, “Since I am a Xiliang man, the Emperor and the officers have selected me to make peace between you and your adversary. Guo Si has consented to cease the quarrel. Will you agree to peace?”

“I overthrew Lu Bu; I have upheld the government for four years and have many great services to my credit as all the world knows. That other fellow, that horse-thief, has dared to seize the officers of state and to set himself up against me. I have sworn to slay him. Look around you. Do you not think my army large enough to break him?”

“It does not follow,” said Huangfu Li. “In ancient days in Youqiong, Hou Yi, proud of and confident in his archer’s skill, gave no thought to others and governed alone, and he so perished. Lately you yourself have seen the powerful Dong Zhuo betrayed by Lu Bu, who had received many benefits at his hands. In no time Dong Zhuo’s head was hanging over the gate. So you see mere force is not enough to ensure safety. Now you are a general, with the axes and whips and all the symbols of rank and high office; your descendants and all your clans occupy distinguished positions. You must confess that the state has rewarded you liberally. True, Guo Si has seized the officers of state, but you have done the
maintained a torrent of abuse. The Emperor heard of the incident, called in Huangfu Li and sent him away to his own country Xiliang.

Now more than half Li Jue’s troops were from Xiliang, and he had also the assistance of the Qiangs, the northern tribespeople beyond the border. When Huangfu Li spread that Li Jue was a rebel and so were those who helped him, and that there would be a day of heavy reckoning, those stories disturbed the soldiers.

Li Jue sent one of his officers, General Wang Chan of the Tiger Army, to arrest Huangfu Li; but Wang Chan had a sense of right and esteemed Huangfu Li as an honorable man. Instead of carrying out the orders, Wang Chan returned to say Huangfu Li could not be found.

Jia Xu tried to work on the feelings of the barbarian tribes. He said to them, “The Son of Heaven knows you are loyal to him and have bravely fought and suffered. He has issued a secret command for you to go home, and then he will reward you.”

The tribesmen had a grievance against Li Jue for not paying them, so they listened readily to the insidious persuasions of Jia Xu and deserted.

Then Jia Xu advised the Emperor, “Li Jue is covetous in nature. He is deserted and enfeebled. A high office should be granted to him to lead him astray.”

So the Emperor officially appointed Li Jue Regent Marshal. This delighted him greatly, and he ascribed his promotion to the potency of his wise witches’ prayers and incantations. He rewarded those people most liberally.

But his army was forgotten. Wherefore his commander, Yang Feng, was angry.

Yang Feng said to General Song Guo, “We have taken all the risks and exposed ourselves to stones and arrows in his service, yet instead of giving us any reward he ascribes all the credit to those witches of his.”

“Let us put him out of the way and rescue the Emperor,” said Song Guo.

“You explode a bomb within as signal, and I will attack from outside.”

So the two agreed to act together that very night in the second watch. But they had been overheard, and the eavesdropper told Li Jue. Song Guo was seized and put to death. That night Yang Feng waited outside for the signal and while waiting, out came Li Jue himself. Then a melee began, which lasted till the fourth watch. But Yang Feng got away and fled to Xian.

But from this time Li Jue’s army began to fall away, and he felt more than ever the losses caused by Guo Si’s frequent attacks. Then came news that Zhang Ji, at the head of a large army, was coming down from Shanxi to make peace between the two factions. Zhang Ji vowed he would attack the one who was recalcitrant. Li Jue tried to gain favor by hastening to send to tell Zhang Ji he was ready to make peace. So did Guo Si.

So the strife of the rival factions ended at
last, and Zhang Ji memorialized asking the Emperor to go to Hongnong near Luoyang.

The Emperor was delighted, saying, “I have longed to go back to the east.”

Zhang Ji was rewarded with the title of Commander of the Flying Cavalry and was highly honored. Zhang Ji saw to it that the Emperor and the court had good supplies of necessaries. Guo Si set free all his captive officers, and Li Jue prepared transport for the court to move to the east. Li Jue told off companies of his Royal Guard to escort the cavalcade.

The progress had been without incident as far as Xinfeng. Near Baling Bridge the west wind of autumn came on to blow with great violence, but soon above the howling of the gale was heard the trampling of a large body of force. They stopped at a bridge and barred the way.

“Who comes?” cried a voice.

“The Imperial Chariot is passing, and who dares stop it?” said Yang Qi, riding forward.

Two leaders of the barring party advanced to Yang Qi, saying, “General Guo Si has ordered us to guard the bridge and stop all spies. You say the Emperor is here: We must see him, and then we will let you pass.”

So the pearl curtain was raised and the Emperor said, “I, the Emperor, am here. Why do you not retire to let me pass, gentlemen?”

They all shouted, “Wan shui! Long Life! Long Life!” and fell away to allow the cortege through.

But when they reported what they had done, Guo Si was very angry, saying, “I meant to outwit Zhang Ji, seize the Emperor, and hold him in Meiwo. Why have you let him get away?”

He put the two officers to death, set out to pursue the cavalcade, and overtook it just at the county of Huaying.
Then the cavalcade went forward, Yang Feng acting as escort as far as the city of Huaying, the halting place for the night. The Commander of the place, Duan Wei, supplied them with clothing and food. And the Emperor passed the night in Yang Feng’s camp.

Next day Guo Si, having mustered his troops, appeared in front of the camp, and Xu Huang rode out to engage. But Guo Si threw his army out so that they entirely surrounded the camp, and the Emperor was in the middle. The position was very critical, when help appeared in the person of a galloping general from the southeast, and the rebels fell away at his assault. Then Xu Huang smote them and so scored a victory.

When they had time to see their helper, they found him to be Dong Cheng, the uncle of the Emperor or the “State Uncle”. The Emperor wept as he related his sorrows and dangers.

Said Dong Cheng, “Be of good courage, Sire. General Yang Feng and I have pledged ourselves to kill both the rebels Li Jue and Guo Si and so purify the world.”

The Emperor bade them travel east as soon as possible, and so they went on night and day till they reached their destination Hongnong.

Guo Si led his defeated army back. Meeting Li Jue, he told Li Jue of the rescue of the Emperor and whither they was going.

“If they reach the Huashang Mountains and get settled in the east, they will send out proclamations to the whole country, calling up the nobles to attack us, and we and our families will be in danger,” said Guo Si.

“Zhang Ji is holding Changan, and we must be careful. There is nothing to prevent a joint attack on Hongnong, when we can kill the Emperor and divide the empire between us,”
These three, being promised pardon for their faults and crimes and a grant of official rank, naturally responded to the call, and thus the loyal side was strengthened so that Hongnong was recaptured. But meanwhile Li Jue and Guo Si laid waste whatever place they reached, slaying the aged and weakly, forcing the strong to join their ranks. When going into a fight they forced these people-soldiers to the front, and they called them the “Dare-to-Die” soldiers.

Li Jue and Guo Si’s force was overwhelming. When Li Yue, the White Wave leader, approached with his army, Guo Si bade his soldiers scatter clothing and valuables along the road. The late robbers could not resist the temptation, so a scramble began. Then Guo Si’s soldiers fell upon the disordered ranks and did much damage. Yang Feng and Dong Cheng had to take the Emperor away to the north. Li Jue and Guo Si pursued.

Li Yue said, “The danger is grave. I pray Your Majesty mount a horse and go in advance.”

The Emperor replied, “I cannot bear to abandon my officers.”

They wept and struggled on as best they could. The White Wave leader Hu Cai was killed in one attack.

The enemy came very near, and the Emperor left his carriage and went on foot. Yang Feng and Dong Cheng escorted him to the bank of the Yellow River. Li Yue sought
a boat to ferry him to the other side. The weather was very
cold and the Emperor and Empress cuddled up close to each
other shivering. They reached the river but the banks were
too high, and they could not get down into the boat. So
Yang Feng proposed to fasten together the horses’ bridle
and lower down the Emperor slung by the waist. However,
the Empress’ brother, Fu De, found some rolls of white silk
from dead soldiers, and they rolled up the two imperial
personages in the silk, and thus they lowered them down
near the boat. Then Li Yue took up his position in the prow
leaning on his sword. Fu De carried the Empress on his
back into the boat.

The boat was too small to carry everybody, and those
unable to get on board clung to the cable, but Li Yue cut
them down, and they fell into the water. They ferried over
the Emperor and then sent back the boat for the others.
There was a great scramble to get on board, and they had
to chop off the fingers and hands of those who persisted in
clinging to the boat. The lamentation rose to the heavens.

When they mustered on the farther bank, many were
missing, only a dozen of the Emperor’s suite were left. Yang
Feng found a bullock cart and transported the Emperor and
Empress to Dayang. They had no food and at night sought
shelter in a poor, tile-roofed house. The cottagers gave them
some boiled millet but it was too coarse to be swallowed.

Next day the Emperor conferred titles on those who had
protected him. Li Yue was made General Who Conquers the
North, and Han Xian was appointed General Who Conquers
the East.

The flight continued. Soon two officers of rank came up
with the cortege, and they bowed before His Majesty with
many tears. They were Imperial Guardian Yang Biao and
Minister Han Rong. The Emperor and Empress lifted up
their voices and wept with them.

Said Han Rong to his colleague, “The rebels have
confidence in my words. You stay as guard of the Emperor,
and I will take my life in my hands and try to bring about
peace.”

After Han Rong had gone, the Emperor rested for a time
in Yang Feng’s camp. But Yang Biao requested the Emperor
to head for Anyi and make the capital there. When the train
reached the town, they found it containing not a single lofty
building, and the court lived in grass huts devoid even of
doors. They surrounded these with a fence of thorns as a
protection, and within this the Emperor held counsel with
his ministers. The soldiers camped round the fence.

Now Li Yue and his fellow ruffians showed their true
colors. They wielded the powers of the Emperor as they
wished, and officials who offended them were beaten or
abused even in the presence of the Emperor. They purposely
provided thick wine and coarse food for the Emperor’s
consumption. He struggled to swallow what they sent. Li
Yue and Han Xian joined in recommending to the Throne
the names of convicts, common soldiers, sorcerers, leeches,
and such people who thus obtained official ranks. There
were more than two hundred of such people. As seals could
not be engraved, pieces of metal were hammered into some sort of a shape. Court affairs had never degraded to such a low point.

Now Han Rong went to see Li Jue and Guo Si. After listening to his vigorous persuasions, the two rebel generals agreed to set free the officials and Palace people.

A famine occurred that same year and people were reduced to eating grass from the roadside. Starving, they wandered hither and thither. But food and clothing were sent to the Emperor from the governor of Henei, Zhang Yang, and the governor of Hedong, Wang Yi, and the court began to enjoy a little repose.

Dong Cheng and Yang Feng sent laborers to restore the palaces in Luoyang with the intention of moving the court thither. Li Yue was opposed to this.

Dong Cheng argued, “Luoyang is the original capital as opposed to the paltry town of Anyi. Removal would be but reasonable.”

Li Yue wound up by saying, “You may get the court to remove, but I shall remain here.”

But when the consent of the Emperor had been given and a start made, Li Yue secretly sent to arrange with Li Jue and Guo Si to capture the Emperor. However, this plot leaked out and the escort so arranged as to prevent such a thing, and they pressed on to the pass at Zhiguan Hills as rapidly as possible. Li Yue heard this, and without waiting for his rebel colleagues to join him set out to act alone.

About the fourth watch, just as the cavalcade was passing Zhiguan Hills, a voice was heard shouting, “Stop those carriages! Li Jue and Guo Si are here!”

This frightened the Emperor greatly, and his terror increased when he saw the whole mountain side suddenly light up. Indeed:

*The rebel party, erstwhile split in twain, To work their wicked will now join three again.*

How the Son of Heaven escaped this peril will be told in the next chapter.
Chapter 14
Cao Cao Moves The Court To Xuchang;
Lu Bu Night-Raids Xuzhou.

The last chapter closed with the arrival of Li Yue who shouted out falsely that the army was that of the two arch rebels Li Jue and Guo Si come to capture the imperial cavalcade. But Yang Feng recognized the voice of Li Yue and bade Xu Huang go out to fight him. Xu Huang went and in the first bout the traitor fell. The White Wave rebels scattered, and the travelers got safely through Zhiguan Hills. Here the Governor of Henei, Zhang Yang, supplied them plentifully with food and other necessaries and escorted the Emperor to Zhidao. For his timely help, the Emperor conferred upon Zhang Yang the rank of a Grand Commander. Yang Feng moved his army to the northeast of Luoyang and camped at Yewang.

Capital Luoyang was presently entered. Within the walls all was destruction. The palaces and halls had been burned, the streets were overgrown with grass and brambles and obstructed by heaps of ruins. The palaces and courts were represented by broken roofs and toppling walls. A small “palace” however was soon built, and therein the officers of court presented their congratulations, standing in the open air among thorn hushes and brambles. The reign style was changed from Prosperous Stability to Rebuilt Tranquillity, the first year (AD 196).

The year was grievous with famine. The Luoyang people, even reduced in numbers as they were to a few hundreds, had not enough to eat and they prowled about stripping the bark off trees and grubbing up the roots of plants to satisfy their starving hunger. Officers of the government of all but the highest ranks went out into the country to gather fuel. Many people were crushed by the falling walls of burned houses. At no time during the decadence of Han did misery press harder than at this period.

A poem written in pity for the sufferings of that time says:

Mortally wounded, the white serpent poured forth its life blood at Mangdang Hills;
Blood-red pennons of war waved then in every quarter,
Chieftain with chieftain strove and raided each other’s borders,
Midst the turmoil and strife the Kingship even was threatened.

Wickedness stalks in a country when the King is a weakling,
Brigandage always is rife, when a dynasty’s failing,
Had one a heart of iron, wholly devoid of feeling,
Yet would one surely grieve at the sight of such desolation.

Imperial Guardian Yang Biao memorialized the Throne, saying, “The decree issued to me some time ago has never been acted upon. Now Cao Cao is very strong in the east of Huashang Mountains, and it would be well to associate him in the government that he might support the ruling house.”

The Emperor replied, “There was no need to refer to the
announced with the very command Cao Cao wanted, and Cao Cao immediately set out.

At Luoyang everything was desolate. The walls had fallen, and there were no means of rebuilding them, while rumors and reports of the coming of Li Jue and Guo Si kept up a state of constant anxiety.

The frightened Emperor spoke with Yang Feng, saying, “What can be done? There is no answer from the East of Huashang, and our enemies are near.”

Then Yang Feng and Han Xian said, “We, your ministers, will fight to the death for you.”

But Dong Cheng said, “The fortifications are weak and our military resources small, so that we cannot hope for victory, and what does defeat mean? I see nothing better to propose than a move into the east of Huashang Mountains.”

The Emperor agreed to this, and the journey began without further preparation. There being few horses, the officers of the court had to march afoot. Hardly a bowshot outside the gate they saw a thick cloud of dust out of which came all the clash and clamor of an advancing army.

The Emperor and his Consort were dumb with fear. Then appeared a horseman; he was the messenger returning from the East of Huashang Mountains.

He rode up to the chariot, made an obeisance, and said, “General Cao Cao, as commanded, is coming with all the military force of the East of Huashang; but hearing that Li Jue and Guo Si had again approached the capital, he has sent Xiahou Dun in advance. With Xiahou Dun are many capable leaders and fifty thousand of proved soldiers. They will guard Your Majesty.”

All fear was swept away. Soon after Xiahou Dun and his staff arrived. Xiahou Dun, Xu Chu, and Dian Wei were presented to the Emperor who graciously addressed them. Then one came to say a large army was approaching from

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1 Duke Wen of Jin (reigned 636-628 BC) was ruler of the western state of Jin during the Spring and Autumn period. He and his successors made Jin a dominant state for nearly 200 years.

2 The Qin Dynasty ended in BC 206. From BC 206 to BC 202, there was actually no emperor in China; and the principal event in this period of anarchy was what we call the Strife between Chu and Han. It was a continuous conflict between Xiang Yu and Liu Bang, the former a native of Wu, and the latter of Pei. Both of them had been lieutenants under King Huai of Chu. This King, aka Emperor Yi, was a descendant of the old ruling house of the state of Chu, and during the troubles attending the breakup of the Qin empire, he set up a kingdom on the ruins. Xiang Yu eventually became the leader of Chu army; and he allegedly had King Huai murdered. Liu Bang, now a leader of Han army, mourned King Huai’s death to show his loyal heart.
the east, and at the Emperor’s command Xiahou Dun went
to ascertain who these were. He soon returned saying they
were Cao Cao’s infantry.

In a short time Cao Hong, Li Dian, and Yue Jing came
to the imperial chariot and their names having been duly
communicated.

Cao Hong said, “When my brother, Cao Cao, heard of
the approach of the rebels, he feared that the advance guard
he had sent might be too weak, so he sent me to march
quickly for reinforcement.”

“General Cao Cao is indeed a trusty servant!” said the
Emperor.

Orders were given to advance, Cao Hong leading the
escort. By and by scouts came to say that the rebels were
coming up very quickly. The Emperor bade Xiahou Dun
divide his force into two parts to oppose them. Xiahou Dun
and Cao Hong’s armies threw out two wings with cavalry in
front and foot behind. They attacked with vigor and beat off
the Li Jue and
Guo Si’s
rebels with
severe loss of
ten thousand.
Then Xiahou
Dun and Cao
Hong begged
the Emperor to
return to Luoyang, and Xiahou Dun guarded the city.

Next day Cao Cao came with his great army, and having
got them duly camped he went into the city to audience.
He knelt at the foot of the steps, but was called up hither to
stand beside the Emperor and be thanked.

Cao Cao replied, “Having been the recipient of great
bounty, thy servant owes the state much gratitude. The
measure of evil of the two rebels is full, I have two hundred
thousand of good soldiers to oppose them, and those soldiers
are fully equal to securing the safety of Your Majesty and
the Throne. The preservation of the state sacrifice is the
matter of real moment.”

High honors were conferred on Cao Cao. He was
appointed Commander of Capital District, Minister of War,
and granted Military Insignia.

The two rebels, Li Jue and Guo Si, wished to attack Cao
Cao’s army while fatigued from its long march. But their
adviser, Jia Xu, opposed this, saying, “There was no hope
of victory. He has both strong soldiers and brave leaders.
Submission may bring us amnesty.”

Li Jue was angry at the suggestion, crying, “Do you
wish to dishearten the
army?”

And he drew his
sword on Jia Xu. But
the other officers
interceded and saved
the adviser. That same
night Jia Xu stole out
of the camp and, quite
alone, took his way home to his native village.

Soon the rebels decided to offer battle. In reply, Cao
Cao sent out Xu Chu, Cao Ren, and Dian Wei with three
hundred horse. These three leaders dashed into the rebels
army but quickly retired. This maneuver was repeated, and
again repeated before the real battle array was formed.

Then Li Xian and Li Bie, nephews of Li Jue, wished to attack Cao
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hundred horse. These three leaders dashed into the rebels
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again repeated before the real battle array was formed.

Then Li Xian and Li Bie, nephews of Li Jue, rode out. At
once from Cao Cao’s side dashed out Xu Chu and cut down
Li Xian. Li Bie was so startled that he fell out of the saddle.
He too was slain. The victor Xu Chu rode back to his own
side with the two heads.
When Xu Chu offered them to the chief, Cao Cao patted him on the back, crying, “You are really my Fan Kuai?!"

Next a general move forward was made, Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong leading the two wings and Cao Cao in the center. They advanced to the roll of the drum. The rebels fell back before them and presently fled. They pursued, Cao Cao himself leading, sword in hand. The slaughter went on till night. Ten thousands were killed and many more surrendered. Li Jue and Guo Si went west, flying in panic like dogs from a falling house. Having no place of refuge they took to the hills and hid among the brushwood.

Cao Cao’s army returned and camped again near the capital.

Then Yang Feng and Han Xian said one to another, “This Cao Cao has done a great service, and he will be the man in power. There will be no place for us.”

So they represented to the Emperor that they wished to pursue the rebels, and under this excuse withdrew their army and camped at Daliang.

One day the Emperor sent to summon Cao Cao to audience. The messenger was called in. Cao Cao noticed that the messenger looked remarkably well and could not understand it seeing that everyone else looked hungry and famine stricken.

3Fan Kuai (BC ?-189) a brave general of Liu Bang. He and Liu Bang had been close friends in their native Pei, where he was a butcher and Liu Bang later held a minor office. Enobled as Lord of Zuo.

So Cao Cao said, “You look plump and well, Sir, how do you manage it?”

“Only this: I have lived meager for thirty years.”

Cao Cao nodded, “What office do you hold?”

“I am a graduate recommended for filial piety and honesty. I had offices under Yuan Shao and Zhang Yang, but came here when the Emperor returned. Now I am one of the secretaries. I am a native of Dingtao, and my name is Dong Zhao.”

Cao Cao got up from his place and crossed over, saying, “I have heard of you. How happy I am to meet you!”

Then wine was brought into the tent, and Xun Yu was called in and introduced. While they were talking, a man came in to report that a party was moving eastward. Cao Cao ordered to find out whose people these were, but Dong Zhao knew at once.

“They are old leaders under the rebels, Yang Feng and the White Wave General Han Xian. They are running off because you have come, Illustrious Sir!”

“Do they mistrust me?” said Cao Cao.

“They are not worthy of your attention. They are a poor lot.”

“What of this departure of Li Jue and Guo Si?”

“Tigers without claws, birds without wings---they will not escape you very long. They are not worth thinking about.”

Cao Cao saw that he and his guest had much in common, so he began to talk of affairs of state.

Said Dong Zhao, “You, Illustrious Sir, with your noble army have swept away rebellion and have become the mainstay of the Throne, an achievement worthy of the ancient Five Protectors. But the officials will look at it in very different ways and not all favorably to you. I think you would not be wise to remain here, and I advise a change of
Cao Cao seized his hands once more, saying, “I shall need your advice in future affairs.”

Dong Zhao thanked and left. Thereafter Cao Cao and his advisers secretly discussed the change of capital.

Now Court Counselor Wang Li, who was an astrologer, said to Liu Cai, Royal Clan Recorder, “I have been studying the stars. Since last spring Venus has been nearing the Guard star in the neighborhood of the Measure, and the Cowherd (the Great Bear and Vega) crossing the River of Heaven. Mars has been retrograding and came into conjunction with Venus in the Gate of Heaven, so that metal (Venus) and fire (Mars) are mingled. Thence must emerge a new ruler. The aura of the Hans is exhausted, and the ancient states of Jin and Wei must increase.”

A secret memorial was presented to the Emperor, saying:

“The Mandate of Heaven has its course and the five elements---metal, wood, water, fire, and earth---are out of proportion. Earth attacking fire is Wei attacking Han, and the successor to the empire of Han is in Wei.”

Cao Cao heard of these sayings and memorials and sent a man to the astrologer to say, “Your loyalty is well known, but the ways of Heaven are past finding out. The less said the better.”

Then Cao Cao discussed with Xun Yu.

The adviser expounded the meaning thus: “The virtue of Han was fire; your element is earth. Xuchang is under the influence of earth, and so your fortune depends on getting capital to Xuchang. However, it must be remembered that the restoration of the capital has been published far and wide and the attention of all the people is concentrated on Luoyang, hoping for a period of rest and tranquillity. Another move will displease many. However, the performance of extraordinary deed may mean the acquisition of extraordinary merit. It is for you to decide.”

“Exactly my own inclination!” said Cao Cao, seizing his guest’s hand. “But are there not dangers? Yang Feng at Daliang and the court officials!”

“That is easily managed. Write to Yang Feng and set his mind at rest. Then say to the high officials plainly that there is no food in the capital here, and so you are going to another place where there is, and where there is no danger of scarcity. When they hear it, they will approve.”

Cao Cao had now decided; and as his guest took leave,

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4Jin state occupied the western part of the empire, in the mountainous area north of the Yellow River. During the Spring and Autumn period, under the leadership of Duke Wen and his successors, Jin grew into a very large state, which broke into three states in the Warring States period.

5Wei was a state in the Warring States period. Wei came into existence after the partition of Jin. Succeeded Jin in dominating the empire.
there. Fire can overcome earth, as earth can multiply wood. Dong Zhao and Wang Li agree, and you have only to hide your time.”

So Cao Cao made up his mind.

Next day at court he said, “Luoyang is deserted and cannot be restored, nor can it be supplied easily with food. Xuchang is a noble city, resourceful and close to Luoyang, which is a grain basin. It is everything that a capital should be. I venture to request that the court move thither.”

The Emperor dared not oppose and the officials were too overawed to have any independent opinion, so they chose a day to set out. Cao Cao commanded the escort, and the officials all followed. When they had traveled a few stages they saw before them a high mound and from behind this there arose the beating of drums.

Then Yang Feng and Han Xian came out and barred the way. In front of all stood Xu Huang, who shouted, “Cao Cao is stealing away the Emperor!”

Cao Cao rode out and took a good look at this man. He seemed a fine fellow; and in his secret soul Cao Cao greatly admired him, although he was an enemy. Then Cao Cao ordered Xu Chu to go and fight Xu Huang. The combat was battle-ax against broadsword, and the two men fought more than half a hundred bouts without advantage to either side. Cao Cao then beat the gongs and drew off his troops.

In the camp a council was called. Cao Cao said, “The two rebels themselves need not be discussed; but Xu Huang is a fine general, and I was unwilling to use any great force against him. I want to win him over to our side.”

Then stepped out Man Chong, replying, “Do not let that trouble you. I will have a word with him. I shall disguise myself as a soldier this evening and steal over to the enemy’s
That night Man Chong, duly disguised, got over to the other side and made his way to the tent of Xu Huang, who sat there by the light of a candle. Xu Huang was still wearing his coat of mail.

Suddenly Man Chong ran out in front and saluted, saying, “You have been well since we parted, old friend?”

Xu Huang jumped up in surprise, gazed into the face of the speaker a long time, and presently said, “What! You are Man Chong of Shanyang? What are you doing here?”

“I am an officer in General Cao Cao’s army. Seeing my old friend out in front of the army today, I wanted to say a word to him. So I took the risk of stealing in this evening and here I am.”

Xu Huang invited Man Chong in, and they sat down.

Then said Man Chong, “There are very few as bold as you on the earth. Why then do you serve such as your present chiefs, Yang Feng and Han Xian? My master is the most prominent man in the world—a man who delights in wise people and appreciates soldiers as everyone knows. Your valor today won his entire admiration, and so he took care that the attack was not vigorous enough to sacrifice you. Now he has sent me to invite you to join him. Will you not leave darkness for light and help him in his magnificent task?”

Xu Huang sat a long time pondering over the offer.

Then he said, with a sigh, “I know my masters are doomed to failure, but I have followed their fortunes a long time and do not like to leave them.”

“But you know the prudent bird selects its tree, and the wise servant chooses his master. When one meets a worthy master and lets him go, one is very reckless.”

“I am willing to do what you say,” said Xu Huang, rising.

“Why not put these two to death as an introductory gift?” said Man Chong.

“It is very wrong for a servant to slay his master. I will not do that.”

“True; you are really a good man.”

Then Xu Huang, taking only a few horsemen of his own men with him, left that night and deserted to Cao Cao. Soon someone took the news to Yang Feng, who at the head of a thousand strong horsemen, set out to capture the deserter.

As they drew close, Yang Feng called out, “Betrayer! Stop there!”

But Yang Feng fell into an ambush. Suddenly the whole mountain side was lit up with torches and out sprang Cao Cao’s troops, he himself being in command.

“I have been waiting here a long time. Do not run away!” cried Cao Cao.

Yang Feng was completely surprised and tried to draw off, but was quickly surrounded. Then Han Xian came to his rescue, and a confused battle began. Yang Feng succeeded in escaping, while Cao Cao kept up the attack on the two
disordered armies. A great number of the rebels gave in, and the leaders found they had too few men left to maintain their independence, so they betook themselves to Yuan Shu.

When Cao Cao returned to camp, the newly surrendered general was presented and well received. Then again the cavalcade set out for the new capital. In due time they reached Xuchang, and they built palaces and halls, an ancestral temple and an altar, terraces and public offices. The walls were repaired, storehouses built and all put in order.

Then came the rewards for Cao Cao’s adherents and others. Dong Cheng and thirteen others were raised to rank of lordship. All good service was rewarded; certain others again, who deserved it, were punished, all according to Cao Cao’s sole decision.

Cao Cao himself was made Prime Minister, Regent Marshal, and Lord of Wuping. Xun Yu was made Imperial Counselor and Chair of the Secretariat; Xun You, Minister of War; Guo Jia, Minister of Rites and Religion; Liu Ye, Minister of Works; Mao Jie, Minister of Agriculture, and together with Ren Jun, they were put over the supervision of military farms and stores. Cheng Yu was appointed Lord of Dongping; Dong Zhao, Magistrate of Luoyang; Man Chong, Magistrate of Xuchang. Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Cao Ren, Cao Hong, Lu Qian, Li Dian, Yue Jing, Yu Jin, and Xu Huang were made Commanders; Xu Chu and Dian Wei, Commanders of Capital District. All good service received full recognition.

Cao Cao was then the one man of the court. All memorials went first to him and were then submitted to the Throne. When state matters were in order, Cao Cao gave a great banquet in his private quarters to all his advisers, and affairs outside the capital were the subject of discussion.

Then Cao Cao said, “Liu Bei has his army at Xuzhou, and he carries on the administration of the region. Lu Bu fled to Liu Bei when defeated, and Liu Bei gave Lu Bu Xiaopei to live in. If these two agreed to join forces and attack, my position would be most serious. What precautions can be taken?”

Then rose Xu Chu, saying, “Give me fifty thousand of picked soldiers, and I will give the Prime Minister both their heads.”

Xun Yu said, “O Leader, you are brave, but we must consider the present circumstance. We cannot start a sudden war just as the capital has been changed. However, there is a certain ruse known as ‘Rival Tigers and One Prey.’ Liu Bei has no decree authorizing him to govern the region. You, Sir Prime Minister, can procure one for him, and when sending it, and so conferring upon him right in addition to his might, you can enclose a private note telling him to get rid of Lu Bu. If he does, then he will have lost a
vigorous warrior from his side, and he could be dealt with as occasions serve. Should he fail, then Lu Bu will slay him. This is 'Rival Tigers and One Prey' ruse; they wrangle and bite each other.”

Cao Cao agreed that this was a good plan, so he memorialized for the formal appointment, which he sent to Liu Bei. Liu Bei was created General Who Conquers the East, Lord of Yicheng, and Imperial Protector of Xuzhou as well. At the same time a private note was enclosed.

In Xuzhou, when Liu Bei heard of the change of capital, he began to prepare a congratulatory address. In the midst of this an imperial messenger was announced and was met which all ceremony outside the gate. When the epistle had been reverently received, a banquet was prepared for the messenger.

The messenger said, “This decree was obtained for you by Prime Minister Cao Cao.”

Liu Bei thanked him. Then the messenger drew forth his secret letter.

After reading it, Liu Bei said, “This matter can be easily arranged.”

The banquet over and the messenger conducted to his lodging to seek repose. Liu Bei, before going to rest, called in his councilors to consider the letter.

“There need be no compunction about putting him to death,” said Zhang Fei. “Lu Bu is a bad man.”

“But he came to me for protection in his weakness: How can I put him to death? That would be immoral,” said Liu Bei.

“If he was a good man, it would be difficult,” replied Zhang Fei.

Liu Bei would not consent.

Next day, when Lu Bu came to offer congratulations, he was received as usual. He said, “I have come to felicitate you on the receipt of the imperial bounty.”

Liu Bei thanked him in due form. But then he saw Zhang Fei draw his sword and come up the hall as if to slay Lu Bu. Liu Bei hastily interfered and stopped Zhang Fei.

Lu Bu was surprised and said, “Why do you wish to slay me, Zhang Fei?”

“Cao Cao says you are immoral and tells my brother to kill you,” shouted Zhang Fei.

Liu Bei shouted again and again to Zhang Fei to go away, and he led Lu Bu into the private apartments out of the way. Then he told Lu Bu the whole story and showed him the secret letter.

Lu Bu wept as he finished reading, “This is that miscreant’s scheme for sowing discord between us.”

“Be not anxious, elder brother,” said Liu Bei. “I pledge myself not to be guilty of such an infamous crime.”

Lu Bu again and again expressed his gratitude, and Liu Bei kept him for a time. They remained talking and drinking wine till late.

Said Guan Yu and Zhang Fei later, “Why not kill him?”

Liu Bei said, “Because Cao Cao fears that Lu Bu and I may attack him, he is trying to separate us and get us to swallow each other, while he steps in and takes the advantage. Is there any other reason?”
Guan Yu nodded assent, but Zhang Fei said, “I want to get him out of the way lest he trouble us later.”

“That is not what a noble man should do,” said his elder brother.

Soon the messenger was dismissed and returned to the capital with a the reply from Liu Bei. The letter only said the instruction would take time to plan and implement. But the messenger, when he saw Cao Cao, told him the story of Liu Bei’s pledge to Lu Bu.

Then said Cao Cao, “The plan has failed. What next?”

Xun Yu replied, “I have another trick called ‘Tiger against Wolf’ in which the tiger is made to gobble up the wolf.”

“Let us hear it,” said Cao Cao.

“Send to Yuan Shu to say that Liu Bei has sent up a secret memorial to the Throne that he wishes to subdue the southern regions around the Huai River. Yuan Shu will be angry and attack him. Then you will order Liu Bei to dispose of Yuan Shu and so set them destroying each other. Lu Bu will certainly think that is his chance and turn traitor. This is the ‘Tiger against Wolf’ trick.”

Cao Cao thought this good and sent the messenger and also sent a false edict to Liu Bei. When this came, the messenger was received with all the ceremonies, and the edict ordered the capture of Yuan Shu. After the departure of the bearer, Liu Bei called Mi Zhu who pronounced it a ruse.

“It may be,” said Liu Bei, “but the royal command is not to be disobeyed.”

So the army was prepared and the day fixed.

Sun Qian said, “A trusty man must be left on guard of the city.”

And Liu Bei asked which of his brothers would undertake this task.

“I will guard the city,” said Guan Yu.
Ji Ling was a native of the East of Huashang. He used a very heavy three-edged sword.

After he had made his camp, he rode out and began abusing his opponents, shouting, “Liu Bei, you rustic bumpkin, how dare you invade this land?”

“I have a decree ordering me to destroy the Governor who behaves improperly. If you oppose, you will be assuredly punished,” replied Liu Bei.

Ji Ling angrily rode out brandishing his weapon.

But Guan Yu cried, “Fool, do not attempt to fight!”

And Guan Yu rode out to meet him. Then they two fought and after thirty bouts neither had an advantage. Then Ji Ling cried out for a rest. So Guan Yu turned his horse away, rode back to his own array and waited for Ji Ling.

When the moment came to renew the combat, Ji Ling sent out one of his officers, Xun Zheng, to take his place.

But Guan Yu said, “Tell Ji Ling to come. I must settle with him who shall be tiger and who shall be deer.”

“You, a reputationless leader and unworthy to fight with our general,” replied Xun Zheng.

This reply angered Guan Yu, who made just one attack on Xun Zheng and brought him to the ground. At this success Liu Bei urged on the army, and Ji Ling’s troops were defeated. They retired to the mouth of the River Huaiyin and declined all challenges.

However, many of their troops were sent into Liu Bei’s camp for harassment, and many of them were slain. The two armies thus stood facing each other.

In Xuzhou, after Liu Bei had started on his expedition, Zhang Fei placed his colleague and helper, Chen Deng, in charge of the administration of the region, keeping military affairs under his own supervision. After thinking over the matter or some time, he gave a banquet to all the military officers.

When they were all seated, he made a speech: “Before my brother left, he bade me keep clear of the wine cup for fear of accidents. Now, gentlemen, you may drink deep today. But from tomorrow wine is forbidden, for we must keep the city safe. So take your fill.”

And with this he and all his guests rose to drink together.

The wine bearer came to Cao Bao who declined it, saying, “I never drink as I am forbidden of heaven.”

“What! A fighting man does not drink wine!” said the host. “I want you to take just one cup.”

Cao Bao was afraid to offend, so he drank.

Now Zhang Fei drank huge goblets with all his guests on every hand and so swallowed a huge quantity of liquor. He became quite intoxicated. Yet he would drink more and insisted on a cup with every guest. It came to the turn of Cao Bao
who declined.
   “Really, I cannot drink,” said Cao Bao.
   “You drank just now: Why refuse this time?”
   Zhang Fei pressed him, but still Cao Bao resisted.

   Then Zhang Fei in his drunken madness lost control of his temper and said, “If you disobey the orders of your general, you shall be beaten one hundred strokes.”

   And he called in his guards. Here Chen Deng interfered reminding him of the strict injunctions of his brother.
   “You civilians attend to your civil business and leave us alone,” said Zhang Fei.

   The only way of escape for the guest was to beg remission, and Cao Bao did so, saying, “Sir, if you saw my son-in-law’s face, you would pardon me.”
   “Who is your son-in-law?”
   “Lu Bu.”
   “I did not mean to have you really beaten; but if you think to frighten me with Lu Bu, I will. I will beat you as if I was beating him,” said Zhang Fei.

   The guests interposed to beg him off, but their drunken host was obdurate, and the unhappy guest received fifty blows. Then at the earnest prayers of the others the remainder of the punishment was remitted.

   The banquet came to an end, and the beaten Cao Bao went away burning with resentment. That night he sent a letter to Xiaopei relating the insults he had received from Zhang Fei. The letter told Lu Bu of Liu Bei’s absence and proposed that a sudden raid should be made that very night before Zhang Fei had recovered from his drunken fit. Lu Bu at once summoned Chen Gong and told him.
   “Xiaopei is only a place to occupy temporarily,” said Chen Gong. “If you can seize Xuzhou, do so. It is a good chance.”

   Lu Bu got ready at once and soon on the way with five hundred cavalrmen, ordering Chen Gong and Gao Shun to follow him with the main body.

   Xiaopei being only about fifteen miles away, Lu Bu was under the walls at the fourth watch. It was clear moonlight. No one on the ramparts saw him.

   Lu Bu came up close to the wall and called out, “Liu Bei’s secret messenger has arrived!”

   The guards on the wall were Cao Bao’s people, and they called him. Cao Bao came, and when he saw who was there he ordered the gates to be opened. Lu Bu gave the secret signal, and the soldiers entered shouting.

   Zhang Fei was in his apartment sleeping off the fumes of wine. His servants hastened to arouse him and told him an enemy had got the gates open.

   They said, “Lu Bu got in, and there is fighting in the city.”

   Zhang Fei savagely got into his armor and laid hold of his mighty serpent halberd. But as
he was mounting his horse at the gate, the attacking soldiers came up. He rushed at them but being still half intoxicated made but a poor fight. Lu Bu knowing Zhang Fei’s prowess did not press him hard, and Zhang Fei made his way, with eighteen leading Guards of Yan, to the east gate, and there went out, leaving Liu Bei’s family to their fate.

Cao Bao, seeing Zhang Fei had but a very small force and was still half drunk as well, came in pursuit. Zhang Fei saw who it was and was mad with rage. He galloped toward Cao Bao and drove him off after a few passes. He followed Cao Bao to the moat and wounded him in the back. Cao Bao’s frightened steed carried its master into the moat, and he was drowned.

Once well outside the city Zhang Fei collected his troops, and they rode off toward the south direction.

Lu Bu having surprised the city set himself to restore order. He put a guard over the residence of Liu Bei so that no one should disturb the family.

Zhang Fei with his few followers went to his brother’s camp at Xuyi and told his story of treachery and surprise. All were greatly distressed.

“Success is not worth rejoicing over; failure is not worth grieving over,” said Liu Bei with a sigh.

“Where are our sisters?” asked Guan Yu.

“They shared the fate of the city.”

Liu Bei nodded his head and was silent.

Guan Yu with an effort controlled his reproaches and said, “What did you say when you promised to guard the city, and what orders did our brother give you? Now the city is lost and therewith our sisters-in-law. Have you done well?”

Zhang Fei was overwhelmed by remorse. He drew his sword to kill himself.

*He raised the cup in pledge,*  
*None might say nay;*  
*Remorseful, drew the sword,*  
*Himself to slay.*

Zhang Fei’s fate will be told in the next chapter.
Chapter 15
Taishi Ci Fights With The Little Prince; Sun Ce Cuts Short The White Tiger King.

In the last chapter it was recorded that Zhang Fei was about to end his life with his own weapon in Xuyi.

But Liu Bei rushed forward and caught Zhang Fei in his arms, snatched away the sword, and threw it on the earth, saying, “Brothers are as hands and feet; wives and children are as clothing. You may mend your torn dress, but who can reattach a lost limb? We three, by the Oath of the Peach Garden, swore to seek the same death day. The city is lost, it is true, and my wives and little ones, but I could not bear that we should die ere our course be run. Beside, Xuzhou was not really ours, and Lu Bu will not harm my family but will rather seek to preserve them. You made a mistake, worthy brother, but is it one deserving of death?”

And Liu Bei wept. His brothers were much affected and their tears fell in sympathy.

As soon as the news of Lu Bu’s successful seizure of his protector’s region reached Yuan Shu, Yuan Shu sent promises of valuable presents to Lu Bu to induce him to join in a further attack on Liu Bei. The presents are said to have been fifty thousand carts of grain, five hundred horses, ten thousand ounces of gold and silver, and a thousand rolls of colored silk.

Lu Bu swallowed the bait and ordered Gao Shun to lead forth fifty thousand troops. But Liu Bei heard of the threatened attack, so he made inclement weather an excuse to moved his few soldiers out of Xuyi for Guangling, before the attacking force came up.

However, Gao Shun demanded the promised reward through Ji Ling, who put Gao Shun off, saying, “My lord has gone away. I will settle this as soon as I can see him and get his decision.”

With this answer Gao Shun returned to Lu Bu, who could not decide what to do.

Then came a letter from Yuan Shu:
“Although Gao Shun had gone to attack Liu Bei, yet Liu Bei had not been destroyed, and no reward could be given till he was actually taken.”

Lu Bu railed at what he called the breach of faith and was inclined to attack Yuan Shu himself.

However, his adviser, Chen Gong, opposed this course, saying, “You should not. Yuan Shu is in possession of Shouchun and has a large army, well supplied. You are no match for him. Rather ask Liu Bei to take up his quarters at Xiaopei as one of your wings and when the time comes, let him lead the attack, both south and north. Then Yuan Shu and Yuan Shao will fall before you, and you will be very powerful.”

Finding this advice good, Lu Bu sent letters to Liu Bei asking him to return.

After the flight of Liu Bei, Yuan Shu attacked Guangling and reduced Liu Bei’s force by half. When the messenger
from Lu Bu came, Liu Bei read the letter. He was quite content with the offer, but his brothers were not inclined to trust Lu Bu.

“Such a dishonorable man must have a motive,” said Guan Yu and Zhang Fei.

“Since he treats me kindly, I cannot but trust him,” replied Liu Bei.

So Liu Bei went back to Xuzhou. Lu Bu, fearing that Liu Bei might doubt his sincerity, restored Liu Bei’s family; and when Lady Gan and Lady Mi saw their lord, they told him that they had been kindly treated and guarded by soldiers against any intrusion, and provisions had never been wanting.

“I knew he would not harm my family,” said Liu Bei to Guan Yu and Zhang Fei.

However, Zhang Fei was not pleased and would not accompany his brothers into the city when they went to express their thanks. He went to escort the two ladies to Xiaopei.

At the interview Lu Bu said, “I did not wish to take the city, but your brother behaved very badly, drinking and flogging the soldiers, and I came to guard it lest some evil should befall.”

“But I had long wished to yield it to you,” said Liu Bei.

Thereupon Lu Bu wished to retire in favor of Liu Bei who, however, would not hear of it. Liu Bei returned and took up his quarters in Xiaopei, but his two brothers would not take the situation kindly and were very discontented.

Said Liu Bei, “One must bow to one’s lot. It is the will of Heaven, and one cannot struggle against fate.”

Lu Bu sent presents of food and stuffs, and peace reigned between the two houses.

In Shouchun, Yuan Shu prepared a great banquet for his soldiers when it was announced that Sun Ce had subdued Lu Gang, the Governor of Lujiang. Yuan Shu summoned the victor, who made obeisance at the foot of the hall of audience. Yuan Shu, sitting in state, asked for details of the campaign and then invited Sun Ce to the banquet.

After the unhappy death of his father Sun Jian, Sun Ce had returned to the lower region of the Great River, where he had devoted himself to peaceful ends, inviting to his side good people and able scholars. Afterwards, when a quarrel broke out between his mother’s brother, Governor Wu Jing of Dangyang, and the late Imperial Protector of Xuzhou, Tao Qian, Sun Ce removed his mother with all the family to Que, he himself taking service under Yuan Shu, who admired and loved him greatly.

“If I had a son like Sun Ce,” said Yuan Shu, “I should die without regret.”

Yuan Shu appointed Sun Ce Commander and sent him on various expeditions, all of which were successful. After this banquet to celebrate the victory over Lu Gang, Sun Ce returned to his camp very bitter over the arrogant and patronizing airs of his patron. Instead of retiring to his tent, Sun Ce walked up and down by the light of the moon.

“Here am I, a mere nobody, and yet my father was such a hero!”

And he cried out and wept in spite of himself.

Then suddenly appeared one who said, laughing loudly, “What is this, Sun Ce? While your noble father enjoyed the light of the sun, he made free use of me. If his son has any difficulty to resolve, why does he not refer it to me also instead of weeping here alone?”

Looking at the speaker Sun Ce saw it was Zhu Zhi, a native of Dangyang, who had been in Sun Jian’s service. Sun Ce then ceased weeping, and they two sat down.

“I was weeping from regret at being unable to continue my father’s work,” said Sun Ce.
“Why stay here bound to the service of a master? The Governor of Dangyang is in distress. Why not get command of an army under the pretense of an expedition to relieve Wu Jing? Escape the shadow of Yuan Shu and take control of Dangyang, then you can accomplish great things.”

While these two were talking, another man suddenly entered, saying, “I know what you two are planning, Noble Sirs. Under my hand is a band of one hundred bold fellows ready to help Sun Ce in whatever he wishes to do.”

The speaker was one of Yuan Shu’s advisers named Zhu Zhi.
father’s generals---Zhu Zhi, Lu Fan, Cheng Pu, Huang Gai, Han Dang, and others.

When Sun Ce reached Linyang, he saw a body of troops in front of him, at their head a dashing leader of handsome and refined mien. As soon as this commander saw Sun Ce, he dismounted and made obeisance. It was Zhou Yu from Shucheng.

When Sun Jian was opposing the tyrant Dong Zhuo, he moved his family to Shucheng where the Zhou family had lived. And as Zhou Yu and Sun Ce were of the same age all but two months, they became exceedingly good friends and sworn brothers, Sun Ce being the elder in virtue of his two months’ seniority. Zhou Yu was on his way to visit Sun Ce’s uncle, Governor Wu Jing of Dangyang, when the happy meeting took place.

Naturally Sun Ce confided his projects and inmost ideas to his friend, who at once said, “I shall put my whole life and energy to serve you to reach that grand goal.”

“Now that you have come, the design is as good as accomplished,” said Sun Ce.

Zhou Yu was introduced to Zhu Zhi and Lu Fan.

Zhou Yu said, “Do you know of the two Zhangs of Guangling? They would be most useful people in working out your schemes.”

“Who are they, the two Zhangs?” said Sun Ce.

“They are men of transcendent genius who are living near here for the sake of tranquillity in these turbulent times. Their names are Zhang Zhao and Zhang Hong. Why
Chapter 15

Sun Ce lost no time in sending letters and gifts, but they both declined. Then he visited them in person, was greatly pleased with their speech and by dint of large gifts and much persuasion, got them to promise to join him. Sun Ce appointed them both Counselors and Generals.

The plan of the attack upon Yangzhou Region was the next matter for discussion. The Imperial Protector, Liu Yao, was of Donglai, a scion of the imperial family and brother of the Imperial Protector of Yanzhou, Liu Dai. Liu Yao had long ruled in Yangzhou and headquartered in Shouchun. But Yuan Shu had forced him to flee to the southeast of the Great River. He retired to Que and now was battling with Wu Jing in Linyang.

Hearing of the meditated attack on him, Liu Yao summoned his generals to take counsel.

Said General Zhang Ying, “I will take an army and entrench at Niuzhu. No army can get past that, whatever its strength.”

Zhang Ying was interrupted by another who shouted, “And let me lead the van!”

All eyes turned to this man. It was Taishi Ci who, after helping Kong Rong raise the siege of Beihai, had come to serve Liu Yao.

Hearing him offer to undertake the hazardous post of van leader, Liu Yao said, “But you are still young and not yet equal to such a charge. Rather stay by my side and await my orders.”

Taishi Ci withdrew in disappointment.

Soon Zhang Ying led his army to Niuzhu, where the stores of grain located. When Sun Ce approached, Zhang Ying went to meet him, and the two armies faced each other above the Bullock Rapid. Zhang Ying roundly abused his opponent, and Huang Gai rode out to attack him. But before the combat had proceeded far, there arose an alarm of fire in Zhang Ying’s camp. Zhang Ying turned back, and then Sun Ce advanced in full force, compelling the enemy to abandon
they all bowed in the shrine. Then Sun Ce knelt and made a vow, saying, “If I, Sun Ce, succeed in my task and restore the authority of my late father, then will I restore this temple and order sacrifices at the four seasons.”

When they had remounted, Sun Ce said, “I am going to ride along the ridge and reconnoiter the enemy’s position.” His commanders begged him to refrain, but he was obstinate, and they rode there together, noting the villages below.

A soldier of the other side going along a bye road quickly reported the presence of horsemen on the ridge, and Liu Yao said, “It is certainly Sun Ce trying to inveigle us to battle. But do not go out.” Taishi Ci jumped up, saying, “What better chance to capture him?”

So, without orders he armed himself and rode through the camp, crying, “If there be any valiant men among you, follow me!” No one moved save a subaltern who said, “He is a brave man, and I will go with him.”

Now having seen all he wished, Sun Ce thought it time to return and wheeled round his horse. But when he was going over the summit, someone shouted, “Stay, Sun Ce!” Sun Ce turned. Two horsemen were coming at full speed down the next hill. Sun Ce halted and drew up his little escort right and left, he himself with his spear ready.

“The spirit will help me: What need I fear?”

So Sun Ce put on his armor, took his spear and mounted, taking with him twelve of his commanders as an escort. They rode up the hills, dismounted, burned incense, and

their possession. The defeated general fled to the hills.

Now the incendiaries who had brought about this result were two, named Jiang Qin from Shouchun and Zhou Tai from Jiujian, who in these turbulent times had got together a band of kindred spirits and lived by plundering the country along the Great River. They knew Sun Ce by reputation as a man who treated able people very liberally and wished to join him. So they came with their band, three hundred strong, and helped him in this way as an introduction. Sun Ce welcomed them and gave the leaders rank. After taking possession of the stores of all kinds abandoned by the runaways, and enlisting four thousand of those who surrendered into his own ranks, Sun Ce moved forward to attack Shenting.

After his defeat Zhang Ying returned to his master and told his misfortune. Liu Yao was going to punish his failure by death, but listened to his advisers, who asked for mercy for the unfortunate man, and sent him to command the garrison in Lingling. Liu Yao himself set out to meet the invaders. He camped south of the Sacred Hills. Sun Ce camped on the opposite side of the hills.

Sun Ce inquired the natives, “Is there a temple of Liu Xiu the Founder of Latter Hans in the vicinity?” They said, “There is a temple to the south on the summit of the hills.”

“I dreamed last night that Liu Xiu called me, so I will go and pray there,” said Sun Ce.

But Counselor Zhang Zhao advised, “My lord, you should not go as the enemy is on the other side, and you may fall into an ambush.”

“The spirit will help me: What need I fear?”

So Sun Ce put on his armor, took his spear and mounted, taking with him twelve of his commanders as an escort. They rode up the hills, dismounted, burned incense, and
Their steeds galloped off they knew not whither, while the two men, each dropping his spear, began a hand to hand struggle. Soon their fighting robes were in tatters. Sun Ce gripped the short lance that Taishi Ci carried at his back, "You and all your crowd come on, and I will not blench!" cried Taishi Ci putting his horse at a gallop and setting his spear.

Sun Ce braced himself for the shock, and the battle began.

Fifty bouts were fought and still neither combatant had the advantage. Sun Ce’s commanders whispered to each other their admiration and amazement. Taishi Ci saw that the spearmanship of his opponent showed no weak point whereby he could gain the advantage, so he decided to resort to guile. Feigning defeat he would lead Sun Ce to pursue. Taishi Ci however did not retire along the road by which he had come, but took a path leading around the hill instead of over it. His antagonist followed, shouting, “He who retreats is no worthy soldier!”

But Taishi Ci thought within himself, “He has twelve others at his back and I only one. If I capture him, the others will retake him. I will inveigle him into some secret spot and then try.”

So flying and fighting by turns he led Sun Ce, an eager pursuer, down to the plain. Here Taishi Ci suddenly wheeled about and attacked. Again they exchanged half a hundred bouts, without result. Then Sun Ce made a fierce thrust, which his opponent evaded by gripping the spear under his arm, while he himself did the same with his opponent’s spear. Neither was wounded but each exerting his utmost strength to pull the other out of the saddle they both came to the ground.
But Cheng Pu said, “My lord should not trouble himself. I will take him.”
And Cheng Pu rode forth.
“You are no antagonist for me,” said Taishi Ci. “Tell your master to come out.”
This incensed Cheng Pu, who rode at his opponent, and they two fought thirty bouts. The duel was stopped by the gongs of Liu Yao.
“Why did you sound the retreat?” said Taishi Ci. “I was just going to capture the wretch.”
“Because I have just heard that Que has been captured. Zhou Yu led a surprise force thither, and Chen Wu was in league with him to betray the city. We have no home now. I will hasten to Moling to get the help of Xue Li and Ze Rong to retake the city.”
The army retired, Taishi Ci with it, without being pursued.
On the other side Zhang Zhao said to Sun Ce, “Zhou Yu’s attack is the cause of this move; they are in no mood to fight. A night raid on their camp would finish them.”
The army was divided into five divisions for the night surprise and hastened toward the camp where they scored a victory. Their opponents scattered in all directions.
Taishi Ci alone made a determined stand, and as he could not withstand a whole army, he fled with ten horsemen to Jingxian.
Now Sun Ce acquired a new adherent in the person of Chen Wu. He was a soldier of middle height, sallow of complexion and red eye, an odd looking man. But Sun Ce held him in high esteem, appointed him Commander, and put him in the van of the attack on Xue Li. As Van Leader, Chen Wu and a dozen horsemen made a dash into the enemy’s formation, where they slew half a hundred men. So Xue Li would not fight but remained within his
defenses. As Sun Ce was attacking the city, a spy came in with the news that Liu Yao and Ze Rong had gone to attack Niuzhu, which made Sun Ce move thither in haste. His two opponents were ready for battle.

“I am here!” said Sun Ce, “You had better give in.”

A general came out from behind Liu Yao to accept the challenge. It was Yu Mi. But in the third bout Sun Ce made him prisoner and carried him off to the other side. Seeing his colleague thus captured, Fan Neng rode out to the rescue and got quite close. But just as he was going to thrust, all Sun Ce’s soldiers shouted, “There is a man behind you going to strike secretly!”

At this Sun Ce turned and shouted so thunderously loud that Fan Neng fell out of his saddle from mere fright. He split his skull and died. When Sun Ce reached his standard, he threw his prisoner to the ground. And Yu Mi was also dead, crushed to death between the arm and the body of his captor. So in a few moments Sun Ce had disposed of two enemies, one crushed to death and one frightened to death. Thereafter Sun Ce was called the Little Prince.

Liu Yao had a defeat. The greater portion of his force surrendered, and the number of those slain exceeded ten thousand. Liu Yao himself fled to Yuzhang and sought safety with Liu Biao, Imperial Protector of Jingzhou.

An attack on Moling was the next move. As soon as Sun Ce arrived at the moat, he summoned Commander Xue Li to surrender. Someone let fly a furtive arrow from the wall which wounded Sun Ce in the left thigh so severely that he fell from his steed. Hastily his officers picked up their wounded chief and returned to the camp where the arrow was pulled out and the wound dressed with the medicines suitable for injuries by metals.

By Sun Ce’s command the story was spread abroad that the hurt had been fatal, and all the soldiers set up cries of lamentation. The camp was broken up. Xue Li, Zhang Ying, and Chen Heng made a night sortie but fell into a carefully prepared ambush.

Presently Sun Ce himself appeared on horseback, shouting: “Sun Ce is here still!”

His sudden appearance created such a panic that the soldiers dropped their weapons and fell on their faces. Sun Ce gave orders not to kill them. But their leaders fell: Zhang Ying from Chen Wu’s spear thrust as he turned to run away; Chen Heng was
killed by Jiang Qin’s arrow; and the Commander, Xue Li, was slain in the turbulence. Thus Sun Ce got possession of Moling. Having calmed the people, he sent his soldiers away to Jingxian, where Taishi Ci was in command.

Taishi Ci had assembled two thousand veterans in addition to his own troops for the purpose of avenging his master. Sun Ce and Zhou Yu on the other hand consulted how to capture him alive.

Zhou Yu planned, “Attack the city on three sides, leaving the east gate free for flight. Some distance off an ambush shall be prepared, when Taishi Ci, his men fatigued and horses spent, shall fall an easy victim.”

The latest recruits under Taishi Ci’s banner were mostly hillmen and unaccustomed to discipline. Beside, the walls of the city were pitiably low. One night Sun Ce ordered Chen Wu to strip off his long dress, leave his arms save a dagger, clamber up the ramparts, and set fire to the city. Seeing the flames spreading, Taishi Ci made for the east gate and, as soon as he got outside, Sun Ce followed in pursuit. The pursuit was maintained for some fifteen miles when the pursuers stopped.

Taishi Ci went on as long as possible, finally halting to rest in a spot surrounded by reeds. Suddenly a tremendous shouting arose. Taishi Ci was just starting when tripping ropes arose all round, his horse was thrown and he found himself a prisoner.

Taishi Ci was taken back to camp. As soon as Sun Ce heard the news, he himself rode out to order the guards to leave the prisoner, whose bonds he loosened with his own hands. Then he took off his own embroidered robe and put it on the captive. They entered the camp together.

“I knew you were a real hero,” said Sun Ce. “That worm Liu Yao had no use for such as you, and so he got beaten.”

Taishi Ci, overcome by this kindness and good treatment, then formally surrendered. Sun Ce seized his hand and said, laughing, “If you had taken me at that fight we had near the shrine, would you have killed me?”

“Who can say?” said Taishi Ci smiling.

Sun Ce laughed also and they entered his tent, where Taishi Ci was placed in the seat of honor at a banquet.

Taishi Ci said, “Can you trust me so far as to let me go to muster as many as I can of the soldiers of my late master? Under the smart of this defeat they will turn against him, and they would be a great help to you.”

“Exactly what I most desire. I will make an agreement with you that at midday tomorrow you will return.”

Taishi Ci agreed and went off. All the generals said he would never return.

“He is trustworthy and will not break his word,” said the chief.

None of the officers believed he would come back.
But the next day they set up a bamboo rod in the gate of the camp, and just as the shadow marked noon Taishi Ci returned, bringing with him about a thousand troops. Sun Ce was pleased, and his officers had to confess that he had rightly judged his man.

Sun Ce thus marched his army to the South Land, and his enemies fled or surrendered before his force. He had now several legions and the southeast of the Great River was his. He improved the conditions of the people and maintained order so that his adherents and supporters daily increased. He was called Sun Ce the Bright.

When Sun Ce’s army approached, the people used to flee in terror; but when it had arrived and they saw that no one was permitted to loot and not the least attempt was made on their houses, they rejoiced and presented the soldiers with oxen and wine, for which they were in turn duly rewarded. Gladness filled the country side. The soldiers who had followed Liu Yao were kindly treated. Those who wished to join Sun Ce’s army did so; those who preferred not to be soldiers were sent home with presents. And thus Sun Ce won the respect and praise of everyone and became very powerful.

Sun Ce then settled his mother and the remainder of the family in Que, setting his brother, Sun Quan, and Zhou Tai over the city of Xuancheng. Then he headed an expedition to the south to reduce Wujun.

At that time there was a certain Yan Baihu, or the White Tiger, who styled himself King of East Wu and ruled over Wujun. His armies stationed at Wucheng and Jiaxing. Hearing of Sun Ce’s approach, Yan Baihu sent his brother, Yan Yu, with an army against Sun Ce, and they met at Maple Bridge.

Yan Yu, sword in hand, took his stand on the bridge, and this was reported to Sun Ce, who prepared to accept the challenge.

Zhang Hong tried to dissuade him, saying, “For as much as my lord’s fate is bound up with that of the army, he should not risk a conflict with a mere robber. I wish that you should remember your own value.”

“Your words, O Wise One, are as gold and precious stones, but I fear that my soldiers will not carry out my commands unless I myself share their dangers.”

However, Sun Ce sent forth Han Dang to take up the challenge. Just as Han Dang reached the bridge, Jiang Qin and Chen Wu, who had dropped down the river in a small boat, passed under the bridge. Though the arrows fell in clouds on the bank, the two men rushed up and fiercely attacked Yan Yu as he stood on the bridge. Yan Yu fled and Han Dang went in pursuit. But Yan Yu smote up to the west gate of the city into which he entered.

Sun Ce laid siege to Wujun both by land and water. For three days no one came out to offer battle. Then at the head of his army, Sun Ce came to the west gate and summoned the warden. An officer of inconsiderable rank came out and stood with one hand resting on a beam while with the other he gave point to his abuse of those below. Quickly Taishi Ci’s hands sought his bow and an arrow was on the string.

“See me hit that fellow’s hand,” said he, turning to his companions.

Even as the sound of his voice died

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1Wu was a state in the Spring and Autumn period. Located southeast in the Great River Plain (the South Land). Became dominant in BC 506, when her army defeated Chu under the leadership of Wu Qi.
Ling Cao and his son then went to meet Sun Ce, who took them into his service, and appointed them Commanders as a reward for their service, and the joint forces crossed the Great River.

The White Tiger, Yan Baihu, gathered his scattered forces and took up a position at Western Ford, but Cheng Pu attacked him there and scattered the defenders, chasing them as far as Kuaiji. The Governor of the place, Wang Lang, was on Yan Baihu’s side and inclined to support him actively.

But, when Wang Lang proposed this, one of his officers stood forth, saying, “No! No! Sun Ce as a leader is humane and upright, while the White Tiger is a savage ruffian. Rather capture him and offer his person as a peace offering to Sun Ce.”

The Governor turned angrily toward the speaker, who was an official named Yu Fan from Kuaiji, and bade him be silent. Yu Fan withdrew sighing deeply. And the Governor went to the help of the White Tiger with whom he joined forces at Shanyin.

Sun Ce came up. When both sides were arrayed, Sun Ce rode out and addressed Wang Lang, saying, “Mine is an army of good soldiers, and my aim is to restore peace to this region, but you give your support to a rebel!”

Wang Lang replied, “Your greed is insatiable. Having got possession of Wujun, you want also my territory. I shall revenge for the Yans!”

This response greatly angered Sun Ce. Just as battle was to be joined, Taishi Ci advanced and Wang
supplies is stored at Chadu, distant only some ten miles. Our best plan is to seize this place, thus attacking where the enemy is unprepared, and doing what they do not expect.”

Sun Ce approved, saying, “My uncle's plan is admirable and will crush the rebels.”

So he issued orders to kindle watch fires at all the gates, and leave the flags standing to maintain the appearance of soldiers in position while the expedition went south.

Zhou Yu came to utter a warning, “When you, my lord, go away, the besieged will surely come out and follow you. We might prepare a surprise for them.”

Sun Ce replied, “My preparations are complete, and the city will be captured tonight.”

So the army set out.

Wang Lang heard that the besiegers had gone, and he went up to the tower to reconnoiter. He saw the fires blazing, the smoke rising, and the pennons fluttering in the breeze as usual and hesitated.

Zhou Xin said, “He has gone and this is only a strategy. Let us go out and smite them.”

Yan Baihu said, “If he has gone, it is to attack Chadu. Let us pursue.”

“The place is our base of supply,” said Wang Lang, “and must be defended. You two lead the way, and I will follow with reserves.”

So Yan Baihu and Zhou Xin went forth with five thousand soldiers and drew near their enemy about the first watch, at seven miles from the city. The road led through dense forest. Then suddenly the drums beat and lighted torches sprang Lang came toward him waving a sword. Before they had exchanged many passes, Zhou Xin dashed out to help Wang Lang. Thereupon Huang Gai rode out to make the sides more equal. These latter two were just engaging when the drums rolled on both sides, and a general battle began.

Suddenly confusion was caused in the rear of Wang Lang’s army by the sudden onslaught of a small army. Wang Lang galloped off to see the attackers were Zhou Yu and Cheng Pu. Then an attack was made on his flank, so that he was in a hopeless position, and he and Yan Baihu and Zhou Xin, fighting desperately to cut an alley out, only just managed to reach the shelter of the city. The drawbridges were raised, the gates closed, and preparations made to sustain a siege.

Sun Ce followed right up to the walls and then divided his troops so as to attack all four gates. Seeing that the city was being fiercely attacked, Wang Lang was for making a sortie, but Yan Baihu opposed this as hopeless against so strong a force outside.

“We can only strengthen our position and remain behind the shelter of the ramparts until hunger forces the besiegers to retire,” said Yan Baihu.

Wang Lang agreed, and the siege went on. For several days a vigorous attack was maintained, but with little success.

In a council, Sun Jing, who was the uncle of Sun Ce, said, “Since they are holding the city with such resolution, it will be difficult to dislodge them. But the bulk of their
up on all sides. Yan Baihu was frightened, turned his horse and started to retreat. At once a leader appeared in front in whom, by the glare of the torches, he recognized Sun Ce. Zhou Xin made a rush at him but fell under Sun Ce’s spear. The men surrendered. However, Yan Baihu managed to cut his way out and fled to Yuhang.

Wang Lang soon heard of the loss and, not daring to return to the city, fled in all haste to the coastal regions. And so Sun Ce got possession of the city of Kuaiji.

Having restored order, a few days later a man came bringing the head of the White Tiger as an offering to Sun Ce. This man was a native of the county. He was of eight-span height, with a square face and wide mouth. He was named Dong Xi. Sun Ce appointed him Commander. After this, peace reigned in all the southeast. Sun Ce placed his uncle Sun Jing in command of the city and made Zhu Zhi Governor of Wujun. Then Sun Ce returned to his own place, south of the Great River.

While Sun Ce was absent, a band of brigands suddenly attacked Xuancheng, left in the care of his brother Sun Quan and the leader Zhou Tai. As the onslaught was made on all sides at once, and in the night, the brigands got the upper hand. Zhou Tai took the youth in his arms and mounted a horse; but as the robbers came on with swords to attack him, he dismounted, and though without mail, met the robbers on foot and slew them as they came up. Then came a horseman armed with a spear, but Zhou Tai laid hold of his spear and pulled him to the earth. Then Zhou Tai mounted the robber’s horse, and thrusting this way and that with the spear fought his way out. So Sun Quan was preserved, but his savior had received more than a dozen wounds. However, the bandits went away.

These wounds being due to metal would not heal but swelled enormously, and the brave soldier’s life hung in the balance. Sun Ce returned and was deeply grieved.

Then Dong Xi said, “Once in an engagement with some coastal pirates, I received many spear wounds, but a certain wise man named Yu Fan recommended a surgeon who cured me in half a month.”

“Surely this must be Yu Fan of Kuaiji,” replied Sun Ce. “That is he; he is so called.”

“Yes, truly a wise man. I would employ him.”

So Sun Ce sent two officers to invite Yu Fan, and he came at once. He was treated in most friendly fashion and appointed an official forthwith. Then the question of treating the wounded man was brought up.

“The surgeon is one Hua Tuo from Qiao, who has perfectly marvelous medicine skill. I will get him to come,” said Yu Fan.

Shortly the famous Hua Tuo arrived, a man with the complexion of a youth and a snowy beard. He looked more like a saint who had passed the gates of this life. He was treated very warmly and taken to see the sick general’s wounds.
“The case is not difficult,” said the surgeon. And he prepared certain drugs that healed the wounds within a month. Sun Ce suitably acknowledged his care and skill, and he was allowed to leave with rich rewards.

Next Sun Ce attacked the brigands and destroyed them, so restoring complete tranquillity to the South Land. After this he set garrisons at all the strategic points in the old state of Wu, and this done, memorialized what he had achieved to the Throne. He came to an understanding with Cao Cao and sent letters to Yuan Shu demanding the return of the Imperial Hereditary Seal he had left in pledge.

But Yuan Shu, secretly cherishing the most ambitious designs, wrote excuses and did not return the state jewel. In his own place Yuan Shu hastily summoned about thirty of his officers to a council. Among them were Adviser Yang Dajiang and Generals Zhang Xun, Ji Ling, Qiao Rui, Lei Bo, and Chen Lan.

Yuan Shu said, “Sun Ce borrowed an army from me and set out on an expedition which has made him master of the South Land. Now he says nothing of repayment but demands the token of his pledge. Truly he is a boor, and what steps can I take to destroy him?”

Yang Dajiang replied, “You cannot do any thing against him, for he is too strongly placed, the Great River as the shield. You must first remove Liu Bei in revenge for having attacked you without cause, and then you may think about Sun Ce. I have a scheme to put the former into your hands in a very short time.”

_Yuan Shu went not to destroy the tiger, but instead Against a dragon forth his army led._

The means Yang Dajiang employed will be made plain in the next chapter.
Adviser Yang Dajiang knew how to remove Liu Bei.

“What is your plan of attack on Liu Bei?” said Yuan Shu.

Yang Dajiang replied, “Though Liu Bei, now camped at Xiaopei, could easily be taken, yet Lu Bu is strongly posted at the chief city near. And I think Lu Bu would help Liu Bei if it was only for the grudge he bears against you for not having given him the gold and studs, grain and horses you promised. First of all you should send Lu Bu a present whereby to engage his affections and keep him quiet while you deal with Liu Bei. You can see to Lu Bu after this is done, and Xuzhou is yours.”

Thereupon two hundred thousand carts of millet was sent, with letters, by the hand of Han Yin. The gift pleased Lu Bu greatly, and he treated the messenger with great cordiality. Feeling sure of no trouble from that quarter, Yuan Shu told off one hundred thousand troops against Xiaopei. The army was led by Ji Ling as commanding general, and Lei Bo and Chen Lan as generals.

When Liu Bei heard these things he called his officers to take counsel. Zhang Fei was for open war forthwith.

But Sun Qian said, “Our resources were too small; therefore, we must lay the position before Lu Bu and ask help.”

“Do you think that fellow will do anything?” said Zhang Fei cynically.

Liu Bei decided in favor of Sun Qian’s proposal and wrote as follows:

“Humbly I venture to remind you that I am here by your orders and enjoy repose as the result of your kindness,
extensive as the heavens. Now Yuan Shu, moved by a
desire for revenge, is sending a force against this place, and
its destruction is imminent unless you intervene to save it. I
trust you will send an army quickly to protect the town, and
our happiness will be inexpressible.”

Receiving this Lu Bu called in Chen Gong to whom he
said, “I have just received gifts from Yuan Shu and a letter,
with the intent of restraining me from helping Liu Bei. Now
comes a letter from Liu Bei asking help. It seems to me that
Liu Bei where he is can do me no harm; but if Yuan Shu
overcomes Liu Bei and comes to an understanding with the
leaders around the Huashang Mountains, then the power
of the north is so much nearer, and I should be unable to
resist the attacks of so many leaders and should never sleep
secure. I will aid Liu Bei: That is the better course for me.”

Now Yuan Shu’s force sent against Xiaopei went thither
as quickly as possible, and soon the country to the southeast
fluttered with pennons by day and blazed with watch fires
by night, while the rolling of the drums reverberated from
heaven to earth.

The five thousand troops at Liu Bei’s disposal were led
out of the city and arranged to make a brave show, but it
was good news to him to hear that Lu Bu had arrived and
was quite near. Lu Bu camped only half a mile away to the
southwest. When Yuan Shu’s general, Ji Ling, heard of his
arrival, he wrote letters reproaching Lu Bu for his treachery.
Lu Bu smiled as he read them.

“I know how to make both of them love me,” said Lu
Bu.

So he sent invitations to both Liu Bei and Ji Ling to come
to a banquet.

Liu Bei was for accepting the invitation and going, but
his brothers dissuaded him, saying, “There is some treachery
in his heart.”

“I have treated him too well for him to do me any harm,”
said Liu Bei.

So he mounted and rode away, the two brothers following.
They came to the camp.

The host said, “Now by a special effort I have got you out of danger. I
hope you will not forget that when you come into
your own.”

Liu Bei thanked him heartily and was invited to take a seat. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei took up their usual
place as guards.

But when Ji Ling was announced, Liu Bei felt a
spasm of fear and got up to go away.

“You two are invited for the particular purpose of a
discussion,” said the host.

“Do not take it amiss.”

Liu Bei, being quite ignorant of his intentions, was very uneasy. Presently his
fellow guest entered. Seeing Liu Bei in the tent, and in the
seat of honor, Ji Ling was puzzled, hesitated and tried to withdraw.
But the attendants prevented this and Lu Bu, advancing, laid hold
of him and drew him into the tent as if he had been a child.
“Do you wish to slay me?” asked Ji Ling.
“Not at all,” replied Lu Bu.
“Then you are going to slay Long-Ears?”
“No; not that.”
“Then what does it mean?”
“Liu Bei and I are brothers. Now, General, you are besieging him, and so I have come to the rescue.”
“Then slay me,” said Ji Ling.
“There would be no sense in that. All my life I have disliked fighting and quarrels, but have loved making peace. And now I want to settle the quarrel between you two.”
“May I ask how you think of doing so?”
“I have a means and one approved of Heaven itself.”
Then Lu Bu drew Ji Ling within the tent and led him up to Liu Bei. The two men faced each other, full of mutual suspicion, but their host placed himself between them and they took their seats, Liu Bei on the right hand of the host.

The banquet began. After a number of courses almost in silence, Lu Bu spoke, saying, “I wish you two gentlemen to listen to me and put an end to your strife.”

Liu Bei made no reply, but Ji Ling said, “I have come with an army of one hundred thousand at the express bidding of my master to take Liu Bei. How can I cease the strife? I must fight.”

“What!” exclaimed Zhang Fei drawing his sword. “Few as we are, we regard you no more than a lot of children. What are you compared with a million Yellow Scarves? You dare hurt our brother!”

Guan Yu urged him to be silent, saying, “Let us see what General Lu Bu has to say first. After that there will be time to go to our tents and fight.”

“I beg you both to come to an understanding. I cannot let you fight,” said Lu Bu.

Now on one side Ji Ling was discontented and angry; on the other Zhang Fei was dying for a fight; and neither of the two chiefly concerned would signify assent.

Then suddenly the host turned to his attendants, saying, “Bring my trident halberd!”

They did so, and he sat there gripping that graceful but effective weapon in his right hand. Both guests felt very ill at ease and turned pale.

Lu Bu went on, saying, “I have tried to persuade you to make peace, for that is the command of the Most High. It shall be put to the test.”

He then bade his servants take the halberd outside beyond the gate and set it up.

Then speaking to his two guests, he said, “That gate is one hundred and fifty paces distant. If I can hit that left branch of the halberd-head with an arrow, you will both withdraw your armies. If I miss, you can go away and prepare for immediate battle. I shall stand against either of you who does not abide by what I say.”

Ji Ling thought to himself, “That small mark at that distance! How could anyone hit it?”

So he assented, thinking he would have plenty of fighting after his host had missed the mark. Of course Liu Bei was willing.

They all sat down again and wine was served. When this had been drunk, the host called for his bow and arrows. Liu Bei silently prayed that Lu Bu would hit the mark.

Lu Bu turned back his sleeves, carefully fitted an arrow to the string and pulled the bow to its utmost stretch. A slight exclamation escaped him as the bow curved like the harvest
That day at his camp gate.
Hou Yi, the archer of ancient days,
Brought down each mocking sun,
And the apes that gibbered to fright Yang Youji
Were slain by him, one by one.
But we sing of Lu Bu that drew the bow,
And his feathered shaft that flew;
For one hundred thousand soldiers could doff their mails
When he hit the mark so true.

Lu Bu laughed loud at the success of his shot.
Dropping his bow he seized his guests by the hands, saying, “The command of Heaven indeed! And now you cease from fighting!”
He ordered the soldier attendants to pour out great goblets of wine and each drank. Liu Bei in his inmost heart felt moon sailing through the sky. “Twang!” went the bowstring, and the arrow sped like a falling star. And it struck the slender tongue of the halberd head full and square. A roar of acclamation from all sides greeted the exploit.
The multitude people often hail their praise:

O Lu Bu was a wonderful archer,
And the arrow he shot sped straight;
By hitting the mark he saved his friend
rather lucky; his fellow guest sat silent, nodding his head.

Presently Ji Ling said, “I cannot disobey your command, General, but let me depart. What will my master say and will he believe me?”

“I will write a letter and confirm it,” said Lu Bu.

After a few more rounds of the wine, Ji Ling asked that he might have the letter and after that departed.

When the brothers took their leave, Lu Bu again reminded Liu Bei, saying, “Do not forget I have delivered you today!”

Liu Bei thanked him and departed. Next day the leaders broke camps, and the soldiers were gone.

When Ji Ling had got back to the South of River Huai and told the story of the feat of archery and the peace making that followed, and had presented the letter, his lord was very wroth.

“Lu Bu repays me for all my grain with this bit of play acting!” cried Yuan Shu. “He has saved Liu Bei, but I will lead a large army myself and settle both Liu Bei and him.”

“Be careful, my lord,” said Ji Ling. “Lu Bu is braver and stronger than most leaders and has a wide territory. He and Liu Bei together make a powerful combination, not easy to break. But there is another course. I have found out that his wife, Lady Yan, has a daughter just of marriageable age; and as you have a son, you could arrange a marriage alliance with Lu Bu. If his daughter wedded your son, Lu Bu would certainly slay your enemy for you. This is called ‘Relative-above-Stranger’ plan.”

This scheme appealed to Yuan Shu, who soon set about its accomplishment. He sent presents by the hand of Han Yin, who was to discuss the question.

When Han Yin saw Lu Bu, he said, “My master has an immense respect for you, Illustrious Sir, and he desires to ensure perpetual alliance between the two families by a marriage, an alliance such as existed between the ancient states of Qin and Jin.”

Lu Bu was well disposed toward the scheme, but went in to consult his wife. Now Lu Bu had two wives and one concubine. He first married a lady of the Yan family, and she was the legal wife. Then he took Diao Chan as a concubine. And while he was living at Xiaopei, he had married a secondary wife, a daughter of Cao Bao. Lady Cao had died quite young leaving no issue. Neither had Diao Chan borne any children. So that Lu Bu had but one child, this daughter, of whom he was dotingly fond.

When he broached the subject, his wife said, “The Yuans have dominated the regions around the River Huai these many years. They have a large army and are very prosperous. One day a Yuan will become emperor, and our daughter may hope to be an empress. But how many sons has Yuan Shu?”

“Only this one.”

“Then we should accept the offer. Even if our daughter does not become Empress, Xuzhou has a new ally.”

Lu Bu decided to accept and so treated the messenger with extreme generosity. Han Yin went back with a favorable answer. The wedding gifts were then prepared ready for Han Yin to take to the bride’s family. They were received and banquets and merry-making filled all the time.

1 Jin was a state that occupied the western part of the empire, in the mountainous area north of the Yellow River. During the Spring and Autumn period, under the leadership of Duke Wen and his successors, Jin grew into a very large state, which broke into three states in the Warring States period. Qin was a western-most state existed in both Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. Because Jin blocked its way to the east, Qin was shielded from the wars in the central plain. Wars between Qin and Jin were not few, but intermarriages between the two houses were frequent, and this alliance strengthened both states.
Next day Chen Gong went to see the messenger in his lodging, and when the usual ceremonies and greetings had been exchanged, the two men sat down to talk.

When the servants had been sent out of earshot, Chen Gong said, “Who originated this scheme by which Yuan Shu and Lu Bu are to become connections by this marriage so that Liu Bei’s head may fall?”

Han Yin was terrified. “I pray you not to let it get abroad,” he said.

“I certainly shall keep it secret. But if there be any delay, some other person will find it out and that spells failure,” said Chen Gong.

“What would best be done?”

“I will see Lu Bu and get him to send the girl immediately so that the marriage may be concluded quickly.”

“If it happened thus, my master would indeed hold you in high respect.”

With this Chen Gong took his leave and sought an interview with Lu Bu.

“I hear your daughter is to be married to Yuan Shu’s son. That is capital, but no one knows when.”

“That has yet to be considered,” said Lu Bu.

“There were certain fixed rules as to the period between sending presents and consummation of the marriage: Emperors, a year; nobles, half a year; high officers, three months; and common people, one month.”

Lu Bu replied, “As to Yuan Shu, Heaven has already put into his hands the Imperial Hereditary Seal, and he will surely arrive at the dignity one day. So, I should think the imperial rule would apply.”

“No, it will not.”

“The nobles’ rule, then?”

“No, nor that.”

“The high officers’?”

“Not even that.”

Lu Bu laughed, saying, “Then you mean to go by the rule for common people.”

“Nor that either.”

“Then what do you mean?”

Chen Gong said, “In the midst of the present troubles, when there is great rivalry among the nobles, do you not see that the others will be exceedingly jealous of your marriage alliance with such a high family as the Yuans? Suppose you postpone the choice of the day, most likely when your fine morning arrives, the wedding party will fall into an ambush on the road and the bride be carried off. Then what could be done? My opinion is that you would have done better to refuse. But since you have consented, then carry out the plan at once before the lords hear of it, and so send the girl over without delay to Shouchun. You can hire a lodging there till you have selected the wedding day, and the odds are greatly against any failure.”

“What you say is quite to the point,” replied Lu Bu.

He went into the private apartments to see his wife and told her the bride elect would set out immediately and the trousseau was to be prepared as far as it could be. On his side he chose some good horses and had a wedding carriage got ready. The escort consisted of Han Yin and two of Lu Bu’s generals, Song Xian and Wei Xu. The procession went out of the city to the sound of music.

Now at this time Chen Gui, father of Chen Deng, was placidly waiting till the evening of his life passed into night. Hearing this burst of music he inquired the occasion, and the servants told him.

“They are working on the ‘Relative-above-Stranger’ device, then,” said Chen Gui. “Liu Bei is in danger.”

Thereupon in spite of his many infirmities, he went to see Lu Bu.
“Noble Sir, what brings you here?” asked Lu Bu.
“I heard you were dead, and I came to mourn,” quavered the old man.
“Who said that?” exclaimed his host.
“Once upon a time you received grand presents from Yuan Shu that you might slay Liu Bei, but you got out by that clever shot at your halberd. Now they suddenly seek a marriage alliance thinking to get hold of your daughter as a pledge. The next move will be an attack on Xiaopei and, that gone, where are you? Whatever they ask in future, grain or troops or anything else, and you yield, will bring your own end nearer, and make you hated all round. If you refuse, then you are false to the duties of a relative, and that will be an excuse to attack you openly. Beside this Yuan Shu intends to call himself emperor, which would be rebellion, and you would be of the rebel’s family: Something abominable, which the multitude people would not suffer.”

Lu Bu was much disturbed to hear this.
“I have been misled by Chen Gong!” cried he.
So he hurriedly sent Zhang Liao to bring the wedding party, which had been ten miles away, back to the city. When they had come, Lu Bu threw Han Yin into prison and sent a reply to Yuan Shu saying curtly that the girl’s trousseau was not ready and she could not be married till it was.

Chen Gui wanted Han Yin to be sent to Capital Xuchang. But Lu Bu was hesitating what course to adopt, when he heard that Liu Bei was enlisting soldiers and buying horses for no apparent reason.

“He is simply doing his duty. There is nothing to be surprised at,” said Lu Bu at first.
Then came two officers, Song Xian and Wei Xu, saying, “As you ordered us, we went into the Huashang Mountains to purchase horses. We had got three hundred when, on our way back, on the borders of Xiaopei some robbers stole half of them. We hear that the real robbers were Zhang Fei and his soldiers, who took on the guise of brigands.”

Lu Bu was very angry at this and began to prepare an expedition against Xiaopei. When Liu Bei heard that an attack threatened, he led out his army to oppose it, and the two armies were arrayed.

Liu Bei rode to the front and said, “Elder brother, why have you brought an army against me?”
Lu Bu began abusing him, saying, “That shot of mine at the Archery Feast saved you from grave danger. Why then did you steal my horses?”
“I wanted horses and I sent out to buy them. Should I dare to take yours?” said Liu Bei.
“You stole a hundred and fifty in the person of your brother Zhang Fei. You only used another man’s hand.”
Thereupon Zhang Fei, with his spear set, rode out, saying, “Yes; I stole your good horses, and what more do you expect?”
Lu Bu replied, “You goggled-eyed thief! You are always treating me with contempt.”
“Yes; I took your horses and you get angry. You did not say any thing when you stole my brother’s Xuzhou.”
Lu Bu rode forward to give battle, and Zhang Fei advanced. A reckless fight began, and the two warriors kept it up for a hundred bouts without a decisive stroke. Then Liu Bei, fearing some accident to his brother, hastily beat the gongs as a signal to retire and led his army into the city. Lu Bu then invested it.

Liu Bei called his brother and chided him as the cause of all this misfortune.

“Where are the horses?” said Liu Bei.

“In some of the temples and courts,” replied Zhang Fei.

Liu Bei sent a messenger out to speak softly and offer to restore the stolen horses if hostilities were to cease. Lu Bu was disposed to agree but Chen Gong opposed.

“You will suffer by and by if you do not remove this Liu Bei.”

Under Chen Gong’s influence the request for peace was rejected, and the attackers on the city pressed harder.

Liu Bei called Mi Zhu and Sun Qian to him to ask advice.

Said Sun Qian, “The one person that Cao Cao detests is Lu Bu. Let us then abandon the city and take refuge with Cao Cao, from whom we may borrow troops to destroy him.”

“If we try to get away, who will lead the van?”

“I will do my best,” said Zhang Fei.

So Zhang Fei led the way; Guan Yu was rearguard; and in the center was Liu Bei with the non-fighting portion. The cavalcade started and went out at the north gate under the bright moon. They met opposition from Song Xian and Wei Xu’s men, but the soldiers were driven off by Zhang Fei, and the besieging force was passed without difficulty. Zhang Liao pursued, but was held off by Guan Yu’s rearguard. It seemed Lu Bu was not dissatisfied at the flight, for he took no personal trouble to prevent it. He made formal entry into the city, settled local affairs, and appointed Gao Shun as Governor.

Liu Bei approached Xuchang and encamped outside the city, whence he sent Sun Qian to see Cao Cao and relate the events that brought him there.

Cao Cao was very friendly and said, “Liu Bei is as my brother.”

Then Cao Cao invited Liu Bei to enter the city.

Leaving his brothers at the camp, Liu Bei, with Sun Qian and Mi Zhu, went to Cao Cao, who received him with the greatest respect. The story of Lu Bu’s perfidy was again related.

“He has no sense of right,” said Cao Cao. “You and I, my brother, will attack him together.”

Liu Bei was very grateful. A banquet was then prepared, and it was late evening before the visitor left for his own camp.

Xun Yu then had an interview with his master and said, “If you are not on your guard, Liu Bei will be your undoing. You ought to destroy him. He is too much of a hero.”

Cao Cao made no reply and his adviser retired.

Presently Guo Jia came, and Cao Cao said, “I have been advised to kill Liu Bei: What of such a scheme?”

“A bad scheme,” said Guo Jia. “You are the popular champion, pledged to relieve the people from oppression, and only by truth and rectitude can you secure the support of the noble-minded. Your only fear is lest they stay away. Now Liu Bei is a clear hero. He has come to you for help.
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and protection, and to put him to death would be to alienate all good people and put fear into the hearts of all the able advisers. Hampered by these difficulties, where will you find those whose help you need? To remove the dangers represented by one man and thereby injure yourself in the eyes of all humankind is a sure means of destruction. These conditions need careful consideration."

“What you say exactly fits in with what I think,” said Cao Cao, greatly pleased with these remarks.

His next step was to memorialize the Emperor to give Liu Bei the imperial protectorship of Yuzhou.

Again Cheng Yu said, “Liu Bei is certain to rise to the top. He will never remain in a subordinate position. You had better remove him.”

Cao Cao answered, “Now is just the time to make use of good people. I will not forfeit the regard of the world for the sake of removing one individual. Guo Jia and I both see this in the same light.”

Wherefore Cao Cao rejected all persuasion to work against Liu Bei but sent him three thousand soldiers and ten thousand carts of grain, and set him on his way to Yuzhou. Liu Bei was to march to Xiaopei, occupy it, call together his former soldiers, and attack Lu Bu.

When Liu Bei reached Yuzhou, he sent to inform Cao Cao, who prepared to march an army to subjugate Lu Bu. But just then hasty news came that Zhang Ji, who had gone to the attack of Nanyang, had been wounded by a stray arrow and had died. His nephew, Zhang Xiu, had succeeded to the command of his army; and with Jia Xu as strategist, Zhang Xiu had joined Liu Biao and camped at Wancheng. They intended to attack the capital and get possession of the Emperor’s person.

Cao Cao was placed in a quandary. He would go to attack this combination, but he feared lest Lu Bu would attack the capital if he left it. So he sought the advice of Xun Yu.

Said the Adviser, “Lu Bu has no notion of a policy. He is led astray by any little advantage that presents itself to his eyes. All you need do is to obtain promotion for him, giving him some additional title, and tell him to make peace with Liu Bei, and he will do it. The south is no threat then.”

“Good,” said Cao Cao.

And he acted upon the hint and sent an Imperial Legate, Wang Ze, to Xuzhou with the official announcement and a letter urging peace, while he went on with preparations to meet the other danger from Zhang Xiu.

When ready Cao Cao marched out with one hundred fifty thousand troops in three divisions. Xiahou Dun was the Van Leader, and they went to River Yu and camped there.

Jia Xu succeeded in persuading Zhang Xiu of the hopelessness of resistance.

“You would do well to surrender, since Cao Cao’s army is too large for you to oppose,” said Jia Xu.

Seeing the truth of this, Zhang Xiu sent his adviser to propose sub mission. Cao Cao was greatly pleased with the messenger, admiring his ready and fluent repartee, and tried to win him to his service.

“I was formerly with Li Jue and was guilty with him. Now I am with Zhang Xiu who esteems my advice, and I should not like to abandon him,” said Jia Xu.

Jia Xu left and next day conducted his master into Cao Cao’s presence. Cao Cao was very generous. Then he entered Wancheng with a small force, the greater part of the army being put in camp outside where the lines extended some three miles. Great banquets were given every day by Zhang Xiu, and Cao Cao was always being entertained.

One day, when Cao Cao returned to his quarters in a more than usual merry mood, he asked the attendants if there were any singing girls in the city.
His nephew, Cao Amin, heard the question and said, “Peeping through one of the partitions last evening, I saw a perfectly beautiful woman in one of the courts. They told me she was the wife of Zhang Ji, Zhang Xiu’s uncle. She is very lovely.”

Cao Cao, inflamed by the description given him of the beauty, told his nephew to go and bring her to visit him. Cao Amin did so, supported by an armed escort, and very soon the woman stood before Cao Cao.

She was a beauty indeed, and Cao Cao asked her name. She replied, “Thy handmaid was wife to Zhang Ji; I was born of the Zhou family.”

“Do you know who I am?”

“I have known the Prime Minister by reputation a long time. I am happy to see him and be permitted to bow before him,” said she.

“It was for your sake that I allowed Zhang Xiu to submit; otherwise I would have slain him and cut him off root and branch,” said Cao Cao.

“Indeed, then, I owe my very life to you; I am very grateful,” said she.

“To see you is a glimpse of paradise, but there is one thing I should like better. Stay here and go with me to the capital where I will see that you are properly cared for. What do you say to that, my lady?”

She could but thank him.

“But Zhang Xiu will greatly wonder at my prolonged absence, and gossips will begin to talk,” said she.

“If you like, you can leave the city tomorrow.”

She did so; but instead of going at once to the capital, she stayed with him among the tents, where Dian Wei was appointed as a special guard over her apartments. Cao Cao was the only person whom she saw, and he passed the days in idle dalliance with the lady, quite content to let time flow...
But people told Zhang Xiu what had gone amiss, and he was angry at the shame brought upon the family.

He confided his trouble to Jia Xu who said, “Keep this secret, wait till he appears again to carry on business, and then do so and so.”

A plan was arranged quite secretly.

Next day Zhang Xiu went into Cao Cao’s tent, saying, “Since the surrendered troops are deserting in great number, it would be well to camp them in the center of your camp to prevent this.”

Cao Cao gave the permission, and Zhang Xiu moved and placed his army in four camps.

But Dian Wei, the especial guard of Cao Cao’s tent, was a man to be feared, being both brave and powerful. It was hard to know how to attack him. So counsel was taken with Hu Juer, the commander of one camp and a man of enormous strength and activity. He could carry a burden of six hundred pounds and two hundred miles in a day. Hu Juer proposed a plan.

He said, “The fearsome thing about Dian Wei is his double halberds. But get him to come to a party and make him quite drunk before you send him back. I will mingle among his escort and so get into his tent and steal away his weapons. One needs not fear him then.”

So the necessary arms were prepared and orders given in the various camps. This done Zhang Xiu gave a banquet, and the intended victim was invited and plied vigorously with wine so that he was quite intoxicated when he left. And, as arranged, Hu Juer mingled with his escort and made away with his weapons.

That night, when Cao Cao was at supper with Lady Zhou, he heard the voices of men and neighing of horses and sent out to ask what it meant. They told him it was the night by.
Near the second watch of the night again was heard some noise in the rear of his tent, and one of the fodder carts was reported to be burning.

“One of the soldiers has dropped a spark; there is nothing to be alarmed at,” said Cao Cao.

But very soon the fire spread on all sides and became alarming. Cao Cao called Dian Wei. But he, usually so alert, was lying down quite intoxicated.

However, the beating of gongs and rolling of drums mingling with his dreams awoke Dian Wei, and he jumped up. His trusty halberds had disappeared. The enemy was near. He hastily snatched up an infantryman’s sword and rushed out. At the gate he saw a crowd of spearmen just bursting in. Dian Wei rushed at them slashing all around him, and twenty or more fell beneath his blows. The others drew back. But the spears stood around him like reeds on the river bank. Being totally without mail, he was soon wounded in several places. He fought desperately till his sword snapped and was no longer of any use. Throwing it aside he seized a couple of soldiers and with their bodies as weapons felled ten of his opponents. The others dared not approach, but they shot arrows at him. These fell thick as rain, but he still maintained the gate against the assailants.

However, the mutineers got in by the rear of the camp, and they wounded Dian Wei in the back with spear thrusts.
Uttering a loud cry he fell. The blood gushed from the wound in torrents, and he died. Even after he was dead not a man dared to come in by the main gate.

Cao Cao, relying on Dian Wei to hold the main gate, had fled in haste by the rear gate. Cao Amin accompanied him on foot. Then Cao Cao was wounded by an arrow in the arm, and three arrows struck his horse. However, fortunately, the horse was a fine Dawan beast full of spirit and, in spite of its wounds, it bore its master swiftly and well as far as the bank of River Yu.

Here some of the pursuers came up, and Cao Amin was hacked to pieces. Cao Cao dashed into the river and reached the further side, but there an arrow struck his steed in the eye and it fell. Cao Cao’s eldest son, Cao Ang, dismounted and yielded his horse to
his father, who galloped on. Cao Ang was killed by arrows, but Cao Cao himself got away. Soon after he met several of his officers who had rallied a few troops.

The soldiers of Qingzhou under Xiahou Dun seized the occasion to plunder the people. Yu Jin took his army, fell upon them, and slew many. Thus he protected and appeased the people. The plunderers, meeting Cao Cao on the road, knelt down howling and said Yu Jin had mutinied and attacked them. Cao Cao was surprised, and he gave order to Xiahou Dun, Xu Chu, Li Dian, and Yue Jing to attack Yu Jin.

Now when Yu Jin saw his master and a great company approaching, he at once stopped the attack and set his troops to make a camp.

An officer asked him, “The Qingzhou soldiers say you have turned traitor. Why do you not explain now that the Prime Minister has arrived? Why first make a camp?”

Yu Jin replied, “Our enemies are coming up in our rear and are very close. It is necessary to prepare for defense or we shall not withstand them. Explanation is a small matter, but defense is very important.”

Soon after the camp was finished, Zhang Xiu fell upon them. Yu Jin himself rode out to face them. Zhang Xiu drew back. The other generals of Yu Jin, seeing he advance thus boldly, also attacked, and Zhang Xiu was overcome. They pursued him a great distance until his force was almost annihilated. With the miserable remnant he finally fled to Liu Biao.

Cao Cao’s army reformed, and the commanders mustered. Then Yu Jin went to see his master and told him of the conduct of the Qingzhou soldiers and their looting and why he had attacked them.

“Why did you not tell me before you made the camp?”

Yu Jin related what had occurred.

Said Cao Cao, “When the first thought of a leader in the time of greatest stress is to maintain order and to strengthen his defenses, giving no thought to slander but shouldering his burdens bravely, and when he thereby turns a defeat into a victory, who, even of the ancient leaders, can excel Yu Jin?”

Cao Cao rewarded Yu Jin with a golden armor and the lordship of Yishou. But Cao Cao reprimanded Xiahou Dun for the lack of discipline among his soldiers.

Sacrifices in honor of the dead warrior Dian Wei were instituted. Cao Cao himself led the wailing and paid due honors.

Turning to his officers he said, “I have lost my first born son, but I grieve not so heavily for him as for Dian Wei. I weep for him!”

All were sad at the loss of this general. Then orders were issued to return to the capital.

When Imperial Legate Wang Ze, bearing the imperial decree, reached Xuzhou, he was met by Lu Bu, who conducted him into the residence where the decree was read. It conferred Lu Bu the title General Who Pacifies the East, and a special seal accompanied the mandate. The private mediating letter was also handed over and the messenger detailed the high appreciation in which Lu Bu was held by
the Chief Minister of State. Lu Bu was greatly pleased.

Next came news that a messenger from Yuan Shu had arrived.

When he had been introduced, he said, “My master’s project of declaring himself emperor is advancing. He has already built a Palace and will speedily choose Empress and concubines and would come to the South of River Huai. He is looking forward to receiving the fiancee of the Heir Apparent.”

“He has the rebel gone so far?” cried Lu Bu in a rage.

He put the messenger to death and Han Yin into the cage. He drafted a memorial of thanks and sent it to the capital, at the same time sending, too, Han Yin, the unfortunate agent who had arranged the marriage alliance. He also replied to Cao Cao’s private meditating letter asking to be confirmed in his protectorship of Xuzhou. The letter was sent by the hand of Chen Deng.

Cao Cao was pleased to hear of the rupture of the marriage arrangement between the houses of Yuans and Lus, and forthwith put Han Yin to death in the market place.

However, Chen Deng secretly told Cao Cao, saying, “Lu Bu is cruel, stupid, and facile. The longer he remains, the worse.”

“I know Lu Bu quite well,” replied Cao Cao. “He is a wolf with a savage heart, and it will be hard to feed him for long. If it had not been for you and your father, I should not have known all the circumstances and you must help me to get rid of him.”

“Anything the Prime Minister wishes to do shall have my assistance,” was the reply.

As a reward Cao Cao obtained an annually grant of two thousand carts of grain for Chen Gui and the governorship of Guangling for Chen Deng, who then took his leave.

As he was saying farewell, Cao Cao took him by the hand,
But just about that time came news of the advance of Yuan Shu on Xuzhou, and that frightened Lu Bu.

When discord rose between Qin and Jin,
They were attacked by Yue and Wu,
And when a promised bride never came,
An army marched to enforce the claim.

How all this fell out will be shown in the next chapter.
Chapter 17
Yuan Shu Marches Out An Army Of Seven Divisions;
Cao Cao And Three Generals Join Forces.

The south of River Huai was very fruitful, and Yuan Shu, as governor of such a large territory, was very influential. He was not a little puffed up. The possession of the Imperial Hereditary Seal, pledged by Sun Ce, added to his pride. And he seriously thought of assuming the full style.

As a preliminary he assembled all his officers and addressed them thus: “The Supreme Ancestor, the Founder of Han Dynasty, was only a very minor official, and yet he became ruler of the empire. The dynasty has endured four centuries, and its measure of fortune has run out. It no longer possesses authority; the cauldron is on the point of boiling over. My family has held the highest offices of state for four generations and is universally respected. Wherefore I wish, in response to the will of Heaven and the desire of the people, to assume the Imperial Dignity. What think ye of the proposal, my officers?”

Secretary Yan Xiang rose in opposition at once, saying, “You may not do this. King Wen, the Ancestor of the Zhou, was of distinguished virtue and held many offices. Till the last years of Shang Dynasty, he had two thirds of the empire. Still he served and was loyal to the ruling house. Your house is honorable, but it is not so glorious as that of Zhou. The Hans may be reduced, but they are not so abominably cruel as those of the Shang Dynasty that they are to be overthrown. Indeed this should not be done.”

Yuan Shu did not hear this with pleasure.

Said he, “We Yuans came from the Chen family, the same ancestry with King Shun. By the rule of interpreting the signs of fate, the day has come when earth (Chen) receives fire (Liu). Beside there is an oracle saying, ‘One who replaces the Hans must wade through deep mire.’ My name means ‘the high road.’ It fits exactly. Further than this, I possess the Imperial Hereditary Seal and must become lord of all, or I turn from Heaven’s own way. Finally, I have made up my mind, so if anyone says too much, that person will simply suffer death.”

Yuan Shu arrogated himself the insignia of royalty and assigned Second Glory the reign title. He set up officials with titles only given by an emperor, and rode in a chariot decorated with the dragon and phoenix, and offered sacrifices after the manner of an emperor in the north and south suburbs. Also he appointed the daughter of Feng Fang his Empress and his son Heir Apparent, and he pressed for the early wedding of Lu Bu’s daughter with his son so that the Palace entourage might be complete.

But when Yuan Shu heard of the fate of his marriage ambassador, Han Yin, who was sent to the capital and was executed, Yuan Shu was very angry and began at once to plan for revenge. He made Zhang Xun his Grand Commander and gave Zhang Xun the command of more than two hundred thousand soldiers with the instruction to invade Xuzhou. The army consisted of seven divisions under seven commanders: Zhang Xun led the Center Army; Qiao Rui, the First Left Army; Lei Bo, the Second Left Army; Han

1Liu Bang’s first office was assistant to a magistrate in Pei.
2King Wen, aka the Scholar King, founder of the Zhou Dynasty, father of King Wu. King Wen did not actually founded the dynasty, but he laid the foundation for Zhou. At the end of Shang Dynasty, the state Zhou of King Wen had already possessed two-thirds of the empire, but King Wen still faithfully served the last emperor of Shang. The final conquest was completed by King Wu and King Wu’s brother, the Duke of Zhou.
3King Yao, King Shun, and King Yu (BC 2400-2200) were the three ideal rulers in ancient China. They ascended the throne by their virtues and merits, and not by heritage. King Yu was also the founder of Xia Dynasty.
The misfortune that has come to us is due to the two Chens, who fawned upon the central government in order to obtain rank and appointments. Now remove the evil by putting these two to death and sending their heads to Yuan Shu. Then he will retire and leave us in peace.”

Lu Bu acquiesced and had the two arrested.

But the son, Chen Deng, only laughed, saying, “What is this anxiety about? These seven armies are no more to me than so many heaps of rotting straw. They are not worth thinking about.”

“If you can show us how to overcome them, I will spare your life,” said Lu Bu.

“General, if you will listen to poor me, the region will be perfectly safe.”

“Let us hear what you have to say.”

Yuan Shu’s troops are numerous but they are only a flock of crows; they are not an army under a leader. There is no mutual confidence. I can keep them at bay with the ordinary guards of the place and could overcome them by some unsuspected stratagem. If I should fail, I have another plan by which I can not only protect the region but capture our enemy.”

“Let us have it.”

Chen Deng said, “Han Xian and Yang Feng, two of the leaders of our enemies, are old servants of the Han Dynasty who fled from fear of Cao Cao and, being homeless, sought refuge with Yuan Shu. He despises them, and they are dissatisfied with his service. A little letter from the court will secure their help as our allies, and with Liu Bei to help us on the outside, we can certainly overcome Yuan Shu.”

4Han Xian used to be a White Wave rebel leader. Yang Feng had been a commander under Li Jue. When the Emperor fled from Changan to Luoyang, he enlisted these two leaders as escorts to fend off Li Jue and Guo Si’s pursuit.

(Chapter 13)
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. Lu Bu himself led against the main body under Zhang Xun, leaving a small guard in Xuzhou City.

Lu Bu camped ten miles from the walls. When the enemy came up, Zhang Xun thought Lu Bu too strong to attack with the force he had, so he retired seven miles to await reinforcements.

That night, in the second watch, Han Xian and Yang Feng arrived, and soon the flare was lighted as arranged. Lu Bu's troops were admitted to the camp and caused great confusion. Then Lu Bu gave a full attack, and Zhang Xun was routed and fled. Lu Bu pursued till daylight, when he fell in with one of the other bodies led by Ji Ling. Both sides faced each other; but at the very beginning of the engagement Yang Feng and Han Xian also attacked, and Ji Ling was forced to fly.

Lu Bu went in pursuit but soon another force came out from the rear of some hills. These looked very imposing. As the ranks opened Lu Bu saw a leader's guard with flags bearing dragons and phoenixes and representations of the sun and moon, the stars in the four groups of the Great Bear Constellation, the five directions of the Earth, golden gourds, silver axes, yellow halberds, white yaks' tails, all imperial emblems. And beneath a yellow silken parasol sat Yuan Shu on horseback, clad in silver mail with a sword handle showing at each wrist.

Standing out in front of the array, Yuan Shu railed at his opponent calling him traitor and bastard. Lu Bu said nothing but rode forward ready for battle, and Li Deng, one of Yuan Shu’s leaders, advanced to take the challenge. They met, but at the third bout, Li Deng was wounded in the hand, whereupon his spear fell to the ground, and he fled. Lu Bu
Yuan Shu’s defeated troops had not gone far when a strong army, led by Guan Yu, appeared barring his way.

“Traitor! Why have they not slain you?” cried Guan Yu.

Whereat Yuan Shu fled in great trepidation, and his army melted into fugitives in all directions. The new army fell upon them with great slaughter. Yuan Shu and the remnant of his army retreated into the below regions of River Huai.

Victory being now secure, Lu Bu, in company with Guan Yu, Yang Feng, and Han Xian returned to Xuzhou, where there were banquets and feasting and rewards for the soldiers and generals of five divisions. These over, Guan Yu took his leave and returned to Yuzhou, while Han Xian was appointed Governor of Yidu, and Yang Feng Governor of Langye.

There had been a question of keeping these two in Xuzhou City, but Chen Gui opposed it, saying, “Let them hold those places in Huashang Mountains, which will be all yours within a year.”

So Han Xian and Yang Feng were sent to these two cities in the meantime to await orders.

“Why not retain them here?” asked Chen Deng secretly of his father. “They would be a basis for our conspiracy against Lu Bu.”

“But if they helped him, on the other hand, we should lengthen the tiger’s claws and teeth,” said Chen Gui.

So Chen Deng could only approve of his father’s precautions.

Yuan Shu returned home burning to avenge his defeat, so he sent to the South Land to ask a loan of troops from Sun Ce.

But Sun Ce said, “On the strength of holding the State Seal, he secretly calls himself emperor and rebels against the Hans. I would rather punish such a renegade than help him.”

So Sun Ce rejected. The letter refusing help added to Yuan Shu’s anger.

“What next from this callow youth?” cried Yuan Shu. “I
But his adviser, Yang Dajiang, dissuaded him from this course. Having refused help to his powerful rival, Sun Ce thought it wise to take measures for his own safety. So he stationed an army at Jiangkou. Soon after came a messenger from Cao Cao bearing Sun Ce’s appointment as Governor of Kuaiji with orders to raise an army and reduce Yuan Shu.

Sun Ce was inclined to carry out these orders, but he called a council at which Zhang Zhao opposed this course. Said he, “Although recently defeated, Yuan Shu has large army and ample supplies. He is not to be attacked lightly. You had better write to Cao Cao persuading him to attack the South of River Huai and we will be auxiliaries. Between the two armies, Yuan Shu must certainly be defeated. If by the remotest chance we lose, we have Cao Cao to come to our rescue.”

This plan was adopted, and a messenger was sent to lay it before Cao Cao. In the meantime, after the defeat at River Yu, Cao Cao had reached Xuchang where his first thought was to institute sacrifices to his beloved lost leader, Dian Wei. He conferred rank upon his son Dian Man and took him into his own palace to be cared for.

Presently arrived Sun Ce’s messenger with letters, and next came a report that Yuan Shu, being short of food, had made a raid on Chenliu. Cao Cao thought the moment opportune, so he issued orders for the south expedition, leaving Cao Ren to hold the capital. The army marched, horse and foot, one hundred seventy thousand, with commissariat wagons of food to the number of over a thousand. Messages were sent to summon Sun Ce, Liu Bei, and Lu Bu.

Liu Bei was the first to welcome the grand army at his Yuzhou borders, and he was called in to the Prime Minister’s tent. After the usual salutations, two human heads were
produced by Liu Bei.

“Whose are these?” asked Cao Cao in surprise.

“The heads of Han Xian and Yang Feng.”

“Why did this happen?”

“They were sent to control Yidu and Langye, but
they allowed their soldiers to plunder the people. Bitter
complaints arose,
so I invited them to
a banquet and my
brothers dispatched
them when I gave the
signal by dropping
a cup. Their armies
gave in at once. Now
I have to apologize
for my fault.”

“You have removed an evil, which is a grand service:
Why talk of a fault?”

And Cao Cao praised Liu Bei’s action.

When the joint army reached Lu Bu’s Xuzhou borders,
he came to meet it. Cao Cao spoke graciously to him and
conferred upon him the title of General of the Left Army,
promising him an official seal as soon as he returned to the
capital. Lu Bu was very pleased.

Then the three armies were made into one force, Cao Cao
being in the center, Lu Bu to the left wing,
and Liu Bei to the
right wing. Xiahou
Dun and Yu Jin were
Leaders of the Van.

On Yuan Shu’s
side, General Qiao
Rui with fifty
thousand troops was appointed Van Leader. The armies met on the confines of the city of Shouchun. Qiao Rui and Xiahou Dun rode out and opened battle. But Qiao Rui fell in the third bout, and his troops fled into the city.

Then came news that Sun Ce’s fleet was near and would attack on the west. The other three land corps took each one face---Cao Cao on the north, Lu Bu on the east, and Liu Bei on the south. The city of Shouchun was in a parlous state.

At this juncture Yuan Shu summoned his officers. Yang Dajiang explained the case, “Shouchun has suffered from drought for several years, and the people are on the verge of famine. Sending an army would add to the distress and anger the people, and victory would be uncertain. I advise not to send any more soldiers there, but to hold on till the besiegers are conquered by lack of supplies. Meanwhile, Your Highness, with regiment of guards, will move over to the other side of River Huai, which is quite ready, and we shall also escape the enemy’s ferocity.”

So due arrangements was made. One hundred thousand troops under Li Deng, Yue Jiu, Liang Gang, and Chen Ji were appointed to guard Shouchun. Then a general move was made to the other side of the River Huai. Not only the remained army went over, but all the accumulated wealth of the Yuan family, gold and silver, jewels and precious stones, were moved also.

Cao Cao’s army of one hundred seventy thousand needed daily a considerable quantity of food; and as the country around had been famine-stricken for several years, nothing could be got there. So he tried to hasten the military operations and capture the city. On the other hand, the defenders knew the value of delay and simply held on. After a month’s vigorous siege, the fall of Shouchun seemed as far off as it was at first, and supplies were very short. Letters were sent to Sun Ce who sent a hundred thousand carts of grain. When the usual distribution became impossible, the Chief of the Commissariat, Ren Jun, and the Controller of the Granaries, Wang Hou, presented a statement asking what was to be done.

“Serve out with a smaller measure,” said Cao Cao. “That will save us for a time.”

“But if the soldiers murmur, what then?”

“I shall have another device.”

As ordered the controller issued grain in a short measure. Cao Cao sent secretly to find out how the army took this; and when he found that complaints were general and the soldiers were saying that the Prime Minister was fooling them, he sent a secret summons to the controller.

When Wang Hou came, Cao Cao said, “I want to ask you to lend me something to pacify the soldiers with. You must not refuse.”

“What does the Prime Minister wish?”

“I want the loan of your head to expose to the soldiery.”

“But I have done nothing wrong!”
and the besiegers were in possession. The officers of the garrison---Li Deng, Yue Jiu, Liang Gang, and Chen Ji---were captured alive and were executed in the market place. All the paraphernalia of imperial state were burned, and the whole city wrecked.

When the question of crossing the river in pursuit of Yuan Shu came up, Xun Yu opposed it, saying, “The country has suffered from short crops for years, and we should be unable to get grain. An advance would weary the army, harm the people, and possibly end in disaster. I advise a return to the capital to wait there till the spring wheat shall have been harvested and we have plenty of food.”

Cao Cao hesitated. Before he had made up his mind, there came an urgent message: “Zhang Xiu, with the support of Liu Biao, was ravaging the country all round. There were rebellions in Nanyang and Jiangling, and Cao Hong could not cope with it. Cao Hong had been worsted already in several engagements and was in sore straits.”

Cao Cao at once wrote to Sun Ce to command the Great River so as to prevent any move on the part of Liu Biao, while he prepared his army to go to deal with Zhang Xiu. Before marching Cao Cao directed Liu Bei to station at Xiaopei, as he and Lu Bu being as brothers might help each other.

When Lu Bu had left for Xuzhou, Cao Cao said secretly to Liu Bei, “I am leaving you at Xiaopei to dig a ‘pitfall for the tiger.’ You will only take advice from Chen Deng and Chen Gui, and there can be no mishap. You will find so-and-so your ally when needed.”

So Cao Cao marched to Xuchang where he heard that Duan Wei had slain Li Jue and Wu Xi killed Guo Si, and they presented the heads of these two. Beside the whole clan of Li Jue, more than two hundred, had been arrested
fields, they dismounted and pushed aside the stalks so that none were trampled down.

One day, when Cao Cao was riding through the fields, a dove suddenly got up, startling the horse so that it swerved into the standing grain, and a large patch was trampled down. Cao Cao at once called the Provost Marshal and bade him decree the sentence for the crime of trampling down corn.

“How can I deal with your crime?” asked the Provost Marshal.

“I made the rule, and I have broken it. Can I otherwise satisfy public opinion?”

Guo Jia said, “In ancient days, the days of the Spring and Autumn history, the laws were not applied to those of the most important. You are the supreme leader of a mighty army and must not wound yourself.”

Cao Cao pondered for a long time. At last he said, “Since there exists the reason just quoted, I may perhaps escape the death penalty.”

Then with his sword he cut off his hair and threw it on the ground, saying, “I cut off the hair as touching the head.”

This deed was a stimulus to discipline all through the army so that not a person dared be disobedient. A poet wrote:
A myriad soldiers march along and all are brave and bold,
And their myriad inclinations by one leader are controlled.
That crafty leader shored his locks when forfeit was his head,
O full of guile were thou, Cao Cao, as everyone has said.

On the first news of the approach of Cao Cao with an army, Zhang Xiu wrote to Liu Biao for help. Then Zhang Xiu led out his troops, with his two generals, Lei Xu and Zhang Xian.

When the array was complete Zhang Xiu took his station in front and pointing at Cao Cao railed at him, saying, “O false and pretended supporter of benevolence and justice! O shameless one! You are just a beast of the forest, and absolutely devoid of humanity.”

This annoyed Cao Cao who sent out Xu Chu against the insulter. Zhang Xian came to meet him and fell in the third bout.

Thence Zhang Xiu’s troops fled and were pursued to the very walls of Nanyang, only managing to get within just before the pursuit came up. The city was then closely besieged.
was so wide and deep that approach to the wall would be
difficult, Cao Cao’s commanders began to fill up the ditch
with earth. Then with sand bags, brushwood, and bundles
of grass they built a great mound near the wall and on this
erected steps so that they could look over into the city.

Cao Cao rode round the city closely inspecting the
defenses. Three days later he issued an order to make a
mound of earth and brushwood at the northwest corner, as
he would mount the walls at that point. He was observed
from within the city by Jia Xu.

Jia Xu went to Zhang Xiu and said, “I know what Cao
Cao intends, and I can defeat him by a countermove.”

Even amongst the very foremost
There is one who leads the way;
Someone sees through your devices,
Be as crafty as ye may.

What the counter-move was will be told in the next
chapter.
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when he retired into the city again.

Cao Cao then rallied his army and mustered his soldiers. He had lost fifty thousand and much baggage, while two of his generals, Lu Qian and Yu Jin were wounded.

Cao Cao being thus worsted, Jia Xu advised Zhang Xiu to write off to Liu Biao to cut off Cao Cao’s retreat so that he might be utterly destroyed.

Liu Biao was preparing an army for this purpose, when a scout came to say that Sun Ce had encamped in the river at Hukou.

Kuai Liang said, “This move of Sun Ce in the river is part of Cao Cao’s strategy, and there will be never-ending regret if Cao Cao is allowed to escape. An immediate expedition is necessary.”

Wherefore Liu Biao moved out with his army to Anzhong to block Cao Cao, leaving Huang Zu to hold Jingzhou’s points of vantage. Zhang Xiu, having been informed of the movement of Liu Biao, went with Jia Xu to smite Cao Cao on the rear.

In the meantime Cao Cao’s army, marching very leisurely, had arrived at Xiangyang.

Walking one day beside River Yu, he suddenly uttered a great cry, and when his officers asked the reason thereof, he replied, “I remembered that here, only a year ago, I lost my great general: Dian Wei. Is that not a reason to grieve?”

Thereupon Cao Cao gave orders to halt, while he should make a great sacrifice and mourn for his lost leader. At the ceremony he himself burned incense and wailed and

He ordered his troops to prepare shovels and hooks and all the gear needed for scaling walls, and all day they kept up the attack on the northwest angle.

But at the second watch they dispatched the veterans to the opposite corner, where they climbed the wall, broke up the fencing barrier, and got into the city apparently without disturbing any of the guards. There was no sign of life anywhere as they entered. But just as they were leaving the wall, suddenly a bomb exploded and they found themselves in an ambush. They turned to retire, but Zhang Xiu immediately fell on the rear and began a slaughter. Cao Cao’s troops were totally defeated and fled out of the gate into the country. Zhang Xiu kept up the pursuit till daybreak,
prostrated himself. The army was much affected by his devotion. After the sacrifices to the lost hero, he sacrificed to the names of his nephew Cao Amin and his eldest son Cao Ang, both of whom had died at the same time. He also sacrificed to his lost soldiers and even to his Dawan steed which had been killed by an arrow.

Next day Xun Yu wrote to tell Cao Cao that Liu Biao had gone to help Zhang Xiu and was camped at Anzhong, thereby cutting his road of retreat.

Cao Cao replied to the letter, saying, “I have been marching only a short distance each day and of course knew of the pursuit. But my plans are laid and, as I am near Anzhong, my enemy will be broken. You need not have any fears.”

Then Cao Cao hastened his march till he came near where Liu Biao had taken position. Zhang Xiu still shortened the distance. Cao Cao ordered his men during the night to open a secret way through a pass, where he laid an ambush.

With the first light of dawn Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu met. As Cao Cao’s force looked small, they thought he had retired so they boldly advanced into the pass to smite him. Then the ambush was opened, and both the attackers’ forces were cut up. The fighting ended; Cao Cao’s soldiers went outside the pass and encamped.

The two leaders on the other side restored order among their beaten troops and then held a conference.

“How could we have foreseen such a wicked ruse?” said Liu Biao.

“Let us try again,” said Zhang Xiu.

Wherefore they joined forces at Anzhong.

But Xun Yu discovered through his spies that Yuan Shao was preparing an attack on Capital Xuchang, so he at once wrote to Cao Cao who, much disturbed by this news, set out homeward right away. When Zhang Xiu heard this through his scouts, he wished to follow the retreating army.

Jia Xu opposed it and said, “It will lead to a defeat.”

However, Liu Biao said, “It is wrong to lose such a chance.”
And so finally pursuit was decided upon. They had not marched more than four miles before they came upon Cao Cao's rearguard, who fought with great vigor and bravery so that the pursuers were beaten off and went home discomfited.

Zhang Xiu said to Jia Xu, “This defeat comes from my not following your advice.”

“Now set your army in order and pursue,” said Jia Xu.

“But we have just suffered defeat!” cried both leaders. “Do you now counsel pursuit?”

“Yes, and the result will be a great victory if you go now. I will venture my head on that,” said Jia Xu.

Zhang Xiu had confidence, but Liu Biao was afraid and would not accompany him. So one army only started in pursuit.

However, this was enough. Cao Cao’s rear-guard was thoroughly routed and abandoned their wagons and their baggage in their hasty flight. Zhang Xiu pursued, but suddenly a troop came out from the shelter of some hills and checked him. Fearful to try further, he hastened back to Anzhong.

The other general, Liu Biao, asked the adviser to explain his apparent inconsistency, saying, “When our veteran and brave soldiers were going to pursue those who retreated, you said our men would lose the day; and when defeated men pursued the victors, you foretold victory. You were right in both cases, but we wish you would enlighten us.”

“It is easy to explain. You, Generals, although skilled leaders, are not a match for our enemy. Though Cao Cao had lost a battle, he had able generals to keep the rear and guard against pursuit. Our soldiers are good, but not a match for them. That is how I knew. For as much as Cao Cao’s hurried retreat was due to trouble in the capital, and he had beaten off our attack, I knew he would retire at his utmost speed and not take his usual precautions. I ventured to take advantage of his laxity.”

Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu could not but affirm his complete understanding of the conditions. On the advice of Jia Xu then Liu Biao returned to Jingzhou, while Zhang Xiu took up his position at Xiangyang so that each strengthened the other as the lips protect the teeth from cold.

When Cao Cao, during his retreat, heard that his army was being pursued, he hastily turned back to support the rearguard. Then he saw the pursuing army draw off.

The soldiers of the beaten rearguard said, “Had it not been for the troops that came out of the hills, we should all have been lost.”

“What troops?” asked Cao Cao in surprise.

The leader of the troops then advanced, slung his spear and, dismounting, made a low obeisance. He was Li Tong, Imperial Commander, from Jiangxia.
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Cao Cao asked him why he had come.

Li Tong replied, “I was in command at Runan when I heard of the struggle going on, so I came to lend you any help I could.”

To show his gratitude, Cao Cao conferred upon Li Tong the title Lord Who Renders High Services, and confirmed him in his command as the defense of Runan against Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu. Then Li Tong expressed his thanks and took his leave.

On his return to the capital, Cao Cao presented a memorial on the good services rendered by Sun Ce, and the Emperor made him Lord of Wu with the title General Who Destroys Rebels. The messenger bearing the decree bore also the order to repress Liu Biao.

Cao Cao went to his palace and there received the ceremonial calls of congratulation. These finished, Xun Yu asked, saying, “You, Sir, marched very leisurely to Anzhong: How came it that you felt certain of victory?”

Cao Cao replied, “My soldiers, who retire and find their retreat cut off, fight vigorously and desperately. I retired slowly to entice the enemy into following whereby I could do as I wished with them. Basing my movements on these considerations I felt secure.”

Xun Yu bowed his head in admiration.

When Guo Jia entered, Cao Cao said, “Why so late, Sir?”

The visitor drew a letter from his sleeve, saying to his master, “Yuan Shao sends this expressing he desires to send an army to attack Gongsun Zan and wishes you to lend provisions and troops.”

“I heard Yuan Shao was going to attack Xuchang. I suppose my return has made him change his intention,” said Cao Cao.

Then he opened the letter and read it. It was couched in very arrogant terms.

“Yuan Shao is so exceedingly rude that I will attack him,” said Cao Cao. “Only I think I am not quite strong enough. What should be done?”

Guo Jia said, “My lord, you know well who lost, and why, in the conflict between Liu Bang, the Supreme Ancestor, and Xiang Yu, his rival. The former won only by superior wisdom. Xiang Yu was the stronger, but in the end he was overcome. Your rival has ten weak points whereas you have ten strong ones, and, though his army is large, it is not terrible.”

Then Guo Jia continued, “Yuan Shao is overmuch devoted to ceremony and deportment; while you are sympathetic and natural; this is an excellence in conduct. He is antagonistic and drives; you are conciliatory and lead; so you have the advantage of popular approval. For many years the government has been lax, and he makes it more so; you strive vigorously after efficiency; this is the excellence of able administration. He is outwardly liberal but grudging at heart, and too given to nepotism; you appear exacting, but you understand and use people after their ability; this is the advantage of correct appreciation. He is a visionary but lacking in decision; you are a man of prompt decision and direct action; this is an advantage in policy. He loves to gather about him people of renown; you treat people as

\(^1\)Wu was a state in the Spring and Autumn period. Located southeast in the Great River Plain (the South Land). Became dominant in BC 506, when her army defeated Chu under the leadership of Wu Qi.
you find them regardless of their reputation; this is where you excel in moral virtue. He is compassionate to those at hand, but careless about those out of sight; your care is all-embracing; this is where you excel in humanity. He lends a ready ear to calumny and is misled; you may be flooded with evil counsel, but you preserve independence; this is where you excel in perspicacity. His sense of right and wrong is confused; your appreciation is accurate and clear; this is where you excel in administrative capacity. He loves the make-believe force, but is ignorant of military essentials; you would overcome with far inferior numbers as you possess military genius; this is where you excel in war. With your ten superiorities, you will have no difficulty in overcoming Yuan Shao.”

“How can I be worth as much as you say?” said Cao Cao, smiling.

“What Guo Jia has said about the ten points in your favor agrees exactly with what I think,” said Xun Yu. “Yuan Shao's army is not formidable in spite of its size.”

“The real and dangerous enemy is Lu Bu,” said Guo Jia. “When Yuan Shao has gone north to destroy Gongsun Zan, we ought to sweep away Lu Bu and so clear away our danger from that side; for if this is not done, our attack on Yuan Shao will be the signal for an attempt on the capital. That would be most serious.”

Cao Cao saw things in the same light as his advisers and began to discuss plans for an attack on Lu Bu. Xun Yu was of opinion that they should first secure the fidelity and aid of Liu Bei. So letters were written, and they waited his assurance before moving a soldier. Then, in order to reassure Yuan Shao, his emissary was treated with great kindness, and a memorial presented to the Emperor asking extra honors for him. Yuan Shao was made Imperial Protector of the four northern regions—Jizhou, Qingzhou, Youzhou, and Bingzhou. With all this a private letter was written by Cao Cao urging upon him to attack Gongsun Zan and promising assistance. So Yuan Shao’s army started.

In the meantime the two Chen Deng and Chen Gui were playing their game. At every feast and gathering in Xuzhou, they uttered the most fulsome praises of Lu Bu. Chen Gong was greatly displeased and took an opportunity to talk about them to his master.

“They flatter you to your face, but what is in their hearts? You ought to be most carefully on your guard.”

“Hold your tongue!” was the angry reply. “You are simply slandering them without the slightest excuse. You want to harm good people.”

“No ears for loyal words,” said Chen Gong, as he went away sad at heart, “and we shall suffer.”

He thought seriously of abandoning Lu Bu, but that would be too painful a wrench. Beside he feared people would laugh at him.

So the days passed sorrowfully for him. One day, with a few horsemen, he rode out to the country near Xiaopei to hunt. On the high road he saw a messenger galloping along in hot haste and began to wonder what it might mean. He left the hunt, rode across country, and intercepted the rider.

“Where are you from? Who sent you?” asked Chen
The messenger made no reply for he knew to what party his captors belonged. But they searched him and found a letter, the secret reply to Cao Cao’s letter from Liu Bei. The messenger and the letter were both taken straight to Lu Bu.

Lu Bu questioned the man, who said, “The Prime Minister sent me to bear a letter to Imperial Protector Liu Bei. I was now taking back the reply. I know nothing more, and I am ignorant of the contents of the letters.”

So Lu Bu tore it open and read:

“I have received your commands concerning the destruction of Lu Bu, and dare I for a moment venture to disregard them? But my force is weak and I must act with extreme circumspection. If you move your main body, then I will hasten forward, and in the meantime my army shall be got ready and weapons prepared. I await your command.”

Lu Bu was really alarmed.

“The wretches!” cried he. “To dare to act thus!”

The unhappy messenger was put to death and countermoves planned. Chen Gong and Zang Ba went to enlist the help of the Taishan Mountains bandits—Sun Guan, Wu Dun, Yin Li, and Chang Xi—so that they would take Yanzhou in the East of Huashang Mountains. Gao Shun and Zhang Liao went to attack Liu Bei in Xiaopei. Song Xian and Wei Xu went west to attack Runan and Yingchuan. And Lu Bu took command of a large body of troops ready to afford help wherever needed.

The departure of the army under Gao Shun against Xiaopei was reported to Liu Bei, who assembled his officers at a council.

Sun Qian advised sending a message to the capital to inform Cao Cao of their danger. In response to the chief’s call, Jian Yong, a fellow townsman of Liu Bei, offered to take the message. Up to that moment Jian Yong had served as a secretary. So a letter was written, and Jian Yong set out at once on his journey.

Then preparations were made for defense: Liu Bei commanding at the south gate; Sun Qian at the north gate; Guan Yu at the west gate; and Zhang Fei at the east gate. Mi Zhu and his brother Mi Fang commanded the family guard in the center.

The two Mis were put in command of the house guard because they were Liu Bei’s brothers-in-law; Liu Bei had taken a sister of Mi Zhu as a second wife. Hence they were suitable men to guard the family.

In due course Gao Shun came to the south gate. Liu Bei ascended the tower and said, “I have no quarrel with your master, why do you come here with an army?”

“Your master is well aware of Cao Cao’s intentions. Why should I not bind you?”

So saying Gao Shun gave the signal to attack. But Liu Bei did not go out to repulse Gao Shun; he only kept the gate fast closed.

Soon after, Zhang Liao led an attack on the west gate, then kept by Guan Yu, who addressed Zhang Liao from the wall.

“You are too good a man to waste yourself on rebels,” said Guan Yu.

Zhang Liao hung his head and made no reply. Guan Yu knew that Zhang Liao had a sound heart and high principles and said no more, as he was unwilling
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To wound Zhang Liao. Nor did he go out to attack.

Zhang Liao then drew off and proceeded to the east gate, and Zhang Fei went out to give battle. Soon it was told Guan Yu, who came over quickly. He saw Zhang Fei going out, but Zhang Liao was already withdrawing. Zhang Fei wished to pursue, but his brother held him back.

“He is afraid and so has gone away. It would be best to pursue,” said Zhang Fei.

“No,” said Guan Yu. “As a warrior he is not inferior to either of us, but I have spoken a few straight words, and he has sunk deep. He is repentant and that is why he will not meet us.”

So Zhang Fei understood, and the gates were shut and orders given for careful defense. When Jian Yong, Liu Bei’s messenger, reached the capital, he saw Cao Cao and told him what had happened. The advisers were called to discuss a plan.

Cao Cao said, “I wish to attack Lu Bu. I fear not Yuan Shao, but Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu may attack me in the rear.”

Xun You, the nephew of Xun Yu, replied, “Both these latter have been too recently defeated to do anything so rash. But Lu Bu is a bold fighting man, and if he joined forces with Yuan Shu and they set themselves to conquer River Huai and River Si, the problem would be difficult.”

Then spoke Guo Jia, “Let us take advantage of the moment before they have fully made up their mind. Smite before they are fully prepared.”

And Cao Cao did so. An army of fifty thousand were sent in advance with four commanders---Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Lu Qian, and Li Dian. Cao Cao commanded the Center Army, which marched by divisions, and Jian Yong brought up the rear.

Soon the scouts informed Gao Shun. He sent flying
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Gao Shun posted this reinforcement and his army about ten miles from Xiaopei to meet Cao Cao’s army. Lu Bu and the main army also followed close.

When Liu Bei saw the enemy retreating from the city, he knew Cao Cao’s army was close at hand. So, making arrangements for guarding the city within, he and his two brothers marched their troops out of the city and made a camp, that they might be ready to assist.

Now the division of Cao Cao’s army under Xiahou Dun, having marched out in advance, first came into touch with Gao Shun. Xiahou Dun at once rode out with spear set and offered a challenge. It was accepted and the two leaders fought half a hundred bouts. Then Gao Shun began to weaken and had to turn back. He rode round to the rear of his array. Xiahou Dun was not the man to quail, so he followed right into the enemy’s country. Then Cao Xing, one of Lu Bu’s generals, secretly strung his bow, fitted an arrow and, when Xiahou Dun had come quite near, shot at him. The arrow hit Xiahou Dun full in the left eye. He shrieked, and putting up his head, pulled out the arrow and with it the eye.

“Essence of my father, blood of my mother, I cannot throw this away!” cried Xiahou Dun, and he put the eye into his mouth and swallowed it.

Then resuming his firm grip of his spear, Xiahou Dun went after this new enemy. There was no escape for Cao Xing. He was overtaken and fell with a fatal spear wound full in the face. Both sides were stricken dumb with amazement.

Having thus slain the man who had wounded him, Xiahou Dun rode back toward his own side. Gao Shun went in pursuit and, waving on his army, attacked so vigorously that he won the day. Xiahou Yuan defended for his elder brother as they fled. Lu Qian and Li Dian led various divisions back to Jibei and made a camp.

Gao Shun, having scored this victory, returned to attack Liu Bei; and as Lu Bu opportunely arrived with Zhang Liao, these three arranged their forces so that each attacked one of the brothers.

Dauntless was Xiahou Dun, that warrior bold,
His courage had been proved of old;
But smitten sore one hapless day,
He might not in the battle stay.

The fate of Liu Bei will be told in the next chapter.
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Cao Cao Fights In Xiapi;
Lu Bu Perishes At The White Gate Tower.

As was stated before, Gao Shun and Zhang Liao together went to smite Guan Yu, while Lu Bu attacked Zhang Fei. Both brothers went out to give battle, while Liu Bei force was held in reserve. But then Lu Bu suddenly attacked both Guan Yu and Zhang Fei from the rear, and the brothers were forced to flee. Liu Bei with a few score of horsemen rushed back to Xiaopei. As he approached the gate with Lu Bu pressing him close, he shouted to the soldiers on the wall to lower the drawbridge. Lu Bu was so close behind that the archers on the wall feared to shoot lest they should wound their lord, and so Lu Bu got into the gate. The gate guards could not force him back so they scattered in all directions. Lu Bu led his force into the city.

Liu Bei saw the position was too desperate for him to reach his residence, and he must abandon all his family. So he hastened through the city and left by the west gate out at which he and his scanty following fled for very life.

When Lu Bu reached the residence, he was met by Mi Zhu who said, “The hero does not destroy a person’s family. Your rival for the empire is Cao Cao, and my master, always mindful of the good turn you did him at the Archery Feast, would not be ungrateful. But he could not help going to Cao, and I think you will pity him.”

Lu Bu replied, “We two are old friends. How could I bear to harm his wives and children?”

Whereupon he sent the family to Xuzhou with Mi Zhu to take care of them. Next Lu Bu led his army into Huashang Mountains to Yanzhou, leaving Gao Shun and Zhang Liao to guard Xiaopei.

During these troubles Sun Qian had also fled out of the city. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, each with a handful of soldiers, had got away to the hills. As Liu Bei with his few horsemen was making the best of their way from the scene of his defeat, he heard someone coming up behind him. When he got closer the person proved to be Sun Qian.

“Alas! I know not the fate of my brothers, whether they be alive or dead, and my wife and children are lost to me! What can I do?” said Liu Bei.

Sun Qian replied, “I see nothing better than getting away to Cao Cao, whence we may be able to plan our future moves.”

Liu Bei had no better plan to propose, and the two men directed their way to Xuchang, choosing by-roads rather than highways. When their small supplies ran out, they entered a village to beg. But when the people of any place heard that Liu Bei of Yuzhou was the man who needed help, they vied with each other in offering all that was required.

One day they sought shelter at a house whence a youth came out and made a low obeisance. They asked his name and he gave it as Liu An, of a well known family of hunters. Hearing who the visitor was, the hunter wished to lay before him a dish of game, but though he sought for a long time, nothing could be found for the table. So Liu An came home, killed his wife and prepared a portion for his guest.

While eating Liu Bei asked, “What flesh is it?”

Liu An told him: “Wolf.”
Liu Bei knew no better and ate his fill. Next day at daylight, just as Liu Bei was leaving, he went to the stables in the rear to get his horse and passing through the kitchen; he saw the dead body of a woman lying on the table. The flesh of one arm had been cut away. Quite startled he asked what this meant, and then he knew what he had eaten the night before. He was deeply sorry at this proof of his host’s regard and the tears rained down as he mounted his steed at the gate.

“I wish I could go with you,” said Liu An, “but as my mother still lives, I cannot go so far from home.”

Liu Bei thanked him and went his way. The party took the road by Liangcheng, and as they were going out, they saw not far off a thick cloud of dust. When the troop came nearer, they found the troops were of Cao Cao’s army, and with them they traveled to the main camp where they found Cao Cao himself. Cao Cao shed tears at the sad story of Liu Bei’s distress, the loss of the city, his brothers and wives and children. When Liu Bei told him of the hunter who had sacrificed his wife to feed them, Cao Cao sent the hunter a present of a hundred ounces of silver as a reward.

The march then was continued to Jibei, where Xiahou Yuan welcomed them. They heard that his brother Xiahou Dun was still ill from the wound he had received in the eye. Cao Cao went to the sick man’s bedside to see him and had him removed to Xuchang for skilled treatment.

Presently scouts, sent out particularly for tidings of Lu Bu, returned, saying, “Lu Bu has allied himself with the bandits in the east, and they are attacking Yanzhou.”

At this Cao Cao dispatched Cao Ren with three thousand soldiers to take Xiaopei, while he, in conjunction with Liu Bei, moved against Lu Bu.

They went east. As they reached the Mangdang Hills near Xiao Pass, they met the a band of thirty thousand
Taishan Mountains brigands barring their road. The chieftains of the bandits were Sun Guan, Wu Dun, Yin Li, and Chang Xi who rode out with their spears set. However, Xu Chu plunged into the battle and easily beat them back and chased them right up to the pass.

The scouts told Lu Bu, who was then in Xuzhou, whither he had gone to start an expedition to save Xiaopei. He left the protection of Xuzhou to Chen Gui and set out with Chen Deng.

As Chen Deng was starting, Chen Gui said to him, “Remember the words of Cao Cao, that the business of the east is in our hands. Now is our moment, for Lu Bu is about to suffer defeat.”

“Father, I can look after the outside. But when Lu Bu returns beaten, you must arrange with Mi Zhu to keep him out of the city. I shall find a means of escape,” said Chen Deng.

“His family is here, and he has many friends. How about them?”

“I also have a scheme to settle them.”

Then Chen Deng went to see Lu Bu, to whom he said, “Xuzhou is surrounded, and this city will be fiercely attacked. We ought to provide for possible retreat, and I advise storing grain and money in Xiapi. We could retreat there if the day went adversely. Why not see about this in good time?”

“Your words are indeed wise. I will also send my wives and little ones thither,” said Lu Bu.

The family left under escort of Wei Xu and Song Xian, and with them was sent much grain and treasures and coins.

And then the soldiers marched to the relief of the pass. About half way there Chen Deng said, “Let me go first to reconnoiter so that you, my lord, may advance with confidence.”

Thus Chen Deng parted company with his chief and preceded him to the pass where he was received by Chen Gong.

Chen Deng said, “The General greatly wonders why you do not advance. He is going to inquire into it.”

“The enemy is in great force, and we cannot be too careful,” said Chen Gong. “We are holding the pass, and you should persuade our master to take steps to guard Xiaopei.”

Chen Deng said, “Your words are true.”

That evening he went up to the heights from which he could see Cao Cao’s army, which was quite close to the pass. Then he wrote three notes, tied them to arrows, and shot them into Cao Cao’s camp.

Next day he left and hastened back to Lu Bu and said, “Those bandits are about to give up the pass to the enemy, but I have left Chen Gong to hold it. You had better make an attack tonight and hold him.”

“Had it not been for you, the pass would have been lost,” said Lu Bu.

Then he sent Chen Deng back to arrange a fire signal with Chen Gong for simultaneous action.

So Chen Deng returned to Chen Gong to whom he said, “Cao Cao’s troops have found a secret way through the pass, and I fear Xuzhou is already lost. You ought to go back at once.”

At this the pass was abandoned, and Chen Gong began
to retreat. Then Chen Deng gave the prearranged signal.

Lu Bu saw the fire and advanced in the darkness to the relief of the pass. Presently he met Chen Gong’s army; and as neither recognized the other in the darkness, a fierce battle ensued. Nor was the trick discovered till daylight came.

While these things were going on, Cao Cao had noted the signal and advanced as fast as possible. The bandits, who alone remained to hold the pass, were easily driven out and scattered in all directions.

When daylight came and the trick was discovered, Lu Bu and Chen Gong set off together for Xuzhou. But when they arrived and summoned the gate, instead of opening the doors, the guards on the wall saluted them with a thick flight of arrows.

At the same time Mi Zhu appeared on the defense tower and shouted, “You stole our master’s city, and now we are going to give it back to him. You will not enter here again!”

“Where is Chen Gui?” cried Lu Bu, angrily.

“We have slain him!” was the reply.

“Where is Chen Deng?” said Lu Bu turning to Chen Gong.

“Do you still hold to your delusion, General, that you ask where this specious rogue is?”

Lu Bu bade them search through all the ranks, but Chen Deng was not to be found. Then they decided to go to Xiaopei. But ere they had got half way there, suddenly appeared the troops under the command of Gao Shun and Zhang Liao.

They said, “Chen Deng came to us saying you, General, was surrounded and wanted help, so we came at once.”

“Another trick of that false rogue!” said Lu Bu. “Surely he shall die for this.”

They went with all speed to Xiaopei, only to see as they drew near, the ensigns of the enemy displayed all along the walls, for the city had been taken by Cao Ren.

While Lu Bu stood at the foot of the rampart reviling the traitor, Chen Deng himself appeared on the wall and pointing to Lu Bu cried, “Did
you think that I, a minister of the dynasty, would serve a rebel like you?"

Lu Bu in his wrath was about to make a desperate attack, but suddenly a great noise was heard, and an army came up behind him. It was led by no other than Zhang Fei. Gao Shun went to engage him, but he had no chance of success. Lu Bu then joined in the fray. Then another army appeared, and the leader this time was Cao Cao himself, and his army rushed to the attack. Seeing that he had no hope of victory, Lu Bu went away toward the east, with Cao Cao in pursuit. Lu Bu’s army marched till they were worn out.

Then appeared a new force under Guan Yu. Holding his sword ready to strike, Guan Yu called out, “Do not flee, O Lu Bu! Guan Yu is waiting for you.”

Lu Bu joined battle. He was flurried and scarcely knew what was happening. And soon Zhang Fei came up once more. By desperate efforts Lu Bu and his troops cut an alley through the press and got free. After this they started for Xiapi as fast as they could travel, and Hou Cheng helped to keep the pursuers at bay and welcomed them into the city.

So the two brothers, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, were together again after their separation. Both shed tears of joy as they told each other what they had seen and suffered.

“I was on the Haizhou Road when I heard of you,” said Guan Yu. “I lost no time in starting.”

“And I had been camped in the Mangdang Hills for a long time. It is happiness to be together again.”

So they talked. Then they marched off together to find their elder brother, and made their salutations with tears. In Liu Bei’s heart, sadness and joy intermingled. Next they were presented to Cao Cao, and with him they went into the captured Xuzhou City.

Mi Zhu soon came with the welcome news of the safety of the family. And Chen Gui and Chen Deng came to present their salutations. A grand banquet was prepared for the officers at which Cao Cao presided as host, and Chen Gui and Liu Bei occupied the seats of honor to his right and left. At the close of the banquet, Cao Cao paid the two Chens the highest compliments on their success and rewarded them with the revenues of ten counties beside giving the son the title of General Who Quells the Waves.

Cao Cao was very pleased with his success and at once began to scheme for the taking of Xiapi, the sole place now left to Lu Bu, where he had taken refuge.

Cheng Yu said the course was inadvisable.

“If Lu Bu be pressed too hard, he may get clear by a desperate effort and throw himself into the arms of our especial enemy, Yuan Shu. These two as allies would be difficult to overcome. Rather send a capable man to guard
the South of River Huai, one able to secure you against Lu Bu on one hand and to hold Yuan Shu on the other. Moreover the bandits are in Huashang Mountains and still our enemies. They must be watched.”

Cao Cao replied, “I can keep the whole of Huashang Mountains, and I will request Liu Bei to take the south.”

“Could I dare withstand your command?” said Liu Bei.

So forthwith Liu Bei, leaving Mi Zhu and Jian Yong at Xuzhou, went south, taking in his train Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Sun Qian. And Cao Cao led his army to Xiapi.

Lu Bu felt very secure in his refuge. He had good store of grain, and he had the protection of River Si, so he sat quiet, satisfied that he could maintain his defense. So he allowed Cao Cao’s army to approach without molestation.

“You ought to attack Cao Cao’s army as they come up, before they have time to make camps and defenses. They will only have a fatigued army to oppose to your fresh troops, and you will certainly defeat them.”

So said Chen Gong, but Lu Bu replied, “I have suffered too many defeats lately to take any risk. Wait till they actually attack, and you will see them floating away on the waters.”

So Lu Bu neglected the confidant’s advice and waited till the enemy had settled into their camp. This done, the attackers advanced against the city. From the foot of the wall, Cao Cao called to Lu Bu to listen while he spoke. Lu Bu ascended to the wall where he stood.

Cao Cao addressed him, saying, “When I heard that your family and that of Yuan Shu were likely to be united by marriage, I sent an army against you. Yuan Shu was guilty of treason, while you had to your credit on the destruction of Dong Zhuo. For what reason have you sacrificed all your merits to throw in your lot with a rebel? It will be over late to regret when this city shall have fallen. But if you surrender and help me to support the ruling house, you shall not lose your rank.”

Lu Bu replied, “If the Prime Minister will retire, we may be able to discuss the matter.”

But Chen Gong, standing near his master, began to rail at Cao Cao for a rebel and shot an arrow that struck his plumed helmet.

“My oath, but I will slay you at least!” cried Cao Cao, pointing his finger at Chen Gong.

Then the attack on the walls began. “They have come from far and cannot maintain this for long,” said Chen Gong. “General, go out with your horse and foot and take up a position outside, leaving me to maintain the defense with the remainder of our troops. If he engages you, I will come out and strike at his rear ranks; if he attacks the city, you can come to our aid. In ten days their stores will fail, and we can beat them off. This will place them between the ox-horns.”

“The advice seems good,” said Lu Bu.

Lu Bu went back to his palace and prepared his weapons. As it was the depth of winter, he made his army take plenty of wadded clothing to keep them warm. Lady Yan, his wife, heard of it and came to ask whither he was going. He told
her of Chen Gong’s plan.

She said, “My lord, you are leaving an undamaged city, abandoning your wife and little ones, and going with a paltry force. Should any untoward event happen, will your handmaid and her lord ever meet again?”

Lu Bu hesitated and for three days made no move.

Then Chen Gong came to see him again and said, “The enemy are all round the city; and unless you go out soon, you will be quite hemmed in.”

“I am thinking it would be better to maintain a stubborn defense,” said Lu Bu.

“Our enemies are short of food and have sent for supplies to Xuchang. These will soon arrive, and you should go out with some veterans and intercept the convoy. That loss would be a heavy blow.”

Lu Bu agreed and went in to tell his wife the new plan.

She wept saying, “If you go, do you think Chen Gong and others equal to the defense of the city? Should anything go wrong, you would be very sorry. You abandoned me at Changan, and it was only through the fortunate kindness of Pang Shu that I was hidden from our enemies and rejoined you. Who would have thought you would leave me again? But go, go your way as far as you wish, and do not mind your wife.”

And she wept bitterly.

Lu Bu very sadly went to take leave of Diao Chan who said, “You are my lord and my life. You must not be careless and ride out alone.”

“You need not fear. With my mighty trident halberd and Red Hare, who dare come near me?”

He went out. But when he met Chen Gong, he said, “That story about supplies for Cao Cao is all false, one of his many ruses. I am not going to stir.”

Chen Gong sighed. He felt all was lost.
“We shall die, and no one shall know our burial place,” said he.

Thereupon Lu Bu remained in his own quarters with his ladies, drinking freely to dissipate his sorrows.

Two of his advisers, Xu Si and Wang Kai, went in and proposed, “Yuan Shu in the South of River Huai is very powerful. Why not write to him to renew the marriage alliance? Yuan Shu can hardly refuse to rescue the affianced bride of his son.”

So Lu Bu wrote and bade these two take the letter.

Xu Si said, “You ought to send a strong escort with us to force a way through.”

So Lu Bu told off one thousand troops and two of his generals, Zhang Liao and He Meng, to conduct his messenger beyond the pass. They started that same night at the second watch, Zhang Liao leading and He Meng bringing up the rear. They got out of the city, crept past Liu Bei’s camp, and got beyond the danger zone. Then half the escort went on, and Zhang Liao led the remainder back toward the city. At the pass he found Guan Yu waiting. However, at that moment Gao Shun came to his help, and they all returned and reentered the gates.

The two messengers presently reached Shouchun, saw Yuan Shu, and presented the letter.

“How is this?” said Yuan Shu. “Formerly he slew my messenger and repudiated the marriage. Now he sends to ask for it.”

“It is all due to the vile plans of that monster Cao Cao. If pray you, Illustrious Sir, consider it carefully,” replied Xu Si.

“But if your master was not hemmed in by his enemy and in imminent danger, he would never have thought of renewing this proposal of marriage.”

The messengers said, “You may decide not to help him, but the teeth are cold when the lips are gone. It will not make for your happiness and comfort.”

Said Yuan Shu, “Lu Bu is unreliable. Tell him that I will send soldiers after the girl has arrived here.”

This was final, and the two messengers took leave and headed back to Xiapi.

When the party reached Liu Bei’s camp, Xu Si decided, “We must wait the night falls, and Wang Kai and I will try to get through in the darkness. The escort of He Meng remaining behind to protect our rear.”

They tried that very night, and the two messengers crept across without discovery. But the escort found themselves faced by Zhang Fei. He Meng tried to fight but was captured in the very first bout, and the five hundred troops of his half company were either killed or they fled.

The prisoner was taken to Liu Bei, who forwarded him to the main camp. There he told the story of the marriage and the scheme to save the city. Cao Cao was angry and ordered the execution of He Meng at the main gate.

Then Cao Cao sent orders to each camp to exercise the greatest diligence with threats of rigorous punishment of the officers of any corps that permitted any communication between the besieged and the outer world.

Every soldier felt mightily afraid.

Liu Bei returned to camp and cautioned his brothers, saying, “We are in the most important place with regard to the South of River Huai, and you must be very careful not
Chapter 19

Romance of Three Kingdoms

Zhang Fei was inclined to grumble, saying, “We have just captured one of the enemy’s leaders, and there is no word of praise or reward for us: Nothing but new orders and threats. What do you make of that?”

“You are wrong to complain,” said Liu Bei. “These are orders of the Commander-in-Chief, and what would happen were there no orders? Do not disobey them, brother.”

They promised obedience and withdrew. In the meantime Xu Si and Wang Kai had got back to Lu Bu and told him what Yuan Shu had said, that if the girl came the soldiers should go.

“But how can she be sent?” said Lu Bu.

Xu Si said, “That is the difficulty. He Meng’s capture means that Cao Cao knows the whole plan of getting help from the South of River Huai. I do not see how anyone but you yourself could hope to get through the close siege.”

“Suppose we tried, today?” said Lu Bu.

“This is an ill-omened day. You must not try today. Tomorrow is a very lucky day, especially in the evening, for any military action.”

Then Lu Bu ordered Zhang Liao and Gao Shun, “Get ready three thousand troops for the venture, and prepare a light carriage. I will lead the first seventy miles, thence you can escort the bride-elect the remainder of the way to her new home.”

Next evening toward the second watch, Lu Bu wrapped up his daughter in soft wadded garments, bound her about with a mailed coat, and took her on his back. Then with his mighty trident halberd in hand, he mounted Red Hare and rode at the head of the cavalcade out of the city gate. Zhang Liao and Gao Shun followed.

In this order they approached Liu Bei’s camp. The drums at once beat the alarm, and Guan Yu and Zhang Fei barred the way.

“Stop!” they shouted.

Lu Bu had no desire to fight; all he wished was to get through, so he made for a side road. Liu Bei came in pursuit and the two parties engaged. Brave as he might be, Lu Bu was almost helpless now that he was hampered by a girl on his shoulders, whom he was desperately anxious to preserve from hurt. Beside other parties came up all shouting and attacking, and he had no alternative but to give up his project and return into the city of Xiapi. He reached his palace very sad at heart. The besiegers returned to camp well pleased that no one had got beyond their lines.

Lu Bu found consolation in the wine cup. The siege had gone on for two months, and still the city stood. Then they heard that Zhang Yang, Governor of Henei, had been inclined to come to the help of Lu Bu. But one of his subordinates, Yang Chou, had assassinated him and was bringing his head as an offering to Cao Cao, when Yang Chou had also been slain by Kui Gu, one of the Governor’s adherents. Kui Gu had then led the force to Daicheng.

In the camp of the besiegers, there now arose much murmuring. Cao Cao sent Shi Huan to intercept and kill Kui Gu.

Then he called a counsel, saying, “Though Zhang Yang, who meant to hurt us, is happily no more, yet we are threatened on the north by Yuan Shao, and on the west Liu Biao and Zhang Xiu are a menace. Here we meet with no
success against the city of Xiapi. We are for leaving Lu Bu to his fate and returning home. What do you think?”

Among them Xun You fought against the idea, saying, “You must not act like this. Lu Bu has lost much, and his spirit is broken. The spirit of the leader expresses that of his army; and when the leader fails, his soldiers do not fight. Chen Gong is clever, but nothing is done. Lu Bu broken, Chen Gong without decision, it only needs a sharp attack, and we shall succeed.”

“I have a plan to propose,” said Guo Jia, “a plan to overcome the city at once. It is better than two hundred thousand troops.”

“I suppose you mean drowning the city by River Si and River Yi,” said Xun Yu.

“That is it,” said Guo Jia, smiling.

Cao Cao accepted the suggestion with joy and set his troops to cut the banks of River Yi and River Si, and moved his army to the high ground whence they watched the drowning out of Xiapi. Only the east gate remained clear of water.

The besieged soldiers hastened to their leader.

Lu Bu said, “Why should I fear? My good horse can go as well through the water as over the land.”

And he again returned to the wine cup for consolation, drinking deeply with his wife and concubine.

The continual drinking bouts told at last, and Lu Bu began to look dissipated. Seeing himself in a mirror one day, he was startled at the change and said to himself, “I am injuring myself with wine. No more from this day forward!”

He then issued an order that no one should drink wine under penalty of death.

Now one of his generals, Hou Cheng, lost fifteen horses, stolen by one of his subordinates, Hou Cao, who intended to resell them to Liu Bei. Hou Cheng found out where the horses were, went out after them, and recovered them after killing Hou Cao. And Hou Cheng’s colleagues congratulated him on his success. To celebrate the occasion, Hou Cheng brewed a few barrels of wine to be drunk at the feast.

But thinking his chief might find him in fault, Hou Cheng sent the bottles of wine to Lu Bu’s palace with a petition explaining, “By your virtue of warlike renown, I have recovered my horses; and as my comrades come with their congratulations, I brew some bottles of wine, first to offer Your Lordship and second to ask your permission to have a little wine at the feast.”

Lu Bu took it very angrily, saying, “When I have forbidden all wine, you brew some and begin to give feasts: You are simply defying me!”

Whereupon he ordered the officer to instant execution.

However, Song Xian, Wei Xu, and other officers came in and interceded, and after a time Lu Bu softened.

“You ought to lose your head for this disobedience. But for the sake of your colleagues, the punishment shall be reduced to a hundred strokes.”

They tried to beg him off this, but only succeeded in reducing the number of blows to one half.

When the sentence had been carried out and Hou Cheng

Wei Xu
was permitted to return home, his colleagues came sadly to console him. “Had it not been for you, I should have been put to death,” said Hou Cheng.

Song Xian replied, “All Lu Bu cares for is his family. There is no pity for anyone else. We are no more than the weeds by the roadside.”

Wei Xu said, “The city is besieged; the water is drowning us out. There will not be much more of this, for we may die any day.”

“He is a beast, with neither a sense of humanity nor of right. Let us leave him,” said Song Xian.

“He is not worth fighting for. The best we could do would be to seize him and hand him over to Cao Cao,” said Wei Xu.

“I was punished because I got my horses back again, yet all he trusts in is his own Red Hare. If you two will betray the gate and seize Lu Bu, I will steal the horse and go out to Cao Cao’s camp,” said Wei Xu.

They settled how to carry out the plot, and that very night Hou Cheng sneaked into the stables and got Red Hare away. He hastened to the east gate which was opened to let him through. The guard made a pretense of pursuing him but only a pretense.

Hou Cheng reached the besiegers’ camp, presented the horse and told Cao Cao what had been arranged. They would show a white flag and open the gates to his army. Hearing this Cao Cao had a few notifications written out, which were attached to arrows and shot over the walls. This is one of them:

“Regent Marshal Cao Cao has received a command from the Emperor to destroy Lu Bu. Those who interfere with the operations of his grand army, whatever their rank, shall be put to death in the gate on the day that the city shall be captured. Should anyone capture Lu Bu or bring his head, he shall be well rewarded. Let all take note of this.”

Next day at daylight a tremendous hubbub was heard without the city and Lu Bu, halberd in hand, hastened to the wall to see what it meant. As he went from gate to gate inspecting the defenses and guards, he censured Wei Xu for letting Hou Cheng escape and get away with his horse. Lu Bu threatened to punish Wei Xu. But just then the besiegers began a fierce attack as the white flag had just appeared, and Lu Bu had to turn all his energies to defense. The assault lasted till noon, when the attacking force drew off for a time.

Lu Bu was taking a rest in the tower and fell asleep in his chair. Song Xian sent away Lu Bu’s attendants. When they had gone, he stole Lu Bu’s weapon, the trident halberd in which he
trusted. Then Song Xian and Wei Xu fell upon Lu Bu together and before he was well awake had bound him with cords, trussing him so that he could not move. Lu Bu shouted for his guards, but they were driven off by the two traitor generals and could not come near. Then a white flag was shown, and the besiegers again approached the city.

The traitors shouted out, “Lu Bu has been captured alive!”

But Xiahou Yuan could hardly believe it till they threw down the famous halberd. The gates were flung open, and the enemy entered the city. Gao Shun and Zhang Liao, who were at the opposite gate, were surrounded and cut off by the water and helpless. They were captured. Chen Gong made a dash to the south gate but was also taken by Xu Huang. Presently Cao Cao entered and at once gave orders to turn the streams back into their usual courses. He put out proclamations to sooth the people.

Cao Cao and Liu Bei, with Guan Yu and Zhang Fei behind, seated themselves side by side in the White Gate Tower. The captives were brought before them. Lu Bu looked a pitiable object. Although a very tall man, he was tied up in a veritable ball.

“The bonds are very tight,” cried he, “I beseech you to loosen them!”

“Bindings a tiger must binding tight, of course,” replied Cao Cao.

Seeing Hou Cheng, Song Xian, and Wei Xu standing there looking pleased at their success, Lu Bu said, “I treated you all well enough: How could you turn against me?”

Said Song Xian, “You listened to the words of your women, but rejected the advice of your generals. Was not that mean?”

Lu Bu was silent. Then Gao Shun was brought forward.
“What have you to say?” asked Cao Cao.

Gao Shun sulkily held his tongue. He was ordered out to execution.

Next Chen Gong was led in.
“I hope you have been well since we last saw each other, Chen Gong?” said Cao Cao.

“Your ways were crooked, and so I left you,” said Chen Gong.

“You say I was crooked; and what of your serving Lu Bu?”

“Though he was a fool, he did not resemble you in deceit and wickedness.”
“You say you are able enough and clever, but what about your position today?”

Turning toward Lu Bu, Chen Gong said, “This man would not follow my advice. Had he done so, he would not now be a captive.”

“What think you ought to be done about this day’s work?” said Cao Cao.

“There is death for me today, and that is the end!” said Chen Gong undauntedly.

“Very well for you; but what of your mother and wife and children?”

“It is said that one who rules with due regard to filial piety does not harm a person’s family; one who would show benevolence does not cut off the sacrifices at a person’s tomb. My mother and wife and children are in your hands. But since I am your prisoner, I pray you slay me quickly and not to try to harrow my feelings.”

Cao Cao’s heart still leaned toward mercy, but Chen Gong turned and walked away, repulsing the attendants who would stop him. Cao Cao rose from his place and walked with Chen Gong, the tears falling from his eyes. Chen Gong never looked at him.

Turning to his guards Cao Cao said, “Let his mother and family be taken to Xuchang and looked after immediately. Any postponement will be punished!”

The condemned man heard him but uttered no word. He stretched out his neck for the blow. Tears sprang to the eyes of all present. His remains were honorably coffined and buried in Xuchang.

A poem pitying Chen Gong’s fate says:
Neither hope of life nor fear of death moved him.
How brave was he, a hero indeed!
But his lord heeded not his words,
Wherefore in vain possessed he great talents.
Nevertheless, in that he stood by his master.
To parting with wife and mother,
He merits our pity and profound respect.
Who would resemble Chen Gong
That day he died at the White Gate Tower?

While Cao Cao sadly escorted Chen Gong on the way to death, Lu Bu appealed to Liu Bei, “Noble Sir, you sit there an honored guest while poor I lie bound at your feet. Will you not utter one word to alleviate my lot?”

Liu Bei nodded.

As Cao Cao returned to his place, Lu Bu called out, “Your only trouble, Illustrious Sir, is myself, and I am on your side now. You take the lead, I will help you, and together the world is at our feet.”
“What do you think?” said Cao Cao turning to Liu Bei.
“You are willing to forget the episodes of Ding Yuan and Dong Zhuo?”
“Truly the lout is not to be trusted!” said Lu Bu, looking at Liu Bei.
“Strangle and expose!” ordered Cao Cao.
As he was led away, Lu Bu turned once more to Liu Bei, “You long-eared lout, you forget now the service I rendered you that day at my camp gate, when my arrow hit the mark!”
Just then someone shouted, “Lu Bu, O fool! Death is but death, and why are you scared at it?”
Everyone turned to look: The guards were hustling Zhang Liao to the place of judgment. Cao Cao ordered Lu Bu’s execution.

A poet has written upon the death of Lu Bu:

*The flood spreads wide, the city drowns,*
*Its lord is captive. Nought avails*
*His courser’s speed or halberd’s thrust.*
*The tiger erstwhile fierce, now whines*
*For mercy. Cao Cao had meted him*
*Full well, a falcon flown at will*
*And hungry kept. Poor fool! He let*
*Chen Gong’s advice be overborne*
*By harem tattle; vainly now*
*He rails against the Long-Ears’ faith.*

And another poem says:

*Round is the hungry tiger, eater of men, for whom is no pity,*
*Since the blood of his victims is fresh and not yet dry.*
*Liu Bei spoke no word in favor of Lu Bu,*
*To whom even a father’s life was not sacred.*

It was recorded earlier that the executioners were hustling Zhang Liao forward.
Pointing to him from above, Cao Cao said, “He has a familiar face.”
“You were not likely to forget me: You saw me before in Puyang,” said Zhang Liao.
“O, so you remember me, eh?”
“Yes; more is the pity.”
“Pity for what?”
“That the fire that day was not fierce enough to burn you up, rebel that you are.”
Cao Cao began to get angry.
“How dare you insult me?” cried he and lifted his sword to kill the bold speaker.
The undaunted Zhang Liao never changed color, but stretched out his neck for the blow. Then a man behind Cao Cao caught his arm, and in front of him another dropped on his knees, saying, “O Prime Minister, I pray thee stay thy hand!”

Lu Bu whining was not spared,
Railing Zhang Liao far better fared.

Who was it that saved Zhang Liao? The next chapter will show.
Chapter 20
Cao Cao Organizes A Hunting Expedition In Xutian; Dong Cheng Receives A Secret Command In The Palace.

The last chapter said that Cao Cao was checked in his angry attack upon Zhang Liao. They were Liu Bei who held his arm and Guan Yu who knelt before him.

“A man as generous-hearted as he is should be saved,” said Liu Bei.
Guan Yu said, “I know him well as loyal and righteous. I will vouch for him with my own life!”
Cao Cao threw aside his sword and smiled.
“I also know Zhang Liao to be loyal and good. I was just testing him,” said he.
Cao Cao loosed the prisoner’s bonds with his own hands, had a change of dress brought in, and clothed him therewith. Then he was led to a seat of honor. This kindly treatment sank deep into Zhang Liao’s heart, and he hastened to declare formally that he yielded. And then he was given the rank of Imperial Commander and the title of Lordship.

Zhang Liao was sent on a mission to win over the bandit leader Zang Ba, who hearing what had happened, came forthwith and gave in his submission. He was graciously received, and his former colleagues—Sun Guan, Wu Dun, and Yin Li—also yielded, with the exception of Chang Xi, who remained obdurate. All these former enemies who came over were kindly treated and given posts of responsibility wherein they might prove the reality of their conversion. Lu Bu’s family were sent to the capital.

After the soldiers had been rewarded with feasting, the camp was broken up and the army moved away to Xuchang. Passing through Xuzhou the people lined the roads and burned incense in honor of the victors. They also petitioned that Liu Bei should be their protector.
Cao Cao replied, “Liu Bei has rendered great services.
You must wait till he has been received in audience and obtained his reward. After that he shall be sent here.”

The people bowed low to the ground to express their thanks. Che Zhou, General of the Flying Cavalry, was given command of Xuzhou for the moment.

After the army had arrived at the capital, rewards were granted to all the officers who had been in the expedition. Liu Bei was retained in the capital, lodging in an annex to the Prime Minister’s palace.

Next day a court was held, and Cao Cao memorialized the services of Liu Bei who was presented to Emperor Xian. Dressed in court robes, Liu Bei bowed at the lower end of the audience arena. The Emperor called him to the Hall and asked his ancestry.

Liu Bei replied, “Thy servant is the son of Liu Hong, grandson of Liu Xiong, who was a direct descendant of Prince Sheng of Zhongshan, who was the son of His Majesty the Emperor Jing."  

The Emperor bade them bring forth the Books of the Genealogies, and therefrom a secretary read:


The Emperor compared this with the registers of the Imperial House and found by them that Liu Bei was his uncle by descent. The Emperor seemed greatly pleased and requested Liu Bei to go into one of the side chambers where he might perform the ceremonial obeisance prescribed for a nephew to his uncle. In his heart he rejoiced to have this heroic warrior uncle as a powerful supporter against Cao Cao who really held all the power in his own hands. The Emperor knew himself to be a mere puppet. He conferred upon his uncle the rank of General of the Left Army and the title of Lord of Yicheng.

When the banquet was concluded, Liu Bei thanked the Emperor and went out of the Palace. And from this time he was very generally styled the “Imperial Uncle.”

When Cao Cao returned to his palace, Xun Yu and his fellow advisers went in to see him.

Xun Yu said, “It is no advantage to you, Illustrious Sir, that the Emperor recognizes Liu Bei as an uncle.”

“Liu Bei may be recognized as uncle, but he is under my orders since I control the decrees of the Throne. He will be all the more ready to obey. Beside I will keep him here under the pretense of having him near his sovereign, and he will be entirely in my hands. I have nothing to fear. The man I fear is Yang Biao, who is a relative of the two Yuan brothers. Should Yang Biao conspire with them, he is an enemy within and might do much harm. He will have to be removed.”

Hence Cao Cao sent a secret emissary to say that Imperial Guardian Yang Biao was intriguing with Yuan Shu, and on this charge Yang Biao was arrested and imprisoned. And his death would have been compassed had his enemy dared.

But just then the Governor of Beihai, Kong Rong, was at the capital, and he remonstrated with Cao Cao, saying, “Yang Biao comes from a family famed for virtue for at
Cao Cao had to relinquish the attempt, but he took away Yang Biao’s offices and banished him to his family estate in the country.

Court Counselor Zhao Yan, an opponent of the Prime Minister, sent up a memorial impeaching Cao Cao for having removed a minister of state from office without a decree. Cao Cao’s reply to this was the arrest of Zhao Yan and his execution, a bold stroke which terrified the bulk of officers and reduced them to silence.

Cheng Yu advised Cao Cao to assume a more definite position. He said, “Illustrious Sir, your prestige grows daily. Why not seize the opportunity to take the position of Chief of the Feudatory Princes?”

“There are still too many supporters of the court,” was the reply. “I must be careful. I am going to propose a royal hunt to try to find out the best line to follow.”

This expedition being decided upon they got together fleet horses, famous falcons, and pedigree hounds, and prepared bows and arrows in readiness. They mustered a strong force of guards outside the city.

When the Prime Minister proposed the hunting expedition, the Emperor said he feared it was an improper thing to do.

Cao Cao replied, “In ancient times rulers made four expeditions yearly at each of the four seasons in order to show their strength. They were called Sou, Miao, Xien, and Shou, in the order of spring, summer, autumn, and winter. Now that the whole country is in confusion, it would be
wise to inaugurate a hunt in order to train the army. I am sure Your Majesty will approve.”

So the Emperor with the full paraphernalia for an imperial hunt joined the expedition. He rode a saddled horse, carried an inlaid bow, and his quiver was filled with gold-tipped arrows. His chariot followed behind. Liu Bei and his brothers were in the imperial train, each with his bow and quiver. Each party member wore a breastplate under the outer robe and held his especial weapon, while their escort followed them. Cao Cao rode a dun horse called “Flying-Lightning,” and the army was one hundred thousand strong.

The hunt took place in Xutian, and the legions spread out as guards round the hunting arena which extended over some one hundred square miles. Cao Cao rode even with the Emperor, the horses’ heads alternating in the lead. The imperial attendants immediately following were all in Cao Cao’s confidence. The other officers, civil and military, lagged behind, for they dared not press forward into the midst of Cao Cao’s partisans.

One day the Emperor was riding toward the hunting grounds and noticed his newly found uncle respectfully standing by the roadside.

“I should like to see my uncle display his hunting skill,” said the Emperor.

Liu Bei mounted his steed at once. Just then a hare started from its form. Liu Bei shot and hit it with the first arrow.

The Emperor, much struck by this display, rode away over a slope. Suddenly a deer broke out of the thicket. He shot three arrows at it but all missed.

“You try,” said the Emperor turning to Cao Cao.

“Lend me Your Majesty’s bow,” Cao Cao replied.

Taking the inlaid bow and the golden-tipped arrows, Cao Cao pulled the bow and hit the deer in the shoulder at the first shot. It fell in the grass and could not run.

Now the crowd of officers seeing the golden-barbed arrow sticking in the wound concluded at once that the shot was the Emperor’s, so they rushed up and shouted “Wan shui! O King! Live forever!”

Cao Cao rode out pushing past the Emperor and acknowledged the congratulations.

They all turned pale. Guan Yu, who was behind Liu Bei, was especially angry. The silkworm
eyebrows stood up fiercely, and the red phoenix eyes glared as, sword in hand, he rode hastily forth to cut down the audacious Prime Minister for his impertinence.

However, Liu Bei hastily waved him back and shot at him a meaning glance so that Guan Yu stopped and made no further move.

Liu Bei bowing toward Cao Cao said, “Most sincere felicitations! A truly supernatural shot, such as few have achieved!”

“It is only the enormous good fortune of the Son of Heaven!” said Cao Cao with a smile.

Then he turned his steed and felicitated the Emperor. But he did not return the bow; he hung it over his own shoulder instead.

The hunt finished with banqueting; and when the entertainments were over, they returned to the capital, all glad of some repose after the expedition.

Guan Yu was still angry of the Prime Minister’s breach of decorum.

One day Guan Yu said to Liu Bei, “Brother, why did you prevent me from killing that rebel and so ridding the world of a scoundrel? He insults the Emperor and ignores everybody else.”

“When you throw stones at a rat, beware of the vase,” quoted Liu Bei. “Cao Cao was only a horse’s head away from Our Lord, and in the midst of a crowd of his partisans. In that momentary burst of anger, if you had struck and failed, and harm had come to the Emperor, what an awful crime would have been laid to us!”

“If we do not rid the world of him today, a worse evil will come of it,” said Guan Yu.

“But be discreet, my brother. Such matters cannot be lightly discussed.”

The Emperor sadly returned to his palace. With tears in his eyes, he related what had occurred in the hunt to his consort, Empress Fu.

“Alas for me!” said he. “From the first days of my accession, one vicious minister has succeeded another. I was the victim of Dong Zhuo’s evil machinations. Then followed the rebellion of Li Jue and Guo Si. You and I had to bear sorrows such as no others have borne. Then came this Cao Cao as one who would maintain the imperial dignity, but he has seized upon all real authority and does as he wishes. He works continually for his own glorification, and I never see him but my back pricks. These last few days in the hunting field, he went in front of me and acknowledged the cheers of the crowd. He is so extremely rude that I feel sure he has sinister designs against me. Alas, my wife, we know not when our end may come!”

“In a whole court full of nobles, who have eaten the bread of Han, is there not one who will save his country?” said she.

Thus spoke the Empress, and at the same moment there stepped in a man who said, “Grieve not, O Imperial Pair! I can find a savior for the country.”

It was none other than the father of the Empress, Fu Wan.

“Have you heard of Cao Cao’s wanton and perverse behavior?” said the Emperor, drying his eyes.

“You mean the deer shooting? Who did not see that, indeed? But the whole court is full of his clan or his creatures. With the exception of the relatives of your Consort, there is not one loyal enough to deal with a rebel. I have no authority and can do nothing, but there is General Dong Cheng, the State Uncle, who could do it.”

“Could Uncle Dong Cheng come in to consult about this? I know he has had much experience of state troubles.”

Fu Wan replied, “Everyone of your attendants is a
partisan of Cao Cao, and this sort of thing must be kept most profoundly secret or the consequence will be most serious.”

“Then what can be done?” said the Emperor.

“The only plan I can think of is to send gifts of a robe and a jade girdle to Dong Cheng, and in the lining of the girdle hide a secret edict authorizing him to take certain steps. When he gets home and has read the edict, he can elaborate plans as quickly as possible, and neither the spirits above nor the demons below will know anything about them.”

The Emperor approved, and Fu Wan went out. The Emperor then with his own hand drew up a decree, writing it with blood drawn by biting his finger. He gave the document to Empress Fu to sew into the purple lining of the girdle. When all was done, he put on the robe and girded it with the girdle. Next he bade one of the attendants summon State Uncle Dong Cheng to the Palace.

Dong Cheng came; and after the ceremonies were finished, the Emperor said, “A few nights ago I was talking with the Empress of the terrible days of the rebellion, and we thought of your good services then, therefore we have called you in to reward you.”

The minister bowed his head in thanks. Then the Emperor led Dong Cheng out of the Reception Hall to the Temple of Ancestors, and they went to the gallery of Worthy Ministers, where the Emperor burned incense and performed the usual ceremonies. After this they went to see the portraits, and among them was one of the founder of the dynasty, Liu Bang the Supreme Ancestor.

“Whence sprang our great ancestor, and how did he begin his great achievement?” said the Emperor.

“Your Majesty is pleased to joke with thy servant,” said Dong Cheng, rather startled at the question. “Who does not know the deeds of the Sacred Ancestor? He began life as a minor official in Sishang. There gripping his sword, he slew a white serpent, the beginning of his struggle for the right. Speedily he mastered the empire: In three years had destroyed Qin and, in five, also Chu. Thus he set up a dynasty that shall endure forever!”

“Such heroic forefathers! Such weakling descendants! How sad it is!” said the Emperor.

Pointing to the portraits right and left, he continued, “Are not these two Zhang Liang2, Lord of Liu, and Xiao He3, Lord of Cuo?”

“Certainly. The Supreme Ancestor was greatly assisted by these two.”

The Emperor glanced right and left. His attendants were rather far away. Then he whispered to Dong Cheng, “You, 2Zhang Liang, aka Zhang Zifang, the master strategist for Liu Bang. His family had served the state of Han as chief ministers during the Warring States period. It is said that he received the strategy book of Lu Wang from a mysterious old man. When he was young, Zhang Liang plotted to assassinate the First Emperor, but failed. He later rebelled against Qin. Joined Liu Bang (BC 206) to fight against Qin and then Chu. Recommended Han Xin to Liu Bang. Zhang Liang’s insights had earned him the name “The Teacher of Emperor”. After Liu Bang won the empire, Zhang Liang was enobled as Lord of Liu, but did not take office, instead he resigned from political life and traveled.

3Xiao He (BC ?-193) a close adviser of Liu Bang. He and Liu Bang had been friends in their native Pei, where Liu Bang later held a minor office. Recommended Han Xin to Liu Bang. Became Han’s prime minister. Enobled as the Lord of Cuo.
like these two, must stand by me.”

“My poor services are of no worth. I do not compare with those men,” said the Uncle.

“I remember that you saved me at the western capital, Changan. I have never forgotten, and I could never reward you properly.”

Then pointing to his own robe, the Emperor continued, “You must wear this robe of mine, girded with my own girdle, and it will be as though you are always near your Emperor.”

Dong Cheng bowed his gratitude while the Emperor, taking off the robe, presented it to his faithful minister. At the same time he whispered, “Examine it closely when you get home, and help your Emperor carry out his intention.”

Dong Cheng understood. He put on the robe and the girdle, took leave and left the chamber.

The news of the audience for Dong Cheng had been taken to the Prime Minister, who at once went to the Palace and arrived as Dong Cheng was passing out at the Donghua Gate. They met face to face, and Dong Cheng could in nowise avoid him. Dong Cheng went to the side of the road and made his obeisance.

“Where are you from, State Uncle?” asked Cao Cao.

“His Majesty summoned me into the Palace and has given me this robe and beautiful girdle.”

“Why did he give you these?”

“He had not forgotten that I saved his life in the old days.”

“Take it off and let me see it.”

Dong Cheng who knew that a secret decree was hidden away somewhere in the garments was afraid Cao Cao would notice a breach somewhere in the material, so he hesitated and did not obey. But Cao Cao called his guards, and they took off the girdle. Then Cao Cao looked it over carefully.

“It certainly is a very handsome girdle,” said he. “Now take off the robe and let me look at that.”

Dong Cheng’s heart was melting with fear, but he dared not disobey. So he handed over the robe. Cao Cao took it and held it up against the sun with his own hand and minutely examined every part of it.

When he had done this, he put it on, girded it with the girdle and turning to his attendants said, “How is it for length?”

“Beautiful!” they chorused.

Turning to Dong Cheng, he said, “Will you give these to me?”

“My Prince’s presents to me I dare not give to another. Let me give you another robe in its stead,” said Dong Cheng.

“Is there not some intrigue connected with these presents? I am sure there is,” said Cao Cao.

“How could I dare?” said Dong Cheng, trembling. “If you are so set upon it, then I must give it up.”

“How could I take away what our Prince has given you? It was all a joke,” said the Prime Minister.

Cao Cao returned both robe and girdle, and their owner made the best of his way home. When night came and he was alone in his library, he took out the robe and looked over every inch of it most carefully. He found nothing.

“He gave me a robe and a girdle and bade me look at them carefully. That means there is something to be looked for but I can find no trace of it. What does it mean?” he
Then he lifted the girdle and examined that. The jade plates were carved into the semblance of small dragons interlaced among flowers. The lining was of purple silk. All was sewn together most carefully and neatly, and he could find nothing out of the common. He was puzzled. He laid the belt on the table. Presently he picked it up and looked at it again. He spent long hours over it but in vain. He leaned over on the small table, his head resting on his hands and was almost asleep, when a candle snuff fell down upon the girdle and burned a hole in the lining. He hastily shook it off, but the mischief was done: A small hole had been burned in the silken lining, and through this there appeared something white with blood red marks. He hastily ripped it open and drew out the decree written by the hand of the Emperor himself in characters of blood. It read:

"Of human relationships, that between parents and children stands first. Of the various social ties that between prince and minister stands highest. Today Cao Cao, the wicked, is a real tyrant, treating even his Prince with indignity. With the support of his faction and his army, he has destroyed the principles of government. By conferring rewards and inflicting punishments, he has reduced the Emperor to a nonentity. I have grieved over this day and night. I have feared the empire would be ruined.

"You are a high minister of state and my own relative. You must recall the difficulties of the Great Founder’s early days and draw together the loyal and right-minded to destroy this evil faction and restore the prerogatives of the Throne. Such a deed would be indeed an extreme joy to the spirits of my ancestors.

"This decree, written in blood drawn from my own veins, is confided to a noble who is to be most careful not to fail in executing his Emperor’s design.

"Given in the era of Rebuilt Tranquillity, fourth year and the third month of spring." (AD 199)

So ran the decree, and Dong Cheng read it with streaming eyes. There was no sleep for him that night. Early in the morning he returned to his library and reread it. No plan suggested itself. He laid the decree down on the table and sought in the depths of his mind for some scheme to destroy Cao Cao, but could not decide upon any. And he fell asleep leaning over his table.

It happened that Minister Wang Zifu, with whom Dong Cheng was on terms of great intimacy, came to visit him and, as usual, walked into the house unannounced and went straight to the library. His host did not wake, and Wang Zifu noticed, hardly hidden by his sleeve, the Emperor’s writing. Wondering what this might be, Wang Zifu drew it out, read it, and put it in his own sleeve.

Then he called out loud, “Uncle Dong Cheng, are you not well? Why are you asleep at this time of day?”

Dong Cheng started up and at once missed the decree.
He was aghast; he almost fell to the ground.

“So you want to make away with Cao Cao? I shall have to tell him,” said Wang Zifu.

“Then, brother, that is the end of the Hans,” said his host, with tears.

“I was joking,” said Wang Zifu. “My forefathers also served the Hans and ate of their bounty. Am I devoid of loyalty? I would help you, brother, as far as lies in my power.”

“It is well for the country that you think like this,” said Dong Cheng.

“But we ought to have a more private place than this to talk over such plans and pledge ourselves to sacrifice all in the cause of Han.”

Dong Cheng began to feel very satisfied. He produced a roll of white silk and wrote his own name at the top and signed it, and Wang Zifu followed suit.

Then the visitor said, “General Wu Zilan is one of my best friends. He ought to be allowed to come in.”

Dong Cheng replied, “Of all the officials of the court, Commander Chong Ji and Court Counselor Wu Shi are my best friends. Certainly they would back me up.”

So the discussion proceeded. Presently a servant announced no other than these very two men Dong Cheng just mentioned.

“This is providential,” said Dong Cheng, and he told Wang Zifu to hide behind a screen.

The two guests were led into the library, and after the exchange of the ordinary civilities and a cup of tea, Chong Ji referred to the incident at the hunt and the shooting of the stag.

“We were not angry at that?” said Chong Ji.

Dong Cheng answered, “Though we be angry, what can we do?”

Wu Shi struck in, saying, “I would slay this fellow, I swear, but I cannot get anyone to back me up.”

“One should perish for one’s country; one should not mind,” said Chong Ji.

At this moment Wang Zifu appeared from behind the screen, saying, “You two want to kill Cao Cao! I shall have to let him know this. And Uncle Dong Cheng is my witness.”

“A loyal minister does not mind death. If we are killed, we will be Han ghosts, which is better than being sycophants of a traitor,” said Chong Ji, angrily.

Dong Cheng said, “We were just saying we wanted to see you two on this matter. Wang Zifu is only joking.”

Then he drew forth the decree and showed it to the two newcomers, who also wept as they read it. They were asked to add their names to the silk roll.

Wang Zifu said, “Wait here a few moments till I get Wu Zilan to come.”

He left the room and very soon returned with his friend, who also wrote his name in the presence of all the others.

After this they went into one of the inner chambers to drink success to the new plot. While there, a new visitor, Ma Teng, Governor of Xiliang, was announced.
“Say I am indisposed,” said the host, “and cannot receive visitors.”

The doorkeeper took the message, whereat Ma Teng angrily said, “Last night at the Donghua Gate, I saw him come out in robe and girdle. How can he pretend illness today? I am not come from mere idleness, why does he refuse to see me?”

The doorkeeper went in again and told his master what the visitor had said and that he was very angry. Then Dong Cheng rose, excused himself saying he would soon return, and went to receive Ma Teng.

After the visitor had saluted and they were both seated, Ma Teng said, “I have just come from a farewell audience and wished to bid you good bye. Why did you want to put me off?”

“My poor body was taken suddenly ill. That is why I was not waiting to welcome you,” said Dong Cheng.

“You do not look as if you were ill. Your face wears the very bloom of health,” said Ma Teng bluntly.

His host could say no more and was silent. The visitor shook out his sleeves and rose to depart.

He sighed deeply as he walked down the steps, saying to himself, “Not one of them is any good. There is no one to save the country.”

This speech sank deeply into Dong Cheng’s heart. He stopped his guest, saying, “Who is no good to save the country? Whom do you mean?”

“That incident at the hunt the other day, the shooting of the stag, filled my breast with anger. But if you, a near relative of the Emperor, can pass your time in wine and idle dalliance without a thought of doing away with rebellion, where can anyone be found who will save the dynasty?”

However, Dong Cheng doubts were not set at rest. Pretending great surprise, he replied, “The Prime Minister is of high rank and has the confidence of the court. Why then do you utter such things?”

“So you find that wretch Cao Cao a good man, eh?”

“Pray speak lower: There are eyes and ears very near us.”

“The sort of people who covet life and fear death are not those to discuss any great undertaking.”

So saying, Ma Teng rose to go away. By this time his host’s doubts were set at rest. He felt that Ma Teng was loyal.

So Dong Cheng said, “Do not be angry any more. I will show you something.”

Whereupon he invited Ma Teng to go into the room where the others were seated and then showed him the decree. As Ma Teng read it, his hair stood on end; he ground his teeth and bit his lips till the blood came.

“When you move, remember the whole force of my army is ready to help,” said Ma Teng.

Dong Cheng introduced him to the other conspirators, and then the pledge was produced, and Ma Teng was told to sign his name. He did so, at the same time smearing the blood as a sign of the oath and saying, “I swear to die rather than betray this pledge!”

Pointing to the five he said, “We require ten for this business, and we can accomplish our design.”

“We cannot get many true and loyal people. One of the wrong sort will spoil all,” said Dong Cheng.
Ma Teng told them to bring in the list of officials. He read on till he came to the name Liu, of the imperial clan, when clapping his hands he cried, “Why not consult him?”

“Whom?” cried they altogether.

Ma Teng very slowly and deliberately spoke his name.

To a very trusty servant comes an Emperor’s decree,
And a scion of the ruling house can prove his loyalty.

If the readers turns to the next chapter, they will see whom Ma Teng talked about.

Chapter 21
In A Plum Garden, Cao Cao Discusses Heroes.

“Who is it?” was the question on the lips of the conspirators.

Ma Teng’s reply was, “The Imperial Protector of Yuzhou, Liu Bei. He is here and we will ask him to help.”

“Though he is an uncle of the Emperor, he is at present a partisan of our enemy, and he will not join,” said Dong Cheng.

“But I saw something at the hunt,” said Ma Teng. “When Cao Cao advanced to acknowledge the congratulations due to the Emperor, Liu Bei’s sworn brother Guan Yu was behind him, and grasped his sword as if to cut down Cao Cao. However, Liu Bei signed to him to hold his hand and Guan Yu did. Liu Bei would willingly destroy Cao Cao, only he thinks Cao Cao’s teeth and claws are too many. You must ask Liu Bei, and he will surely consent.”

Here Wu Shi urged caution, saying, “Do not go too fast. Let us consider the thing most carefully.”

They dispersed. Next day after dark Dong Cheng went to Liu Bei’s lodging taking with him the decree. As soon as Dong Cheng was announced, Liu Bei came to greet him and led him into a private room where they could talk freely. The two younger brothers were there as well.

“It must be something unusually important that has brought Uncle Dong Cheng here tonight,” said Liu Bei.

“If I had ridden forth by daylight, Cao Cao might have suspected something, so I came by night.”

Wine was brought in, and while they were drinking, Dong Cheng said, “Why did you check your brother the other day at the hunt, when he was going to attack Cao Cao?”

Liu Bei was startled and said, “How did you know?”

“Nobody noticed but I saw.”
Liu Bei could not prevaricate and said, “It was the presumption of the man that made my brother so angry. Guan Yu could not help it.”

The visitor covered his face and wept.

“Ah,” said he, “if all the court ministers were like Guan Yu, there would be no sighs for lack of tranquillity.”

Now Liu Bei felt that possibly Cao Cao had sent his visitor to try him, so he cautiously replied, “Where are the sighs for lack of tranquillity while Cao Cao is at the head of affairs?”

Dong Cheng changed color and rose from his seat.

“You, Sir, are a relative of His Majesty, and so I showed you my inmost feelings. Why did you mislead me?”

But Liu Bei said, “Because I feared you might be misleading me, and I wanted to find out.”

At this Dong Cheng drew out the decree he had received and showed it. His host was deeply moved. Then Dong Cheng produced the pledge. There were only six names to it, and these were Dong Cheng, Wang Zifu, Chong Ji, Wu Shi, Wu Zilan, and Ma Teng.

“Since you have a decree like this, I cannot but do my share,” said Liu Bei, and at Dong Cheng’s request he added his name and signature to the others and handed it back.

“Now let us but get three more, which will make ten, and we shall be ready to act.”

“But you must move with great caution and not let this get abroad,” said Liu Bei.

The two remained talking till an early hour in the morning when the visitor left.

Now in order to put Cao Cao quite off the scent that any plot against him was in progress, Liu Bei began to devote himself to gardening, planting vegetables, and watering them with his own hands. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei ventured to remonstrate with him for taking to such an occupation when great matters needed attention.

“The reason for this you may not know,” replied he.

And they said no more.

One day when the two brothers were absent, and Liu Bei was busy in his garden, two generals of Cao Cao, Xu Chu and Zhang Liao, with an escort came from Cao Cao, saying, “The command of the Prime Minister is that you come at once.”

“What important affair is afoot?” asked Liu Bei nervously.

“We know nothing. We were ordered to come and request your presence.”

All he could do was to follow.

When Liu Bei arrived, Cao Cao met him and laughingly said, “That is a big business you have in hand at home.”

This remark made Liu Bei turn the color of clay. Cao Cao took him by the hand and led him straight to the private garden, saying, “The growth of vegetables that you are trying to learn is very difficult.”

Liu Bei breathed again. He said, “That is hardly a business. It is only a solace.”
Cao Cao said, “I happened to notice the green plums on the trees today, and suddenly my thoughts went back to a year ago when we were thrashing Zhang Xiu. We were marching through a parched county, and everyone was suffering from thirst. Suddenly I lifted my whip, and pointing at something in the distance I said, ‘Look at those fruitful plum trees in the forest ahead.’ The soldiers heard it, and it made their mouths water. Seeing the plums kindles my appreciation. I owe something to the plums, and we will repay it today. I ordered the servants to heat some wine very hot and sent to invite you to share it.”

Liu Bei was quite composed by this time and no longer suspected any sinister design. He went with his host to a small spring pavilion in a plum garden, where the wine cups were already laid out and green plums filled the dishes. They sat down to a confidential talk and free enjoyment of their wine.

As they drank, the weather gradually changed, clouds gathering and threatening rain. The servants pointed out a mass of cloud that looked like a dragon hung in the sky. Both host and guest leaned over the balcony looking at it.

“Do you understand the evolution of dragons?” asked Cao Cao of the guest.

“Not in detail.”

“A dragon can assume any size, can rise in glory or hide from sight. Bulky, it generates clouds and evolves mist; attenuated, it can scarcely hide a mustard stalk or conceal a shadow. Mounting, it can soar to the empyrean; subsiding, it lurks in the uttermost depths of the ocean. This is the midspring season, and the dragon chooses this moment for its transformations like a person realizing his own desires and overrunning the world. The dragon among animals compares with the hero among people. You, General, have traveled all lakes and rivers. You must know who are the
heroes of the present day, and I wish you would say who they are."

"I am just a common dullard. How can I know such things?"

"Do not be so modest," said Cao Cao.

"Thanks to your kindly protection I have a post at court. But as to heroes I really do not know who they are."

"You may not have looked upon their faces, but you must have heard their names."

"Yuan Shu of the South of River Huai, with his strong army and abundant resources: Is he one?" asked Liu Bei.

His host laughed, "A rotting skeleton in a graveyard. I shall put him out of the way shortly."

"Well, Yuan Shao then. The highest offices of state have been held in his family for four generations, and his clients are many in the empire. He is firmly posted in Jizhou, and he commands the services of many able people. Surely he is one."

"A bully, but a coward. He is fond of grandiose schemes, but is devoid of decision. He makes for great things but grudges the necessary sacrifice. He loses sight of everything else in view of a little present advantage. He is not one."

"There is Liu Biao of Jingzhou. He is renowned as a man of perfection, whose fame has spread on all sides. Surely he is a hero."

"He is a mere semblance, a man of vain reputation. No; not he."

"Sun Ce is a sturdy sort, the chief of all in the South Land. Is he a hero?"

"He has profited by the reputation of his father Sun Jian. Sun Ce is not a real hero."

"What of Liu Zhang of Yizhou?"

"Though he is of the reigning family, he is nothing more than a watch dog. How could you make a hero of him?"

"What about Zhang Xiu, Zhang Lu, Han Sui, and all those leaders?"

Cao Cao clapped his hands and laughed very loudly, saying, "Paltry people like them are not worth mentioning."

"With these exceptions I really know none."

"Now heroes are the ones who cherish lofty designs in their bosoms and have plans to achieve them. They have all-embracing schemes, and the whole world is at their mercy."

"Who is such a person?" said Liu Bei.
Cao Cao pointed his finger first at his guest and then at himself, saying, “The only heroes in the world are you and I.”

Liu Bei gasped, and the spoon and chopsticks rattled to the floor. Now just at that moment the storm burst with a tremendous peal of thunder and rush of rain.

Liu Bei stooped down to recover the fallen articles, saying, “What a shock! And it was quite close.”

“What! Are you afraid of thunder?” said Cao Cao.

Liu Bei replied, “The Sage One paled at a sudden peal of thunder or fierce gust of wind. Why should one not fear?”

Thus he glossed over the real fact, that it was the words he had heard that had so startled him.

Constrained to lodge in a tiger’s lair,
He played a waiting part,

But when Cao Cao talked of breaking humans,
Then terror gripped his heart.
But he cleverly used the thunder peal
As excuse for turning pale;
O quick to seize occasions thus!
He surely must prevail.

The shower had passed, and there appeared two men rushing through the garden, both armed. In spite of the attendants, they forced their way to the pavilion where sat the two friends. They were Guan Yu and Zhang Fei.

The two brothers had been outside the city at archery practice when Cao Cao’s invitation had come so peremptorily. On their return they heard that two officers had arrived and led away Liu Bei to the Prime Minister. They hastened to his palace and were told their brother was with his host in the grounds, and they feared something had happened. So they rushed in.

Now when they saw their brother quietly talking with Cao Cao and enjoying a cup of wine, they took up their usual places and meekly stood waiting.

“Why did you come?” said Cao Cao.

“We heard that you, Sir, had invited our brother to a wine
Chapter 21

Romance of Three Kingdoms

party, and we came to amuse you with a little sword play,” said they.

“This is not a Hongmen Banquet,” replied Cao Cao. “What use have we for Xiang Chang and Xiang Ba of old?”

Liu Bei smiled. The host ordered wine to be served to the two “Fan Kuais” to allay their anxiety and, soon after, the three took their leave and returned homeward.

“We were nearly frightened to death,” said Guan Yu.

The story of the dropped chopsticks was told. The two asked what their brother intended by his actions.

“My learning gardening was to convince Cao Cao of my perfect simplicity and the absence of any ambition. But when he suddenly pointed to me as one of the heroes, I was startled, for I thought he had some suspicions. Happily the thunder at that moment supplied the excuse I wanted.”

“Really you are very clever,” said they.

Next day Cao Cao again invited Liu Bei and while the two were drinking, Man Chong, who had been dispatched to find out what Yuan Shao was doing, came to present his report.

Man Chong said, “Gongsun Zan has been completely

1 At that time Liu Bang, Governor of Pei, and Xiang Yu, King of West Chu, were fighting Qin under the Chu banner. Liu Bang was the first commander who entered Qin’s capital, Xianyang. The loss of this honor enraged Xiang Yu, and he was set to attack Liu Bang’s force. But his uncle Xiang Ba wanted to mediate the situation, and Xiang Ba invited Liu Bang to visit Xiang Yu’s camp in Hongmen. During a banquet at Hongmen, Xiang Yu’s adviser Fan Zeng ordered Xiang Chang to perform a sword-dance and take the chance to kill Liu Bang. However, as Xiang Chang closed in Liu Bang, Xiang Ba rose to perform another sword-dance and fend off the attack. Just then Liu Bang’s general Fan Kuai bursted in, armed and angry-looking. Fan Kuai proclaimed his lord’s achievements and denounced the murder plot. In the confusion, Liu Bang slipped away and rushed back to his camp.
defeated by Yuan Shao.”

“Do you know the details? I should like to know how,” interrupted Liu Bei.

“They were at war, and Gongsun Zan got the worst of it, so he acted on the defensive, building a high wall about his army and on that erecting a high tower, which he called the Yijing Tower. Therein he placed all his grain, one hundred thousand carts total, and took up his own quarters. His fighting troops passed in and out without ceasing, some going out to give battle, others returning to rest. One of them was surrounded and sent to ask Gongsun Zan to rescue him. Gongsun Zan said, ‘If I rescue him, hereafter everyone will want to be helped and will not exert himself.’ So Gongsun Zan did not go. This disgusted his soldiers, and many deserted to the enemy so that his army diminished. He sent letters to the capital to crave help, but the messenger was captured. He sent to Zhang Yan to arrange with him for a two-pronged joint attack, and those letters with the plans also fell into Yuan Shao’s hands. The plans were adopted by Yuan Shao, who gave the signals agreed upon. Thus Gongsun Zan fell into an ambush, lost heavily, and retreated into the city. There he was besieged, and a subterranean passage was pierced into the tower where he lodged. The tower was set on fire, and Gongsun Zan could not escape. So he slew his wife and little ones and hanged himself. The flames destroyed the bodies of the whole family.

“Yuan Shao has added the remnants of the vanquished army to his own and so become yet stronger. His brother Yuan Shu in the South of River Huai, however, has become so arrogant and cruel that the people have turned against him. Then Yuan Shu had sent to say he would yield the title of Emperor, which he had assumed, in favor of Yuan Shao. Yuan Shao demanded the Imperial Hereditary Seal also, and Yuan Shu promised to bring it in person. Now Yuan Shu has abandoned River Huai and is about to move to the North of Yellow River. If he succeeded, the two brothers will control adjoining regions and be dangerous.”

It was a sad story, and Liu Bei remembered with sorrow that, in the days of success and prosperity, the dead chieftain, Gongsun Zan, had pushed his interest and shown him much kindness. Moreover he was anxious to know the fate of Zhao Yun.

In his heart he thought, “What better chance am I likely to get of setting myself free?”

So Liu Bei rose and said to Cao Cao, “If Yuan Shu goes over to join his brother, he will surely pass through Xuzhou. I beg you to give me an army with which to smite him on the way. That will finish Yuan Shu.”

“Memorialize the Emperor tomorrow, and I will give you an army,” said Cao Cao.

So next day Liu Bei went to an audience, and Cao Cao gave him command of fifty thousand horse and foot, and sent Generals Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao with him.

At parting with Liu Bei, the Emperor shed tears.

As soon as Liu Bei reached his lodging, he set about preparations for immediate departure, taking his seal as General and preparing his weapons. Dong Cheng went three miles away from the city to bid him farewell.

“You must not mind my going. This journey will assuredly help on the scheme,” said Liu Bei.

“Keep your mind fixed on that,” said Dong Cheng, “and never forget what His Majesty requires of us.”

They parted. Presently his brothers asked him why he was in such a hurry to get away.

Liu Bei replied, “I have been a bird in a cage, a fish in a net. This is like the fish regaining the open sea and the bird soaring into the blue sky. I suffered much from the confinement.”
Then he ordered Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao to march the troops faster.