Chapter 21 - 2
Using The Host’s Forces, Guan Yu Takes Xuzhou.

Now Guo Jia and Cheng Yu had been absent inspecting stores and supplies when Liu Bei left. As soon as they heard of his expedition, they went in to see their master, asking him why he had let Liu Bei go in command of an army.

“He is going to cut off Yuan Shu,” replied Cao Cao.

“Formerly, when he was Imperial Protector of Yuzhou, we recommended that he should be put to death, but you would not hear of it. Now you have given him an army. You have allowed the dragon to reach the sea, the tiger to return to the mountains. What control will you have in future?”

So spoke Cheng Yu, and Guo Jia followed in the same strain, saying, “Even if you would not put him to death, you need not have let him go. As the proverb says, ‘Relax opposition for one day and age-long harm ensues.’ You must admit the truth of this.”

Cao Cao recognized that these were prudent counsels, so he sent Xu Chu with five hundred horsemen and imperative orders to bring Liu Bei back again.

Liu Bei was marching as rapidly as possible when he noticed a cloud of dust in the rear and remarked to his brothers, “Surely they are pursuing us.”

He halted and made a stockade, and ordered his brothers to be in readiness, one on each flank. Presently the messenger arrived and found himself in the midst of an army ready for battle. Xu Chu dismounted and entered the camp to speak with Liu Bei.

“Sir, on what business have you come?” asked Liu Bei.

“The Prime Minister has sent me to request you to return as he has further matters to discuss with you.”

“When a general has once taken the field, even the royal command is of no effect. I bade farewell to the Emperor, I received the Prime Minister’s commands, and there can be nothing further to talk about. You may return forthwith and take that as my reply.”

Xu Chu was undecided what action to take. He thought, “The Prime Minister cherishes a friendship with Liu Bei, and I have no orders to kill. I can only return with this reply and ask further instructions.”

So Xuchu left. When he related what had occurred, Cao Cao still hesitated to take any action.

“This refusal to return means enmity,” said Cheng Yu and Guo Jia.

“Still, two of my people are with him,” said Cao Cao. “He will not dare do anything unfriendly, I think. Beside, I sent him and I cannot go back on my own orders.”

So Liu Bei was not pursued.

He took his arms, he fed his steed,  
And fared forth willingly,  
Intent to accomplish his King’s behest  
Deep graven on his memory.  
At least he had broken out of his cage,
He heard not the tiger’s roar,
He had shaken the shackle from his feet,
As a dragon on high could soar.

As soon as Ma Teng heard that Liu Bei had set forth, he reported that pressing business called him and marched back to his own region, Xiliang.

When Liu Bei reached Xuzhou, the Deputy Imperial Protector, Che Zhou, came to meet him. When the official banquet was over, Sun Qian and Mi Zhu paid their visit to Che Zhou. Then Liu Bei proceeded to his residence to greet his family.

Scouts were sent out to see what Yuan Shu was doing. They came back with the intelligence: “Yuan Shu’s arrogance had driven away his generals, Lei Bo and Chen Lan, who had returned to their mountain fastness in Mount Song. His forces thus reduced, he wrote resigning the imperial style he had assumed in favor of his brother Yuan Shao, who at once commanded his presence. Thereupon he packed up the Palace fittings he had made, got the remnants of his army in order, and marched west.”

When Yuan Shu neared Xuzhou, Liu Bei led out his force of fifty thousand soldiers and four generals---Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhu Ling, and Lu Zhao. Yuan Shu sent out Ji Ling to force a way through. But Zhang Fei opposed him and attacked without a parley. In the tenth bout Zhang Fei cut down Ji Ling. The defeated troops fled in all directions.

Then Yuan Shu came up with his own army. Liu Bei placed Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao in command of the left wing, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei the right wing, and himself in the center, and so met Yuan Shu.

As soon as the enemy came near, Liu Bei began to abuse him, crying, “O rebellious one, and wicked, I have a command to destroy you! Yield, then, with good grace and so escape your punishment!”

“Base weaver of mats and mean maker of straw sandals! How dare you make light of me?” replied Yuan Shu, and he gave the signal for an attack.

Liu Bei retired, and his generals from the flanks closed in. They smote the army of Yuan Shu till corpses littered the plain and blood flowed in streams. At the same time Yuan Shu’s former generals, Lei Bo and Chen Lan from Mount Song, attacked the baggage train and completed the destruction. Yuan Shu tried to retreat to Shouchun, but Lei Bo and Chen Lan barred the road.

Yuan Shu sought refuge in Jiangling, with one thousand troops left of all his army. And these were the weakly ones, able neither to fight nor flee. It was then the height of summer, and their food was nearly exhausted. The whole provision consisted of thirty carts of wheat. This was made over to the soldiers, and the members of his household went hungry. Many died of actual starvation. Yuan Shu could not swallow the coarse food that the soldiers lived on. One day he bade his cook bring him some honeyed water to quench his thirst.

“There is no water, save that tainted with blood,” replied the cook. “Where can I get
honeyed water?" This was the last straw. Yuan Shu sat up on his couch and rolled out on the floor with a loud cry. Blood gushed from his mouth and thus he died. It was the sixth month of the fourth year of Rebuilt Tranquillity (AD 199).

The last days of Han approached and weapons clashed in every quarter;

The misguided Yuan Shu, lost to all sense of honor;

Forgetful of his forefathers, who had filled the state’s highest offices;

Madly aspired to become himself Emperor;

Resting his outrageous claim on the possession of the Seal,

And arrogantly boasting that thus he fulfilled the design of Heaven.

Alas! Sick unto death he vainly begged for a little honeyed water;

He died, alone.

Yuan Shu being dead, his nephew, Yuan Yin, taking his coffin and his wife and children, sought shelter in Lujiang. There the Magistrate, Xu Liu, slew all the survivors. Among the possessions Xu Liu found the Imperial Hereditary Seal, which he at once took to the capital and presented to Cao Cao, for which service he was made Governor of Gaoling. Since then the Imperial Hereditary Seal belonged to Cao Cao.

When Liu Bei heard that Yuan Shu was dead, he prepared a report to the Throne, and sent it to Cao Cao. He sent the two generals deputed by Cao Cao, Zhu Ling and Lu Zhao, back to the capital, keeping the army to defend Xuzhou. He also personally went through the countryside commanding the people to resume their ordinary avocations.

Cao Cao was angry when his two officers returned without their man and was going to put them to death. Xun Yu reasoned with him.

“The power was in Liu Bei’s hands, and so these two had no alternative,” said Xun Yu.

So they were pardoned.

“You should instruct Che Zhou, the Deputy Imperial Protector, to try to destroy him,” said Xun Yu.

Accordingly he sent secret orders to Che Zhou, who took Chen Deng into his confidence and asked his advice.
Chapter 10

Romance of Three Kingdoms

Chen Deng said, “That is easy. Liu Bei is outside the city, and an ambush in the city gate to attack him on his return from the country will be final. I will attack the escort with arrows from the city walls.”

Che Zhou agreed to try this.

Then Chen Deng went to his father to tell him. Chen Gui bade him go and warn the intended victim. Chen Deng at once rode away to do so. Before long he met Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, to whom he told his story.

Now Liu Bei was following some distance behind. As soon as Zhang Fei heard of the plot, he wanted to attack the ambush, but Guan Yu proposed another plan.

Said he, “Attacking the ambush will be a failure, since we are without the walls. And I think we can compass the death of Che Zhou. In the night we will pretend to be some of Cao Cao’s soldiers and entice him out to meet us. We will slay him.”

Zhang Fei approved of the plan. Now the soldiers still had some of Cao Cao’s army banners and wore similar armor. About the third watch they came to the city wall and hailed the gate. Those on guard asked who they were. The men replied that they were Zhang Liao’s troops sent from the capital. This was told Che Zhou who sent hastily for Chen Deng to ask his advice.

“If I do not receive them, they will suspect my loyalty,” said Che Zhou. “Yet if I go out, I may be victim of a ruse.”

So he went up on the wall and said, “It is too dark to distinguish friends from foes. You must wait till daylight.”

“If Liu Bei know our presence, he will attack,” shouted back the soldiers.

And they begged him to let them in. Still Che Zhou hesitated. They shouted louder than ever to open the gate.

Presently Che Zhou girded on his armor, placed himself at the head of one thousand cavalry and went out. He galloped over the bridge, shouting, “Where is Zhang Liao?”

Then lights blazed around, and he recognized Guan Yu with his sword drawn.

“Wretch!” cried Guan Yu. “You would plot to slay my brother, would you?”

Che Zhou was too frightened to make good defense, and he turned to reenter the gate. But as he reached the drawbridge, Chen Deng shot out flights of arrows, wherefore Che Zhou turned aside and galloped along under the wall. But Guan Yu came quickly in pursuit. His sword was raised aloft, and as it came down, Che Zhou fell to the earth.

Guan Yu cut off his head and returned, shouting, “I have slain the traitor. You others need not fear if you only surrender!”
Chapter 21

They threw aside their spears and gave in. As soon as the excitement had calmed, Guan Yu took the head to show Liu Bei and told him the story of the plot.

“But what will Cao Cao think of this?” said Liu Bei. “And he may come.”

“If he does, we can meet him,” said Guan Yu.

But Liu Bei was grieved beyond measure. When he entered the city, the elders of the people knelt in the road to welcome him. When he reached his residence, he found that Zhang Fei had already exterminated the family of Che Zhou.

Liu Bei said, “We have slain one of Cao Cao’s best officers, and how will he stand that?”

“Never mind!” cried Chen Deng. “I have a plan.”

Just from grave danger extricated,
A looming war must be placated.

The plan proposed by Chen Deng will be disclosed next.

Chapter 22

Yuan Shao And Cao Cao Both Take The Field;
Guan Yu And Zhang Fei Captures Two Generals.

This was the plan Chen Deng proposed to Liu Bei, “Yuan Shao is Cao Cao’s terror. He is strongly posted in an extensive territory of four regions---Jizhou, Qingzhou, Youzhou, and Bingzhou---with one million fighting soldiers and numerous able officers. Write letters and pray him rescue you.”

Liu Bei replied, “But we have never had any dealings with each other, and he is unlikely to do such a thing for a person who has just destroyed his brother.”

“There is someone here whose family have been on intimate terms with the Yuans for a hundred years. Yuan Shao would surely come, if he wrote.”

“And who is this?”

“A man you know well and respect greatly. Can you not guess?”

“You surely mean Zheng Xuan,” said Liu Bei suddenly. “That is he,” said Chen Deng smiling.

Now Zheng Xuan was a student and a man of great talent, who had long studied under the famed teacher Ma Rong, whose knowledge of the Book of Odes was universally recognized. Whenever Ma Rong lectured, he let fall a curtain behind which were a circle of singing girls. The students were assembled in front of this curtain.

Zheng Xuan attended these lectures for three years and never
once let his eyes wander to the curtain.

Naturally the master admired his pupil. After Zheng Xuan had finished his studies and gone home, Ma Rong praised him to the others, saying, “Only one man has penetrated the inner meaning of my instructions, and that one is Zheng Xuan.”

In Zheng Xuan’s household, the waiting maids were familiar with the Book of Odes. Once one of the maids opposed Zheng Xuan’s wishes, so as punishment she was made to kneel in front of the steps. Another girl made fun of her, quoting from an ode:

“What are you doing there in the mire?”

The kneeling girl capped the verse from another ode, quoted she:

“That was but a simple word I said, Yet brought it wrath upon my head.”

Such was the family in which Zheng Xuan had been born. In the reign of the Emperor Huan, he rose to the rank of Chair of the Secretariat. But when the Ten Eunuchs began to control the government, he gave up office and retired into the country to Xuzhou. Liu Bei had known him before, had consulted him on many occasions, and greatly respected him.

Liu Bei was glad that he had remembered this man, and without loss of time, in company with Chen Deng, he went to Zheng Xuan’s house to ask him to draft this letter, which Zheng Xuan generously consented to do.

Sun Qian was entrusted with the task of delivery and set out at once. Yuan Shao read it and considered the matter long before speaking.

“Liu Bei destroyed my brother, and I ought not to help him, but out of consideration for the writer of this letter I must.”

Thereupon Yuan Shao assembled his officers to consider an attack upon Cao Cao.

Adviser Tian Feng said, “Do not raise an army. The people are worn out, and the granaries are empty with these constant wars. Let us rather report the recent victory of Gongsun Zan to the Throne. If that does not reach the Emperor, then memorialize that Cao Cao is hindering the government. Then raise an army, occupy Liyang, assemble a Yellow River fleet in Henan, prepare weapons, send out your various divisions, and within three years you will win all round.”

Adviser Shen Pei replied, “I do not agree. The military genius of our illustrious lord having overcome the hordes of the north, to dispose of Cao Cao is as simple as turning one’s hand. It is not a matter of months.”

Adviser Ju Shou said, “Victory is not always to the many. Cao Cao’s discipline is excellent; his soldiers are brave and
well drilled. He will not sit down quietly waiting to be surrounded as Gongsun Zan did. Now you abandon the intention to inform the Throne of our success, which I find a good plan, but you intend to send out an army without any valid excuse. Our lord should not do that.”

Then followed adviser Guo Tu, saying, “You are wrong. No expedition against Cao Cao can lack excuse. But if our master would take the chance now offering itself of coming into his own, he will accede to the request in the letter of Zheng Xuan and ally himself with Liu Bei for the destruction of Cao Cao. This would win the approval of Heaven and the affections of the people, a double blessing.”

Thus the four advisers differed and wrangled, and Yuan Shao could not decide which to follow.

Then there came two others, Xu You and Xun Shen, and, seeing them, Yuan Shao said, “You two have wide experience, how would you decide?”

The two made their obeisance, and Yuan Shao said, “A letter from Zheng Xuan the Chair has arrived, counseling me to support Liu Bei in an attack on Cao Cao. Now am I to send an army or not send an army?”

They both cried with one voice, “Send! Your armies are numerous enough and strong enough. You will destroy a traitor and help the dynasty.”

“Your words just express my desire,” said Yuan Shao and thenceforward the discussion turned on the expedition.

First, Liu Bei’s legate, Sun Qian, was sent back with Yuan Shao’s consent and instructions for Liu Bei to make ready to cooperate. Second, Yuan Shao assigned Shen Pei and Peng Ji as Commanding Generals; Tian Feng, Xun Shen, and Xu You as Military Advisers; Yan Liang and Wen Chou as Generals. The army was to be composed of three hundred thousand, horse and foot in equal numbers. They were to march on Liyang.

When the arrangements were complete, Guo Tu went to his chief, saying, “In order to manifest the righteousness of your attack on Cao Cao, it would be well to issue a manifesto with a summary of his various crimes.”

Yuan Shao approved of this, and Chen Lin, well known as a scholar, was entrusted to compose such a document. Chen Lin had been the Court Secretary in the reign of the late Emperor Ling. When Dong Zhuo unseated Regent Marshal He Jin, Chen Lin sought safety in Jizhou. This is the manifesto:

“A perspicacious ruler wisely provides against political vicissitudes; a loyal minister carefully foresees the
difficulties in the assertion of authority. Wherefore a person of unusual parts precedes an extraordinary situation, and of such a person the achievements will be extraordinary. For indeed the ordinary person is quite unequal to an extraordinary situation.

“In former days, after having gained ascendancy over a weakling emperor of the powerful Qin Dynasty, Prime Minister Zhao Gao\(^1\) wielded the whole authority of the Throne, overruling the government. All dignity and fortune came through him, and his contemporaries were restrained so that none dared to speak openly. Slowly but surely evolved the tragedy of the Wangyi Palace, when the Emperor was slain and the Imperial Tablets perished in the flames. Zhao Gao, the author of these crimes, has ever since been held up to obloquy as the arch example of an evil doer.

“In the later days of Empress Lu of the Hans, after the death of the Supreme Ancestor, the world saw Lu Chan and Lu Lu, brothers of the Empress and fellows in wickedness, monopolizing the powers of government. Within the capital, they commanded two armies, and without they ruled the feudal states of Liang and Zhao. They arbitrarily controlled all state affairs and decided all questions in the council chamber and the court. This dominance of the base and declension of the noble continued till the hearts of the people grew cold within them.

“Thereupon Zhou Bo\(^2\), Lord of Jiang, and Liu Zhan, Lord of Zhuxu, asserted their dignity and let loose their wrath.

They destroyed the contumacious ministers and restored their ruler to his royal state. Thus they enabled the kingly way to be reestablished and the glory to be manifested. Here are two instances where ministers asserted their authority.

“This Cao Cao, now Minister of Works, forsooth, had for ancestor a certain eunuch named Cao Teng, fitting companion of Xu Huan and Zuo Guan. All three were prodigies of wickedness and insatiably avaricious and, let loose on the world, they hindered ethical progress and preyed upon the populace. This Cao Teng begged for and adopted Cao Cao’s father who, by wholesale bribery, wagons of gold and cartloads of jewels presented at the gates of the influential, contrived to sneak his way into considerable office where he could subvert authority. Thus Cao Cao is the depraved bantling of a monstrous excrecence, devoid of all virtue in himself, ferocious and cunning, delighting in disorder and reveling in public calamity.

“Now I, Yuan Shao, a man of war, have mustered my armies and displayed my might that I may sweep away and destroy the evil opponents of government. I have already had to deal with Dong Zhuo, the ruffian who invaded the official circle and wrested the government. At that time I grasped my sword and beat the drums to restore order in the east. I assembled warriors, selected the best, and took them into my service. In this matter I came into relations with this Cao Cao and conferred with him to further my scheme. I gave him command of a subordinate force and looked to him to render such petty service as he was equal to. I suffered his stupidities and condoned his shortcomings, his rash attacks and facile retreats, his losses and shameful defeats, his repeated destruction of whole armies. Again and again I sent him more troops and filled the gaps in his depleted ranks. I even addressed a memorial to the Throne for him to be appointed Imperial Protector of Yanzhou. I

---

1 Zhao Gao a court eunuch serving the First Emperor. Zhao Gao killed the eldest son and supported the second son for the throne after the First Emperor’s death (BC 209). In the final days of Qin Dynasty, Zhao Gao killed the Second Emperor and placed the First Emperor’s grandson on the throne (BC 206).

2 Zhou Bo was prime minister of Han Emperor Wen (BC 179-156). After Empress Lu died, Zhou Bo cooperated with Chen Ping and Liu Zhan to purge the Lu clan. Ennobled as Lord of Jiang.
made him feel as he were a tiger. I added to his honors and increased his authority, hoping that eventually he would justify himself by a victory against Dong Zhuo such as Qin used Meng Ming against Jin.

“But Cao Cao availed himself of the opportunity to overstep all bounds, to give free rein to violence and evil. He stripped the common people, outraged the good, and injured the virtuous. Bian Rang, Governor of Jiujiang, was a man of conspicuous talent and of world-wide reputation. He was honest in speech and correct in demeanor. He spoke without flattery. Cao Cao put him to death and his head was exposed, and his family utterly destroyed. From that day to this scholars have deeply mourned, and popular resentment has steadily grown. One person raised his arm in anger, and the whole countryside followed him. Whereupon Cao Cao was smitten at Xuzhou, and his territory was snatched by Lu Bu. He fled eastward without shelter or refuge.

“My policy is a strong trunk and weak branches, a commanding central government and obedient feudal lords. Also I am no partisan. Therefore I again raised my banners, donned my armor, and moved forward to attack. My drums rolled for an assault on Lu Bu, and his multitudes incontinently fled. I saved Cao Cao from destruction and restored him to a position of authority. Wherein I must confess to showing no kindness to the people of Yanzhou, although it was a great matter for Cao Cao.

“Later it happened that the imperial cortege moved east, and a horde of rebels of Dong Zhuo’s faction rose and attacked. The course of government was hindered. At that moment my territory was threatened from the north, and I could not leave it. Wherefore I sent one of my officers, Xu Xun, to Cao Cao to see to the repair of the dynastic temples and the protection of the youthful sovereign. Thereupon Cao Cao gave the rein to his inclinations. He
arbitrarily ordered the removal of the court to Xuchang. He brought shame upon the Ruling House and subverted the laws. He engrossed the chairmanship of the three highest offices and monopolized the control of the administration. Offices and rewards were conferred according to his will; punishment was at his word. He glorified whole families of those he loved; he exterminated whole clans of those he hated. Open critics were executed; secret opponents were assassinated. Officials locked their lips; wayfarers only exchanged glances. Chairs of boards recorded levies, and every government official held a sinecure.

“The late Yang Biao, a man who had filled two of the highest offices of state as Chairs of two boards, because of some petty grudge was, though guiltless, charged with a crime. He was beaten and suffered every form of cruelty. This arbitrary and impulsive act was a flagrant disregard of constitutional rules.

“Another victim was the Counselor Zhao Yan. He was faithful in remonstrance, honest in speech, endowed with the highest principles of rectitude. He was listened to at court. His words carried enough weight with the Emperor to cause him to modify his intention and confer reward for outspokenness. Desirous of diverting all power into his own hands and stifle all criticism, Cao Cao presumed to arrest and put to death this censor, in defiance of all legal procedures.

“Another evil deed was the destruction of the tomb of Prince Xiao of Liang, the brother of the late Emperor. His tomb should certainly have been respected, even its mulberries and sweetgum trees, its cypresses and its pines. Cao Cao led soldiers to the cemetery and stood by while it was desecrated, the coffin destroyed and the poor corpse exposed. They stole the gold and jewels of the dead. This deed brought tears to the eyes of the Emperor and rent the hearts of all people. Cao Cao also appointed new offices—Commander Who Opens Grave Mounds and General Who Seeks for Gold—whose tracks were marked by desecrated graves and exhumed bodies. Indeed, while assuming the position of the highest officer of state, he indulged the inclination of a bandit, polluting the empire, oppressing the people, a bane to gods and humans.

“He added to this by setting up minute and vexatious prohibitions so that there were nets and snares spread in every pathway, traps and pitfalls laid in every road. A hand raised was caught in a net, a foot advanced was taken in an entanglement. Wherefore the people of his regions, Yanzhou and Yuzhou, waxed desperate and the inhabitants...
of the metropolis groaned and murmured in anger.

"Read down the names through all the years,
Of ministers that all people curse,
For greed and cruelty and lust,
Than Cao Cao you will not find a worse.

"I have investigated the cases of evil deeds in the regions, but I have been unable to reform him. I have given him repeated opportunities hoping that he would repent. But he has the heart of a wolf, the nature of a wild beast. He nourishes evil in his bosom and desires to pull down the pillars of the state, to destroy the loyal and true, and to stand himself conspicuous as the chiefest of criminals.

"Formerly, when I attacked the north, Gongsun Zan, that obstinate bandit and perverse brave, resisted my might for a year. Before Gongsun Zan could be destroyed, this Cao Cao wrote to him that, under the pretense of assisting my loyal armies, he would covertly lead them to destruction. The plot was discovered through his messengers, and Gongsun Zan also perished. This blunted Cao Cao’s ardor, and his plans failed.

"Now he is camped at the Ao Granaries, with the Yellow River to strengthen his position. Like the mantis in the story, who threatened the chariot with its forelegs, he thinks himself terrible. But with the dignity and prestige of Han to support me, I confront the whole world. I have spearmen by millions, horsemen by hundreds of thousands, fierce and vigorous warriors strong as Chong Huang and Wu Huo, those heroes of antiquity. I have enlisted expert archers and strong bowmen. In Bingzhou my armies have crossed the Taihang Range, and in Qingzhou they have forded River Ji and River Ta. They have coasted down the Yellow River to attack his van, and from Jingzhou the armies of Liu Biao have descended to Wancheng and Wangye to smite his rearguard. Thunder-like in the weight of their march, tiger-like in the alertness of their advance, they are as flames let loose among light grass, as the blue ocean poured on glowing embers. Is there any hope that he escape destruction?

"Of the hordes of Cao Cao, those who can fight are from the north or from other camps, and they all desire to return home. They weep whenever they look to the north. The others belong to Yanzhou or Yuzhou, being remnants of the armies of Lu Bu and Zhang Yang. Beaten, stern necessity forced them to accept service, but they take it only as a temporary expedient. They who have been wounded hate each other. If I give the signal to return and send my drums to the mountain tops, and wave the white flag to show them they may surrender, they will melt away like dew before the sun, and no blood will be shed. The victory will be mine.

"Now the Hans are failing and the bonds of empire are relaxed. The sacred dynasty has no supporter, the ministers are not strong enough to cope with the difficulties. Within the capital the responsible ministers are crestfallen and helpless. There is no one to rely upon. Such loyal and high principled people as are left are browbeaten by a tyrannical minister. How can they manifest their virtue?

"Cao Cao has surrounded the Palace with seven hundred veterans, the ostensible object being to guard the Emperor, but the covert design being to hold him prisoner. I fear this is but the first step in usurpation, and so I take my part. Now
is the time for loyal ministers to sacrifice their lives, the opportunity for officers to perform meritorious deeds. Can I fail to urge you?

“Cao Cao has forged commands to himself to undertake the control of government affairs and, in the name of the state, sends out calls for military assistance. I fear lest distant regions may obey his behest and send troops to help him, to the detriment of the multitude and their everlasting shame. No wise person will do so.

“The forces of four regions---Bingzhou, Jizhou, Qingzhou, and Youzhou---are moving out simultaneously. When this call reaches Jingzhou, you will see their forces cooperate with those of Liu Biao. All regions and counties ought to organize volunteers and set them along their borders to demonstrate their force and prove their loyal support of the dynasty. Will not this be rendering extraordinary service?

“The rank of lordship, with feudal rights over five thousand households and a money reward of five millions, will be the reward of the one who brings the head of Cao Cao. No questions will be asked of those who surrender. I publish abroad this notice of my bounty and the rewards offered that you may realize that the dynasty is in real danger.”

Yuan Shao read this effusion with great joy. He at once ordered copies to be posted everywhere, in towns and cities, at gates, tax stations, ferries, and passes. Copies found their way to the capital, and one got into Cao Cao’s palace. That day he happened to be in bed with a bad headache. The servants took the paper to the sick man’s room. He read it and was frightened from the tips of his hair to the marrow of his very bones. He broke out into a cold perspiration, and his headache vanished.

Cao Cao bounded out of bed and said to Cao Hong, “Who wrote this?”

“They say it is Chen Lin’s brush,” replied he.

Cao Cao laughed, “They have the literary gift; they would rather have the military too to back it up. This fellow may be a very elegant writer, but what if Yuan Shao’s fighting capacity falls short?”

Cao Cao called his advisers together to consider the next move.

Kong Rong heard of the summons and went to Cao Cao, saying, “You should not fight with Yuan Shao: He is too strong. Make peace.”

Xun Yu said, “He is despicable. Do not make peace.”

Kong Rong replied, “His land is wide and his people strong. He has many skillful strategists like Guo Tu, Xu You, Peng Ji, and Shen Pei; loyal leaders like Tian Feng and Ju Shou; and formidable generals like Yan Liang and Wen Chou; able commanders like Gao Lan, Zhang He, Han Meng, and Chunyu Qiong. You cannot say he is despicable.”

Xun Yu laughed, saying, “His army is a rabble. One general, Tian Feng, is bold but treacherous; another, Xu You, is greedy and ignorant; Shen Pei is devoted but
stupid; Peng Ji is steady but useless. And these four of such different temperaments, mutually incompatible, will make for confusion rather than efficiency. The brave Yan Liang and Wen Chou are worthless and can be disposed of in the first battle; and the others such as Gao Lan, Zhang He, Han Meng, and Chunyu Qiong are poor, rough stuff. What is the use even of their hundred thousands?"

Kong Rong was silent, and Cao Cao smiled.

“They are even as Xun Yu describes,” said Cao Cao.

Then Cao Cao issued orders. Generals Liu Dai and Wang Zhong were to lead an army of fifty thousand troops, displaying the Prime Minister’s banners, and march against Xuzhou to attack Liu Bei.

This Liu Dai had been Imperial Protector of Yanzhou but had surrendered to Cao Cao and entered Cao Cao’s service after the fall of his region. Cao Cao had given him a rank as Supernumerary Leader and now was disposed to make use of him.

Cao Cao himself took command of a large army of two hundred thousand troops for a simultaneous attack on Yuan Shao at Liyang.

Adviser Cheng Yu said, “The two Liu Dai and Wang Zhong sent against Liu Bei are unequal to their task.”

“I know,” said Cao Cao. “They are not meant to fight Liu Bei. It is merely a feint. They have orders not to make any real attack till I have overcome Yuan Shao. Then Liu Bei will be next.”

Liu Dai and Wang Zhong went their way, and Cao Cao marched out his grand army, which came into touch with the enemy, then thirty miles distant, at Liyang. Both sides made fortified camps and waited watching each other. This went on for two months of the autumn.

There was dissension in Yuan Shao’s camp. Xu You was at enmity with his colleague, Shen Pei, who was in commanding position; and the strategist Ju Shou resented the rejection of his plan. So they would not attack. Yuan Shao also could not make up his mind.

Tired of this state of inaction, Cao Cao then gave orders to his commanders: Zang Ba was to continue the pressure on Qingzhou and Xuzhou; Yu Jin and Li Dian to deploy troops along the Yellow River; Cao Ren to quarter the main force at Guandu. Then Cao Cao with an army marched back to Capital Xuchang.

The five legions sent against Liu Bei went into camp thirty-five miles from Xuzhou. The camp made an imposing display of the banners of the Prime Minister, but no attacks followed. Their spies were very busy north of the river to get news of Cao Cao’s movement. On the defensive side, Liu Bei, as he was uncertain of the strength of the force against him, dared not move.

Suddenly orders came for the Cao Cao’s army to attack, and then discord showed itself.

Liu Dai said, “The Prime Minister orders an attack: You advance.”
Wang Zhong replied, “You were named first.”
“I am the Commander-in-Chief. It is not my place to go first.”
“I will go with you in joint command,” said Wang Zhong.
“Let us cast lots, and he upon whom the lot falls must go,” said Liu Dai.
They drew lots, and it fell to Wang Zhong, who advanced toward Xuzhou with half the force.

When Liu Bei heard of the threatened attack, he called Chen Deng to consult.
Liu Bei said, “There is dissension in Yuan Shao’s camp at Liyang, so they do not advance. We do not know where Cao Cao is, but his own banner is not displayed in his Liyang’s camp. Why then is it shown here?”
Chen Deng replied, “His tricks take a hundred forms. It must be that he regards the north as more important and has gone there to look after its defense. He dares not show his flag there, and I feel sure it is only meant to mislead us. He is not here.”

Liu Bei then asked whether one of his brothers would find out the truth, and Zhang Fei volunteered to go.
“I fear you are unsuited for this,” said Liu Bei. “You are too impetuous.”
“If Cao Cao is there, I will haul him over here,” said Zhang Fei.
“Let me go first and find out,” said Guan Yu.
“If you go, I shall feel more at ease,” said Liu Bei.

So Guan Yu set out with three thousand soldiers to reconnoiter. It was then early winter, and snow was falling from a gloomy sky. They marched regardless of the snow and came near Wang Zhong’s camp with arms all ready to attack. Guan Yu summoned Wang Zhong to a parley.
“Beg him to come to the front, for I would speak with him,” replied Guan Yu.
“Is he likely to come out to see such as you,” said Wang Zhong.

Guan Yu angrily dashed forward, and Wang Zhong set his spear to meet him. Guan Yu rode till he came close to his antagonist, then suddenly wheeled away. Wang Zhong went after him and followed up a slope. Just as they passed the crest, Guan Yu suddenly wheeled again, shouted, and came on flourishing the mighty sword. Wang Zhong could not withstand that and fled. But Guan Yu, changing the huge sword to his left hand, with his right laid hold of his victim by the straps of his breastplate, lifted him out of the saddle, and rode away to his own lines with the captive laid across the pommel of his saddle. Wang Zhong’s army scattered.

The captive was sent to Xuzhou, where he was summoned into the presence of Liu Bei.
“Who are you? What office do you hold? How dare you falsely display the ensigns of the Prime Minister?” said Liu Bei.
“What do you mean by falsely when I simply obeyed
my orders?” said Wang Zhong. “My master wanted to produce the impression that he was present. Really he was not there.”

Liu Bei treated him kindly, giving him food and clothing, but put him in prison till his colleague could be captured.

Guan Yu said to Liu Bei, “I knew you had peaceful intentions in your mind; therefore, I captured Wang Zhong instead of slaying him.”

“I was afraid of Zhang Fei’s hasty and impulsive temper,” said Liu Bei. “He would have slain this man. So I could not send him. There is no advantage in killing people of this sort, and while alive they are often useful in amicable settlements.”

Here Zhang Fei said, “You have got this Wang Zhong; now I will go and get the other man.”

“Be careful,” said Liu Bei. “Liu Dai was once Imperial Protector of Yanzhou, and he was one of the nobles who met at Tiger Trap Pass to destroy Dong Zhuo. He is not to be despised.”

“I do not think him worth talking about so much. I will bring him in alive just as Second Brother did this other.”

“I fear that if his life be lost, it may upset our designs,” said Liu Bei.

“If I kill him, I will forfeit my own life,” said Zhang Fei.

So he was given three thousand soldiers and went off quickly.

The capture of his colleague made Liu Dai careful. He strengthened his defenses and kept behind them. He took no notice of the daily challenges and continual insults which began with Zhang Fei’s arrival.

After some days Zhang Fei evolved a ruse. He issued orders to prepare to rush the enemy’s camp at night, but he himself spent the day drinking. Pretending to be very intoxicated, he held a court-martial, and one soldier was severely flogged for a breach of discipline.

The man was left bound in the midst of the camp, Zhang Fei saying, “Wait till I am ready to start tonight: You shall be sacrificed to the flag.”

At the same time he gave secret orders to the custodians to let the man escape. The man found his opportunity, crept out of camp, and went over to the enemy, to whom he betrayed the plan of a night attack. As the man bore signs of savage punishment, Liu Dai was the more disposed to credit his desertion and tale. So Liu Dai made his arrangements, putting the greater part of his troops in ambush outside his camp so that it was empty.

That night, having divided his army into three parties, Zhang Fei went to attack the camp. A few men were ordered to advance directly, dash in and set fire going. Two larger bodies of troops were to go round to the rear of the camp and attack when they saw the fire well started. At the third watch, Zhang Fei, with his veterans, went to cut off Liu Dai’s road to the rear.

The thirty men told off to start a conflagration made their way into the camp and were successful. When the flames arose, the ambushing troops rushed out but only to find themselves attacked on both sides. This confused them, and as they knew nothing of the number of their assailants, they were panic stricken and scattered.

Liu Dai, with a company of footmen got clear of the fight and fled, but he went straight toward Zhang Fei. Escape was impossible, and the two men rode up each to attack the other. Zhang Fei captured his opponent, and the men surrendered.
Zhang Fei sent news of this success to his brothers. 
Liu Bei said, “Hitherto Zhang Fei has been rather violent, but this time he has acted wisely, and I am very pleased.”
They rode out to welcome Zhang Fei.
“You said I was too rough. How now?” said Zhang Fei to his brothers.
“If I had not put you on your mettle, you would not have evolved this stratagem,” said Liu Bei.
Zhang Fei laughed. Then appeared the captive Liu Dai, in bonds.
Liu Bei at once dismounted and loosed the cords, saying, “My young brother was rather hasty, but you must pardon him.”
So Liu Dai was freed. He was taken into the city, his colleague was released, and both were cared for.
Liu Bei said to them, “I could not help putting Deputy Imperial Protector Che Zhou to death when he tried to kill me, but Cao Cao took it as disaffection and sent you two generals to punish me. I have received much kindness from him and certainly would not show ingratitude by killing you. I wish you to speak for me and explain when you get back.”
“The two leaders with one voice cried, “Even if the Prime Minister slay our whole clans, we will never come again. We pray you pardon us.”
Said Zhang Fei, “If Cao Cao himself had come, I would have slain him. Not a breastplate should have gone back. But for this time I leave you your heads.”
Clapping their hands to their heads the two men scuttled off while the two brothers returned to the city.
“Cao Cao will certainly come,” said Guan Yu and Zhang Fei.
Sun Qian said, “This is not a city that can hold out for long. We should send part of our forces to Xiaopei and guard Xiapi as a corner stone of our position.”
Liu Bei agreed and told off Guan Yu to guard Xiapi whither he also sent his two wives, Lady Gan and Lady Mi. The former was a native of Xiapi; the latter was Mi Zhu’s younger sister.
Sun Qian, Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, and Mi Fang were left to defend Xuzhou, and Liu Bei with Zhang Fei went to Xiaopei.
The two released leaders, Liu Dai and Wang Zhong, hastened home to Cao Cao and explained to him that Liu Bei was not disaffected.

“Do not behave so disgracefully!”
The newcomer was Guan Yu, and his appearance relieved the unhappy men of all fear.
“Why do you stop them since our brother set them free?” cried Guan Yu.
“If they are let go today, they will surely come back,” cried Zhang Fei.
“Wait till they do, then you may kill them,” replied Guan Yu.

Next day the two leaders and their army were allowed to depart unscathed. But before they had got three miles from the boundary, they heard a mighty shouting and there appeared Zhang Fei barring the road.
“My brother made a mistake in letting you go. He did not understand. How could he give freedom to two rebels?”
This made the two men quake with fear, but as the fierce eyed warrior with uplifted sword was bearing down upon them, they heard another man galloping up and shouting,
But their master was exceeding angry with them, crying, “You shameful traitors, what use are you?”

He roared to the guards to take them away to instant execution.

How can a hare or a deer expect
To conquer in tiger strife?
Minnows and shrimps that with dragons contend
Already have done with life.

The fate of the two leaders will be told in the next chapter.

Chapter 23
Mi Heng Slips His Garment And Rails At Traitors; Ji Ping Pledges To Kill The Prime Minister.

At the close of the last chapter the two unsuccessful leaders, Liu Dai and Wang Zhong, were in danger of death.

However, Kong Rong remonstrated with Cao Cao, saying, “You knew these two were no match for Liu Bei, and if you put them to death because they failed, you will lose the hearts of your people.”

Wherefore the death sentence was not executed, but they were deprived of rank and status.

Cao Cao next proposed to lead an army himself to attack Liu Bei, but Kong Rong advised, “The weather is too inclement. We must wait the return of spring. In the interval, we better use the time to arrange peace with Zhang Xiu and Liu Biao, before launching an expedition against Xuzhou.”

Wherefore Liu Ye was sent to Zhang Xiu and in due time reached Xiangyang. He first had an interview with Jia Xu, Zhang Xiu’s adviser, whereat he dwelt upon Cao Cao’s virtues so that Jia Xu was impressed. Jia Xu kept Liu Ye as a guest and undertook to smooth his way.

Soon after Liu Ye saw Zhang Xiu and spoke of the advantages of coming to terms with Cao Cao. While the discussion was in progress, a messenger from Yuan Shao was announced, and he was called in. He presented letters
and, when they also proposed terms of peace, Jia Xu asked what their success had been lately against Cao Cao.

“The war had ceased for the moment on account of the winter,” replied the messenger. “As you, General, and Liu Biao are both well reputed officers of the state, I have been sent to request your help.”

Jia Xu laughed, “You can return to your master and say that as he could not brook rivalry of his brother, he certainly would be sorely put to it with that of all the officers of the state.”

The letter was torn into fragments before the messenger’s face, and he was angrily bidden be gone.

“But his master, Yuan Shao, is stronger than Cao Cao,” protested Zhang Xiu. “You have torn up his letter and are dismissing his man. What shall we say about such an insult should Yuan Shao come?”

“Better join hands with Cao Cao,” said Jia Xu. “But there is still between us an unavenged enmity. We could not suffer each other.”

Jia Xu said, “There are three advantages in joining hands with Cao Cao. First, he has a command from the Emperor to restore peace. Second, as Yuan Shao is so strong, our little help to him will be despised, while we shall loom large and be well treated by Cao Cao. Third, Cao Cao is going to be Chief of the Feudal Lords, and he will ignore all private feuds in order to show his magnanimity to all the world. I hope, General, you will see these things clearly and hesitate no longer.”

Zhang Xiu, now convinced, became more reasonable and recalled Liu Ye, who, at the interview, extolled the many virtues of his master.

“If the Prime Minister had any thought of the old quarrel, he would hardly have sent me to make friendly engagements, would he?” said Liu Ye at the last.

So Zhang Xiu and his adviser proceeded to the capital where formal submission was made. At the interview Zhang Xiu bowed low at the steps, but Cao Cao, hastening forward, took him by the hand and raised him, saying, “Forget that little fault of mine¹, I pray you, General!”

Zhang Xiu received the title of General Who Possesses Prowess, and Jia Xu was appointed Counselor.

Cao Cao then directed his secretaries to draft letters inviting the support of Liu Biao.

Jia Xu said, “Liu Biao loves to have to do with famous people. If some famous scholar should be sent to him, he would submit forthwith.”

So Cao Cao inquired of Xun You who was the best person to go as a messenger, and he recommended Kong Rong. Cao Cao agreed and sent Xun You to speak with this officer.

Xun You went to Kong Rong, saying, “A scholar of reputation is required to aid as a messenger of state. Can you undertake this task?”

Kong Rong replied, “I have a certain friend, Mi Heng, whose talents are ten times mine. He ought to be constantly at the court of the Emperor and not merely be sent as a state messenger. I will recommend him to the Emperor.”

So Kong Rong wrote the following memorial:

“In ancient days, when the great waters were abroad, the emperor pondered over their regulation and he sought

¹Cao Cao slept with Zhang Xiu’s aunt.
out people of talent from all directions. In old time, when Emperor Wu of the Hans desired to enlarge his borders, crowds of scholars responded to his call.

“Intelligent and holy, Your Majesty ascended the throne. You have fallen upon evil days, but have been diligent, modest, and untiring in your efforts. Now the great mountains have sent forth spirits, and people of genius appear.

“I, your humble servant, know of a certain simple scholar, Mi Heng by name, of Pingyuan, a young man of twenty-four. His moral character is excellent, his talents eminent. As a youth he took a high place in study and penetrated the most secret arcane of learning. What he glanced at he could repeat, what he heard once he never forgot. He is naturally high principled, and his thoughts are divine. Sang Hongyang’s mental calculations and Zhang Anshi’s memorial feats compared with Mi Heng’s powers are no longer wonderful. Loyal, sincere, correct, and straightforward, his ambition is unsullied. He regards the good with trembling respect; he detests the evil with uncompromising hatred. Ren Zuo in unflinching candor, Shi Yu in severe rectitude, never surpassed him.

“Hundreds of hawks are not worth one osprey. If Mi Heng be given a court appointment, notable results must follow. Ready in debate, rapid in utterance, his overwhelming intelligence wells up in profusion. In the solution of doubts and the unraveling of difficulties he has no peer.

“In former days of Han, Jia Yi begged to be sent on trial to a vassal state for the control of the Xiongnu tribespeople; Zhong Jun offered to bring back the Prince of Nanyue to do homage to the emperor. The generous conduct of these youths has been much admired.

“In our day Lu Cui and Yan Xiang, remarkable for their talents, have been appointed among the secretaries. And Mi Heng is no less capable. Should he be got, then all possibilities may be realized: The dragon may curvet through the celestial streets and soar along the Milky Way; fame will extend to the poles of the universe and hang in the firmament with rainbow glory. He would be the glory of all the present Ministers and enhance the majesty of the Palace itself. The Music will acquire new beauties, and the Palace will contain an excellent treasure. People like Mi Heng are but few. As in the recitation of ‘Ji Chu Songs’ and the singing of ‘Yang E Poems’, the most skillful performers are sought; and such fleet horses as ‘Fei Tu Broncos’ and ‘Yao Niao Mustangs’ were looked for by the famous judges of horses, Wang Liang and Bo Le. So I, the humble one, dare not conceal this man. Your Majesty is careful in the selection of servants and should try him. Let him be summoned as he is, simply clad in his serge dress; and should he not appear worthy, then

2Emperor 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.
may I be punished for the fault of deception.”

The Emperor read the memorial and passed it to his Prime Minister, who duly summoned Mi Heng. He came, but after his formal salutations were over, he was left standing and not invited to sit down.

Looking up to heaven, Mi Heng sighed deeply, saying, “Wide as is the universe, it cannot produce the person.”

“Under my orders are scores of people whom the world call heroes. What do you mean by saying there is not the person,” said Cao Cao.

“I should be glad to hear who they are,” said Mi Heng.

“Xun Yu, Xun You, Guo Jia, and Cheng Yu are all people of profound skill and long views, superior to Xiao He and Chen Ping. Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, Li Dian, and Yue Jing are bravest of the brave, better than Cen Peng and Ma Wu. Lu Qian and Man Chong are my secretaries; Yu Jin and Xu Huang are my van leaders; Xiahou Dun is one of the world’s marvels, Cao Ren is the most successful leader of the age. Now say you there are not the people?”

3 Xiao 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.

4 Chen Ping (BC ?-178) a master strategist of Liu Bang. He first served Xiang Yu but then became a follower in Liu Bang’s camp. Served as Liu Bang’s prime minister and Empress Lu’s left minister. After the death of Empress Lu, Chen Ping played an important role in returning royal authority to the Liu clan.

5 Cen Peng was a general of Liu Xiu. Cen Peng was loyal and contributed much to Liu Xiu’s success. He, together with Yao Qi, Deng Yu, Chen Jun, and Du Mao, was executed by Liu Xiu by mistake when Liu Xiu was drunk. Liu Xiu later died of this grief.

6 Ma Wu was a general of Liu Xiu. Also contributed much to Liu Xiu’s success. Ma Wu committed suicide after Liu Xiu executed several ministers by mistake when Liu Xiu was drunk. Liu Xiu later died of this grief.

“Sir, you are quite mistaken,” said Mi Heng with a smile. “I know all these things you call people. Xun Yu is qualified to pose at a funeral or ask after a sick man; Xun You is fit to be a tomb guardian; Cheng Yu might be sent to shut doors and bolt windows; and Guo Jia is a reciter of poems; Zhang Liao might beat drums and clang gongs; Xu Chu might lead cattle to pasture; Yue Jing would make a fair reader of elegy; Li Dian could carry dispatches and notices; Yu Jin might be of use to carry planks and build walls; Xu Huang might be employed to kill pigs and slay dogs; Xiahou Dun should be styled ‘Whole Body General,’ and Cao Ren should be called ‘Money-grubbing Governor.’ As for the remainder, they are
mere clothes shelves, rice sacks, wine vases, flesh bags.”

“And what special gifts have you?” said Cao Cao angrily.

“I know everything in heaven above and the earth beneath. I am conversant with the Three Religions and the Nine Systems of Philosophy. I could make my prince the rival of Kings Yao and Shun, and I myself could compare in virtue with Confucius and Mencius. Can I discuss on even terms with common people?”

Now Zhang Liao was present, and he raised his sword to strike down the impudent visitor who spoke thus to his master, but Cao Cao said, “I want another drummer boy to play on occasions of congratulation in the court. I will confer this office upon him.”

Instead of indignantly declining this, Mi Heng accepted the position and went out.

“He spoke very impertinently,” said Zhang Liao. “Why did you not put him to death?”

“He has something of a reputation; empty, but people have heard of him and so, if I put him to death, they would say I was intolerant. As he thinks he has ability, I have made him a drummer to mortify him.”

Soon after Cao Cao instituted a banquet in the capital at which the guests were many. The drums were to be played, and the old drummers were ordered to wear new clothes.

But the new drummer Mi Heng took his place with the other musicians clad in old and worn garments. The piece chosen was the “Tolling of Yuyang,” and from the earliest taps on the drum the effect was exquisite, profound as the notes from metal and stone. The performance stirred deeply the emotions of every guest; some even shed tears.

Seeing all eyes turned on the shabby performer, the attendants said, “Why did you not put on your new uniform?”

Mi Heng turned to them, slipped off his frayed and torn robe and stood there in full view, naked as he was born. The assembled guests covered their faces. Then the drummer composedly drew on his nether garments.

“Why do you behave so rudely at court?” said Cao Cao.

“To flout one’s prince and insult one’s superiors is the real rudeness,” cried Mi Heng. “I bare my natural body as an emblem of my purity.”

“So you are pure! And who is foul?”

“You do not distinguish between the wise and the foolish, which is to have foul vision. You have never read the Odes or the Histories, which is to have foul speech. You are deaf to honest words, which is to have foul ears. You are unable to reconcile antiquity with today, which is to be foul without. You cannot tolerate the nobles, which is to be foul within. You harbor thoughts of rebellion, which is to have a foul heart. I am one of the most famous scholars in the empire, and you make me a drummer boy, that is as Yang Huo belittling Confucius or Zang Cang vilifying Mencius. You desire to be chief and arbitrator of the great nobles, yet you treat me thus!”

Now Kong Rong who had recommended Mi Heng for employment was among the guests, and he feared for the life of his friend. Wherefore he tried to calm the storm.

“Mi Heng is only guilty of a misdemeanor,” said Kong

7Kings Yao and Shun are two ideal rulers, while Confucius and Mencius are two great philosophers.
Chapter 23

Romance of Three Kingdoms

Rong. “He is not a man likely to disturb your dreams like Fu Yue, Illustrious Sir.”

Pointing to Mi Heng, the Prime Minister said, “I will send you to Jingzhou as my messenger; and if Liu Biao surrenders to me, I will give you a post at court.”

But Mi Heng was unwilling to go. So Cao Cao bade two of his men prepare three horses, and they set Mi Heng on the middle one and dragged him along the road between them.

It is also related that a great number of officers of all ranks assembled at the East Gate to see the messenger start.

Xun Yu said, “When Mi Heng comes, we will not rise to salute him.”

So when Mi Heng came, dismounted, and entered the waiting room, they all sat stiff and silent. Mi Heng uttered a loud cry.

“What is that for?” said Xun Yu.

“Should not one cry out when one enters a coffin?” said Mi Heng.

“We may be corpses,” shouted they altogether, “but you are a wandering headless ghost.”

“I am a minister of Han and not a partisan of Cao Cao’s,” cried Mi Heng. “You cannot say I have no head.”

They were angry enough to kill him, but Xun Yu checked them, saying, “He is a paltry fellow. It is not worth soiling your blades with his blood.”

“I am paltry, and yet I have the soul of a man, and you are mere worms,” said Mi Heng.

They went their ways, all very angry. Mi Heng went on his journey and presently reached Jingzhou, where he saw Liu Biao. After that, under pretense of extolling Liu Biao’s virtue, he lampooned Liu Biao who was annoyed and sent him to Jiangxia to see Huang Zu.

“Why did you not put the fellow to death for lampooning you?” said one to Liu Biao.

“You see he shamed Cao Cao, but Cao Cao did not kill him as Cao Cao feared to lose popular favor. So Cao Cao sent him to me, thinking to borrow my hand to slay him and so suffer the loss of my good name. I have sent him on to Huang Zu to let Cao Cao see that I understood.”

Liu Biao’s clever caution met with general praise. At that time a messenger from Yuan Shao was also there with certain proposals for an alliance, and it was necessary to decide which aide to espouse. All the advisers came together to consider the question.

Then Commander Han Song said, “As you have now two offers, you can please yourself and choose your own way to destroy your enemies; for if one refuses, you can follow the other. Now Cao Cao is an able general and has many capable officers in his train. It looks as though he may destroy Yuan Shao and then move his armies across the river. I fear, my lord, you would be unable then to withstand him. That being so, it would be wise to support Cao Cao, who will treat you with respect.”

Liu Biao replied, “You go to the capital and see how things tend. That will help me to decide.”

Han Song said, “The positions of master and servant are clearly defined. Now I am your man prepared to go all lengths for you and obey you to the last, whether in serving the Emperor or in following Cao Cao. But lest there should be any doubt you must remember that if the Emperor gives me any
office, then I shall become his servant and shall not be ready to face death for you.”

“You go and find out what you can. I have ideas in my mind.”

So Han Song took his leave and went to the capital, where he saw Cao Cao. Cao Cao gave him rank and made him Governor of Lingling.

Adviser Xun Yu remonstrated, saying, “This man came to spy out how things were moving. He has done nothing to deserve reward, and yet you give him an office like this. There were no such suspicious rumors connected with poor Mi Heng, and yet you sent him off and would never test his power.”

“Mi Heng shamed me too deeply before all the world. I am going to borrow Liu Biao’s hand to remove him. And you need say no more,” said Cao Cao.

Then Cao Cao sent Han Song back to his former master to tell him what had happened. Han Song came and was full of praise for the virtues of the court and was keen on persuading Liu Biao to espouse that side.

Then Liu Biao suddenly turned angry, charged him with treachery, put him in prison, and threatened him with death.

“You turn your back on me,” cried Han Song. “I did not betray you.”

Kuai Liang remarked, “Han Song had foretold this possibility before he left. It is only what he expected.”

Liu Biao, who was just and reasonable, went no further.

Presently came the news that Mi Heng had been put to death by Huang Zu on account of a quarrel begun over the wine cups. Both being worse for liquor they had begun to discuss the worth of people.

“You were in Xuchang,” said Huang Zu. “Who was there of worth?”

“The big boy was Kong Rong and the little one Yang Xiu. There was no one else to count.”

“What am I like?” said Huang Zu.

“You are like a god in a temple: You sit still and receive sacrifice, but the lack of intelligence is pitiful.”

“Do you regard me as a mere image?” cried Huang Zu, angrily.

So Huang Zu put the impudent speaker to death. Even at the very point of death, Mi Heng never ceased his railing and abuse.

“Alas!” sighed Liu Biao when he heard Mi Heng’s fate. Then Liu Biao had the victim honorably interred near Yingwu, on Parrot Island.

And a later poet wrote of Mi Heng:

Huang Zu could brook no rival; at his word
Mi Heng met death, beneath the cruel sword.
His grave on Parrot Isle may yet be seen,
The river flowing past it, coldly green.

Cao Cao heard of the young man’s death with pleasure.

“The putrid bookworm has just cut himself up with his own sharp tongue,” said he.

As there was no sign of Liu Biao coming to join him, Cao Cao began to think of coercion. Xun Yu dissuaded him from this course.

Said he, “Yuan Shao is not subdued; Liu Bei is not destroyed. To attack Liu Biao would be to neglect the vital to care for the immaterial.
Destroy the two chief enemies first, and the Han River is yours at one blow.”

And Cao Cao took the advice.

After the departure of Liu Bei, Dong Cheng and his fellow conspirators did nothing else day or night but try to evolve plans for the destruction of Cao Cao. But they could see no chance to attack. At the new year audience Cao Cao was odiously arrogant and overweening, and the chief conspirator’s disgust was so intense that he fell ill.

Hearing of the State Uncle’s indisposition, the Emperor sent the Court Physician to see him. The Court Physician at this time was a native of Luoyang, named Ji Ping. A very famous physician, Ji Ping devoted himself wholly to the treatment of his court patient. Living in Dong Cheng’s palace and seeing Dong Cheng at all times, Ji Ping soon found that some secret grief was sorely troubling him. But Ji Ping dared not ask questions.

One evening of the full moon festival, when the physician was just taking his leave, Dong Cheng kept him, and the two men had supper together. They eat talking for some time, and Dong Cheng by and by dropped off to sleep dressed as he was.

Presently Wang Zifu and the others were announced. As they were coming in, Wang Zifu cried, “Our business is settled!”

“I should be glad to hear how,” said Dong Cheng.

“Liu Biao has joined Yuan Shao, and five hundred thousand troops in fifty legions are on their way here by different routes. More than this, Ma Teng and Han Sui are coming from the northwest with seven hundred thousand Xiliang troops. Cao Cao has moved every soldier outside Xuchang to meet the combined armies. There is a great banquet in his palace tonight. If we get together our young men and servants, we can muster more than a thousand, and we can surround the palace, while Cao Cao is at the banquet, and finish him off. We must not miss this.”

Dong Cheng was more than delighted. He called his servants and armed them, put on his own armor and mounted his horse. The conspirators met, as they had arranged, just at the inner gate of the Prime Minister’s palace. It was the first watch. The small army marched straight in, Dong Cheng leading with his treasured sword drawn. His intended victim was at table in one of the private rooms. Dong Cheng rushed in, crying, “Cao Cao, you rebel, stay!” and dashed at Cao Cao who fell at the first blow.

And just then he woke up and found it was all a dream, but his mouth was still full of curses.

“Do you really wish to destroy Cao Cao?” said Ji Ping, going forward to his half awakened patient.

This brought Dong Cheng to his senses. He stopped, terror stricken, and made no reply.

“Do not be frightened, O Uncle,” said the doctor. “Although I am a physician, I am also a man, and I never forget my emperor. You have seemed sad for many days,
Quin Quington was kept in a secret part of the palace, while his late master, Dong Cheng, only knowing that he had run away, took no special means to find him.

Soon after this Cao Cao feigned a headache and sent for Ji Ping as usual.

"The rebel is done for," thought Ji Ping, and he made a secret package of poison which he took with him to the palace of the Prime Minister.

He found Cao Cao in bed. The patient bade the doctor prepare a potion for him.

"One draught will cure this disease," said Ji Ping.

He bade them bring him a pot, and he prepared the potion in the room. When it had simmered for some time and was half finished, the poison was added, and soon after the physician presented the draught. Cao Cao, knowing it was poisoned, made excuses and would not swallow it.

But I have never ventured to ask the reason. Now you have shown it in your dream, and I know your real feelings. If I can be of any use, I will help. Nothing can daunt me."

Dong Cheng covered his face and wept.

"I fear you may not be true to me," cried he.

Ji Ping at once bit off a finger as a pledge of his faith. And then his host and patient brought forth the decree he had received in the girdle.

"I am afraid our schemes will come to nought," said Dong Cheng. "Liu Bei and Ma Teng are gone, and there is nothing we can do. That was the real reason I fell ill."

"It is not worth troubling you gentlemen with, for Cao Cao's life lies in these hands of mine," said Ji Ping.

"How can that be?"

"Because he is often ill with deep-seated pain in his head. When this comes on, he sends for me. When next he calls me, I only have to give him one dose and he will certainly die. We do not want any weapons."

"If only you could do it! You would be the savior of the dynasty. It depends upon you."

Then Ji Ping went away leaving his late patient a happy man. Dong Cheng strolled into the garden and there he saw one of his servants, Quin Quington, whispering with one of the concubines, Yun Ying, in a dark corner. This annoyed him, and he called his attendants to seize them. He would have put them to death but for the intervention of his wife. At her request he spared their lives, but both were beaten forty canes, and the lad was thrown into a dungeon. Sulky at this treatment, Quin Quington broke out of the cell in the night, climbed over the wall, and went straight to Cao Cao's palace, where he betrayed the conspiracy.

Cao Cao at once had him taken into a secret chamber and questioned him.

Quin Quington gave the names of the conspirators, saying, "Wang Zifu, Wu Zilan, Chong Ji, Wu Shi, Ma Teng, and my master have been meeting secretly. My master has a roll of white silk, with writing on it, but I do not know what it means. Yesterday, Ji Ping bit off one of his fingers as a pledge of fidelity. I saw that."

Quin Quington was kept in a secret part of the palace, while his late master, Dong Cheng, only knowing that he had run away, took no special means to find him.

Soon after this Cao Cao feigned a headache and sent for Ji Ping as usual.

"The rebel is done for," thought Ji Ping, and he made a secret package of poison which he took with him to the palace of the Prime Minister. He found Cao Cao in bed. The patient bade the doctor prepare a potion for him.

"One draught will cure this disease," said Ji Ping.

He bade them bring him a pot, and he prepared the potion in the room. When it had simmered for some time and was half finished, the poison was added, and soon after the physician presented the draught. Cao Cao, knowing it was poisoned, made excuses and would not swallow it.
“You should take it hot,” said the doctor. “Then there will be a gentle perspiration, and you will be better.”

“You are a scholar,” said Cao Cao, sitting up, “and know what is the correct thing to do. When the master is ill and takes drugs, the attendant first tastes them; when a man is ill, his son first tastes the medicine. You are my confidant and should drink first. Then I will swallow the remainder.”

“Medicine is to treat disease. What is the use of anyone’s tasting it?” said Ji Ping.

But he guessed now the conspiracy had been discovered, so he dashed forward, seized Cao Cao by the ear, and tried to pour the potion down his throat. Cao Cao pushed it away, and it spilt. The bricks upon which it fell were split asunder. Before Cao Cao could speak, his servants had already seized the assailant.

Said Cao Cao, “I am not ill. I only wanted to test you. So you really thought to poison me!”

He sent for a score of sturdy gaolers who carried off the prisoner to the inner apartments to be interrogated. Cao Cao took his seat in a pavilion, and the hapless physician, tightly bound, was thrown to the ground before him. The prisoner maintained a bold front.

Cao Cao said, “I thought you were a physician. How dared you try to poison me? Someone incited you to this crime. If you tell me, I will pardon you.”

“You are a rebel. You flout your Prince and injure your betters. The whole empire wishes to kill you. Do you think I am the only one?”

Cao Cao again and again pressed the prisoner to tell what he knew, but he only replied that no one had sent him and it was his own desire.

“I have failed, and I can but die,” added Ji Ping.

Cao Cao angrily bade the gaolers give him a severe beating, and they dogged him for two watches. His skin hung in tatters, the flesh was battered, and the blood from his wounds ran down the steps. Then fearing he might die and his evidence be lost, Cao Cao bade them cease and remove him. They took him off to a quiet place where he might recover somewhat.

Having issued orders to prepare a banquet for next day, Cao Cao invited all the courtiers thereto. Dong Cheng was the only one who excused himself, saying he was unwell. The other conspirators dared not stay away as they felt they would be suspected.

Tables were laid in the private apartments, and after several courses the host said, “There is not much to amuse us today, but I have a man to show you that will sober you.”

“Bring him in!” Cao Cao said, turning to the gaolers, and the hapless Ji Ping
Presently Cao Cao said, “Still there is something I want to speak about, so I have asked you to stay for a time longer. I do not know what you four have been arranging with Dong Cheng.”

“Nothing at all,” said Wang Zifu.

“And what is written on the white silk?” asked Cao Cao.

They all said they knew nothing about it.

Then Cao ordered the runaway servant to be brought in. As soon as Quin Quington came, Wang Zifu said, “Well, what have you seen and where?”

Quin Quington replied, “You five very carefully chose retired places to talk in, and you secretly signed a white roll. You cannot deny that.”

Wang Zifu replied, “This miserable creature was punished for misbehavior with one of Uncle Dong Cheng’s maids, and now because of that he slanders his master. You must not listen to him.”

“Ji Ping tried to pour poison down my throat. Who told him to do that if it was not Dong Cheng?” said Cao Cao.
They all said they knew nothing about who it was.
“So far,” said Cao Cao, “Matters are only beginning, and there is a chance of forgiveness. But if the thing grows, it will be difficult not to take notice of it.”
The whole four vigorously denied that any plot existed. However Cao Cao called up his henchmen, and the four men were put into confinement.

Next day Cao Cao with a large following went to the State Uncle’s palace to ask after his health.
Dong Cheng came out to receive his visitor, who at once said, “Why did you not come last night?”
“I am not quite well yet and have to be very careful about going out,” replied Dong Cheng.
“One might say you were suffering from national sorrow, eh?” said Cao Cao.
Dong Cheng started. Cao Cao continued, “Have you heard of the Ji Ping affair?”
“No; what is it?”
Cao Cao smiled coldly, saying, “How can it be you do not know?”
He turned to his attendants and told them to bring in the prisoner, while he went on talking to his host about national illness.
Dong Cheng was much put about and knew not what to do. Soon the gaolers led in the physician to the steps of the hall. At once the bound man began to rail at Cao Cao as rebel and traitor.

“This man,” said Cao Cao, pointing to Ji Ping, “has implicated Wang Zifu and three others, all of whom are now under arrest. There is one more whom I have not caught yet.”
“Who sent you to poison me?” continued Cao Cao, turning toward the physician. “Quick, tell me!”
“Heaven sent me to slay a traitor!”

Cao Cao angrily ordered them to beat Ji Ping again, but there was no part of his body that could be beaten. Dong Cheng sat looking at him, his heart feeling as if transfixed with a dagger.
“You were born with ten fingers. How is it you have now only nine?”

Ji Ping replied, “I bit off one as a pledge when I swore to slay a traitor.”

Cao Cao told them to bring a knife, and they lopped off his other nine fingers.
Now they are all off. That will teach you to make pledges.”

Still I have a mouth that can swallow a traitor and a tongue that can curse him,” said Ji Ping.

Cao Cao told them to cut out his tongue.

Do not. I cannot endure any more punishment, I shall have to speak out. Loosen my bonds.”

Loose them. There is no reason why not,” said Cao Cao.

They loosed him. As soon as he was free, Ji Ping stood up, turned his face toward the Emperor’s palace and bowed, saying, “It is Heaven’s will
that thy servant has been unable to remove the evil.”

Then he turned and smashed his head into the steps and died.

His body was quartered and exposed. This happened in the first month of the fifth year of Rebuilt Tranquillity (AD 200), and a certain historian wrote a poem:

There lived in Han a simple physician.
No warrior, yet brave
Enough to risk his very life
His Emperor to save.
Alas! He failed; but lasting fame
Is his; he feared not death;
He cursed the traitorous Prime Minister
Unto his latest breath.

Seeing his victim had passed beyond the realm of punishment, Cao Cao had Quin Quington led in.
“Do you know this man, Uncle?”
“Yes,” cried Dong Cheng. “So the runaway servant is here. He ought to be put to death!”
“He just told me of your treachery. He is my witness,” said Cao Cao. “Who would dare kill him?”
“How can you, the First Minister of State, heed the unsupported tale of an absconding servant?”
“But I have Wang Zifu and the others in prison,” said Cao Cao. “And how can you rebut their evidence?”

He then called in the remainder of his followers and ordered them to search Dong Cheng’s bedroom. They did so and found the decree that had been given him in the girdle and the pledge signed by the conspirators.
“You mean rat!” cried Cao Cao. “You dared do this?”
He gave orders to arrest the whole household without exception. Then he returned to his palace with the incriminating documents and called all his advisers together to discuss the dethronement of the Emperor and the setting up of a successor.

Many decrees, blood written, have issued, accomplishing nothing,
One inscribed pledge was fraught with mountains of sorrow.

The reader who wishes to how the fate of the Emperor must read the next chapter.
Cao Cao Murdered The Consort Dong;  
Liu Bei Flees To Yuan Shao.

The last chapter closed with the discovery of the “girdle” decree and the assembly of Cao Cao’s advisers to consider the deposition of Emperor Xian.

Cheng Yu spoke strongly against this, saying, “Illustrious Sir, the means by which you impress the world and direct the government is the command of the House of Han. In these times of turmoil and rivalry among the nobles, such a step as the deposition of the ruler will certainly bring about civil war and is much to be deprecated.”

After reflection Cao Cao abandoned the project. But Dong Cheng’s plot was not to go unpunished. All five of the conspirators with every member of their households, seven hundred at least, were taken and put to death at one or another of the gates of the city. The people wept at such merciless and wholesale slaughter.

A secret decree in a girdle sewn,  
In red blood written, the Emperor’s own,  
To the staunch and faithful Dong Cheng addressed,  
Who had saved him once when enemies pressed.  
And who, sore grieved at his Sovereign’s fate,  
Expressed in dreams his ceaseless hate,  
Carried misfortune and death in its train,

But glory to him who died in vain.

Another poet wrote of the sad fate of Wang Zifu and his friends:

Greatheartedly these signed the silken roll,  
And pledged themselves to save their king from shame.  
Alas! Black death of them took heavy toll,  
To write their names upon the roll of fame.

But the slaughter of the conspirators and their whole households did not appease the wrath of the Prime Minister. The Emperor’s consort was a sister of Dong Cheng; and, sword in hand, Cao Cao went into the Forbidden City determined to slay her also. The Emperor cherished her tenderly, the more so as she was then in the fifth month of pregnancy. That day, as they often did, the Emperor, Consort Dong, and Empress Fu were sitting in their private apartment secretly talking of the decree entrusted to Dong Cheng and asking each other why nothing seemed to have been done. The sudden appearance of the angry Prime Minister, armed as he was, frightened them greatly.

“Does Your Majesty know that Dong Cheng conspired against me?” said he.  
“Dong Zhuo died long ago,” replied the Emperor.  
“Not Dong Zhuo---Dong Cheng!” roared Cao Cao.  
The Emperor’s heart trembled, but he gasped out, “Really I did not know!”

“So the cut finger and the blood written decree are all forgotten, eh?”

The Emperor was silent. Cao Cao bade his lictors seize Consort Dong. The Emperor interposed asking pity for her condition.

But Cao Cao said, “If Heaven had not interposed and
defeated the plot, I should be a dead man. How could I leave this woman to work evil to me by and by?"

Said the Emperor, "Immure her in one of the palaces till her confinement. Do not harm her now!"

"Do you wish me to spare her offspring to avenge the mother?" said Cao Cao.

"I pray that my body may be spared mutilation and not put to shame," said Consort Dong.

Cao Cao bade his men show her the white silk cord. The Emperor wept bitterly.

"Do not hate me in the below realms of the Nine Golden Springs," said the Emperor to her.

His tears fell like rain. Empress Fu also joined in the lament, but Cao Cao said, "You are behaving like a lot of children."

And he told the lictors to take Consort Dong away and strangle her in the courtyard.

_In vain had the fair girl found favor in the sight of her lord._

*She died, and the fruit of her womb perished._

*Stern and calm her lord sat, powerless to save._

*Hiding his face while tears gushed forth._

When leaving the Palace, Cao Cao gave strict orders to the keepers, saying "Anyone of the imperial relatives by marriage who enter the Palace will be put to death, and the guards will share the same punishment for lack of zeal."

To make more sure he appointed three thousand Imperial Guards from his own troops and appointed Cao Hong to the command.

Then said Cao Cao to his counselor Cheng Yu, "The conspirators in the capital have been removed, it is true, but there are yet two others, Ma Teng and Liu Bei. These must not be left."

Cheng Yu replied, "Ma Teng is strong in the west and would not be easily captured. He might be enticed to the capital by suave words and kindly praises, when he would be at your mercy. Liu Bei is at Xuzhou, strongly posted in an ox-horn formation, and not to be lightly attacked. More than this, Yuan Shao is at Guandu, and his one desire is to attack you. Any attempt on the east will send Liu Bei to Yuan Shao for help, and Yuan Shao will come here at once. Then what will you do?"

"You are at fault," replied Cao Cao. "Liu Bei is a bold warrior. If we wait till he is fully fledged and winged, he will be more difficult to deal with. Yuan Shao may be strong, but he is not to be feared. He is too undeciding to act."

As they were discussing these things, Guo Jia came in, and Cao Cao suddenly referred the matter to him.

"If I attack Liu Bei, then Yuan Shao is to be feared. What do you think of it?"

Guo Jia said, "Yuan Shao by nature is dilatory and
hesitating, and his various advisers are jealous of each other. He is not to be feared. Liu Bei is getting together a new army and has not yet won their hearts. You could settle the east in one battle.”

“This advice is in harmony with my thinking,” said Cao Cao.

And he prepared an army of two hundred thousand troops, to move in five divisions against Xuzhou.

Scouts took the news of these preparations to Xuzhou. Sun Qian first went to Xiapi to tell Guan Yu and then went to Xiaopei to tell Liu Bei. The two discussed the position and decided that help must be sought. So letters were written to Yuan Shao and given to Sun Qian, who went north, sought Tian Feng, and asked him to arrange an interview with Yuan Shao. Sun Qian was introduced and presented his letters.

But Yuan Shao was of melancholy countenance, and his dress was all awry. Tian Feng said, “Why this disarray, my lord?”

“I am about to die,” replied Yuan Shao.

“But why do you utter such words?”

“I have three sons, but only the youngest is clever enough to understand my ideas. Now he is suffering from scabies which places his life in jeopardy. Think you that I have any heart to talk over any other affairs?”

“But,” said Tian Feng, “the present combination of circumstances is unparalleled. Cao Cao is going to attack the east, and Xuchang will be empty. You can enter it with a few volunteers and so perform good service to the Emperor and save the people from sorrow. You have only to make up your mind to act.”

“I know the chance is excellent, but I am worried and distressed and fear failure.”

“What are you distressed about?” said Tian Feng.

“Among my sons only this special one is remarkable; and if anything happens, I am done.”

Thus it became evident that no army would be dispatched.

In confirmation of this, Yuan Shao said to Sun Qian, “Go home and tell Liu Bei the real reason, and say that if anything untoward happen, he can come over to me, and I will find some means of helping him.”

Tian Feng struck the ground with his staff.

“It is such a pity!” cried he. “Just as a unique opportunity presents itself, everything is spoiled by the illness of a child.”

He went out. Sun Qian saw that no help could be hoped for and set out to return. When he had arrived and related what he had seen, Liu Bei was quite alarmed and asked what could be done.

“Do not be troubled, brother,” said Zhang Fei. “We can
destroy Cao Cao merely by a sudden attack before his army shall have time to camp.”

“That would be according to the rules of war,” said Liu Bei.
“You have always been a bold warrior, and that move against Liu Dai shows that you are becoming a strategist too.”

So Liu Bei gave Zhang Fei command of enough soldiers to carry out this plan.

Now while Cao Cao was in the midst of his march toward Xiaopei, a tornado sprang up and the howling gale tore down one of the banners and broke the staff. Cao Cao called together his advisers and leaders to ask them what this portended.

Xun Yu said, “From what direction was the wind at the time, and what was the color of the flag?”
“The wind was from the southeast, and the flag was blue and red.”
“There is only one interpretation: A raid on the camp will occur tonight.”

Cao Cao nodded. At that moment Mao Jie entered and reported a similar incident. Cao Cao asked him the portent.
“My thinking tells me it means a night raid,” replied he.

Alas for the weakness of this descendant of kings!
He placed his faith on a night raid.
But the broken staff of a banner warned his enemy.
Why should the ancient of days favor the wicked?

“This is evidently providence,” said Cao Cao.
And he began to make preparations. He told off nine bodies of troops to take stations, leaving only one of them as if camped while he placed the others in ambush at eight points.

There was but little moonlight as Liu Bei and Zhang Fei marched their respective armies toward Cao Cao’s camp. They had left Sun Qian to guard Xiaopei. Zhang Fei, since he was the originator of the stratagem, led the way with some light horse. As they drew near, everything seemed very quiet and no one seemed moving. Then suddenly lights flashed out all about them, and Zhang Fei saw he had fallen into a trap. At once from all the eight directions came out the ambushing troops. From east, west, north, south were Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, Li Dian, and Yu Jin. From northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest were Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Xu Huang, and Yue Jing.

Zhang Fei, dashing this way and rushing that, guarding his van and protecting his rear, vainly tried to clear himself. The soldiers he had, being originally Cao Cao’s troops, soon gave in and returned to their old leader. The position became very desperate.

Zhang Fei met Xu Huang and engaged him, but his rear was also attacked by Yue Jing. At length he cut an alley out and with a half score of his troops started to return to Xiaopei. The retreat was cut off. He thought to make for Xuzhou but felt certain that way was also barred. No other way seemed open, and so he made for the Mangdang Hills.

As Liu Bei drew near the camp, he intended to attack
when he heard the din of battle. Then he was attacked in the rear and very soon had lost half his force. Next Xiahou Dun came to attack. Thereupon Liu Bei bolted. He was pursued by Xiahou Yuan. Presently Liu Bei looked about him and found he had less than half a hundred soldiers following him. He set his face in the direction of Xiaopei.

But before long Liu Bei saw that place was in flames. So he changed his plan and went toward Xiapi. However he found the whole countryside full of the enemy, and he could not get through. So he bethought himself of the promise of Yuan Shao, that he would find refuge if things went unfavorable, and determined to go to Yuan Shao till he could form some other plan. Wherefore he took the Qingzhou road. But it also was blocked, and he went into the open country and made his way north, not without being pursued and losing the remainder of his few followers.

He hastened toward Qingzhou City, traveling one hundred miles a day. When he reached the city and summoned the gate, the guards asked who he was and they told the Governor, who was Yuan Shao’s eldest son, Yuan Tan. Yuan Tan was greatly surprised, but he opened the gates and went to meet Liu Bei, whom he treated with due consideration.

Liu Bei told the story of his defeat and said he wished for harbor. He was given suitable quarters and hospitably entertained, while the young man wrote to inform his father. Then Yuan Tan provided an escort and sent Liu Bei on his journey as far as the boundary of Pingyuan.

At the city of Yejun, Liu Bei was met by Yuan Shao in person ten miles outside the city, with a great escort. Liu Bei made a humble obeisance which Yuan Shao hastened to return and said, “I have been very distressed that, on account of my son’s illness, I did not come to your aid. It is a great joy to see you; the one desire of my life is satisfied.”

Liu Bei replied, “The poor Liu Bei you see here has long desired to take refuge with you, but fate has hitherto denied him that privilege. Now attacked by Cao Cao, my family lost, I remembered that you, General, would receive good people from all sides. Wherefore I put my pride in my pocket. I trust that I may be found worthy and one day I will prove my gratitude.”

Yuan Shao received him with much pleasure and treated him exceedingly well. And they both lived in Yuan Shao’s home region Jizhou.

After the capture of Xiaopei, Cao Cao pressed on toward Xuzhou City, which, after a short defense and the flight of Mi Zhu and Jian Yong, was surrendered by Chen Deng. Cao

[Image]
Cao led his army into the city, restored order, and pacified the people. Next he wanted to press on to Xiapi, where Guan Yu was holding out and keeping guard of Liu Bei’s family.

Xun Yu said, “Guan Yu is there, in charge of his brother’s family, and he will defend the city to the last. If you do not take it quickly, Yuan Shao will get it.”

Cao Cao said, “I have always loved Guan Yu, both for his warlike abilities and his principles. I would engage him to enter my service. I would rather send someone to talk him into surrender.”

“He will not do that,” said Guo Jia. “His sense of right is too solid. I fear anyone who went to speak with him would suffer.”

Then suddenly a man stepped out, saying, “I know him slightly, and I will go.”

The speaker was Zhang Liao.

Cheng Yu looked at him and said, “Though you are an old acquaintance, I do not think you are equal to talking over Guan Yu. But I have a scheme that will so entangle him that he will have no alternative. He will have to enter the service of the Prime Minister.”

They set the fatal spring beside the lordly tiger’s trail,
They hide the hook with fragrant bait to catch the mighty whale.

How Guan Yu was to be entrapped will be told in the next chapter.
from the foot of the wall, his wrath got the better of him, and he moved out with three thousand troops. After the leaders had exchanged some ten bouts, Xiahou Dun made to run away. Guan Yu pursued. Xiahou Dun stopped and made a stand, then he fled again. Thus alternately fighting and retiring, he enticed Guan Yu seven miles from Xiapi. Then Guan Yu suddenly remembering the risk to the city drew off his army to return homeward.

Soon, at the sound of a signal bomb, from the left and right out moved two bodies of troops led by Xu Huang and Xu Chu who barred his way. Guan Yu hastened along a road that seemed to offer retreat, but from both sides his ambushing enemies shot their crossbows, and the arrows flew like locusts on the wing. No way past was found, and he turned back. Then both bodies joined in attacking him. He drove them off and got into the road to his own city, but soon Xiahou Dun came up again and attacked fiercely as before. Evening came and still Guan Yu was hemmed in, so he went up on a low hill of Tushan Mountains upon which he encamped for a rest.

Guan Yu was surrounded on all sides by enemies. By and by, looking toward his city, he saw the glow of fire. It meant that the traitors, who had come in to surrender, had opened the gate, and the enemy had gone in force. They had made the fires in order to perplex and distress Guan Yu, and indeed the sight saddened him.

In the night he made efforts to escape from the hill, but every attempt was checked by flights of arrows. At daybreak he prepared for one more effort, but before moving he saw a horseman riding up at full speed and presently discerned Zhang Liao.

When within speaking distance, Guan Yu said, “Are you come to fight me, Zhang Liao?”

“No,” replied Zhang Liao. “I am come to see you because of our old friendship.”

Wherefore Zhang Liao threw aside his sword, dismounted,
and came forward saluting. And the two sat down.

“Then naturally you have come to talk me over,” said Guan Yu.

“Not so!” said Zhang Liao. “Sometime ago you saved me. Can I help saving you?”

“Then you desire to help me.”

“Not exactly that,” replied Zhang Liao.

“Then what are you doing here if you have not come to help me?”

“Nothing is known of the fate of your elder brother, nor whether your younger brother is alive or dead. Last night your city fell into the hands of Cao Cao, but neither soldiers nor people were harmed, and a special guard was set over the family of Liu Bei lest they should be alarmed. I came to tell you how well they had been treated.”

“This is certainly talking me over,” said Guan Yu.

“Though escape is impossible, yet I am not perturbed. I look upon death as going home. You had better depart quickly and let me go down and begin the struggle again.”

“Surely you must know everybody will ridicule you when they hear of this,” said Zhang Liao.

“I shall die for loyalty and righteousness. Who will laugh?” said Guan Yu.

“You would be guilty of three faults if you died.”

“Tell me them,” said Guan Yu.

“First of all, you and your elder brother pledged yourselves in the Peach Garden to die or to live together.

Now your brother has been defeated, and you want to fight to the death. Therefore, if your brother appears again by and by and wants your help, he will seek it in vain. Is this anything else than betraying the Peach Garden Oath? Secondly, you are in charge of your brother’s family and, if you fought and died, the two women would be left forlorn and without a protector. That would be a betrayal of trust. Thirdly, your military skill stands out conspicuous and will go down in history. If you do not aid your brother in his noble attempt to maintain the dynasty, then all your labors and sufferings will have been spent to win a worthless reputation as a valiant fool. Where is the sense in that? I feel it my duty to point out these three faults to you.”

Guan Yu remained silent and thought for some time.

Then he said, “You have spoken of my three faults. What do you desire?”

“You are surrounded with the certainty of death if you do not yield. There is no advantage in a useless death. Wherefore your best course is to yield to Cao Cao till you hear news of Liu Bei and can rejoin him. Thus you will ensure the safety of the two ladies and also keep inviolate the Peach Garden compact. You will preserve a useful life. Brother, you must reflect on these things.”

“Brother, you have spoken of three advantages; now I have three conditions. If the Prime Minister concede these, then will I doff my armor. If he refuses, then I prefer to be guilty of the three faults and die.”

“Why should the Prime Minister
not concede them? He is most liberal and large minded. I pray you let me hear your conditions."

"The first is that as I and the Imperial Uncle have sworn to support the Hans, I now submit to the Emperor and not to His Prime Minister Cao Cao. The second condition is that suitable provision be made for the two ladies under my care and that no one shall be allowed to approach them. The third is that I shall be allowed to set off to rejoin Uncle Liu Bei so soon as I shall hear where he is, whether it be far or near. I require all these to be satisfied. Failing a single one, I will not submit. Wherefore, Zhang Liao, I pray you hasten back and announce them."

Zhang Liao lost no time but rode back to Cao Cao. When he spoke of Guan Yu’s intention to submit to the Hans but not to Cao Cao, the latter laughed, saying, "As I am a minister of Han, so am I Han. I grant that."

Zhang Liao then spoke of provision due to their rank and security from molestation for the ladies, to which Cao Cao replied, "I will give them twice the regular amount for an Uncle of the Emperor. As for securing them from molestation, that is simple. The ordinary domestic law is enough. Why should there be any doubt?"

Then said Zhang Liao, "Whenever he shall get news of the whereabouts of Liu Bei, he must go to him."

At this Cao Cao shook his head, saying, "Then I am merely to feed Guan Yu. What is the use of this? I cannot consent."

Zhang Liao replied, "You must know of Yu Rang’s saying: The difference in behavior brought about by difference of treatment? Liu Bei treats Guan Yu just kindly and liberally. You can surely engage Guan Yu’s heart and support by being kinder and more liberal."

"What you say is much to the point. I will grant the three conditions," said Cao Cao.

Whereupon Zhang Liao left to carry the news to Guan Yu, still on the summit of the Tushan Mountains.

Said Guan Yu, "Now I expect the army to withdraw so that I may enter the city to tell the two ladies what has been arranged. After that I submit at once."

Zhang Liao rode back once more with this request, and the order was given for the army to retire three miles.

"Do not do this," said Xun Yu. "I fear treachery."

"He will certainly not break faith," said Cao Cao. "He is too high principled."

The army retired, and Guan Yu with his force reentered the city of Xiapi, where he saw that the people were following their ordinary avocations in tranquillity. He came to the palace and went in to see the two ladies, who hastened to meet him.

He bowed to them below the steps and said, "I apologize for having caused you to feel alarmed."

"Where is the Uncle?" asked they.

"I know not whither he has gone."

"What do you intend to do, brother-in-law?"

"I went out of the city to try a last battle. I was surrounded on a hill top, and Zhang Liao has urged me to yield. I proposed three conditions, all of which were conceded, and the enemy drew off to allow me to return to the city. Unless I have your decision, sisters-in-law, I scarcely dare to take any final step."

They asked what were the conditions and were told.
Lady Gan said, “When Cao Cao’s army came in, we took it to mean certain death. But it is scarcely credible that not a hair of our heads has been disturbed. Not a soldier has dared enter our doors. You have accepted the conditions, brother-in-law, and there is no need to ask our consent. Our only fear is that he will not let you go by and by to search for the Uncle.”

“Sisters-in-law, you need not be anxious. I will see to that.”

“You must decide everything and need not ask us.”

Guan Yu withdrew and then, with a small escort, went to his interview with Cao Cao. Cao Cao came to the outermost gate to welcome him, and Guan Yu dismounted and made obeisance. Cao Cao returned his salute with the greatest cordiality.

“The leader of a defeated army is grateful for the graciousness that has preserved his life,” said Guan Yu.

“I have so long admired your loyalty and high principles that this happy meeting gratifies the desire of my whole life,” replied Cao Cao.

“As the Prime Minister has granted the three requests which my friend petitioned for on my behalf, there is now but little to discuss,” said Guan Yu.

“As I have spoken, so be it. I could not break faith,” replied Cao Cao.

“Whenever I hear where Uncle Liu Bei is, I must certainly go to him, even if through fire and water. It may be that there will be no time nor opportunity of saying farewell. I trust you will understand the reason.”

“If Liu Bei should prove to be alive, you must certainly be allowed to go to him. But I fear that in the confusion he may have lost his life. You may set your mind at rest and let me make inquiries.”

Guan Yu thanked him. Then a banquet was prepared in Guan Yu’s honor. Next day the army started on its homeward march.

For the journey to the capital, a carriage was prepared for the two ladies, and Guan Yu was its guard. On the road they rested at a certain post station, and Cao Cao, anxious to compromise Guan Yu by beguiling him into forgetfulness of his duty, assigned Guan Yu to the same apartment as his sisters-in-law. Guan Yu stood the whole night before the door with a lighted candle in his hand. Not once did he yield to fatigue. Cao Cao’s respect for him could not but increase.

At the capital the Prime Minister assigned a dignified residence to Guan Yu, which he immediately divided into two enclosures, the inner one for the two ladies and the other for himself. He placed a guard of
Chapter 25

Guan Yu was presented to Emperor Xian who conferred upon him the rank of General Who Serves the Hans. Guan Yu expressed his thanks to the Emperor. Next day Cao Cao made a great banquet, inviting all his advisers and officers, solely in honor of Guan Yu, who sat in the seat of honor. Beside this Guan Yu received presents of silks and gold and silver vessels, all of which Guan Yu sent into the ladies’ quarters for their use and keeping. In fact from the day of arrival in the capital, Guan Yu was treated with marked respect and distinction, small banquets following each other in each three days, and large banquets held in each five days.

Cao Cao also presented him with ten most lovely serving girls. Guan Yu sent these also within to wait upon his two sisters-in-law.

Every third day Guan Yu went to the door of the women’s quarters to inquire after their welfare, and then they asked if any news of the wanderer had come. This ceremony closed with the words: “Brother-in-law, you may retire when you wish.”

Cao Cao heard of this extremely correct behavior and thought all the more of the man for it.

One day Cao Cao noticed that the robe Guan Yu was wearing was old and frayed. Taking his measurements, Cao Cao had a new one made of fine brocade and presented it to him. Guan Yu took it and put it on under the old robe, so that the latter covered it.

“Why so very thrifty?” laughed Cao Cao.

“It is not thrifty,” was his reply. “The old robe was a gift from my brother, and I wear it because it reminds me of him. I could not allow the new gift to eclipse his old one.”

“How very high principled!” said Cao Cao, sighing.

One day when Guan Yu was at home, there came a messenger to say that the two women had thrown themselves on the ground and were weeping. They would not say why.

Guan Yu set his dress in order, went over, and knelt by the door, saying, “Why this grief, sisters-in-law?”

Lady Gan replied, “In the night I dreamed that the Uncle had fallen into a pit. I woke up and told Lady Mi, and we think he must be dead. So we weep.”

“Dreams are not to be credited,” he replied. “You dreamed of him because you were thinking of him. Pray do not grieve.”

Just then Guan Yu was invited to another banquet, so he took leave of the ladies and went. Seeing Guan Yu looked sad and tearful, his host asked the reason.

“My sisters-in-law have been weeping for my brother, and I cannot help being sad in sympathy.”

Cao Cao smiled and tried to cheer up his guest. Cao Cao plied Guan Yu with wine so that Guan Yu became quite intoxicated and sat stroking his beard and saying, “What a useless thing am I! I could do no service for my country, and I have parted from my elder brother.”

“How many hairs in your beard?” suddenly asked his host.
Some hundreds, perhaps. In the autumn a few fall out, but in the winter it is fullest. Then I use a black silk bag to keep the hairs from being broken,” replied Guan Yu.

Cao Cao had a bag made for him to protect his beard. Soon after when they were at court, the Emperor asked what was the bag he saw on Guan Yu’s breast.

“My beard is rather long, Your Majesty,” said Guan Yu. “So the Prime Minister gave me a bag to protect it.”

The Emperor bade him take off the bag and show his beard in all its fullness and it fell in rippling waves below his breast.

“Really a most beautiful beard!” said the Emperor.

This is why people call him: “The Man with the Beautiful Beard.”

Another time, after a banquet, Cao Cao was seeing his guest start from the gate of his palace when he noticed that his charger was very thin.

“Why is it so thin?” said Cao Cao.

“My worthless body is rather heavy and really too much for it. It is always out of condition.”

Cao Cao at once told his attendants to bring out a certain steed, and before long it appeared. It was red, like glowing charcoal, and a handsome creature in every way.

“Do you recognize it?” asked Cao Cao.

“Why, it is no other than Red Hare!” cried Guan Yu.

“Yes; it is Red Hare,” said Cao Cao.

And he presented the horse, all fully caparisoned, to his guest.

Guan Yu bowed many times and thanked him again and again, till Cao Cao began to feel displeased and said, “I have given you many things, lovely handmaids and gold and silks and never won a bow of gratitude from you before. This horse seems to please you better than all the rest. Why
do you think so poorly of the damsels and so much of the steed?"

"I know the horse: It can travel five hundred miles a day, and I am very lucky to get him. Now as soon as I find out where my brother is, I can get to him in a single day," said Guan Yu.

Cao Cao grumbled to himself and began to repent of his gift.

Fortune dealt a stunning blow, still he played his part;
Partitioning his dwelling proved his purity of heart.
The crafty minister desired to win him to his side,
But felt that failure was foredoomed however much he tried.

Said Cao Cao to Zhang Liao, "I have treated Guan Yu pretty liberally, but he still cherishes the desire to leave me. Do you know if it is really so?"

"I will try to find out," was the reply.

So Zhang Liao took an early opportunity of seeing Guan Yu, and when the politeness of the visit were over, Zhang Liao said, "I recommended you to the Prime Minister, and you have not lost much by that."

"I am deeply affected by his kindness and bounty," said Guan Yu, "but, though my body is here, yet I am always thinking of my brother."

"Your words do not express present conditions quite correctly. One who lives in the world without discrimination and consideration of his relations with others is not the most admirable type of person. Even Liu Bei never treated you better than does the Prime Minister. Why then do you maintain this desire to get away?"

"I know only too well that he has been most kind, but I have also received great kindness from Uncle Liu Bei. Beside we have sworn to die together, and I cannot remain here. But before I go, I must try to render the Prime Minister some signal service to prove my gratitude."

"Supposing Liu Bei should have left the world, whither will you go?" said Zhang Liao.

"I will follow him to the below realms of Nine Golden Springs."

There could no longer be the least doubt as to Guan Yu’s intentions, and Zhang Liao told Cao Cao just how matters stood. Cao Cao sighed.

"To serve one’s chief with unswerving fidelity is a proof of the highest principle of all," said he.

Said Xun Yu, "He spoke of performing some act of service before leaving. If he gets no chance of such a thing, he will not be able to go."

Cao Cao agreed that this was so.

Liu Bei went to Yuan Shao for refuge. Here Liu Bei was always sorrowful and, when asked the reason, said he did not know where his brothers were nor what had happened to his family since they fell into the hands of Cao Cao.

"Why should I not be sad when I have failed towards my country and my family?" said he.

"I have long wished to attack Xuchang," said Yuan Shao.

"Now it is autumn and just the time for an expedition, so let us discuss plans for the destruction of Cao Cao."

Tian Feng at once opposed this.
“When Cao Cao attacked Xuzhou and Xuchang was undefended, you let the chance slip by. Now that Xuzhou has been captured, and their soldiers are flushed with victory, it would be madness to attempt it. It is necessary to await another chance.”

“Let me think about it,” said Yuan Shao. He asked advice from Liu Bei whether to attack or to hold on.

Liu Bei replied, “Cao Cao is a rebel. I think you are failing in your duty if you do not attack him.”

“Your words are good,” said Yuan Shao. He made up his mind to move. But again the adviser Tian Feng intervened.

Then Yuan Shao grew angry, saying, “You fellows who cultivate literature and despise war have made me miss a lot!”

Tian Feng bowed his head and said, “Neglect your servant’s wise words, and you will fail in the field.”

Yuan Shao was so angry that he wanted to put Tian Feng to death. However, Liu Bei begged him off and he was only imprisoned.

Seeing the fate of his colleague, another adviser, Ju Shou, assembled his clan and distributed among them all his possessions, saying, “I go with the army. If we succeed, then nothing can exceed our glory; but if we are defeated, the risk I run is great.”

His friends wept as they said farewell.

General Yan Liang was appointed to the command of the advance guard, to go to attack Baima.

Then Ju Shou first protested, “His mind is too narrow for such a post. He is brave but unequal to such a trust.”

“You are not the sort of man to measure my best generals,” replied Yuan Shao.

The army marched to Liyang, and Governor Liu Yue of Dongjun sent an urgent call to Xuchang for aid. Cao Cao moved his armies hastily.

As soon as the news of battle got about, Guan Yu went to see the Prime Minister and said, “Illustrious Sir, the army is mobilized. I volunteer for the van leader.”

“I scarcely dare put you to such inconvenience, but presently, if need arises, I will call upon you.”

So Guan Yu retired, and one hundred fifty thousand soldiers marched out in three directions. On the road the letters from Liu Yue arrived praying for help, and Cao Cao marched the first fifty thousand troops to Baima and took up a position supported by the hills. In the wide plains in front of them, Yan Liang was encamped with one hundred thousand veterans.

Cao Cao was frightened at the force opposed to him and, returning to camp, spoke to Song Xian, who had once
served under Lu Bu, saying, “You are one of Lu Bu’s famous veteran generals. Can you give battle to this Yan Liang?”

Song Xian agreed to try. He armed himself, mounted, and rode to the front. Yan Liang was there on horseback, his sword lying crossways. Seeing an opponent approaching, he uttered a loud shout and galloped toward Song Xian. The two met, but after only three bouts, Song Xian fell under a mighty slash from Yan Liang’s sword.

“What a terrible leader!” said Cao Cao.

“He has slain my comrade, I want to go and avenge him,” then cried Wei Xu.

Cao Cao bade him go and he rode out, spear set, and in front of the army railed at Yan Liang.

Yan Liang replied not a word, but their two steeds came together; and at the first blow from Yan Liang’s sword, Wei Xu’s forehead was halved.

“Now, who again dares face him?” cried Cao Cao.

Xu Huang took up the challenge and he went out. The combat endured twenty bouts, and then Xu Huang fled back to his own side. The other generals were now greatly depressed at their failure. Cao Cao withdrew his army, feeling very sad at the loss of two generals in quick succession. Yan Liang also marched off his force.
Then Cheng Yu went to see his chief, saying, “I can produce a man the equal of Yan Liang.”

“Who?” cried Cao Cao.

“No other than Guan Yu.”

“I am afraid that if he is given an opportunity to perform that return service he spoke of, he will leave me.”

“If Liu Bei is still alive, he is with Yuan Shao. If you get Guan Yu to defeat Yuan Shao’s army, Yuan Shao will look askance at Liu Bei and put him to death. Liu Bei gone, where can Guan Yu go?”

This argument appealed to Cao Cao at once, and he sent to request Guan Yu to come.

Previous to obeying the call, Guan Yu went to say farewell to his sisters-in-law.

“You may get news of the Uncle on the journey,” said they.

“Yes,” said Guan Yu and left them.

Armed with his green-dragon saber, riding on the swift steed Red Hare, and having but a slender following, Guan Yu was not long in arriving at Baima. He saw Cao Cao, who told him what had happened. Yan Liang was too valiant for any to face.

“Let me look at him,” said Guan Yu.

Then wine was served for his refreshment, and while they were drinking, it was reported that Yan Liang once again offered a challenge. So Cao Cao and his guest and staff went to the summit of a hill whence the enemy could be seen. Cao Cao and Guan Yu sat on the hill top, and the commanders stood about them. Cao Cao pointed out Yan Liang’s troops arrayed on the plains below. The ensigns and banners waving fresh and bright amid the forest of spears and swords made a grand and imposing spectacle.

“See how formidable these soldiers of the North of Yellow River are,” said Cao Cao.

“I regard them as so many clay fowls and mud dogs,” said Guan Yu.

Cao Cao pointed out Yan Liang, saying, “There under that grand umbrella, in that embroidered robe and that silver breastplate and riding on horseback and gripping that huge sword is Yan Liang.”

“His head looks as though it was stuck on a pole for sale,” said Guan Yu, just glancing over the army at his feet.

“He is very terrible. You must not despise him,” said Cao Cao.

Guan Yu rose, saying, “I am a poor thing, but I will go over and bring you his head if you like.”

“Joking is not allowed in this army,” interposed Zhang Liao. “Please be careful what you say, General.”
Guan Yu quickly mounted, turned down his mighty weapon, and galloped down the hill, his phoenix eyes rounded, and his silkworm eyebrows fiercely bristling. He dashed straight into the enemy’s array, and the northern soldiers opened like falling waves and dissolving storms. He made directly for the commander.

Now Yan Liang sitting there in state saw a horseman rushing toward him, and just as he began to ask who the rider of the red horse was, lo! the horseman was there. Taken utterly by surprise, the leader could make no defense. Guan Yu’s arm rose and the mighty weapon fell. And with it fell Yan Liang.

Leaping from the saddle, Guan Yu cut off his victim’s head and hung it to his horse’s neck. Then he mounted and rode out, just as if there was no army there. The northern troops, panic stricken, made no fight. Cao Cao’s army attacked with full force and slew great numbers of them. They captured many horses and weapons and much military gear. Guan Yu rode quickly back up the hill and laid the proof of his prowess at the feet of the Prime Minister.

“You are more than human, General!” cried Cao Cao.

“What have I done to talk about?” said Guan Yu. “My brother, Zhang Fei, did the same thing in an army of a hundred legions, and did it as easily as picking something from his own pocket.”

Cao Cao marveled at the statement and turning to those about him said, “If you meet this Zhang Fei, be careful.”

And he bade them make a note on the overlap of their robes so that they should remember.

The beaten army returning northward met Yuan Shao on the road and told their story.

“A red-faced warrior with a long beard, wielding a huge, long-handled sword, broke into the army, cut off the
general’s head and bore it off,” said they.

“Who was this?” asked Yuan Shao.

Ju Shou said, “It must have been Liu Bei’s brother, Guan Yu. It could be nobody else.”

Yuan Shao was very angry and, pointing to Liu Bei, he said, “Your brother has slain my beloved leader. You are in the plot too. Why should I save you alive?”

He bade the lictors take Liu Bei away and behead him.

Morning saw him guest on high.
Evening, prisoner, doomed to die.

Liu Bei’s actual fate will be told in the next chapter.
avenge his death?"

The speaker was a man of eight-span height with a face like a jilin, a famous leader from the North of Yellow River, named Wen Chou.

Yuan Shao was pleased and said, “You are the only man who can do it. I will give you one hundred thousand troops, and you can cross the Yellow River, and quickly smite that rebel Cao Cao.

“You cannot do it. Wen Chou will fail,” said Ju Shou. “The proper course is to hold Yenjin and detach a force to Guandu. If you rashly cross the river and anything goes wrong, not a soul will return.”

Yuan Shao said, “That is always the way with you fellows, always delaying and taking the dash out of the army. You put off today and postpone tomorrow till success has become impossible. Do you forget that promptitude is what each soldier honors?”

The adviser withdrew sadly, saying, “Superiors do not curb their ambitions; inferiors crave for achievements; things are undone. Eternal is the course of Yellow River, shall I change it?”

Thereafter Ju Shou feigned illness and went no more to the council.

Liu Bei said, “I have received much kindness at your hands and have been unable to show my gratitude. I would accompany General Wen Chou that I may repay your bounty and also that I may hear news of my brother.”

Yuan Shao gladly consented and ordered Wen Chou to share his command with Liu Bei.

But the former objected, saying, “Liu Bei has been so often defeated that it will augur ill for success this time. Since you wish, I will give Liu Bei command of the rear guard of thirty thousand soldiers.”

And this being approved, three legions were told off

Wen Chou
under Liu Bei’s special command to follow the main body.

The prowess displayed by Guan Yu in the bold attack on
Yan Liang redoubled Cao Cao’s respect for him, and Cao
Cao memorialized the Throne that Guan Yu receive the title
of Lord of Hanshou, and a seal was cast for him.

Just then came the unexpected news that Yuan Shao’s
army had moved toward the Yellow River and was in position
above Yenjin. Cao Cao first sent to transfer the inhabitants
to the west bank and then led out an army to oppose Yuan
Shao. He issued an order to face about, thus placing the rear
companies in front. The commissariat wagons were also
placed in the van.

“What is this reversal for?” asked
Lu Qian.

Cao Cao replied,
“When the supplies
are in rear, they
are liable to be
plundered. So I have
put them first.”

“But if you meet the enemy and they steal them?”

“Wait till the enemy appears. I shall know what to do.”

Lu Qian was much exercised at this new move of the
Prime Minister. In the meantime the supply train moved
along the river toward Yenjin. Presently the foremost
troops raised a great shout, and Cao Cao sent to see what it
meant.

The messenger came back, saying, “Wen Chou’s army
is approaching, and the supply train has been abandoned
and is at the mercy of the enemy. The main body is still far
behind. What to do next?”

Thereupon Cao Cao pointed to two mounds, saying, “We
will take refuge here for the present.”

All those near him hastened to the mounds. There Cao
Cao ordered them all to loosen their dress, lay aside their
breastplates, and rest a time. The horsemen turned their
steeds loose.

Wen Chou’s
soldiers approached
under cover. As
they drew near, the
officers told Cao
Cao, saying, “The
rebels are near. We
ought to catch the
horses and go back
to Baima.”

But Adviser Xun You checked them, saying, “These are
a bait for the enemy. Why retire?”

Cao Cao glanced across at him and said, “He understands.
Do not say anything.”

Now having got possession of the supply carts, the
enemy next came to seize the horses. By this time they
had all broken ranks and were scattered, each soldier going
his own way. Then suddenly Cao Cao gave the order to go
down from the mounds and smite them.

The surprise was complete. Wen Chou’s army was in
confusion, and Cao Cao’s army surrounded them. Wen
Chou made a stand, but those about him trampled each
other down, and he could do nothing but flee. And he fled.

Then standing on the top of a mound Cao Cao pointed
to the flying leader, calling out, “There is one of the most
famous generals of the north. Who can capture him?”

Zhang Liao and Xu Huang both mounted and dashed
after him, crying, “Wen Chou, do not run away!”

Looking round, the fugitive saw two pursuers, and then
he set aside his spear, took his bow and adjusted an arrow,
which he shot at Zhang Liao.

“Cease shooting, you rebel!” shouted Xu Huang.

Zhang Liao ducked his head, and the shaft went harmlessly by, save

that it carried away the tassel of his cap. He only pressed harder in pursuit. The next arrow however struck his horse in the head, and the animal stumbled and fell, throwing its rider to the earth.

Then Wen Chou turned to come back. Xu Huang, whirling his battle-ax, stood in his way to stop Wen Chou. But Xu Huang saw behind Wen Chou several more horsemen coming to help; and as they would have been too many for him, he fled. Wen Chou pursued along the river bank. Suddenly he saw

coming toward him with banners fluttering in the breeze, a small party of horse, and the leader carried a great sword.

“Stop!” cried Guan Yu, for it was he, and he attacked at once.

At the third bout Wen Chou’s heart failed him, and he wheeled and fled, following the windings of the river. But Guan Yu’s steed was fast and soon caught up. One blow, and the hapless Wen Chou fell.

When Cao Cao saw from the mound that the leader of the enemy had fallen, he gave the signal for a general onset, and half of the northern army were drowned in the river. And the carts with supplies and all the horses were quickly recovered.

Now Guan Yu, at the head of a few horsemen, was thrusting here and striking there at the moment when Liu Bei, with the thirty thousand reserve troops, appeared on the battle field on the other bank of the river. At once they told him that the red-faced, long-bearded warrior was there and had slain Wen Chou. Liu Bei hastily pressed forward to try to get a look at the warrior. He saw across the river a body of horse and the banners bore the words Guan Yu, Lord of Hanshou.
“Then it is my brother, and he is really with Cao Cao,” said Liu Bei, secretly thanking Heaven that Guan Yu was safe.

Liu Bei made an attempt to wait about till he could call to Guan Yu, but a great mass of Cao Cao’s soldiers came rushing down, and he was forced to retire.

Yuan Shao, bringing reinforcements, reached Guandu and built a stockade.

Two advisers, Guo Tu and Shen Pei, went in to see him and said, “Again that fellow Guan Yu has been in the battle. He killed Wen Chou. Liu Bei pretends ignorance of him.”

Their master was angry and railed at Liu Bei, “The long-cared rebel! How dare he do such a thing?”

Soon Liu Bei appeared. Again Yuan Shao ordered him out to instant execution.

“What crime have I committed?” asked Liu Bei.

“You sent your brother to slay one of my generals. Is that no crime?”

“Pray let me explain before I die. Cao Cao hated me and has always done so. Now he has found out where I am and, fearing that I may help you, has got my brother to destroy your two generals, feeling sure that when you heard of it, you would be angry and put me to death. You cannot fail to see this.”

“What he says is sense,” said Yuan Shao, turning to his advisers, “and you two nearly brought on me the reproach of injuring the good.”

Yuan Shao ordered his attendants to retire and asked Liu Bei to come and sit by him.

Liu Bei came, saying, “I am deeply thankful, Illustrious Sir, for your great kindness, for which I can never be sufficiently grateful. Now I desire to send some confidential messenger with a secret letter to my brother to tell him where I am, and I am sure he will come without a moment’s delay. He will help you to destroy Cao Cao to make up for having destroyed your two officers. Do you approve of this?”

“If I got Guan Yu, he would be ten times better than the Yan Liang and Wen Chou that I have lost,” replied Yuan Shao.

So Liu Bei prepared a letter. But there was no one to take it. Yuan Shao ordered the army to withdraw to Wuyang, where they made a large camp. For some time nothing was done.

Then Cao Cao sent Xiahou Dun to defend the strategic points at Guandu while he led the
bulk of the army back to the capital. There he gave many banquets in honor of the services of Guan Yu, and then he told Lu Qian that putting the supplies in the front of the army had been meant as a bait to draw the enemy to destruction.

“Only Xun You understood that,” said Cao Cao in conclusion.

Everyone present praised his ingenuity. Even while the banquet was proceeding, there arrived news of a rising of Yellow Scarves rebels at Runan led by Liu Pi and Gong Du. They were very strong, and Cao Hong had been defeated in several engagements. Now he begged for help.

Guan Yu hearing this said, “I should like to have the opportunity of performing some service by destroying these rebels.”

“You have already rendered noble services for which you have not been properly requited. I could hardly trouble you again,” said Cao Cao.

“I have been idle too long. I shall get ill,” said Guan Yu.

Cao Cao then let him to go and gave him fifty thousand troops with Yu Jin and Yue Jing as generals under him. They were to leave soon.

Then Xun Yu said privily to his master, “He always cherishes the idea of returning to Liu Bei. He will leave you if he hears any news. Do not let him go on this expedition.”

“If he does well this time, I will not let him go into battle again,” said Cao Cao.

In due time the force led by Guan Yu drew near the rebels in Runan and made their camp. One night, just outside his camp, two spies were caught and taken in to Guan Yu who in one of them recognized Sun Qian. The attendants being dismissed, Guan Yu questioned Sun Qian.

“After we lost sight of each other, I have heard not a word of you. What are you doing here?” said Guan Yu.

“After I escaped, I drifted hither and thither till I had the good fortune to reach Runan, and Liu Pi and Gong Du, the Yellow Scarves leaders, took me in. But why are you with Cao Cao, General? And where are your sisters-in-law? Are they well?”

Guan Yu told him all that had happened.

“I have heard lately that Liu Bei is with Yuan Shao. I would have liked to go and join him, but I have not found a convenient opportunity. Now the two men I am with have taken the side of Yuan Shao against Cao Cao. By good luck you were coming here, so I got command of a small party of scouts to be able to see you and tell you. Presently our two leaders will pretend to be defeated and you, and the two ladies, can go over to Yuan Shao. And you will see your brother.”

“Since he is there, I certainly must go at once to see him. But it is a misfortune that I have slain two of Yuan Shao’s generals. I fear things are not in my favor,” said Guan Yu.

“Let me go first and see how the land lies. I will come back and tell you.”

“I would risk a myriad deaths to see my brother,” said Guan Yu. “But I must go to say farewell to Cao Cao.”

Sun Qian was sent away that night, and next day Guan Yu led out his army to offer battle. Gong Du, in armor, went out to the front of the line of battle, and Guan Yu said, “You people, why have you risen against the government?”

“Why do you blame us when you have turned your back
on your own lord?” replied Gong Du.
“How have I turned my back on my lord?”
“Liu Bei is with Yuan Shao, and you are with Cao Cao. What is that?”
Guan Yu could not reply, but he whirled round his sword and rode forward. Gong Du fled, and Guan Yu followed. Gong Du turned and said to Guan Yu, “Do not forget your old chief’s kindness. Now attack as soon as you can, and I will give up the defense.”
Guan Yu understood and urged on his troops. The leaders of the rebels pretended they were worsted, and they all scattered. So Runan was retaken. Having pacified the people, Guan Yu quickly led his army back to the capital, where he was met by Cao Cao and congratulated on his success and feasted.
When this was all over, Guan Yu went to the dwelling of his sisters-in-law to pay his respects at their gate.
“Have you been able to get any news of Uncle Liu Bei in your two expeditions?” asked Lady Gan.
“None,” replied Guan Yu.
As he retired from the door, he heard sounds of bitter weeping within.
“Alas! He is dead,” said they. “Our brother-in-law thinks we shall be greatly distressed; and thus, he hides the truth from us.”
One of the old soldiers, who acted as guard, hearing the sounds of perpetual grief, took pity on them and said, “Do not weep, ladies. Your lord is with Yuan Shao in the North of Yellow River.”
“How do you know that?” said they.
“I went out with General Guan Yu, and one of the soldiers told me.”
The two ladies summoned Guan Yu and reproached him, saying, “Uncle Liu Bei never betrayed you, and yet you remain here enjoying the bounty of Cao Cao and forgetting the old times. And you tell us falsehoods.”
Guan Yu bowed his head, saying, “My brother really is in the North of Yellow River, but I dared not tell you, lest it should become known. Something must be done, but done carefully, and it needs time.”
“Brother-in-law, you should hasten,” said Lady Gan.
Guan Yu withdrew feeling that he must evolve some scheme of departure without further loss of time. It caused him much uneasiness.
Yu Jin, having found out that Liu Bei was in the north, told Cao Cao, who at once sent Zhang Liao to find out Guan Yu’s intentions.
Zhang Liao entered jauntily and congratulated Guan Yu, saying, “They tell me you obtained news of your brother in the battlefield. I felicitate you.”
“My lord was there indeed, but I met him not. I see nothing to be glad about.”
“Is there any difference between the relationship of you two and that of any other two brothers?”
Guan Yu replied, “You and I stand in the relationship of friends. Liu Bei and I are friends and brothers beside,
and prince and minister in addition to both. Our relationship
cannot be discussed in usual terms.”

“Well, now that you know where your brother is, are you
going to him?”

“How can I go back on what I said before? I am sure you
will explain fully to the Prime Minister.”

Zhang Liao went back and told his master, who said, “I
must find a way to keep him here.”

While Guan Yu was pondering over his difficulties, they
told him that a friend had come to inquire for him. The
visitor was introduced but Guan Yu did not recognize him.

“Who are you?” asked Guan Yu.

“I am Chen Zhen of Nanyang, in the service of Yuan
Shao.”

In great perturbation, Guan Yu sent away the attendants
and, they being gone, said, “There is some special reason
for your visit?”

For reply Chen Zhen drew out a letter and handed it to
his host, who recognized that it was from his brother Liu
Bei. The letter read:

“I, the writer, and
you, Sir, pledged
ourselves in the
Peach Garden to die
together. Why then
are we apart and
yet alive, our kindly
feelings destroyed,
our sense of right
outraged? If you desire to obtain fame and acquire riches
and honor, I will offer my head without hesitation so that
your achievement is fulfilled. More might be said, but I
await your commands with great anxiety.”

Guan Yu finished the letter with a bitter cry.

“I always wanted to find my brother, but I did not know
where he was. How can he think such evil of me?” said he.

“Liu Bei looks for you very eagerly. If you are still
bound by the old pledge, you should go quickly,” said Chen
Zhen.

“Anyone born into the world without the essential virtue
of sincerity is no true human. I came here openly and can
go in no other way. Now will I write a letter which I will ask
you to bear to my brother, that as soon as I can take leave of
Cao Cao, I will bring the ladies and come to him.”

“But what if Cao Cao refuse to let you go?” said Chen
Zhen.

“Then would I rather die. I will not remain here.”

“Then, Sir, quickly write your letter and relieve your
brother from his anxiety.”

So Guan Yu wrote like this:

“I, the humble one, know full well that a human of principle
does not betray and a human of loyalty despises death. I
have been a student in my youth and know somewhat of the
proprieties. I sigh and weep at the memory of the fraternal
affection that made Yangjue Ai and Zuo Botao die rather
than separate. I was in charge of Xiapi, but the place lacked
provision and there was no help. I would have fought to
the death, but there was on my shoulders the responsibility
for my sisters-in-law. Wherefore I had to take care of my
body lest I betrayed your trust. And so I made a prisoner of
myself, hoping to find a way of release. I heard of you lately
in Runan. I must, however, bid farewell to Cao Cao and
bring the ladies with me when I come. May I perish, victim
to the superhuman powers, if I have harbored any traitorous
thought. Ink and paper are poor substitutes for what I would
say, but I look to see you soon.”

Chen Zhen left with this missive, and Guan Yu went to
tell the women. Then he proceeded to the Prime Minister’s
palace to say farewell. But Cao Cao knew what he was coming for, and at the gate Guan Yu found the board intimating that no one could be received. So he had to return. However, he bade his own few soldiers prepare to start at any moment. He also gave orders that everything received from Cao Cao was to be left in the quarters. Nothing was to be taken.

Next day he again proceeded to the palace to say farewell to his patron, but again found the board hanging there to show there was no admission. So it was several times; he could never enter. Then he went to see Zhang Liao, but Zhang Liao was indisposed.

“This means Cao Cao will not let me go,” thought Guan Yu. “But I am going, and I shall hesitate no longer.”

So he wrote this letter:

“As a young man I entered the service of the Imperial Uncle, and pledged myself to share his fortunes. Heaven and Earth witnessed this oath. When I lost the city, I made three requests which you granted. Now I hear my brother is with Yuan Shao and I, remembering our pledge, cannot but go to him. Though your bounty is great, I forget not the bond of the past; wherefore I write this letter of farewell trusting that when you have read it, you will be content for me to postpone to another season the proof of my gratitude.”

Guan Yu sealed and sent it to the palace. Then he deposited in the treasury of his dwelling all the gold and silver he had received, hung his seal of lordship of Hanshou in the middle of the reception hall and left, taking his sisters-in-law with him in a carriage. He rode Red Hare and carried the green-dragon saber in his hand. With a small escort of guards, those formerly under his command, he left the city by the north gate.

The wardens would have stopped him, but Guan Yu frightened them with a fierce shout. Having got out, he told the escort to go in front with the carriage while he would remain behind to guard against pursuit. So they pushed the carriage toward the high road.

In the city, Guan Yu’s letter reached the Prime Minister while he was consulting about what to do. He read it and exclaimed, “So he has left!”

Then the warden of the gate came to report that Guan Yu had forced his way out, and was gone with a carriage, a
horse, and a score of guards. Next came the servants from his house to report that he had left, taking nothing of the treasure, nor anyone of the waiting maids. Everything was left in the house. Even his seal was there. His only escort were the few soldiers of his original force.

Suddenly from the assembly of officers rose a voice, saying, “With three thousand of mailed horse, I will bring him back alive.”

Their eyes turned to the speaker, who was General Cai Yang.

_On the dragon’s cave he turns his back,_
_But numberless wolves infest his track._

What came of this offer to pursue will be seen in the next chapter.

Chapter 26

_The Man of Beautiful Beard Rides On A Solitary Journey;_  
_Guan Yu Slays Six Generals Through Five Passes._

Now of all the officers in Cao Cao’s army, the two friendly toward Guan Yu were Zhang Liao and Xu Huang. The others treated Guan Yu with respect, except Cai Yang who was decidedly inimical. So this Cai Yang was ready to pursue and capture Guan Yu as soon as he heard of his departure. But Cao Cao accepted Guan Yu’s going as natural.

“He does not forget his old leader, and he was perfectly open in all his actions. He is a gentleman, and you would do well to follow his example,” said Cao Cao.

So Cao Cao bade the would-be pursuer be gone and say no more about pursuit.

“You were exceedingly good to Guan Yu,” said Cheng Yu, “but he went off very rudely. He certainly left a screed behind with his reasons, but he affronted you, and that is no light matter. Now to let him join Yuan Shao is to add wings to a tiger. You had better catch him and put him to death so as to guard against future evil.”

Cao Cao replied, “But he had my promise, and can I break my word? Each has his master. Do not pursue.”

But Cao Cao said to Zhang Liao, “He has rejected all I gave him, so bribes were powerless with him in whatever shape. I have the greatest respect for such as him. He has
not yet gone far, and I will try to strengthen his attachment to me and make one appeal to sentiment. Ride after him and beg him to stop till I can come up and bid farewell and offer him a sum of money for his expenses and a fighting robe, that he may remember me kindly in after days."

So Zhang Liao rode out quite alone. Cao Cao followed him leisurely with an escort of a score or so.

Now the steed that Guan Yu rode was Red Hare, and it was very fast. No one could have come up with him but that there was the ladies’ carriage to escort, and so Red Hare had to be held in and go slow. Suddenly Guan Yu heard a shout behind him, a voice crying, “Go slowly, Guan Yu!”

He turned and made out the person to be Zhang Liao. Ordering the pushers of the carriage to press on along the high road, he reined in his steed, held the green-dragon saber ready for a stroke, and waited for Zhang Liao to come up.

“Of course you have come to take me back, Zhang Liao?” said Guan Yu.

“No; the Prime Minister, seeing that you are going a long journey, wishes to see you on your way and told me to hasten forward and beg you to wait till he can come up. That is the only thing.”

“Seeing that he is coming along with mailed men, I shall fight to the very last,” said Guan Yu.

And he took up his position on a bridge where he waited the approach of the party, who advanced quickly. Four of Cao Cao’s generals, Xu Chu, Xu Huang, Yu Jin, and Li Dian, followed close. Seeing Guan Yu was ready to fight, Cao Cao ordered his escort to open out in two lines, and then it was seen they carried no arms. This relieved his mind, for it proved to Guan Yu they meant no attack.

“Why do you go in such haste, Guan Yu?” asked Cao Cao.

Guan Yu inclined his head but did not dismount, saying, “I informed you in writing that since my lord was in the North of Yellow River, I had to leave at once. I went to your palace again and again but was refused admittance. So I wrote a letter of farewell, sealed up the treasure, resigned my lordship seal, and left everything for you. I hope you recall the promise you once made me.”

Cao Cao replied, “My desire is to keep my troth with all people. I cannot go back on my word. However, you may find the journey expensive, and therefore I have here prepared a sum of money to help you.”

Then from horseback Cao Cao held out a packet of gold.

Guan Yu said, “I have sufficient left from your former bounty. Keep that for presents to your soldiers.”

“What should you refuse this? It is but an insignificant return for great services.”

“My services have been all trifling, not worth mentioning.”

“Really, Guan Yu, you are the most high-principled of humans. I am very sorry my luck is too poor to retain you at my side. Pray accept just this robe to show you I am not
quite ungrateful,” said Cao Cao.

And one of his generals, dismounting, held up a silken coat in both hands. Guan Yu even still fearful of what might happen, would not dismount, but he reached down his sword and took the robe on its point. Then he threw it over his shoulders and turned to thank the giver.

“I thank you, Sir Prime Minister, for the robe and trust we shall meet again.”

So saying, Guan Yu went down from the bridge and bore away to the north.

“He is a very rude man,” said Xu Chu, who was of the escort. “Why do you not take him prisoner?”

Cao Cao replied, “He was absolutely alone facing scores of us. He was justified in being suspicious. But my word has gone forth, and he is not to be pursued.”

Cao Cao and his escort returned, the Prime Minister very sad when he thought of the man who had gone.

Guan Yu went down from the bridge and started in the
wake of the carriage carrying the two ladies, which should have gone about ten miles while this interview had been going on. He could see no signs of it and rode hither and thither looking on all sides.

Presently he heard someone shouting from a hill, calling him by name to halt. He saw a youth wearing a yellow turban and dressed in a silk robe. He held a spear in his hand and was mounted on a horse from the neck of which dangled a bloody head. Behind him were a hundred or so men on foot, and they advanced quickly.

“Who are you?” asked Guan Yu.

The young man dropped his spear, dismounted, and made a low bow. Guan Yu feared this was some ruse, so he only checked his horse and gripped his sword the more firmly, saying, “Sir, I desire you to tell me your name!”

“My name is Liao Hua. I belong to a Xiangyang family. Since these troubled times began I have been an outlaw among the rivers and lakes, and I and my comrades have lived by plunder. We are about five hundred in all. By chance my friend Du Yuan came across two ladies in a carriage just now; and, quite wrongly, he took them prisoners and brought them to the hold in the hills. I questioned the servants and so found out who they were and who was escorting them. So I wished them to be set free to pursue their journey. Du Yuan opposed this and spoke so ill-mannerly that I killed him. And here is his head. I pray you pardon me.”

“Where are the two ladies?”

“They are among the hills,” replied Liao Hua.

“Bring them down here, at once,” said Guan Yu.

In a short time a party of the brigands pushed the carriage down the hill, and the ladies sat there before him.

Then Guan Yu dismounted, laid aside his sword, and stood respectfully before them with his arms crossed.

“Sisters, have you been alarmed?” asked he.

They replied, “We should have suffered at the hands of Du Yuan had it not been for Liao Hua.”

“How did Liao Hua come to save the ladies?” asked Guan Yu of those who stood by.

They said, “Du Yuan carried off the ladies and proposed that he and Liao Hua should have one each as wife. But Liao Hua had found out they were of gentle birth and worthy, and was for treating them with respect. When Du Yuan disagreed, Liao Hua slew him.”

Hearing this Guan Yu bowed to Liao Hua and thanked him. Liao Hua then wanted to join himself and his troop to Guan Yu, but Guan Yu, seeing he was a Yellow Scarf, would have nothing to do with him. So Guan Yu simply thanked him for his kindness to the ladies. Liao Hua offered some presents, but these were also declined.

So Liao Hua took his leave and presently disappeared in a valley among the hills. Guan Yu told his sisters the story of his interview with Cao Cao and the gift of a robe, and then he urged the carriage on its way. Towards dark they came to a farm where they would rest. The farmer, an old graybeard, came out to welcome the party and asked who they were. Guan Yu described himself as the brother of Liu Bei, and said his name.
“Surely you are no other than the slayer of Yan Liang and Wen Chou,” said the venerable host.

“That is so,” replied Guan Yu.

“Come in,” said the old man, joyfully.

“My two sisters-in-law are in the carriage,” said Guan Yu.

“Will you let your women folks go out to receive them?”

As Guan Yu remained standing there, the host asked him to be seated, but he would not sit while the women were present and remained standing in a respectful attitude till the old man’s wife had returned and ushered the ladies into the inner apartments. Then the old man set to the entertainment of his guest in the guest hall. Guan Yu asked his name.

He replied, “I am called Hu Hua. In the days of the Emperor Huan, I was an officer of the court, but I resigned and retired into private life. I have a son, Hu Ban, with Governor Wang Zhi of Yingyang. If you should be going that way, General, I should like to send him a letter by you.”

Guan Yu said he would take the letter. Next day, after an early meal, the ladies got into their carriage, the host handed his letter to Guan Yu, and the little party once more took the road. They went toward Luoyang.

Presently they approached a pass known as the Dongling Pass, guarded by Commander Kong Xiu and five hundred soldiers. When the soldiers saw a carriage being pushed toward the pass, they ran to tell their commander, who came out to accost the travelers.

Guan Yu dismounted and returned the officer’s salute, and Kong Xiu said, “Whither are you going?”

“I have left the Prime Minister to go into the North of Yellow River to find my brother.”

“But Yuan Shao is my master’s rival. You have authority from him to go thither?”

“I left hurriedly and could not get it.”

“If you have no authority, you must wait while I send to request orders.”

“To remain while you send and receive an answer will delay me greatly,” said Guan Yu.

“I must stand by my instructions. That is the only thing to do,” said Kong Xiu.

“Then you refuse to let me pass?”

“If you want to go through, leave the family as a gage.”

At this Guan Yu got very angry and made to cut at the commander on the spot, but Kong Xiu withdrew into the gate and beat the drums for an attack. Thereupon the soldiers armed themselves, mounted, and came down to oppose the passage, crying, “Dare you go through, eh?”

The carriage was sent off to a safe distance, and then Guan Yu rode at full speed directly at the commander of the guard, who set his spear and came to meet him. The two steeds met and the men engaged, but at the first stroke of the green-dragon saber the commander of the gate fell to the earth dead. His troops fled.

“Soldiers, do not flee!” cried Guan Yu. “I killed him because I could do no otherwise. I have nothing against...
you, but I would ask you to tell the Prime Minister how this thing came to pass, that Kong Xiu wished to kill me, and so I slew him in self defense.”

The soldiers bowed before him, and Guan Yu, with the carriage, passed through the gates and continued their way to Luoyang. But one of the guards of the pass went quickly in advance and informed the Governor of Luoyang, Han Qu, of the slaughter of Kong Xiu. Wherefore Han Qu assembled his officers to take counsel.

Meng Tan, one of his generals, said, “This Guan Yu must be a fugitive, or he would have a safe conduct. Our only course is to stop him, or we shall incur blame.”

“The man is fierce and brave. Remember the fate of Yan Liang and Wen Chou. It seems vain to oppose him by force, and so we must think out some trap for him,” said Han Qu.

“I have a ruse ready,” said Meng Tan. “I will close the gate with thorny blockades, and I will go to fight with him. I will engage and then flee, and you can shoot him from an ambush along the road. If we can get him and his party and send them prisoners to the capital, we ought to be well rewarded.”

This course was determined upon, and soon they heard that Guan Yu was approaching. Han Qu strung his bow and filled his quiver with arrows and with one thousand soldiers took up position along the pass.

Then as the party approached, Han Qu said, “Who is the traveler who comes?”

Guan Yu bowed low and said, “He is a certain Guan Yu, Lord of Hanshou, and he wishes to go through the pass.”

“Have you a letter from the Prime Minister?”

“In the hurry of departure I did not get any.”

“My special orders from him are to hold this pass and make examination of all spies that may go to and fro. Any person without an authority must be a fugitive.”

Then Guan Yu began to be angry, saying, “I have killed Kong Xiu at Dongling Pass. Do you also seek death?”

“Who will capture him for me?” cried Han Qu, and Meng Tan offered himself. He rode out, whirling his double swords, and made straight for Guan Yu.

Guan Yu sent back the carriage out of danger and then rode toward Meng Tan. They engaged, but very soon Meng Tan turned his steed and fled. Guan Yu pursued. Meng Tan, intent only on leading his enemy toward the ambush, took no account of the speed of Red Hare. Very soon Meng Tan was caught up, and a stroke of the mighty sword cut him in two pieces. Then Guan Yu stopped and turned back. The archers in the gate shot their hardest; and though it was a long way off, one of them lodged an arrow in his left arm. He pulled it out with his teeth, but the blood streamed
down as he rode toward Governor Han Qu. The men scattered. Guan Yu rode straight at his next victim. He raised his sword and made an oblique cut which sliced off the head and shoulder of Han Qu.

Then Guan Yu drove off the soldiers and returned to escort the carriage. He bound up his wound, and, fearing lest anyone might take advantage of his weakness, he made no long halts on the road but hurried toward River Si Pass.

The warden of this pass was Bian Xi of Bingzhou, a warrior whose weapon was a comet-hammer. He had been a Yellow Scarf and had gone over to Cao Cao, who had given him this post. As soon as he heard of the coming of the redoubtable Guan Yu, he cudgeled his brains for a ruse to use against him. He decided upon an ambush. In the State Guardian Temple at the pass he placed two hundred ax-men and swordsmen. He reckoned on enticing Guan Yu to the temple for refreshment, and when he let fall a cup as signal, the hidden ruffians would rush out.

All being thus arranged and ready, he went out to welcome Guan Yu in friendly guise, and Guan Yu dismounted at his coming. Bian Xi began very amiably.

"Your name, General, makes the very earth tremble, and everyone looks up to you. This return to the Imperial Uncle proves you to be noble and true."

Guan Yu in reply told him the story of the men he had slain in the last two passes.

Bian Xi replied, "You slew them; that is well. When I see the Prime Minister, I will explain to him the inner reasons for these acts."

Guan Yu thought he had found a friend and so mounted and rode through the pass. When he came to the temple, a number of priests came out to meet him with clanging bells.

This temple, named State Guardian Temple, had a courtyard in which the Emperor Ming had burned incense in the past. In the temple were thirty priests, and among these there happened to be one Pu Jing who came from the same village as Guan Yu. His religious name was Transverse Peace. Hearing who the visitor was, Transverse Peace came forward to speak with him.

"General," said Transverse Peace, "It is many a long year since you left Pudong."

"Yes," said Guan Yu, "nearly twenty years."

"Do you recognize this poor priest?"

"I left the village many years ago; I do not recognize you."

"My house and yours were only separated by a rivulet," said the priest.

Now Bian Xi, seeing Transverse Peace holding forth about village matters, thought Transverse Peace would blab about the ambush, so Bian Xi bade him be silent.

"I want to invite the General to a feast. You priest fellows seem to have a lot to say," said Bian Xi.

"Not too much," said Guan Yu. "Naturally when fellow villagers meet, they talk of old times."

Bian Xi invited the visitor into the guest room to take
tea, but Guan Yu said, “The two ladies are out there in the carriage. They ought to have some first.”

So the priest bade them take some tea to the ladies, and then he led Guan Yu within, at the same time lifting the priest knife which he wore at his side and looking meaningfully at Guan Yu. The latter understood and told his people to bring along his weapon and keep close at his side.

When Bian Xi invited Guan Yu to go into the Hall of the Laws for some refreshment, Guan Yu turned to him, saying, “Is this invitation with good intention or evil?”

Bian Xi was so taken aback that he could make no reply, and then Guan Yu saw that many armed men were concealed behind the arras.

Then Guan Yu shouted loudly at Bian Xi, saying, “What means this? I thought you an honorable man. How dare you?”

The traitor saw that his plot had failed and called to the assassins to come out and fall to, but Guan Yu had a short sword in his hand and slashed at anyone who came near.

So they scattered. Their commander ran down the hall and tried to escape among the side buildings, but Guan Yu threw aside the short sword, took up the green-dragon saber and went after Bian Xi. The latter was trying to get into position to throw his comet-hammer, but Guan Yu cut the cord and the weapon was useless. Guan Yu followed Bian Xi in and out and soon caught up with him. Then with one blow Guan Yu cut him in halves.

The fight over, Guan Yu sought the two ladies, who were surrounded by soldiers. These fled at sight of the terrible warrior. Seeking out the priest, his fellow
countryman, he thanked him for the timely warning which had saved him from death.

“I cannot remain here after this,” said Transverse Peace. “I shall pack up my few garments and my alms bowl and take to the road, vague in my wanderings as the clouds in the sky. But we shall meet again and till then take care of yourself.”

Then Guan Yu took leave and retook the road to Yingyang. The Governor of this city was named Wang Zhi, and he was related to Han Qu by their children’s marriage. Hearing of the death of his relative, Wang Zhi set about a scheme to kill Guan Yu secretly. He sent soldiers to guard the city gates and, when he heard that Guan Yu approached, he went himself and received Guan Yu with a smiling countenance and bade Guan Yu welcome. Guan Yu told him the object of his journey.

“You, General, have been able to get some exercise on the road, but the ladies in their carriage must be cramped and fatigued. I pray you come into the city, and all of you remain the night in the official travelers’ quarters. Tomorrow you can set forth again.”

The offer was tempting, and his host seemed in earnest, so the two ladies went into the city, where they found everything very comfortably prepared for them. And, though Guan Yu declined the Governor’s invitations to a banquet, refreshments for the travelers were sent to their lodgings. Guan Yu was fatigued from the trials of the journey, and as soon as the evening meal was over, he bade the ladies retire to rest while he sat down in the main room, quite alone, for he bade all to get repose while they could. His horse was given a good feed for once. He sat with his armor loosened in order to be more at ease.

Now Governor Wang Zhi had a general named Hu Ban to whom he had entrusted the arrangements for the destruction of his guest.

Said Wang Zhi, “This Guan Yu is a traitor to the Prime Minister and a fugitive. On the road he has murdered several Commanders of Passes and is guilty of serious crimes. But he is too strong and valiant for any ordinary soldier to overcome. So this evening you will lead a whole company of a thousand troops to surround his lodging, each one armed with a torch, and we will burn
him. They will start the fire about midnight. Everyone of the party will perish. I will come with a force to stand by and assist if necessary.”

These orders received, Hu Ban passed them on to the soldiers, who began secretly to prepare dry wood and other combustibles which they piled up at the gate of the rest house. Hu Ban thought within himself that he would like to know what manner of man was this Guan Yu, whose fame had spread so far, so he determined to get a peep at the guest. He went to the rest house and inquired where Guan Yu was.

“The General is the man in the main hall reading,” was the reply.

Hu Ban noiselessly made his way to the outside of the room and peeped in. He saw the famous warrior stroking his beard with his left hand while he read by the light of a lamp placed on a low table. An involuntary exclamation of wonder escaped at the majesty of the figure.

“Really a god!” Hu Ban sighed.

“Who is there?” suddenly asked the reader at the sound.

Hu Ban entered and said, “I am Hu Ban, a general of the Governor.”

“Surely you are the son of Hu Hua, who lives outside Xuchang,” said Guan Yu.

“I am he,” replied Hu Ban.

Then Guan Yu called up his followers and bade them look among the baggage for the letter, which they brought.
Guan Yu handed it to the General.

Hu Ban read it and then breathed long, saying, “I very nearly caused the death of a good man.”

Then he betrayed the whole plot, saying, “This Wang Zhi is a wicked man, who wanted to kill you. At this moment you are surrounded, and at the third watch they will set fire to this place. Now I will go and open the city gates while you hastily prepare for flight.”

Guan Yu was greatly surprised, but he quickly buckled up his armor, got his steed ready, roused the two ladies, and put them into their carriage. Then they left the rest house; and as they passed out, they saw the soldiers all about them, each with a torch. The party hastened to the outskirts of the city and found the gate already open, and they lost no time in getting clear of the city. Hu Ban returned to give orders to fire the rest house.

The fugitives pressed on. But before long they saw lights coming up behind them, and Wang Zhi called out to them to stop.

Guan Yu reined in his horse and began to abuse him, crying, “Worthless fellow! What had you against me that you wished to burn me to death?”

Wang Zhi whipped up his steed and set his spear, but Guan Yu cut him through with the short sword he wore at his side and scattered his followers.

Then the carriage pushed on. Guan Yu’s heart was filled with gratitude to Hu Ban.

When the party drew near Huazhou, someone told Liu Yue, who rode out to welcome him. Liu Yue had been once rescued by Guan Yu, who slew Yan Liang and Wen Chou and lifted the siege of the city.

Guan Yu did not dismount but bowed from horseback, saying, “Have you been quite well since we parted?”

“Whither are you going, Sir?” replied Liu Yue.

“I have left the Prime Minister and am on my way to find my brother.”

“Liu Bei is with Yuan Shao, who is at enmity with the Prime Minister. How can you be allowed to go to him?” asked Liu Yue.

“That matter was settled long ago.”

“The Yellow River Ferry is an important point and is guarded by a commander of Xiahou Dun. He will not let you cross.”

“But suppose then you provide boats for me?”

“Though there are boats, I dare not give them to you.”

“Well, formerly I slew Yan Liang and Wen Chou and saved you a grave danger. Now you refuse me a ferry boat!”

“I am afraid Xiahou Dun will know of it and make it a fault against me.”
Guan Yu perceived that no help was to be expected from this man, so he pushed on and presently reached the ferry. There the Commander of the Guard, Qin Qi, came out to question him.

"I am one Guan Yu, Lord of Hanshou."

"Whither are you bound?"

"I go to the North of Yellow River to seek my brother, Liu Bei, and I respectfully ask you to grant me a passage over the river."

"Where is the authority of the Prime Minister?"

"I am not on a mission from the Prime Minister, so why should I have such an authority?"

"I have orders from my chief to guard the ferry, and you will not cross. Even if you grew wings, you should not fly over."

Guan Yu’s choler arose.

"Do you know that I have been the death of all those who have hitherto tried to stop me?" said he.

"You have only slain a few officers of no rank or reputation; but you dare not kill me!"

"Where would you stand beside Yan Liang and Wen Chou?" asked Guan Yu.

Qin Qi grew angry, and he loosed his rein. Sword in hand, he came at a gallop. The two met, but in the first encounter Qin Qi’s head was swept off by the terrible green-dragon saber.

"He who opposed me is dead! You others need not be afraid," cried Guan Yu. "Be quick and prepare me a boat."

The boat was soon at the landing, and the two women stepped on board, followed by Guan Yu. They crossed and were then in the country of Yuan Shao. In the course of his journey to this point, Guan Yu had forced five passes and slain six generals.

His seal hung up, the treasury locked, his courtly mansion left, He journeyed toward his brother dear, too long from his side left. The horse he rode was famed for speed as for
endurance great,
His good sword made a way for him and
opened every gate.
His loyalty and truth forth stand, a pattern
unto all,
His valor would frighten rushing streams and
make high mountains fall.
Alone he traveled lustily, this was death to meet
his blade,
He has been themed by myriads, his glory never
will fade.

“I did not willingly slay a single one of them,” mused
Guan Yu as he rode along. “There was no help for it.
Nevertheless when Cao Cao hears of it, he will regard me
as ungrateful for his bounty.”

Before long he saw a rider on the road who soon hailed
him and proved to be Sun Qian.

“I have never heard a word from you since we lost sight
of each other at Runan. How have you fared?” said Guan
Yu.

“After your departure Liu Pi and Gong Du retook
the city. I was sent by them to Yuan
Shao to try to make peace with him and
succeeded, so that Yuan Shao invited
Liu Bei to go to him and share in the deliberations for a
concerted attack on Cao Cao. But to my disgust the leaders
of Yuan Shao’s army showed great jealousy of each other
so that Tian Feng got into gaol, Ju Shou was degraded, and
others quarreled. Then Yuan Shao vacillated and hesitated,
so that your brother and I consulted how we might get away
from them all. Now the Uncle is at Runan with Liu Pi and,
thinking you could not know that and might suffer some
harm if you unwillingly went to Yuan Shao, I have come to
warn you. It is good fortune to find you like this. Now we
can hasten to Runan, and you will meet your brother.”

Guan Yu took Sun Qian to make his bow to the ladies,
who asked after his adventures, and Sun Qian said, “Uncle
Liu Bei were nearly executed due to Yuan Shao’s sudden
bursts of anger after the deaths of Yan Liang and Wen Chou.
Now, however, he is out of his way and safe at Runan, and
you will meet him soon.”

The ladies covered their faces and wept at the recital of
his dangers. Then the party no longer traveled north but
took the road toward Runan. Not long after a great cloud
of dust was noticed behind them, and
that presently made out a hundred of
horsemen. These
were led by Xiahou
Dun, who shouted out to Guan Yu to stop.

One by one the pass commanders stopped his
progress and were slain,
The river crossed, another army comes and he
must fight again.

How finally Guan Yu escaped death will appear in the
succeeding chapter.
Chapter 28
Putting Cai Yang To Death, The Brothers’ Doubts Disappear;
Meeting At Gucheng, Lord and Liege Fortify Each Other.

Sun Qian had joined Guan Yu in escorting the two ladies, and they were on the road to Runan when Xiahou Dun suddenly determined to pursue. So with a couple of hundred horse, Xiahou Dun set out. When Xiahou Dun was seen approaching, Guan Yu bade Sun Qian go ahead with the carriage while he remained to deal with the pursuers.

When they were near enough, Guan Yu said, “In coming after me thus you do not reinforce the magnanimity of your master!”

Replied Xiahou Dun, “The Prime Minister has sent no definite instructions. You have caused the death of several people, among them one of my commanders, and so I have come to capture you! You have behaved most grossly. The Prime Minister will decide.”

Thereupon Xiahou Dun dashed forward with his spear ready to thrust.

But at that moment a rider came up behind him at full gallop, crying, “You must not fight with Guan Yu!”

Guan Yu stayed his steed at once and waited.

The messenger came up, drew from his bosom an official letter, and said to Xiahou Dun, “The Prime Minister loves General Guan Yu for his loyalty and honor, and fearing lest Guan Yu might be stopped at the various passes, he sent me with this letter to show when necessary at any point on the road.”

“But this Guan Yu has slain several commanders of the passes. Does the Prime Minister know that?” said Xiahou Dun.

The messenger said these things were unknown.

“Then,” said Xiahou Dun, “I will arrest him and take him to the Prime Minister, who may set him free or not as he wills.”

“Do you think I fear anything you can do?” said Guan Yu.
Yu getting wrathful.
And he rode forward. Xiahou Dun, nothing loth, set his spear and prepared for battle. They met and had reached the tenth encounter when a second horseman came up at full speed, crying, “Generals, wait a little!”

Xiahou Dun stayed his hand and asked the messenger, saying, “Am I to arrest him?”

“No,” replied the messenger. “Fearing lest he should have difficulties at the passes, the Prime Minister has sent me with a dispatch to say he is to be released.”

“Did the Prime Minister know that he had slain several commanders on the way?”

“He did not know!”

“Since he was ignorant of that, I may not let this Guan Yu go,” and Xiahou Dun gave the signal to his men to close in round Guan Yu.

But Guan Yu flourished his sword and made to attack them and a fight was again imminent, when a third rider appeared, who cried, “Guan Yu, give way and do not fight!”

The speaker was Zhang Liao. Both combatants made no further move but awaited his arrival.

Zhang Liao said, “I bring the Prime Minister’s order that since he has heard that Guan Yu has slain certain commanders on the way, he fears that some will hinder his passage. Wherefore he has sent me to deliver his command at each gate that Guan Yu is to be suffered to pass freely.”

Xiahou Dun said, “Qin Qi was the son of Cai Yang’s sister, and he was confided to my especial care. Now this Guan Yu has killed him, and how can I refrain?”

“When I see his uncle Cai Yang, I will explain. But now the main point is that you have the Prime Minister’s orders to let Guan Yu pass and you may not despise his wish.”

So the only thing for Xiahou Dun to do was to retire, and he did.

“Whither are you going?” then said Zhang Liao to Guan Yu.

“I fear my brother is no longer with Yuan Shao, and now I am going to find him wherever he is.”

“As you do not know where to go, why not return to the Prime Minister?”

“Where is the sense of that?” said Guan Yu with a smile. “But, Zhang Liao, you return, and try to arrange pardon for my faults.”

With this Guan Yu saluted Zhang Liao and took his leave. Zhang Liao retired and joined Xiahou Dun.

Guan Yu quickly regained the carriage, and as they went along side by side he told Sun Qian what had happened. Several days later a heavy rain storm came on which soaked everything. Looking about for protection they noticed a farm under the shelter of a precipice and took their way thither. An old man came out to them, to whom they told their story.

When they had finished, the old fellow said, “My name is Guo Chang, and I have lived here many years. I am very pleased to greet the man whom I have known so long by reputation.”

Guo Chang quickly killed a sheep for their refreshment and brought out wine for the two men. The two ladies were entertained in the inner apartments. And while they refreshed themselves, their baggage was put out to dry and their steeds were fed.
As the day closed in, they saw several youths come along, and their host said, “My son is come to pay his respects.”

“This is my humble son,” said Guo Chang, presenting a lad to Guan Yu.

“What has he been doing?” asked Guan Yu.

“He has just come in from hunting.”

The young fellow went out. The old man continued, “All my family have been farmers or scholars. He is my only son, and instead of following in the footsteps of his ancestors he cares for nothing but gadding about and hunting, unhappily.”

“Why unhappily?” said Guan Yu. “In these days of disorder a good soldier can make a name for himself.”

“If he would only learn the military arts, that would be something of a career. But he is nothing but a vagabond and does everything he should not. He is a grief to me.”

Guan Yu sighed in sympathy. The old gentleman stayed till a late hour; and when he took his leave, his two guests began to prepare for rest.

Suddenly outside there arose a great hubbub, men shouting and horses neighing. Guan Yu called to his people; but as no one answered, he and Sun Qian drew their swords and went into the stable yard. There they found their host’s son on the ground shouting to his followers to fight.

Guan Yu asked what it was all about, and his guards told him, “The young fellow had tried to steal Red Hare, but had been badly kicked. We heard shouting and went to see what it meant when his men had set on us.”

Guan Yu was very wrathful.

“You mean thieves! Would you steal my horse?” cried he.

But before he could do anything, his host came running out, saying, “It was not with my consent that my son did this evil thing. I know he is very guilty and deserves death. But his mother loves him tenderly, and I pray you be generous and pardon him!”

“Really he is unworthy of his father,” said Guan Yu. “What you told me shows he is a degenerate. For your sake I pardon him.”

Then Guan Yu told his own people to keep a better lookout, sent the people about their business and, in company with Sun Qian, went away to rest.

Next morning both the host and hostess were up betimes waiting to thank Guan Yu for forgiving their son’s mad freak.

“My son has insulted your tiger dignity, I know, and I am deeply affected by your kindness in not punishing him,” said the old man.

“Bring him here and I will talk to him,” said Guan Yu. “He went out before daylight with a lot of his fellow rogues, and I know not where he is.”

So Guan Yu bade them farewell, got the ladies into their carriage, and they moved out of the farmyard. Guan Yu and Sun Qian riding abreast as escort. They took the road toward the hills.

Before they had gone far, they saw a large party of men, led by a couple of riders, pouring down one of the gullies. One of the riders wore a yellow turban and a battle robe. The other was Guo Chang’s son.

The wearer of the turban called out, saying, “I am one of the commanders of Zhang Jue the Lord of Heaven. Whoever you may be, leave that horse you are riding for me. You
Chapter 28

Guan Yu greeted the speech with a hearty laugh.

"O you mad ignoramus! If you had ever been with Zhang Jue as a bandit, you would have learned to know Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei, the three brothers."

"I have heard of the ruddy long beard called Guan Yu, but I have never seen him. Who may you be?"

Guan Yu then laid aside his sword, stopped his horse, and drew off the bag that covered his beard thus showing its magnificence.

The turban wearer immediately slipped out of the saddle, laid an angry hand on his companion, and they both bowed low in front of Guan Yu's steed.

"Who are you?" asked Guan Yu.

"I am Pei Yuanshao. After the death of Zhang Jue, I was left forlorn; and I got together a few others like myself, and we took refuge in the forests. This morning early this fellow came to tell us that a guest at his father's farm had a valuable horse and proposed to me to steal it. I did not think I should meet you, General."

The wretched Guo Chang's son implored that his life might be spared, and Guan Yu pardoned him for his father's sake. Then Guan Yu covered his face and crept away.

"You did not recognize me. How then did you know my name?" asked Guan Yu.

"I am Pei Yuanshao. After the death of Zhang Jue, I was left forlorn; and I got together a few others like myself, and we took refuge in the forests. This morning early this fellow came to tell us that a guest at his father's farm had a valuable horse and proposed to me to steal it. I did not think I should meet you, General."

The wretched Guo Chang's son implored that his life might be spared, and Guan Yu pardoned him for his father's sake. Then Guan Yu covered his face and crept away.

"You did not recognize me. How then did you know my name?" asked Guan Yu.

Pei Yuanshao replied, "Not far from here is a mountain called the Sleeping Bull, where lives a certain Zhou Cang, a very powerful man who came from the west. He has a stiff curly beard and looks very handsome. He also was a commander in the rebel army, who took to the forest when his leader perished. He has told me a lot about you, but I have never had the happiness of seeing you."

Said Guan Yu, "Under the green wood trees is no place for a hero's foot. You had better abandon this depraved life and return to the path of virtue. Do not work out your own destruction."

As they were talking, a troop of horsemen appeared in the distance. They belonged to Zhou Cang, as Pei Yuanshao said, and Guan Yu waited for them to approach. The leader was very dark complexioned, tall, and armed with a spear. As soon as he drew near enough to see, he exclaimed joyfully. "This is General Guan Yu!"

In a moment he had slipped out of the saddle and was on his knees by the roadside.

"Zhou Cang renders obeisance," said he.

Said Guan Yu, "O Warrior, where have you known me?"

"I was one of the Yellow Scarves, and I saw you then. My one regret was that I could not join you. Now that my good fortune has brought me here, I hope you will not reject me. Let me be one of your foot soldiers to be always near you to carry your whip and run by your stirrup. I will cheerfully die for you."

As he seemed thoroughly in earnest, Guan Yu said, "But if you follow me, what of your companions?"

"They may do as they please: Follow me or go their
Thereupon they all shouted, “We will follow!”

Guan Yu dismounted and went to ask the ladies what they thought of this.

Lady Gan replied, “Brother-in-law, you have traveled thus far alone and without fighters; you have safely passed many dangers and never wanted their assistance. You refused the service of Liao Hua, why then suffer this crowd? But this is only a my view and you must decide.”

“What you say, sister-in-law, is to the point.”

Therefore returning to Zhou Cang, he said, “It is not that I am lacking in gratitude, but my sisters-in-law do not care for a large following. Wherefore return to the mountains till I shall have found my brother, when I will surely call you.”

Zhou Cang replied, “I am only a rough uncouth fellow, wasting his life as a brigand. Meeting you, General, is like seeing the full sun in the skies, and I feel that I can never bear to miss you again. As it might be inconvenient for all my people to follow you, I will bid my companion lead them away, but I will come and follow you on foot wherever you go.”

Guan Yu again asked his sisters-in-law what they thought of this. Lady Gan said one or two made no difference, and so Guan Yu consented. But Pei Yuanshao was not satisfied with this arrangement and said he wished also to follow.

Zhou Cang said, “If you do not stay with the band, they will disperse and be lost. You must take command for the moment and let me accompany General Guan Yu. As soon as he has a fixed abode, I will come to fetch you.”

Somewhat discontentedly Pei Yuanshao accepted the situation and marched off, while his one-time colleague joined the train of Guan Yu, and they went toward Runan. They traveled quickly for some days, and then they saw a city on a hill.

The natives told them, “This city is called Gucheng. A few months before a warrior suddenly appeared, drove out the magistrate, and took possession. Then he has begun to recruit soldiers, bought up horses, and laid in stores. The warrior’s name is Zhang Fei. Now he has a large force, and no one in the neighborhood dare face him.”

“To think that I should find my brother like this!” said Guan Yu, delighted. “I have had never a word of him, nor knew I where he was since Xuzhou fell.”

So Guan Yu dispatched Sun Qian into the city to tell its new commander to come out to meet him and provide for their sisters-in-law.

Now, after being separated from his brothers, Zhang Fei had gone to the Mangdang Hills, where he had remained a month or so while he sent far and near for tidings of Liu Bei. Then as he happened to pass Gucheng, he had sent in to borrow some grain, but had been refused. In revenge, he had driven away the magistrate and taken possession of
the city. He found the place well suited to his needs at the moment.

As directed by Guan Yu, Sun Qian entered the city and, after the usual ceremonies, told Zhang Fei the news, “Liu Bei has left Yuan Shao and gone to Runan; and Guan Yu, with your sisters-in-law, is at the gates. He wishes you to go out and receive them.”

Zhang Fei listened without a word till he came to the request to go out to meet his brother. At that point he called for his armor and, when he had put it on, laid hold of his long serpent halberd, mounted, and rode out with a large company at his back. Sun Qian was too astonished to ask what this meant and simply followed.

Guan Yu was very glad when he saw his brother coming, put up his weapons and, with Zhou Cang at his back, rode toward him at full speed. But as Guan Yu approached, he saw all the signs of fierce anger on Zhang Fei’s face, and Zhang Fei roared as he shook his spear, threatening Guan Yu.

Guan Yu was entirely taken aback and called out anxiously, “Brother, what does this mean? Is the Peach Garden Pledge quite forgotten?”

“What impudence is this that you come to see me since your disgraceful behavior?” shouted Zhang Fei.

“What disgraceful behavior has been mine?” said Guan Yu.

“You have betrayed your brother; you have surrendered to Cao Cao; and you have received title and office at his hands. And now you are come to exploit me. One of us shall die!”

Guan Yu said, “Really you do not understand, and it is hard for me to explain. But ask the two ladies here, worthy brother, and they will tell you.”

At this the ladies lifted the curtain of the carriage and called out: “Brother, why is this?”

Zhang Fei said, “Wait a while, sisters, and see me slay this traitor. After that I will conduct you into the city.”

Said Lady Gan, “Since he knew not where you were, our brother took shelter with Cao Cao. And since he knew that his elder brother was at Runan, he has braved every danger to escort us thus far on the road. Pray take a correct view of his conduct.”

Lady Mi also chimed in, “When your brother went to Xuchang, no other course was open to him.”

“Sisters, do not let him deceive you to the truth. Real loyalty prefers death to dishonor. No good person can serve two masters.”

Guan Yu said, “Brother, cease to wrench me I pray you.”
Sun Qian said, “Guan Yu came expressly to seek you.”

“How much more nonsense will you talk?” roared Zhang Fei. “How can he be true-hearted? He came to capture me, I say.”

“Had I come to capture you, I should have come with troops and horses,” said Guan Yu.

“And are there not troops and horses?” said Zhang Fei pointing to a point behind Guan Yu.

Guan Yu turned, and there he saw a cloud of dust rising as though a squadron of horse was coming. And soon they were near enough, and from their trumpets and banners they showed themselves to be of Cao Cao’s army.

“Now will you try to cajole me further?” cried Zhang Fei in a rage.

He set his serpent halberd and was just coming on when Guan Yu said, “Brother, wait a while. See me slay the leader of these that I may prove myself no traitor.”

“Well, if you are really true, prove it by slaying that leader, whoever he may be, before I have finished three rolls of the drum.”

Zhang Fei’s condition was accepted. Soon the attacking force was near enough to make out the leader to be Cai Yang.

Sword in hand Cai Yang rode at full speed, crying, “So I have found you, slayer of my nephew! I have a command to capture you and will execute it.”

Guan Yu made no reply. Raising his sword ready to strike, he moved out and the drums began to beat. Before a roll could be completed the fight was over, and Cai Yang’s head had rolled on the ground. His force scattered and fled. Guan Yu, however, captured the young ensign bearer and questioned him.

The youth said, “The fact is the Prime Minister had not given an order. Incensed at the loss of his nephew, Cai Yang wished to cross the river to pursue and attack you, General, although the Prime Minister refused permission. To satisfy him, the Prime Minister had sent Cai Yang to attack Runan, and the meeting at this place is entirely an accident.”

Guan Yu bade him repeat this story to his brother. Zhang Fei also questioned him concerning all that had happened in the capital, and the recital of the whole story satisfied Zhang Fei of the fidelity of Guan Yu.

Just then messengers came from the city to Zhang Fei to say: “Some scores of horsemen has arrived at the south gate. They seem in a great hurry but no one know them.”

Zhang Fei, with still a lingering doubt in his mind, went to look at the newcomers and there saw some forty mounted archers with light bows and short arrows. Hastily dismounting to see them better, he found they were Mi Zhu and Mi Fang.

Quickly slipping out of the saddle,
they came up and Mi Zhu said, “After the dispersal at Xuzhou when we lost sight of you, we returned to our village whence we sent all around for news of you. We heard that Guan Yu had surrendered to Cao Cao and our lord was in the North of Yellow River with Yuan Shao. The one of whom we could hear nothing was yourself. But yesterday, while on our way, we fell in with some travelers who told us a certain General Zhang Fei, of such and such an appearance, had suddenly occupied Gucheng, and we felt it must be you. So we came to inquire, and we happily fell in with you here.”

Zhang Fei replied, “Guan Yu and Sun Qian are here, and my two sisters are with them. They had heard where my elder brother was.”

This news added to the joy of the two newcomers who went to see Guan Yu and the women, and then they all entered the city. When the ladies had settled down a little, they related the whole story of the adventures on the road at which Zhang Fei was overcome with remorse and bowed before his brother bitterly weeping. Mi Zhu and Mi Fang were greatly affected. Then Zhang Fei related what had happened to him.

A day was spent in banquets, and next day Zhang Fei wished his newly found brother to go with him to Runan to see their elder brother Liu Bei.

But Guan Yu said, “No; you take care of the ladies here while Sun Qian and I go to get news.”

So Guan Yu and Sun Qian with a small escort set out. When they reached Runan, they were received by Liu Pi.

“Liu Bei is no longer in the city. After waiting some days, he has come to the conclusion that the soldiers are too few, and has gone back to Yuan Shao to consult with him,” said Liu Pi.

Guan Yu was greatly disappointed, and Sun Qian did his best to console him, saying, “Do not be sorrowful. It only means the trouble of another journey into the North of Yellow River to tell Uncle Liu Bei, and then we can all meet at Gucheng.”

So spoke Sun Qian, and Guan Yu accepted it. They took leave of Liu Pi and returned to Gucheng where they related what had happened.

Zhang Fei wanted to go with them into the North of Yellow River, but Guan Yu opposed this, saying, “Seeing you have this city, it makes a rallying point for us and a resting place. We must not abandon it lightly. Sun Qian and I will go; and while sway we look to you to keep the city safe.”

“How can you go after killing the two generals, Yan Liang and Wen Chou?”

“That will not stop me. And after I am there, I can act according to circumstances.”

Then Guan Yu summoned Zhou Cang and asked him, saying, “How many followers are there with Pei Yuanshao at Sleeping Bull Mountain?”

“I should think four or five hundred.”

“Now,” said Guan Yu, “I am going to take the shortest road to find my brother. Can you go to summon your army and lead them along the high road to assist me?”

With instructions to bring up this force, Zhou Cang left, while Guan Yu and Sun Qian and their small escort went off to the north.

When they drew near the boundary, Sun Qian said, “You
must be careful how you go over. You ought to stop here while I go in, see Uncle Liu Bei, and take the necessary steps.”

Seeing the wisdom of this, Guan Yu stopped there and sent his companion in advance. He and his followers going up to a nearby farm as an abiding place.

When they got to the farm, out came a venerable man leaning on a staff. After exchanging salutes, Guan Yu told the old man all about himself.

“My family name is also Guan, my personal name being Ding,” said the old man. “I know your reputation, and I am very happy to meet you.”

Guan Ding sent for his two sons to come and make their bow. He put up Guan Yu in his house and provided for his escort in the farm buildings.

In the meantime Sun Qian had made his way to Jizhou City and told Liu Bei the whole story.

Liu Bei said, “Jian Yong is also here. We will send for him secretly to talk over this matter.”

They did so; and when the usual salutes had been exchanged, they three began to consider the means of getting away.

“My lord,” said Jian Yong, “you see Yuan Shao personally and say you wish to go to Jingzhou to see Liu Biao about a scheme for the destruction of Cao Cao. That will give an excuse.”

“That seems best,” said Liu Bei, “but will you go with me?”

“I have another plan to extricate myself,” said Jian Yong.

Having settled their plans, Liu Bei soon went in to see his protector and suggested, “Liu Biao is strong and well posted. His help should be sought against our enemy.”

“I have sent messengers repeatedly to ask his help,” said Yuan Shao, “but he is unwilling.”

“As he and I are of the same family, he will not refuse me if I go and ask him,” said Liu Bei.

“Certainly he is worth much more than Liu Pi. You shall go.”

“I have just heard,” Yuan Shao continued, “that Guan Yu has left Cao Cao and wants to come here. If he does, I will put him to death out of revenge for my two beloved generals--Yan Liang and Wen Chou.”

“Illustrious Sir, you wished to employ him and so I sent for him. Now you threaten to put him to death. The two men he slew were but deer compared with such a tiger as he is. When you exchange a couple of deer for a tiger, you need not complain of the bargain.”

“Really I like him,” said Yuan Shao. “I was only joking. You can send another messenger for him and tell him to come soon.”

“May I send Sun Qian for him?”

“Certainly.”

After Liu Bei had gone, Jian Yong came in and said to Yuan Shao, “If Liu Bei goes, he will not come back. I had better go to speak to Liu Biao. And I can keep a watch on Liu Bei.”

Yuan Shao agreed and issued orders for both to go.

On the subject of the mission, Guo Tu came in to his chief to dissuade him.

Said Guo Tu, “Liu Bei went to speak to Liu Pi, but he accomplished nothing. Now you are sending Jian Yong with
him, and I am sure neither will ever return."

"Do not be too suspicious," said Yuan Shao. "Jian Yong is clever enough."

That was the end of the interview. Forthwith Liu Bei sent Sun Qian back to Guan Yu and then, with Jian Yong, took leave of Yuan Shao and rode out of the city. As soon as they reached the border line, they met Sun Qian and all three rode off to Guan Ding’s farm to meet Guan Yu. He came out to welcome them, bowed and then seized his brother’s hands while tears streamed down his face.

Presently the two sons of their host came to bow to the visitors. Liu Bei asked their names.

"These are of the same name as myself," said Guan Yu. "The sons are Guan Neng, who is a student, and Guan Ping, who is to be a soldier."

"I have been thinking of sending the younger in your train, General," said old Guan Ding, "Would you take him?"

"What is his age?" said Liu Bei.

"He is eighteen."

Liu Bei said, "Since, O Senior, you are so kind, I venture to suggest that your son should be adopted by my brother, who has no son of his own. What think you of that?"

Guan Ding was perfectly willing, so he called Guan Ping and bade him make a son’s obeisance to Guan Yu and to style Liu Bei "Uncle."

Then it was time to get on their way lest they should be pursued, and with Guan Yu went Guan Ping. Guan Ding and Guan Ning escorted them a long distance and then returned.

The party took the road to Sleeping Bull Mountain. Before they had gone very far, they met Zhou Cang with a small party. He was wounded. He was introduced to Liu Bei who asked him how it was.

He replied, "Before I reached the hill, a certain warrior all alone, had fought with my friend Pei Yuanshao and killed him. Then many of our troops surrendered to him, and he occupied our old camp. When I reached it, I tried to allure the soldiers back to my side but only succeeded with a few. The others were too afraid. I got angry and engaged the interloper, who however worsted me time after time and wounded me thrice."

"Who is the warrior? What does he look like?" asked Liu Bei.

"All I know he is a doughty fighter, I do not know his name."

Thereafter they advanced toward the hill with Guan Yu in front and Liu Bei in rear. When they drew near, Zhou Cang began to abuse his enemy, who soon appeared, mailed and armed, coming down the hill like a tornado.

Suddenly Liu Bei rode out waving his whip and shouting,
“O Zhao Yun, I am here to look for you!”

Indeed the rider was Zhao Yun. He instantly slipped out of the saddle and bowed by the roadside.

Liu Bei dismounted to talk with him and ask how he came to be there.

“When I left you, I had no idea that Gongsun Zan was a man who would listen to no reason. The result was disaster, and he perished in the flames. Yuan Shao invited me to him several times, but I thought too little of him to go. Then I wanted to go to Xu to you, but you had lost that place, and Guan Yu had gone over to Cao Cao, and you had joined Yuan Shao. Several times I thought of coming to you, but I feared Yuan Shao. So I drifted from one place to another with nowhere to rest till I happened to come this way, and Pei Yuanshao tried to steal my horse. So I slew him and took possession of his camp. I heard Zhang Fei was in Gucheng but thought it might be only a rumor. And so the days have passed till this happy meeting.”

Liu Bei told Zhao Yun all that had happened to him since they parted, and so did Guan Yu.

Said Liu Bei, “The first time I saw you, I felt drawn to you and did not want to part from you. I am very happy to meet you again.”

“In all my wanderings, trying to find a lord worth serving, I have seen no one like you. Now I have reached your side, that is enough for all my life. I care not what may happen to me.”

Next they burned the camp on Sleeping Bull Mountain, after which they all took the road back to Gucheng where they were welcomed. They exchanged the stories of their several adventures, and the two ladies related the valiant deeds of Guan Yu whereat Liu Bei was too affected to speak.

Then they performed a great sacrifice to Heaven and Earth with the slaughter of a bull and a horse.

The soldiers also were recompensed for their toils. Liu Bei surveyed the conditions around him and found therein much to rejoice at. His two brothers were restored to his side and none of his helpers were missing. Moreover he had gained Zhao Yun, and Guan Yu had acquired an adopted son Guan Ping. Another commander had joined his ranks in the person of Zhou Cang. There was every occasion for feasting and gratification.

Scattered wide were the brothers, none knew another’s retreat,

Joyfully now they foregather, dragon and tigers meet.

At this time the forces under the command of Liu Bei, Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhao Yun, Sun Qian, Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, Guan Ping, and Zhou Cang numbered four or five thousand soldiers. Liu Bei was in favor of leaving Gucheng and occupying Runan, and just then
Chapter 28

Liu Pi and Gong Du, the commanders of that city, sent to invite him to go there. So they went. There they devoted all their efforts to strengthen their army, both horse and foot.

Yuan Shao was much annoyed when Liu Bei did not return and at first was for sending a force after him. However Guo Tu dissuaded him.

“Liu Bei needs cause you no anxiety. Cao Cao is your one enemy and must be destroyed. Even Liu Biao, though strongly posted on River Han, is none too terrible. There is Sun Ce on the southeast of the Great River, strong, feared, with wide domain of six territories, a large army, and able counselors and leaders; you should make an alliance there against Cao Cao.”

Guo Tu won his chief to his view and wrote to Sun Ce, sending the letter by Chen Zhen.

Just as one warrior leaves the north, Another from the east comes forth.

Future chapters will reveal the outcome of these dispositions.

Chapter 29
The Little Chief Of The South Slays Yu Ji; The Green Eyed Boy Lays Hold On The South Land.

Sun Ce gradually became supreme on the southeast of the Great River. In the fourth year of Rebuilt Tranquillity (AD 199), he took Lujiang by the defeat of the Governor Liu Xu. He dispatched Yu Fan with a dispatch to Governor Hua Xin of Yuzhang, and Hua Xin surrendered. Thence Sun Ce’s renown increased, and he boldly sent a memorial on his military successes to the Emperor by the hand of Zhang Hong.

Cao Cao saw in Sun Ce a powerful rival and said, “He is a lion difficult to contend with.”

So Cao Cao betrothed his niece, daughter of Cao Ren, to Sun Kuang, the youngest brother of Sun Ce, thus connecting the two families by marriage. Cao Cao also retained Zhang Hong near him in the capital.

Then Sun Ce sought the title of Grand Commander, one of the highest offices of state, but Cao Cao prevented the attainment of this ambition, and Sun Ce keenly resented it. Henceforward his thoughts turned toward an attack on Cao Cao.

About this time the Governor of Wujun, Xu Gong, sent a secret letter to the capital to Cao Cao, saying:

¹The Yangtze or Yangzi river, which flows from west to east to the Pacific at Shanghai.
“Sun Ce is a turbulent fellow of the Xiang Yu type; and the government ought, under the appearance of showing favor to him, to recall him to the capital, for he is a danger in the southern regions.”

But the bearer of this letter was captured on the Great River and sent to Sun Ce, who immediately put him to death. Then Sun Ce treacherously sent to ask the author of the letter to come and consult over some affair. The unsuspecting Xu Gong came.

Sun Ce produced the letter, saying, “So you wish to send me to the land of the dead, eh?”

And thereupon the executioners came in and strangled Xu Gong. The family of the victim scattered, but three of his clients determined to avenge him if only they could find some means of attacking Sun Ce.

One day Sun Ce went hunting in the hills to the west of Dantu. A stag was started, and Sun Ce pressed after it at topmost speed and followed it deep into the forest. Presently he came upon three armed men standing among the trees. Rather surprised to see them there, he reined in and asked who they were.

“We belong to Han Dang’s army and are shooting deer,” was the reply.

So Sun Ce shook his bridle to proceed. But just as he did so, one of the men thrust at him with a spear and wounded his thigh. Sun Ce drew the sword at his side, dashed forward, and tried to cut down the aggressor. The blade of his sword suddenly fell to the ground, only the hilt remaining in his hand. Then one of the assassins drew his bow, and an arrow wounded Sun Ce in the cheek. Sun Ce plucked out the arrow and shot at the offender, who fell, but the other two attacked him furiously with their spears, shouting, “We are Xu Gong’s men and his avengers!”

Sun Ce then understood. But he had no weapons save his bow against them. He tried to draw off, keeping them at bay striking with his bow. But the fight was getting too much for him, and both he and his steed were wounded in several places. However, just at the critical moment, Cheng Pu and some of his own officers came up, and they minced the assassins into pieces.

2Xiang Yu (BC 232-202) was the leader of Chu and a rival of Liu Bang in contending the empire after the fall of Qin.
But their lord was in a sorry plight. His face was streaming with blood, and some of the wounds were very severe. They tore up his robe and therewith bound up his wounds, and they carried him home.

A poem in praise of the three avengers says:

_O Sun Ce was a warrior and a stranger he to fear._
_But he was basely murdered while hunting of the deer._
_Yet were they leal who slew him, to avenge a murdered lord._

_Self immolated like Yu Rang, they dreaded not the sword._

Badly wounded, Sun Ce was borne to his home. They sent to call the famous physician Hua Tuo, but he was far away and could not be found. However, a disciple of his came, and the wounded man was committed to his care.

“The arrowheads were poisoned,” said the physician, “and the poison has penetrated deep. It will take a hundred days of perfect repose before danger will be past. But if you give way to passion or anger, the wounds will not heal.”

Sun Ce’s temperament was hasty and impatient, and the prospect of such a slow recovery was very distasteful. However, he remained quiet for some twenty of the hundred days. Then came Zhang Hong from the capital, and Sun Ce insisted on seeing and questioning him.

“Cao Cao fears you, my lord, very greatly,” said Zhang Hong, “and his advisers have exceeding respect for you—

all except Guo Jia.”

“What did Guo Jia say?” asked the sick chieftain.

Zhang Hong remained silent, which only irritated his master and caused him to demand to be told. So Zhang Hong had to speak the truth.

He said, “The fact is Guo Jia told Cao Cao that he needed not fear you, that you were frivolous and unready, impulsive and shallow, just a stupid swaggerer who would one day come to his death at the hands of some mean person.”

This provoked the sick man beyond endurance.

“The fool, how dare he say this of me?” cried Sun Ce. “I will take Xuchang from Cao Cao, I swear.”

It was no more a question of repose. Ill as he was, he wanted to begin preparations for an expedition at once. They remonstrated with him, reminded him of the physician’s orders and urged him to rest.

“You are risking your priceless self in a moment’s anger,” said Zhang Zhao.

Then arrived Chen Zhen, the messenger from Yuan Shao, and Sun Ce would have him brought in.

He said, “My master wishes to ally himself with the South Land in an attack on Cao Cao.”

Such a proposal was just after Sun Ce’s heart. At once he called a great meeting of his officers in the wall tower and prepared a banquet in honor of the messenger. While this was in progress, Sun Ce noticed many of his officers whispering to each other and they all began to go down from the banquet chamber. He could not understand this and inquired of the attendants near him what it meant.

They told him, “Saint Yu Ji has just gone by, and the officers have gone down to pay their respects to him.”

Sun Ce rose from his place and went and leaned over the railing to look at the man. He saw a Taoist priest in snowy garb leaning on his staff in the middle of the road, while the
crowd about him burnt incense and made obeisance.

“What wizard fellow is this? Bring him here!” said Sun Ce.

“This is Yu Ji,” said the attendants. “He lives in the east and goes to and fro distributing charms and draughts. He has cured many people as everybody will tell you, and they say he is a saint. He must not be profaned.”

This only angered Sun Ce the more, and he told them to arrest the man at once or disobey at their peril. So there being no help for it, they went down into the road and hustled the saint up the steps.

“You madman! How dare you incite people to evil?” said Sun Ce.

“I am but a poor priest of the Langye Mountains. More than half a century ago, when gathering simples in the woods, I found near the Yangqu Spring a book called ‘The Way of Peace.’ It contains a hundred and more chapters and taught me how to cure the diseases of humans. With this in my possession I had only one thing to do: To devote myself to spreading its teachings and saving humankind. I have never taken any thing from the people. Can you say I incite people to evil deeds?”

“You say you take nothing: Whence came your clothes and your food? The fact is you are one of the Yellow Scarves, and you will work mischief if you are left alive.”

Then turning to his attendants, Sun Ce ordered, “Take him away and put him to death.”

Zhang Zhao interceded, “The Taoist Saint has been here in the east these many years. He has never done any harm and does not deserve death or punishment.”

“I tell you I will kill these wizard fellows just as I would cattle.”

The officials in a body interceded, even the guest of honor, Chen Zhen, but in vain. Sun Ce refused to be placated. He ordered Yu Ji to be imprisoned.

The banquet came to an end, and Chen Zhen retired to his lodging. Sun Ce also returned to his palace.

His treatment of the Taoist Holy Man was theme of general conversation and soon reached the ears of his mother.

Lady Wu sent for her son to the ladies’ apartments and said to him, “They tell me you have put Saint Yu Ji in bonds. He has cured many sick people, and the common folk hold him in great reverence. Do not harm him!”

“He is simply a wizard who upsets the multitude with his spells and craft. He must be put to death,” replied Sun Ce. Lady Wu entreated him to stay his hand, but he was obstinate.

“Do not heed the gossip of the streets, Mother,” said he. “I must be judge of these matters.”

However, Sun Ce sent to the prison for Yu Ji in order to interrogate him. Now the gaolers, having a great respect for Yu Ji and faith in his powers, were very indulgent to him and did not keep him in the collar. However when Sun Ce sent for him, they put on him with collar and fetters all complete.

Sun Ce had heard of their indulgence and punished the gaolers, and ordered the prisoner thereafter to be put in constant torture. Zhang Zhao and many others, moved by pity, made a petition which they humbly presented, and they offered to become surety for him.
Sun Ce said to them, “Gentlemen, you are all great scholars, but why do you not understand reason? Formerly in Jiaozhou was Imperial Protector Zhang Jing, who was deluded by these vicious doctrines into beating drums, twanging lyres, burning incense, and such things. He wore a red turban and represented himself as able to ensure victory to an army. But he was slain by the enemy. There is nothing in all this, only none of you will see it. I am going to put this fellow to death in order to stop the spread of this pernicious doctrine.”

Lu Fan interposed, saying, “I know very well this Yu Ji can control the weather. It is very dry just now, why not make him pray for rain as an amercement?”

“We will see what sort of witchcraft he is equal to,” said Sun Ce.

Thereupon he had the prisoner brought in, loosed his fetters, and sent him up to an altar to intercede for rain.

The docile Taoist Yu Ji prepared to do as he was bidden. He first bathed himself, then dressed himself in clean garments. After that he bound his limbs with a cord and lay down in the fierce heat of the sun. The people came in crowds to look on.

Said Yu Ji, “I will pray for three spans high of refreshing rain for the benefit of the people, nevertheless I shall not escape death thereby.”

The people said, “But if your prayer be efficacious, our lord must believe in your powers.”

“The day of fate has come for me, and there is no escape.”

Presently Sun Ce came near the altar and announced that if rain had not fallen by noon, he would burn the priest. And to confirm this he bade them prepare the pyre.

As it neared noon a strong wind sprang up, and the clouds gathered from all quarters. But there was no rain.
a wreath of black vapor, followed by roaring thunder and vivid lightning, peal on peal and flash on flash. And the rain fell in a perfect deluge. In a short time the streets became rivers and torrents. It was indeed a three-span fall.

Yu Ji, who was still lying upon the pile of firewood, cried in a loud voice, “O Clouds, cease thy rain, and let the glorious sun appear!”

Thereupon officials and people helped the priest down, loosened the cord that bound him, and bowed before him in gratitude for the rain.

But Sun Ce boiled with rage at seeing his officers and the people gathered in groups and kneeling in the water regardless of the damage to their clothing.

“Rain or shine are as nature appoints them, and the wizard has happened to hit upon a moment of change. What are you making all this fuss about?” cried he.

Then he drew his sword and told the attendants to smite the Taoist Saint therewith. They all besought him to hold his hand.

“You want to follow Yu Ji in rebellion, I suppose,” cried Sun Ce.

The officers, now thoroughly cowed by the rage of their lord, were silent and showed no opposition when the executioners seized the Taoist Saint and beheaded him.

As the head fell, they saw just a wreath of black smoke drift away to the northeast where lay the Langye Mountains.

The corpse was exposed in the market place as a warning to enchanter and wizards and such people. That night there came a very violent storm, and when it calmed down at daylight, there was no trace of the body of Yu Ji. The guards reported this, and Sun Ce in his wrath sentenced them to death. But as he did so, he saw Yu Ji calmly walking toward him as if the Taoist Saint were still alive. Sun Ce drew his sword and darted forward to strike at the wraith, but he fainted and fell to the ground.

They carried him to his chamber, and in a short time he recovered consciousness.

His mother, Lady Wu, came to visit him and said, “My son, you have done wrong to slay the holy one, and this is your retribution.”

“Mother, when I was a boy, I went with Father to wars, where people are cut down as one cuts reed stalks. There is not much retribution about such doings. I have put this fellow to death and so checked a great evil. Where does retribution come in?”

“This comes of want of faith,” she replied. “Now you must avert the evil by meritorious deeds.”

“My fate depends on Heaven. Wizards can do me no harm, so why avert anything?”

His mother saw that it was useless to try persuasion, but she told his attendants to do some good deeds secretly whereby the evil should be turned aside.

That night about the third watch, as Sun Ce lay in his chamber, he suddenly felt a chill breeze, which seemed to extinguish the lamps for a moment, although they soon brightened again; and he saw in the lamp light the form of Yu Ji standing near his bed.

Sun Ce said, “I am the sworn foe of witchcraft, and I will purge the world of all such as deal in magic. You are a spirit, and how dare you approach me?”

Reaching down a sword that hung at the head of his bed, he hurled it at the phantom, which then disappeared. When his mother heard this story, her grief redoubled. Sun Ce, ill as he was, went to see his mother and did his utmost to reassure her.

She said, “Confucius the Teacher says: ‘How abundantly do spiritual beings display the powers that belong to them!’”
and ‘Prayer has been made to the spirits of the upper and lower worlds.’ You must have faith. You sinned in putting Saint Yu Ji to death, and retribution is sure. I have already sent to have sacrifices performed at the Jade Pure Monastery, and you should go in person to pray. May all come right!”

Sun Ce could not withstand such a mandate from his mother so, mustering all his strength, he managed to get into a sedan chair and went to the monastery, where the Taoists received him respectfully and begged him to light the incense. He did so, but he returned no thanks. To the surprise of all, the smoke from the brazier, instead of floating upwards and dissipating, collected in a mass that gradually shaped itself into an umbrella, and there on the top sat Yu Ji.

Sun Ce simply spat abuse and went out of the temple. As he passed the gates, lo! Yu Ji stood there gazing at him with angry eyes.

“What do you see that wizard fellow?” said he to those about him.

They said they saw nothing. More angry than ever, he flung his sword at the figure by the gate. The sword struck one of his escorts who fell. Sun Ce told them to bury the man. But as he went out of the courtyard, he saw Yu Ji walking in.

“This temple is nothing more than a lurking place for sorcerers and wizards and such people,” said Sun Ce.

Whereupon he took a seat in front of the building and sent for five hundred soldiers to pull the place down. When they went up on the roof to strip off the tiles, Sun Ce saw Yu Ji standing on the main beam flicking tiles to the ground. More angry than ever, Sun Ce told them to drive out the priests belonging to the place and burn it. They did so, and when the flames rose their highest, Sun Ce saw the dead Taoist Yu Ji standing in the midst of the fire.
Sun Ce returned home still in a bad humor, which increased when he saw the form of Yu Ji standing at his gate. He would not enter but mustered his army and went into camp outside the city walls. And there he summoned his officers to meet him and talk over joining Yuan Shao in an attack on Cao Cao.

They assembled, but they remonstrated with him and begged him to consider his precious health. That night he slept in the camp and again saw Yu Ji, this time with his hair hanging loose. Sun Ce raged at the vision without cessation.

Next day his mother called him into the city and he went. She was shocked at the change in his appearance: He looked so utterly miserable. Her tears fell.

“My son,” said Lady Wu, “How wasted you are!”

He had a mirror brought and looked at himself. He was indeed so gaunt and thin that he was almost frightened and exclaimed, “How do I come to look so haggard?”

While he spoke, Yu Ji appeared in the mirror. He struck it and shrieked. Then the half healed wounds reopened and he fainted.

He was raised and borne within. When he recovered consciousness, he said, “This is the end. I shall die.”

He sent for Zhang Zhao and his other chief officers and his brother, Sun Quan, and they gathered in his chamber.

He gave them his dying charge, saying, “In the disordered state of the empire, the domains of Wu and Yue\(^3\), with its strong defense of the three rivers and resourceful lands, has a brilliant future. You, Zhang Zhao, must assist my brother.”

So saying Sun Ce handed his seal to Sun Quan, saying, “For manipulating the might of Wu so as to make it the deciding force among the factions and then obtaining the whole empire, you are not so suited as I. But in encouraging the wise and confiding in the able and getting the best out of everyone for the preservation of this land, I should not succeed as you will. Remember with what toil and labor your father and I have won what we possess, and take good care thereof.”

Sun Quan wept as he knelt to receive the seal, and the dying Sun Ce turned to his mother, saying, “Mother, the days allotted of Heaven have run out, and I can no longer serve my tender mother. I have given over the seal to my brother and trust that you will advise him early and late, and see that he lives worthy of his predecessors.”

“Allas! Your brother is full young for such a task,” said his mother, weeping. “I know not what may happen.”

“He is far abler than I and fully equal to the task of ruling. Should he have doubts upon internal affairs, he must turn to Zhang Zhao; for outer matters he must consult Zhou Yu. It is a pity Zhou Yu is absent so that I cannot give him my charge face to face.”

To his brothers Sun Ce said, “When I am gone, you must help your brother. Should any discord arise in the family, let the others punish the wrongdoer and let not his ashes mingle with those of his ancestors in the family vaults.”

The young men wept at these words.

Then he called for his wife, Lady Qiao, and said, “Unhappily we have to part while still in the full vigor of

\(^3\)Wu and Yue were two powerful states in the south during the Spring and Autumn period. The South Land was frequently called Wu or East Wu, which implied to include the territories of Yue.
life. You must care for my mother. Your sister will come to see you presently, and you can ask her to tell her husband, Zhou Yu⁴, to help my brother in all things and make my brother keep to the way I have taught him to walk in.”

Then Sun Ce closed his eyes and soon after passed away. He was only twenty-six.

People called him first of the chieftains,
The east had felt his might,
He watched like a tiger crouching.
Struck as a hawk in flight.
There was peace in the lands he ruled.
His fame ran with the wind.
But he died and left to another.
The great scheme in his mind.

As his brother breathed his last, Sun Quan sank by the bed and wept.

“This is not the time to mourn,” said Zhang Zhao. “First see to the funeral ceremonies and that the government is safe.”

So the new ruler dried his tears. The superintendence of the funeral was confided to Sun Jing, and then Zhang Zhao led his young master to the hall to receive the felicitations of his officers.

Sun Quan was endowed with a square jaw and a large mouth; he had green eyes and a purple beard.

Formerly, when Minister Liu Wan had gone to Wu to visit the Sun family, he said of the family of brothers, “I have looked well at them all, and they are all clever and perspicacious, but none of them have the very ultimate degree of good fortune. Only the second, Sun Quan, has the look of a deep thinker. His face is remarkable, and his build unusual, and he has the look of one who will come to great honor.”

When Sun Quan succeeded to his brother and his brother’s might, there was still some reorganization to be done. Soon Zhou Yu had arrived at Wujun.

The young ruler received him very graciously and said, “I need have no anxiety now that you have come.” Zhou Yu had been sent to hold Baqiu. When he heard that his chief had been wounded, he thought it well to return to see how he was. But Sun Ce had died before Zhou Yu could arrive. He hurried to be present at the funeral.

When Zhou Yu went to wail at the coffin of his late chief, Lady Wu, the dead man’s mother, came out to deliver her son’s last injunctions.

When she had told him the last charge, Zhou Yu bowed to the earth, saying, “I shall exert the puny powers I have in

⁴Sun Ce and Zhou Yu wedded two sisters, who were daughters of Duke Qiao in the South Land.
your service as long as I live.”

Shortly after Sun Quan came in, and, after receiving Zhou Yu’s obeisance, said, “I trust you will not forget my brother’s charge to you.”

Zhou Yu bowed, saying, “I would willingly suffer any form of death for you.”

“How best can I maintain this great charge which I have inherited from my father and brother?”

“He who wins people, prospers; he who loses them, fails. Your present plan should be to seek people of high aims and farseeing views, and you can establish yourself firmly.”

“My brother bade me consult Zhang Zhao for internal administration, and yourself on external matters,” said Sun Quan.

“Zhang Zhao is wise and understanding and equal to such a task. I am devoid of talent and fear to take such responsibility, but I venture to recommend to you as a helper one Lu Su, a man of Linhuai. This man’s bosom hides strategy, and his breast conceals tactics. He lost his father in early life and has been a perfectly filial son to his mother. His family is rich and renowned for charity to the needy. When I was stationed at Juchao, I led some hundreds of soldiers across Linhuai. We were short of grain. Hearing that the Lu family had two granaries there, each holding three thousand carts, I went to ask for help. Lu Su pointed to one granary and said, ‘Take that as a gift.’ Such was his generosity!

“He has always been fond of fencing and horse archery. He was living in Que. His grandmother died while he was there, and he went to bury her in Dongcheng, and then his friend, Liu Ziyang, wished to engage him to go to Chaohu and join Zheng Bao. However, he hesitated about that and has not gone yet. You should invite him without loss of time.”

Sun Quan at once sent Zhou Yu to engage the services of this man, and Zhou Yu set out. When the obeisance was over, Zhou Yu laid before Lu Su the inducements that his own master held out.

Lu Su replied, “I have been engaged by Liu Ziyang to go to Chaohu, and I am just starting thither.”

Said Zhou Yu, “Of old Ma Yuan said to Liu Xiu, ‘This is an age when not only do princes select their ministers, but Ma Yuan (BC 14-AD 49) a general who first served Wang Mang, then join Liu Xiu in restoring Han Dynasty. In his life of career, Ma Yuan contributed much to Liu Xiu’s success by putting down rebellions throughout the empire and abroad.

Liu Xiu (or Guang Wu) (BC 5-AD 57) (reigned AD 25-57) restored Han after Wang Mang’s usurpation. The dynasty Liu Xiu restored is also known as Eastern Han (capital in Luoyang) or Latter Han.
ministers must also choose their princes.’ Now our General Sun Quan calls to him the wise and treats his officers well. Thus he engages the help of the wonderful and gets the services of the extraordinary in a way that few others do. But if you are not engaged elsewhere, come with me to the South Land as the best thing to do.”

Lu Su returned with Zhou Yu and saw Sun Quan, who treated him with the greatest deference and with him discussed affairs very fully. The conference proved so interesting that it went on all day and neither felt fatigue.

One day at the close of the usual reception, Sun Quan kept Lu Su to dine with him. They sat up late and by and by slept on the same couch as would the closest of friends.

In the dead of night Sun Quan said to his bedfellow, “The dynasty is failing, and everything is at sixes and sevens. I have received a great charge from my father and brother, and I am thinking of imitating the actions of the celebrated Protectors of Reign, Wen7 and Huan8, and becoming the leader of the feudal lords, and I pray you instruct me.”

Lu Su replied, “Of old the Founder of Han, the Supreme Ancestor, wished to honor and serve Emperor Yi of Qin, but could not on account of Xiang Yu’s evildoings. Now Cao Cao can be compared with Xiang Yu: How can you be the protector of the Emperor? My humble opinion is that the Hans have fallen beyond hope of recovery and Cao Cao cannot be destroyed, and that the only key to your big schemes is to secure your present position in order to keep

7Duke Wen of Jin, (reigned 636-628 BC) ruler of the western state of Jin during the Spring and Autumn period. By serving the Zhou Dynasty, he and his successors made Jin a dominant state for nearly 200 years.

8Duke Huan of Qi (reigned BC 685-643), in the name of serving the Zhou emperor, became the leader of a league of small states in northeast China during the Spring and Autumn period. His prime minister was the famed Guan Zhong.

the master hand and control the combinations among the others. Now take advantage of the turmoil in the north to smite Huang Zu and attack Liu Biao in Jingzhou. Thereby you will command the whole length of the Great River. Then you may consolidate the empire and become the Son of Heaven. This was how the Supreme Ancestor acted.”

Hearing this Sun Quan was very greatly pleased. He threw on some clothing, got up, and thanked his newly-found adviser. Next day Sun Quan gave Lu Su costly gifts and sent robes and silks to his mother.

Lu Su then recommended a friend of his to Sun Quan’s notice, a man of wide reading and great ability. He was also a filial son. His name was Zhuge Jin, and he came from Nanyang. Sun Quan treated Zhuge Jin as a superior guest. This man dissuaded Sun Quan from making common cause with Yuan Shao, but advised him rather to favor Cao Cao, against whom he could plan when occasion served. Sun Quan therefore sent back the messenger Chen Zhen with dispatches that broke off all negotiations.

Hearing of Sun Ce’s death, Cao Cao was for sending an expedition against the south. But Zhang Hong dissuaded him, saying, “It would be mean to take advantage of the period of mourning. And if you should not overcome him, you will make him an enemy
instead of being a friend. It would be preferable to treat him generously.”

So Cao Cao memorialized the Throne and obtained for Sun Quan the title of General and Governor of Kuaiji, while Zhang Hong was appointed Commander under Sun Quan.

And a seal of office was sent to Sun Quan by Zhang Hong. The new appointment pleased Sun Quan, and he was greatly glad to get Zhang Hong back again. Then Zhang Hong was sent to act jointly with Zhang Zhao in the administration.

Zhang Hong was the means of getting another into Sun Quan’s service. His friend was Gu Yong, a disciple of the Historian Cai Yong. Gu Yong was a man of few words and an abstainer from wine. He was very correct in all things. Sun Quan appointed Gu Yong Deputy Governor.

Henceforward Sun Quan’s rule was very prosperous, and he waxed mightily in influence and won the love of all the people.

When Chen Zhen had returned and related the events in the South Land and told of the honors that Cao Cao had obtained for Sun Quan in return for his support, Yuan Shao was very wroth, and he set about preparing for an attack on Xuchang with a force of seven hundred thousand northern soldiers.

Although in the south they rest from war,
They rattle the spears beneath the northern star.

Later it will be seen which side conquered.
Chapter 30
Shunning Advice, Yuan Shao Loses Leaders and Granaries;
Using Strategy, Cao Cao Scores Victory At Guandu.

Hearing that Yuan Shao was hastening to attack at Guandu, Xiahou Dun wrote to the capital urgently asking for reinforcements, and Cao Cao told off seventy thousand troops with which he marched. Xun Yu was left to guard the capital.

Just as Yuan Shao’s army was starting, Tian Feng sent out a remonstrance from his prison cell, saying, “My lord, a hasty attack in full scale will bring disaster to our army. It is best now to wait upon such times as Heaven should appoint.”

Peng Ji said to Yuan Shao, “Why does this Tian Feng utter ill-omened words? My lord is sending forth an army in the cause of humanity and justice.”

Easily moved to anger, Yuan Shao was going to execute Tian Feng, but this time he forbore at the entreaties of many of his officers.

However, he was not appeased, for he said, “I will punish Tian Feng when I return from conquering Cao Cao.”

Meanwhile Yuan Shao hastened to start. The banners of his host filled the horizon, their swords were as trees in the forest. They marched to Yangwu and there made a strong camp.

Then Ju Shou once more opposed any hasty movement, saying, “Though our soldiers are many, they are not so bold as the enemy. However, veterans as are the enemy, they have not ample supplies. Therefore they will wish to force on a speedy battle, while our policy is to hold them off and delay. If we can keep from a decisive battle long enough, the victory will be ours without fighting.”

This advice did not appeal to Yuan Shao.

Said he, threateningly, “Tian Feng spoke discouraging words to my armies, and I will assuredly put him to death on my return. How dare you follow in the same way?”

Yuan Shao summoned the lictors and sent away the adviser in chains, saying, “When I have overcome Cao Cao, then will I deal with you and Tian Feng together.”

The huge army was camped in four divisions, one
toward each point of the compass. The camps were thirty miles in circuit. Scouts and spies were sent out to discover the strong and the weak points of the enemy.

Cao Cao’s army arrived and were smitten with fear when they heard of the strength of their enemy. The leader called together his council.

Then said Adviser Xun You, “The enemy are many but not terrible. Ours is an army of veterans, every soldier of ours worth ten of theirs. But our advantage lies in a speedy battle, for unhappily our stores are insufficient for a long campaign.”

“You speak to the point,” said Cao Cao. “I think the same.”

Therefore Cao Cao issued orders to press noisily forward and force on a battle. Yuan Shao’s soldiers took up the challenge, and the two sides were arrayed. On Yuan Shao’s side, Shen Pei placed ten thousand of crossbowmen in ambush on the two wings, while five thousand of archers held the center. The signal for general attack was a bomb, and the onset was to continue through three rolls of the drum.

Yuan Shao wore a silver helmet and breastplate and an embroidered robe held in by a jeweled belt. He took up his post in the center with his commanders---Gao Lan, Zhang He, Han Meng, Chunyu Qiong, and others---ranged right and left. His banners and ensigns made a brave show.

When Cao Cao’s army’s center opened and the banners moved aside, the chieftain appeared on horseback with his staff of doughty leaders all fully armed---Xu Chu, Zhang Liao, Xu Huang, Li Dian, and others.

Pointing with his whip at Yuan Shao, Cao Cao cried, “In the presence of the Emperor, I pressed your claims to consideration and obtained for you the title of Regent Marshal. Why do you now plan rebellion?”

Yuan Shao replied, “You take the title of a minister of Han, but you are really a rebel against the House. Your crimes and evil deeds reach to the heavens, and you are worse than the usurper Wang Mang and the rebel Dong Zhuo. What are these slanderous words about rebellion that dare you address to me?”

“I have a command to make you prisoner!”

“I have the Girdle Decree to arrest rebels!” replied Yuan Shao.

Then Cao Cao became wrathful and bade Zhang Liao ride forth as his champion.

From the other side rode Zhang He on a curvetting steed. The two champions fought forty or fifty bouts with no advantage to either. In his heart Cao Cao thought the contest
amazing. Then Xu Chu whirled up his sword and went to help. From the other side, to match him rode out Gao Lan with his spear set, and the contestants were now four, battling two and two. Then Cao Cao ordered three thousand troops under Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong to attack the opponents’ array. Thereupon on Yuan Shao’s side, Shen Pei gave the signal for attack, and the legion of crossbowmen on the wings shot and the center archers let fly all together. The arrows flew all over the field in front, and Cao Cao’s troops could not advance. They hastened away toward the south. Yuan Shao threw his soldiers on their rear, and they were broken. They fled away toward Guandu, and Yuan Shao advanced another stage. He camped near them.

Then Shen Pei said, “Now send one hundred thousand soldiers to guard Guandu, and get near Cao Cao’s camp. Then build up observation mounds to get a clear view of the enemy, and choose vantage points whence to shoot arrows into the midst of their host. If we can force him to evacuate this place, we shall have gained a strategic point whence Capital Xuchang can be attacked.”

Yuan Shao adopted this suggestion. From each of the camps, they sought out the strongest veterans who dug with iron spades and carried earth to raise mounds near Cao Cao’s camp.

Cao Cao’s soldiers saw what their enemies were doing and were anxious to make a sortie and drive them off. But the archers and crossbowmen came out commanding the narrow throat through which it was necessary to attack and stayed them. At the end of ten days, they had build up more than half a hundred mounds, and on the summit of each was a lofty tower, whence the archers could command their opponents’ camp. Cao Cao’s soldiers were greatly frightened and held up their bucklers to keep off the various missiles. From the mounds the arrows flew down like a fierce rain after each roll of drums. The soldiers of Yuan Shao’s army laughed and jeered when they saw their enemies crouching under their shields and crawling on the ground to avoid their missiles.

Cao Cao saw that his troops were getting out of hand under this attack, so he called a council.

Liu Ye spoke up, saying, “Let us make catapults and so
destroy them.”

Cao Cao at once had models brought and set cunning workers to make these stone-throwing machines. They soon constructed some hundreds and placed them along the walls of the camp inside, just opposite the high ladders on the enemy’s mounds.

Then Cao Cao’s troops watched for Yuan Shao’s archers to ascend the towers. As soon as the archers began to shoot, all the catapults began to heave stone balls into the skies and they wrought great havoc. There was no shelter from the falling stones, and enormous numbers of the archers were killed. Yuan Shao’s troops called these machines “Rumblers,” and after their appearance the archers dared not ascend the mounds to shoot.

Then Shen Pei, the strategist, thought out another plan. He set troops to tunnel under the walls into the midst of Cao Cao’s camp and called this corps “The Sappers”. Cao Cao’s soldiers saw the enemy digging out pits behind the mounds and told the chief, who at once sought a counter plan from Liu Ye.

“As Yuan Shao can no longer attack openly, he is attacking secretly and is tunneling a road under ground into the midst of our camp,” said Liu Ye.

“But how to meet it?”

“We can surround the camp with a deep moat which renders their tunnel useless.”

So a deep moat was dug as quickly as possible, and when the enemy sappers arrived thereat, lo! their labor had been in vain and the sap was useless.

Cao Cao held Guandu throughout the eighth and ninth months when, his army being worn out and provisions failing, he began to think of giving up and returning to the capital. As he could not make up his mind, he referred his difficulties by letter to Xun Yu, whom he had left to guard Xuchang. The reply he got was to this effect:

“I have received your command to decide whether to continue the campaign or retire. It appears to me that
Yuan Shao assembled such large forces at Guandu with the expectation of winning a decision. You, Sir, are very weak while he is very strong. If you cannot get the better of him, he will be able to work his will on you, and this will be a crisis of the empire. Your opponents are indeed numerous, but their leader knows not how to use them. With your military genius and discernment, where are you not sure to succeed? Now though your numbers are small, your situation is still brighter than Liu Bang’s when he faced against Xiang Yu in Jungyang and Chenggao. You are securely entrenched with your hands on Yuan Shao’s throat; and even if you cannot advance, that state of things cannot endure forever but must change. This is the time to play some unexpected move, and you must not miss it. The device I leave to your illustrious ingenuity.”

This letter greatly pleased Cao Cao, and he urged upon his troops to use every effort to maintain the position.

Yuan Shao then retired some ten miles, and Cao Cao sent out scouts to ascertain his new dispositions. One of Xu Huang’s officers, Shi Huan, captured an enemy spy and sent him to his chief. Xu Huang interrogated him and found out that a convoy of supplies was expected and that this spy and others had been sent to find out what the risks of the route were. Xu Huang went at once to tell Cao Cao.

When Xun You heard that the commander of the convoy was Han Meng, he said, “That fellow is a valiant fool. A few thousand light horse sent to intercept him can capture the whole train and cause much trouble in the enemy’s camp.”

“Whom should I send?” asked Cao Cao.

“You might send Xu Huang. He is capable of such a task.”

So Xu Huang was deputed, and he took with him Shi Huan, who had captured the spy, and his company. And this party was supported by Zhang Liao and Xu Chu.

It was night when the commissariat train of many thousands of wagons drew near Yuan Shao’s camp. As they passed through a defile, Xu Huang and Shi Huan came out and stopped the train. Han Meng galloped up to give battle but was soon overcome. The guard was scattered, and soon the whole train was in flames. The escort and their leader fled away.

Xu Huang
The glow of the flames seen from Yuan Shao’s camp caused great consternation, which became fear when the escaped soldiers rode in and told their tale.

Yuan Shao sent out Zhang He and Gao Lan to try to intercept the raiders, and they came upon Xu Huang and his company. Just as Zhang He and Gao Lan were attacking, reinforcements from Zhang Liao and Xu Chu came up, and the Yuan Shao’s troops were between two fires. They were cut to pieces and the successful generals of Cao Cao rode back to Guandu, where they were richly rewarded.

As an additional safeguard, Cao Cao made a supporting outpost in front of the main camp to be the apex of a triangle of defense.

When Han Meng returned with his woeful tidings, Yuan Shao was angry and threatened to put him to death. His colleagues begged him off.

Then said Shen Pei, “Food is very important for an army in the field and must be defended with the greatest diligence. Wuchao is our main depot and must be carefully guarded.”

“My plans being complete,” said Yuan Shao, “You may as well return to Capital Yejun of Jizhou and undertake the control of the supplies. Let there be no shortage.”

So Shen Pei left the army. Then a force of twenty thousand troops was told off to defend the depot in Wuchao. The leaders of this body were Chunyu Qiong, Gui Yuanjin, Han Juzi, Lu Weihuang, and Zhao Rui.

Of these generals, Chunyu Qiong was a hard man and a heavy drinker, who in his cups was a terror to the soldiers. Under the idle life of guarding the supply depot, the leaders gave themselves up to indulgence and drank heavily.

In Cao Cao’s army food was also getting scarce, and a message was sent to Capital Xuchang to send grain quickly. The messenger with the letter, however, had not gone far when he fell into the hands of Yuan Shao’s guards, who took him to the adviser Xu You.

Seeing from the letter that Cao Cao was short of supplies, Xu You went to Yuan Shao and told him, saying, “Cao Cao and we have been at grips here for a long time, and Capital Xuchang must be undefended. A small army sent quickly could take it, and at the same moment an attack here would deliver Cao Cao into our hands. Now is the moment to strike, for his supplies are short.”
Yuan Shao replied, “Cao Cao is full of ruses, and this letter is artfully designed to bring about a battle to suit himself.”

“If you do not take this chance, he will do you some injury by and by.”

Just at this juncture in came a dispatch from Yejun in which, after some details regarding the forwarding of grain, Shen Pei said he had discovered that Xu You had been in the habit of receiving bribes while in Jizhou and had winked at his relatives collecting excess taxes. One of his son and nephew were then in prison.

At this Yuan Shao turned on Xu You angrily and said, “How can you have the face to stand before me and propose plans, you extortionate fellow? You and Cao Cao have old liking for each other, and he has bribed you to do his dirty work for him and help his base schemes. Now you want to betray my army. I ought to take off your head, but temporarily I will let your neck carry it away. Get out and never let me see you again.”

The discredited adviser sighed and went out, saying, “Faithful words offend his ear. He is a pest and unworthy of advice from me. And now that Shen Pei has injured my son and nephew, how can I look my fellow folks in the face again?”

And Xu You drew his sword to end his life. But his people prevented that.

They said, “If Yuan Shao rejects your honest words, then assuredly he will be taken by Cao Cao. You are an old friend of Cao Cao’s: Why not abandon the shade for the sunlight?”

Xu You stealthily left the camp and set out for Cao Cao’s lines. He was captured on the way. He told his captors: “I am an old friend of the Prime Minister. Go and tell the Prime Minister that Xu You of Nanyang wishes to see him.”

They did so. Cao Cao was resting in his tent, his clothing loose and comfortable after the toils of the day. When he heard who wished to see him, he arose quite joyfully and hastily ran out, on bare feet, to receive Xu You. Cao Cao went forth to greet him. They saw each other in the distance, and Cao Cao clapped his hands with gladness, bowing to the ground when near enough to his visitor.

Xu You hastened to help him rise, saying, “Sir, you, a
great minister, should not thus salute a simple civilian like me.”

“But you are my old friend, and no name or office makes any difference to us,” replied Cao Cao.

“Having been unable to choose the lord I would serve, I bowed my head before Yuan Shao wishing to support him sincerely. But he was deaf to my words and disregarded my plans. Wherefore I have left him and come now to see my old friend from whom I hope employment.”

“If you are willing to come, then have I indeed a helper,” said Cao Cao. “I desire you to give me a scheme for the destruction of Yuan Shao.”

“I counseled him to send a light force to take Capital Xuchang and at the same time attack here in full scale so that head and tail be both attacked.”

Cao Cao was alarmed, saying, “If he does so, I am lost!”

“How much grain have you in store?” said the new adviser.

“Enough for a year.”

“I think not quite,” said Xu You, smiling.

“Well, half a year.”

The visitor shook out his sleeves, rose and hurried toward the door of the tent, saying, “I offer him good counsel, and he repays me with deceit. Could I have expected it?”

Cao Cao held him back.

“Do not be angry,” said he. “I will tell you the truth. Really I have here only enough for three months.”

“Everybody says you are a marvel of wickedness, and indeed it is true,” said Xu You.

“But who does not know that in war there is no objection to deceit?” replied Cao Cao.

Then whispering in Xu You’s ear, he said, “Actually here I have only supplies for this month’s use.”

“O do not throw dust in my eyes any more. Your grain is exhausted and I know it.”

Cao Cao was startled, for he thought no one knew of the straits he was in.

“How did you find that out?” said Cao Cao.

Xu You produced the captured letter, saying, “Who wrote that?”

“Where did you get it?”

Whereupon Xu You told Cao Cao the story of the captured messenger.

Cao Cao seized him by the hand, saying, “Since our old friendship has brought you to me, I hope you have some plan to suggest to me.”

Xu You said, “To oppose a great army with a small one is to walk in the way of destruction, unless you inflict quick defeat. I can propose a plan which will defeat the innumerable hordes of Yuan Shao without fighting a battle. But will you follow my advice?”

“I very much desire to know your plan,” said Cao Cao.

“Your enemy’s stores of all kinds are at Wuchao, where the commander of the guard is that drunkard Chunyu Qiong. You can send some of your trusty veterans to pretend they belong to one of Yuan Shao’s generals, Jiang Qi, sent to help guard the depot. These soldiers can find an opportunity to fire the grain and stores of all kinds, which will upset all Yuan Shao’s calculations. In three days Yuan Shao is no
Cao Cao greatly approved. He treated Xu You very liberally and kept him in his camp. Fortwith he chose five thousand of horse and foot ready for the expedition.

Zhang Liao protested, saying, “The enterprise will be futile as the grain depot will certainly be well guarded. Without caution, we may be victims of the treachery on the part of the newly arrived Xu You.”

“Xu You is no traitor,” said Cao Cao. “He has come sent by Heaven to defeat Yuan Shao. If we do not get grain, it will be hard to hold out. I have to either follow his advice or sit still and be hemmed in. If he were a traitor, he would hardly remain in my camp. Moreover this raid has been my desire for a long time. Have no doubts: The raid will certainly succeed.”

“Well, then, you must look out for an attack here while the camp is undefended.”

“That is already well provided for,” said Cao Cao gleefully.

The arrangements for the raid on the grain depot were made with extreme care to ensure success. Cao Cao assigned Xun You, Jia Xu, and Cao Hong to guard the main camp, together with Xu You; Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan to guard the left camp; Cao Ren and Li Dian to guard the right camp. When all was ready they set out, Cao Cao himself in the center, with Zhang Liao and Xu Chu as van leaders and Xu Huang and Yu Jin as rear guard. The army showed the ensigns of their opponents. The troops carried bundles of grass and faggots to make a blaze. The soldiers were gagged and the horses tied round the muzzles so as to prevent any noise. They set out at dusk.

The night was fine and the stars shone brightly.

Ju Shou, still a prisoner in Yuan Shao’s camp, saw the stars were very brilliant and told his gaolers to conduct him out to the central pavilion whence he could study them. While watching he saw the planet Venus invade the quarter of the Bear and Lyra, which startled him very greatly.

“Some misfortune is near!” said Ju Shou.

So although it was still night, he went to see his master. But Yuan Shao was sleeping after indulgence in too much wine and was in bad humor. However, when they had roused him saying that the prisoner had a secret message to deliver, he got up.

“While I happened to be studying the aspect of the heavens,” said the night visitor, “I saw Venus, then between Hydra and Cancer, suddenly shoot into the neighborhood of the Bear and Lyra. There is danger of a robber raid, and special precautions must be taken at the grain depot. Lose no time in sending good soldiers and vigorous leaders thither, and keep a lookout on the byways among the hills that you may escape the wiles of Cao Cao.”

“You are a criminal!” said Yuan Shao. “How dare you come with such wild nonsense to upset my armies.”

And turning to the gaolers Yuan Shao continued, “I bade you confine him. Why did you let him come?”

Then he issued orders to put the gaolers to death and appointed others to keep the prisoner in close custody.

Ju Shou went away, wiping his falling tears and sighing deeply, “Our soldiers’ destruction is at hand, and I know not where our poor corpses may find a resting place.”
Too stupid any plan to make,
His stores destroyed this is evident
That Jizhou also is at stake.

Cao Cao’s raiding party went along through the night. Passing one of Yuan Shao’s outpost camps, they were challenged.

Cao Cao sent forward a man to say, “Jiang Qi has orders to go to Wuchao to guard the grain stores.”

Seeing that the raiders marched under the ensigns of Yuan Shao, the guard had no suspicions and let them pass. At every post this ruse was effective, and they got safely through. They reached their objective at the end of the fourth watch, the straw and wood were placed in position without loss of time, and the blaze started. Then Cao Cao’s commanders beat to attack.

At this time Chunyu Qiong and his companions were all asleep after a heavy drinking bout. However, when the alarm was given, they sprang up and asked what was the matter. The hubbub was indescribable. Very soon the fuddled officers were caught with hooks and hauled out of their camp.

Yuan Shao’s generals Gui Yuanjin and Zhao Rui were just returning from taking grain to the camp and seeing the flames arise, they hastened to assist.

Some of Cao Cao’s soldiers ran to him, saying, “The enemy is coming up in the rear. Send reinforcements.”

But Cao Cao only replied, “Press on to the front till the enemy is actually close at hand and then face about.”

So the attack was pressed on and they al! hastened forward. Very soon the fire gained strength, and thick smoke hung all around filling the sky. When Gui Yuanjin and Zhao Rui drew near, Cao Cao turned about and attacked them. They could not stand this for a moment, and both generals were killed. Finally the stores of grain and forage were utterly destroyed.

The commander, Chunyu Qiong, was made prisoner and taken to Cao Cao who ordered him to be deprived of ears, nose, and hands. He was bound on a horse and sent, thus horribly mutilated, to his master.

From Yuan Shao’s camp, the flames of the burning depot were seen away in the north, and they knew what they meant. Yuan Shao hastily summoned his officers to a council to send a rescue party.

Zhang He offered to go with Gao Lan, but Guo Tu said, “You may not go. It is certain that Cao Cao is there in person, wherefore his camp is undefended. Let loose our soldiers on the camp, and that will speedily bring Cao Cao
back again. This is how Sun Bin¹ besieged Wei and thereby rescued Zhao².

But Zhang He said, “Not so; Cao Cao is too wily not to have fully prepared against a chance attack. If we attack his camp and fail and Chunyu Qiong should be caught, we shall all be captured too.”

Guo Tu said, “Cao Cao will be too intent on the destruction of the grain to think of leaving a guard. I entreat you to attack his camp.”

So Yuan Shao sent five thousand soldiers under Zhang He and Gao Lan to attack Cao Cao’s camp, and he sent ten thousand with Jiang Qi to go to recover the grain store.

Now after overcoming Chunyu Qiong, Cao Cao’s troops dressed themselves in the armor and clothing of the defeated soldiers and put out their emblems, thus posing as defeated force running back to their own headquarters. And when they happened upon Jiang Qi’s rescue body, they said they had been beaten at Wuchao and were retreating. So Cao Cao’s troops were suffered to pass without molestation while Jiang Qi hastened on. But soon Jiang Qi came to Zhang Liao and Xu Chu who cried out, “Stop!”

And before Jiang Qi could make any opposition, Zhang Liao had cut him down. Soon his force were killed or dispersed, and the victors sent false messengers to Yuan Shao’s camp to say that Jiang Qi had attacked and driven away the attackers of the granaries. So no more relief were sent that way. However, Yuan Shao sent reinforcements to Guandu.

In due course, the Yuan Shao’s force came down upon Cao Cao’s camp at Guandu, and the defenders---Xiahou Dun, Cao Ren, and Cao Hong---at once came out and fought them on three sides so that they were worsted. By the time reinforcements arrived, Cao Cao’s army, returning from the raid, had also come, and Yuan Shao’s army were attacked in the rear. So they were quite surrounded. However, Zhang He and Gao Lan managed to force their way out and got away.

When the remains of the defenders of the grain stores reached their master’s camp, they were mustered. Seeing the mutilated state of their one time leader, Yuan Shao asked how Chunyu Qiong had come to betray his trust and to suffer thus.

The soldiers told their lord, “The General was intoxicated at the time of the attack.”

So Yuan Shao ordered Chunyu Qiong to be forthwith executed.

Guo Tu, fearing lest Zhang He and Gao Lan would return and testify the whole truth, began to intrigue against them.

First Guo Tu went to his lord, saying, “Those two, Zhang He and Gao Lan, were certainly very glad when your armies were defeated.”

“Why do you say this?” asked Yuan Shao.

“O they have long cherished a desire to go over to Cao Cao. So when you sent them on the duty of destroying his camp, they did not do their best and so brought about this disaster.”

Yuan Shao accordingly sent to recall these two to be interrogated as to their faults. But Guo Tu sent a messenger in advance to warn them, as though in friendly guise, of the adverse fate that awaited them.

¹Sun Bin military strategist, a descendant of Sun Zi. Sun Bin served as military counselor during the Warring States period in Qi. He wrote a treatise named The Art of War of Sun Bin.

²In the Warring States period, Wei was attacking Zhao when Zhao sent to Qi to seek help. Sun Bin, a strategist of Qi, devised a scheme to attack Wei’s important base. Facing this new threat, Wei had to withdraw its force to defend the base, and thus Zhao was relieved. Sun Bin then laid an ambush on Wei’s retreat and scored a victory for Qi.
So when the orders reached them to return to answer for their faults, Gao Lan asked, “For what reason are we recalled?”

“Indeed I do not know,” said the messenger.

Gao Lan drew his sword and killed the messenger.

Zhang He was astonished at this demonstration, but Gao Lan said, “Our lord has allowed someone to malign us and say we have been bought by Cao Cao. What is the sense in our sitting still and awaiting destruction? Rather let us surrender to Cao Cao in reality and save our lives.”

“I have been wanting to do this for some time,” replied Zhang He.

Wherefore both, with their companies, made their way to Cao Cao’s camp to surrender.

When they arrived, Xiahou Dun said to his master, “These two have come to surrender, but I have doubts about them.”

Cao Cao replied, “I will meet them generously and win them over, even if they have treachery in their hearts.”

The camp gates were opened to the two officers, and they were invited to enter. They laid down their weapons, removed their armor, and bowed to the ground before Cao Cao, who said, “If Yuan Shao had listened to you, he would not have suffered defeat. Now you two coming to surrender are like Wei Zi leaving the falling House of Shang to go to Zhou and Han Xin leaving Xiang Yu to go over to the rising House of Han.”

Cao Cao made them Generals and conferred upon Zhang He the title of Lord of Duting and upon Gao Lan Lord of Donglai, which pleased them much.

And so as Yuan Shao had formerly driven sway his adviser, Xu You, so now he had alienated two leaders and had lost his stores at Wuchao, and his army was depressed and down-hearted.

When Xu You advised Cao Cao to attack Yuan Shao as promptly as he could, the two newly surrendered generals volunteered to lead the way. So Cao Cao sent Zhang He and Gao Lan to make a first attack on the camp, and they left in the night with three thousand troops. The fighting went on

3 The last king of Shang Dynasty was King Zhou, who was cruel and corrupt. King Zhou had three uncles---Bi Gan, Qi Zi, and Wei Zi---who served as ministers. When these three officials repeatedly failed to persuade King Zhou to repent, Wei Zi resigned his post, while Qi Zi pretended to be insane. Bi Gan stayed and continued persuading the king, who later executed Bi Gan. Later the Duke of Zhou overthrew Shang Dynasty and ennobled Wei Zi, Qi Zi, and the wife and the son of Bi Gan. Wei Zi became known as the Duke of Song. Qi Zi left for Korea where he became a ruler.

4 Before serving Han, Han Xin had been an officer under Xiang Yu. Disappointed because his plans were rejected, Han Xin left Xiang Yu and joined Liu Bang’s camp, where he was made Commander-in-Chief by recommendations of Xiao He and Zhang Liang. Ennobled as King of Qi, then King of Chu.
confusedly all night but stayed at dawn. Yuan Shao had lost half of his army.

Then Xun You suggested a plan to Cao Cao, saying, “Now is the moment to spread a report that an army will go to take Suanzao and attack Yejun, and another to take Liyang and intercept the enemy’s retreat. Yuan Shao, when he hears of this, will be alarmed and tell off his troops to meet this new turn of affairs; and while he is making these new dispositions, we can have him at great disadvantage.”

Cao Cao adopted the suggestion, and care was taken that the report spread far around. It came to the ears of Yuan Shao’s soldiers, and they repeated it in camp. Yuan Shao believed it and ordered his son Yuan Tan with fifty thousand troops to rescue Yejun, and General Xin Ming with another fifty thousand to go to Liyang, and they marched away at once. Cao Cao heard that these armies had started, and at once dispatched troops in eight divisions to make a simultaneous attack on the nearly empty camp. Yuan Shao’s troops were too dispirited to fight and gave way on all sides.

Yuan Shao without waiting to don his armor went forth in simple dress with an ordinary cap upon his head and mounted his steed. His youngest son, Yuan Shang, followed him. Four of the enemy generals---Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, Xu Huang, and Yu Jin---with their forces pressed in his rear, and Yuan Shao hastened across the river, abandoning all his documents and papers, baggage, treasure, and stores. Only eight hundred horsemen followed him over the stream. Cao Cao’s troops followed hard but could not come up with him. However, they captured all his impedimenta, and they slew some eighty thousands of his army so that the watercourses ran blood and the drowned corpses could not be counted. It was a most complete victory for Cao Cao, and he made over all the spoil to the army.

Among the papers of Yuan Shao was found a bundle of letters showing secret correspondence between him and many persons in the capital and army.

Cao Cao’s personal staff suggested that the names of those concerned should be abstracted and the persons arrested, but their lord said, “Yuan Shao was so strong that even I could not be sure of safety. How much less other people?”
So Cao Cao ordered the papers to be burned and nothing more was said. Now when Yuan Shao’s soldiers ran away, Ju Shou, being a prisoner, could not get away and was captured. Taken before Cao Cao, who knew him, Ju Shou cried aloud, “I will not surrender!”

Said Cao Cao, “Yuan Shao was foolish and neglected your advice: Why still cling to the path of delusion? Had I had you to help me, I should have been sure of the empire.”

Ju Shou was well treated in the camp, but he stole a horse and tried to get away to Yuan Shao. This angered Cao Cao who recaptured him and put him to death, which he met with brave composure.

“I have slain a faithful and righteous man!” then said Cao Cao sadly.

And the victim was honorably buried at Guandu. His tomb bore the inscription This is the tomb of Ju Shou the Loyal and Virtuous.

Ju Shou was honest and virtuous,
The best in Yuan Shao’s train,
From him the stars no secrets held,

In tactics all was plain.
For him no terrors had grim death.
Too lofty was his spirit,
His captor slew him, but his tomb
Bears witness to his merit.

Cao Cao now gave orders to attack Jizhou.

In feeling over confident, that’s where one’s weakness lay;
The other bettered him by plans which never went astray.

The following chapter will tell who won the next campaign.
Chapter 31
Cao Cao Overcomes Yuan Shao In Cangting;
Liu Bei Seeks Shelter With Liu Biao In Jingzhou.

Cao Cao lost no time in taking advantage of Yuan Shao’s flight, but smote hard at the retreating army. Yuan Shao without helmet or proper dress, and with few followers, crossed hastily to the north bank at Liyang. He was met by one of his generals, Jiang Yiqu, who took him in and comforted him and listened to the tale of misfortunes. Next Jiang Yiqu called in the scattered remnants of the army, and when the soldiers heard that their old lord was alive they swarmed to him like ants, so that Yuan Shao quickly became strong enough to attempt the march to Jizhou. Soon the army set out and at night halted at Huang Hills.

That evening, sitting in his tent, Yuan Shao seemed to hear a far off sound of lamentation. He crept out quietly to listen and found it was his own soldiers telling each other tales of woe. This one lamented an elder brother lost, that one grieved for his younger brother abandoned, a third mourned a companion missing, a fourth, a relative cut off. And each beat his breast and wept.

And all said, “Had he but listened to Tian Feng, we had not met this disaster!”

Yuan Shao, very remorseful, said, “I did not hearken unto Tian Feng, and now my soldiers have been beaten and I was nearly lost. How can I return and look him in the face?”

Next day the march was resumed, and Yuan Shao met Peng Ji with reinforcements, to whom he said, “I disregarded Tian Feng’s advice and have brought myself to defeat. Now shall I be greatly ashamed to look him in the face.”

This tribute to Tian Feng’s prescience roused the jealousy of Peng Ji, who replied, “Yes; when he heard the news of your defeat, though he was a prisoner, he clapped his hands for joy and said, ‘Indeed, just as I foretold!’”

“How dare he laugh at me, the blockhead? Assuredly he shall die,” said Yuan Shao.

Whereupon Yuan Shao wrote a letter and sent therewith a sword to slay the prisoner.

Meanwhile Tian Feng’s gaoler came to him one day, saying, “Above all humans I felicitate you.”

“What is the joyful occasion and why felicitate?” said Tian Feng.

The gaoler replied, “Imperial Protector Yuan Shao has been defeated and is on his way back. He will treat you with redoubled respect.”

“Now am I a dead man!” said Tian Feng.

“The Imperial Protector appears liberal, but he is jealous and forgetful of honest advice. Had he been victorious, he might have pardoned me. Now that he has
been defeated and put to shame, I may not hope to live.”

But the gaoler did not believe Tian Feng. Before long came the letter and the sword with the fatal order.

The gaoler was dismayed, but the victim said, “I knew all too well that I should have to die.”

The gaoler wept.

Tian Feng said, “An able person born into this world who does not recognize and serve the right lord is ignorant. Today I die, but I am not deserving of pity.”

Whereupon he cut his throat in the prison.

Ju Shou but yesterday was killed,
Tian Feng ends his life his fate fulfilled;
The Yellow River’s main beams break one by one,
Mourn ye that Yuan House! Its day is done.

Thus died Tian Feng, pitied of all who heard of his fate.

When Yuan Shao came home in Jizhou, he was with troubled mind and distorted thoughts. He could not attend to the business of government and became so ill that his second wife, who came of the Liu family and had replaced the first wife after her death, besought him to make his last dispositions.

Now three sons had been born to Yuan Shao: Yuan Tan the eldest, who was commander at Qingzhou; Yuan Xi, who ruled over Youzhou; and Yuan Shang, borne to him by Lady Liu. This youngest son was very handsome and noble looking, and his father’s favorite. So he was kept at home.

After the defeat at Guandu, the lad’s mother was constantly urging that her son should be named as successor, and Yuan Shao called together four of his counselors to consider this matter.

These four happened to be divided in their sympathies: Shen Pei and Peng Ji being in favor of the youngest son, and Xin Ping and Guo Tu supporters of the eldest.

When they met to consult, Yuan Shao said, “As there is nought but war and trouble outside our borders, it is necessary that tranquillity within be early provided for, and I wish to appoint my successor. My eldest son is hard and cruel, my second is mild and unfit. The third has the outward form of a hero, appreciates the wise, and is courteous to his subordinates. I wish him to succeed, but I wish that you tell
me your opinions.”

Guo Tu said, “Yuan Tan is your first born, and he is in a position of authority beyond your control. If you pass over the eldest in favor of the youngest, you sow the seeds of turbulence. The prestige of the army has been somewhat lowered and enemies are on our border. Should you add to our weakness by making strife between father and son, elder and younger brothers? Rather consider how the enemy may be repulsed and turn to the question of the heirship later.”

Then the natural hesitation of Yuan Shao asserted itself, and he could not make up his mind. Soon came news that his sons Yuan Tan was coming from Qingzhou with sixty thousand troops, Yuan Xi coming from Youzhou with fifty thousand troops, and his nephew Gao Gan coming from Bingzhou with fifty thousand troops to help him, and he turned his attention to preparations for fighting Cao Cao.

When Cao Cao drew up his victorious army on the banks of Yellow River, the aged natives brought an offering of food and sauce to bid him welcome. Their venerable and hoary appearances led Cao Cao to treat them with the highest respect.

He invited them to be seated and said to them, “Venerable Sirs, what may be your age?”

“We are nearly a hundred,” replied the old villagers.

“I should be very sorry if my army had disturbed your village,” said Cao Cao.

One of them said, “In the days of the Emperor Huan a yellow star was seen over by way of the ancient states of Chu and Song in the southwest. Yin Kui of Liaodong, who was learned in astrology, happened to be passing the night here, and he told us that the star foretold the arrival in these parts, fifty years hence, of a true and honest man here in the Yellow River. Lo! That is exactly fifty years ago. Now Yuan Shao is very hard on the people and they hate him. You, Sir, having raised this army in the cause of humanity and righteousness, out of pity for the people and to punish crimes, and having destroyed the hordes of Yuan Shao at Guandu, just fulfill the prophecy of Yin Kui. The millions of the land may look now for tranquillity.”

“How dare I presume that I am he?” said Cao Cao with a smile.

Wine was served and refreshments brought in, and the old gentlemen was sent away with presents of silk stuffs. And an order was issued to the army that if anyone killed so much as a fowl or a dog belonging to the villagers, he should be punished as for murder. And the soldiers obeyed with fear and trembling while Cao Cao rejoiced in his heart.

It was told Cao Cao that the total army from the four regions under the Yuan family amounted to two hundred thirty thousand soldiers and they were camped at Cangting. Cao Cao then advanced nearer to them and made a strong camp.

Next day the two armies were arrayed over against each other. On one side Cao Cao rode to the front surrounded by his commanders, and on the other appeared Yuan Shao supported by his three sons, his nephew, and his leaders.

Cao Cao spoke first, “Yuan Shao, your schemes are poor, your strength is exhausted, why still refuse to think of surrender? Are you waiting till the sword shall be upon your neck? Then it will be too late.”

Yuan Shao turned to those about him, saying, “Who dares go out?”

His son Yuan Shang was anxious to exhibit
his prowess in the presence of his father, so he flourished his pair of swords and rode forth.

Cao Cao pointed him out to his officers and asked, "Anyone knows him?"

“He is the youngest son of Yuan Shao,” was the reply.

Before they had finished speaking, from their own side rode out Shi Huan, armed with a spear. The two champions fought a little while and suddenly Yuan Shang whipped up his horse, made a feint and fled. His opponent followed. Yuan Shang took his bow, fitted an arrow, turned in his saddle, and shot at Shi Huan, wounding him in the left eye. Shi Huan fell from the saddle and died on the spot.

Yuan Shao seeing his son thus get the better of his opponent, gave the signal for attack, and the whole army thundered forward. The onslaught was heavy, but presently the gongs on both sides sounded the retire and the battle ceased.

When he had returned to camp, Cao Cao took counsel to find a plan to overcome Yuan Shao. Then Cheng Yu proposed the plan of the "Ten Ambushes" and persuaded Cao Cao to retire upon the river, placing troops in ambush as he went. Thus would Yuan Shao be inveigled into pursuit as far as the river, when Cao Cao’s army would be forced to make a desperate stand or be driven into the water.

Cao Cao accepted this suggestion and told off ten companies of five thousand soldiers each to lie in ten ambush on two sides of the road of retreat. The arrangement of the ambushes were thus: On the left, first company under Xiahou Dun; second company, Zhang Liao; third company, Li Dian; fourth company, Yue Jing; fifth company, Xiahou Yuan; on the right, first company was under Cao Hong; second company, Zhang He; third company, Xu Huang; fourth company, Yu Jin; fifth company, Gao Lan. Xu Chu commanded the advanced front.

Next day the ten companies started first and placed themselves right and left as ordered. In the night Cao Cao ordered the advanced front to feign an attack on the camp, which roused all the enemy in all their camps. This done, Xu
Chu retreated and Yuan Shao’s army came in pursuit. The roar of battle went on without cessation, and at dawn Cao Cao’s army rested on the river and could retreat no farther.

Then Cao Cao shouted, “There is no road in front, so all must fight or die.”

The retreating army turned about and advanced vigorously. Xu Chu simply flew to the front, smote and killed ten generals and threw Yuan Shao’s army into confusion. They tried to turn and march back, but Cao Cao was close behind. Then the drums of the enemy were heard, and right and left there appeared two ambush companies of Gao Lan and Xiahou Yuan. Yuan Shao collected about him his three sons and his nephew, and they were enabled to cut an alley out and flee. Three miles further on they fell into another ambush of Yue Jing and Yu Jin, and here many troops of Yuan Shao were lost so that their corpses lay over the countryside and the blood filled the water courses. Another three miles and they met the third pair of Li Dian and Xu Huang barring their road.

Here they lost heart and bolted for an old camp of their own that was near, and bade their men prepare a meal. But just as the food was ready to eat, down came Zhang Liao and Zhang He and burst into the camp.

Yuan Shao mounted and fled as far as Cangting, when he was tired and his steed spent. But there was no rest, for Cao Cao came in close pursuit. It seemed now a race for life. But presently Yuan Shao found his onward course again blocked by Xiahou Dun and Cao Hong, and he groaned aloud.

“If we do not make most desperate efforts, we are all captives!” said he.

And they plunged forward. His second son Yuan Xi and his nephew Gao Gan were wounded by arrows, and most of his soldiers were dead or had disappeared. He gathered his sons into his arms and wept bitterly. Then he fell into a swoon. He was picked up,
but his mouth was full of blood which ran forth in a bright scarlet stream.

He sighed, saying, “Many battles have I fought, and little did I think to be driven to this. Heaven is afflicting me. You had better return each to his own territory and swear to fight this Cao Cao to the end.”

Then Yuan Shao bade Xin Ping and Guo Tu as quickly as possible follow Yuan Tan to Qingzhou and prepare to give battle to Cao Cao lest he should invade. Yuan Xi was told to go to Youzhou and Gao Gan to Bingzhou.

So each started to prepare armies and horses for repulsing Cao Cao. Yuan Shao with his youngest son Yuan Shang and the remnant of his officers went away to Jizhou, and military operations were suspended for a time.

Meanwhile Cao Cao was distributing rewards to his army for the late victory, and his spies were scouting all about Jizhou. He soon learned that Yuan Shao was ill, and that the youngest son Yuan Shang and Shen Pei were in command of the city, while his brothers and cousin had returned each to his own. Cao Cao’s advisers were in favor of a speedy attack.

But he objected, saying, “Jizhou is large and well supplied. Shen Pei is an able strategist. And it behooves me to be careful. I would rather wait till the autumn when the crops have been gathered in so that the people will not suffer.”

While the attack was being talked over there came letters from Xun Yu:

“Liu Bei was strengthening himself at Runan with the force of Liu Pi and Gong Du and, when he heard that you were attacking Jizhou, he said he would take the opportunity to march on the capital. Wherefore you, Sir, should hasten homeward to defend Xuchang.”

This news disconcerted Cao Cao. He left Cao Hong in command on the river bank, with orders to maintain the appearance of strength there, while he led the main part of his army to meet the threatened attack from Runan.

Meanwhile Liu Bei, his brothers, and the leaders, having gone forth with the intention of attacking the capital, had reached a point near the Rang Mountains when Cao Cao came upon them. So Liu Bei camped by the hills and divided his army into three, sending Guan Yu and Zhang Fei with ten thousand troops each to entrench themselves southeast and southwest respectively of the main body, which he and Zhao Yun commanded.

When Cao Cao came near, Liu Bei beat his drums and went out to where Cao Cao had already arrayed his army.

Cao Cao called Liu Bei to a parley, and when the latter appeared under his great standard, Cao Cao pointed his whip at him and railed, saying, “I treated you as a guest of the highest consideration. Why then do you turn your back on righteousness and forget kindness?”

Liu Bei replied, “Under the name of Prime Minister you are really a rebel. I am a direct descendant of the family, and I have a secret decree from the Throne to take such offenders as you.”

As he said these words, he produced and recited the decree which is known as the “Girdle Mandate.”

Cao Cao grew very angry and ordered Xu Chu to go out to battle. As Liu Bei’s champion, out rode Zhao Yun with spear ready to thrust. The two warriors exchanged
thirty bouts without advantage to either. Then there arose an earth-rending shout and up came the two brothers, Guan Yu from the southeast and Zhang Fei from the southwest. The three armies then began a great attack, which proved too much for Cao Cao’s troops, fatigued by a long march, and they were worsted and fled. Liu Bei having scored this victory returned to camp.

Next day he sent out Zhao Yun again to challenge the enemy, but it was not accepted and Cao Cao’s army remained ten days without movement. Then Zhang Fei offered a challenge which also was not accepted. And Liu Bei began to feel anxious.

Then unexpectedly came news that the enemy had stopped a train of supplies brought by Gong Du, and at once Zhang Fei went to the rescue. Worse still was the news that followed, that an army led by Xiahou Dun had got in behind to attack Runan.

Quite dismayed, Liu Bei said, “If this be true, I have enemies in front and rear and have no place to go.” He then sent Guan Yu to try to recover the city and thus both his brothers were absent from his side. One day later a horseman rode up to say that Runan had fallen, its defender Liu Pi had fled, and Guan Yu was surrounded. To make the matters worse, the news came that Zhang Fei, who had gone to rescue Gong Du, was in like case.

Liu Bei tried to withdraw his troops, fearing all the time an attack from Cao Cao. Suddenly the sentinels came in, saying: “Xu Chu is at the camp gate offering a challenge.”

Liu Bei did not allow his army to go out. They waited till dawn, and then Liu Bei bade the soldiers get a good meal and be ready to start. When ready the foot went out first, the horsemen next, leaving a few troops in the camp to beat the watches and maintain an appearance of occupation.

After traveling some miles, they passed some mounds. Suddenly torches blazed out, and on the summit stood one who shouted, “Do not let Liu Bei run away! I, the Prime Minister, am here awaiting you!”

Liu Bei dashed along the first clear road he saw. Zhao Yun said, “Fear not, my lord, only follow me!” And setting his spear, Zhao Yun galloped in front opening an alley as he went. Liu Bei gripped his double swords and followed close. As they were winning through, Xu Chu came in pursuit and engaged Zhao Yun, and two other companies led by Yu Jin and Li Dian bore down as well. Seeing the situation so desperate, Liu Bei plunged into the wilds and fled. Gradually the sounds of battle became fainter and died away while he went deeper and deeper into the hills, a single horseman fleeing for his life. He kept on his way
till daybreak, when a company suddenly appeared beside the road. Liu Bei saw these men with terror at first, but was presently relieved to find they were led by the friendly Liu Pi. They were a company of his defeated army escorting the family of their chief. With them also were Sun Qian, Jian Yong, and Mi Fang.

They told him, “The attack on Runan was too strong to be resisted, and so we were compelled to abandon the defense, and the enemy followed, and only Guan Yu’s timely arrival saved us from destruction.”

“I do not know where my brother is,” said Liu Bei. “All will come right if you will push on,” said Liu Pi.

They pushed on. Before they had gone far, the beating of drums was heard and suddenly appeared Zhang He with a thousand soldiers.

Zhang He cried, “Liu Bei, quickly dismount and surrender!”

Liu Bei was about to retire when he saw a red flag waving from a rampart on the hills and down came rushing another body of troops under Gao Lan.

Thus checked in front and his retreat cut off, Liu Bei looked up to Heaven and cried, “O Heaven, why am I brought to this state of misery? Nothing is left me now but death!”

And he drew his sword to slay himself.

But Liu Pi stayed his hand, saying, “Let me try to fight a way out and save you. Death is nothing to me!”

As he spoke, Gao Lan’s force was on the point of engaging his. The two leaders met and in the third bout Liu Pi was cut down. Liu Bei at once rushed up to fight, but just then there was sudden confusion in the rear ranks of the opponents, and a warrior dashed up and thrust at Gao Lan with his spear. Gao Lan fell from his steed. The newcomer was Zhao Yun.

His arrival was most opportune. He urged forward his steed thrusting right and left, and the enemy’s ranks broke and scattered. Then the first force under Zhang He came into the fight, and the leader and Zhao Yun fought thirty or more bouts. However, this proved enough, for Zhang He turned his horse away recognizing that he was worsted. Zhao Yun vigorously attacked, but was forced into a narrow space in the hills where he was hemmed in. While seeking for some outlet, they saw Guan Yu, Guan Ping, and Zhou Cang, with three hundred men, coming along. Soon Zhang He was driven off, and then Liu Bei’s troops came out of the narrow defile and occupied a strong position among the hills where they made a camp.

Liu Bei sent Guan Yu for news of the missing brother. Zhang Fei had been attacked by Xiahou Yuan who had killed Gong Du, but Zhange Fei had vigorously resisted, beaten him off, and followed him up. Then Yue Jing had come along and surrounded Zhang Fei.

In this pass he was found by Guan Yu, who had heard of his plight from some of his scattered soldiers met on the way. Now they drove off the enemy. The two brothers returned. Soon they heard of the approach of a large body of Cao
Cao’s army. Liu Bei then bade Sun Qian guard his family and sent him on ahead, while he and the others kept off the enemy, sometimes giving battle and anon marching. Seeing that Liu Bei had retired too far, Cao Cao let him go and left the pursuit.

When Liu Bei collected his army, he found they numbered only a thousand, and this halting and broken force marched as fast as possible to the west. Coming to a river they asked the natives its name and were told it was the Han River, and near it Liu Bei made a temporary camp. When the local people found out who was in the camp, they presented flesh and wine.

A feast was given upon a sandy bank of the Han River.

After they had drunk awhile, Liu Bei addressed his faithful followers, saying, “All you, Fair Sirs, have talents fitting you to be advisers to a monarch, but your destiny has led you to follow poor me. My fate is distressful and full of misery. Today I have not a spot to call my own, and I am indeed leading you astray. Therefore I say you should abandon me and go to some illustrious lord where you may be able to become famous.”

At these words they all covered their faces and wept.

Guan Yu said, “Brother, you are wrong to speak thus. When the great Founder of Han contended with Xiang Yu, he was defeated many times, but he won at the Nine-Mile Mountains and that achievement was the foundation of a dynasty that endured for four centuries. Victory and defeat are but ordinary events in a soldier’s career, and why should you give up?”

“Success and failure both have their seasons,” said Sun Qian, “and we are not to grieve. Jingzhou, which your illustrious relative, Liu Biao, commands, is a rich and prosperous country. Liu Biao is of your house, why not go to him?”

“Only that I fear he may not receive me,” said Liu Bei.

“Then let me go and prepare the way. I will make Liu Biao come out to his borders to welcome you.”

So with his lord’s approval, Sun Qian set off immediately and hastened to Jingzhou. When the ceremonies of greeting were over, Liu Biao asked the reason of the visit.

Said Sun Qian, “The princely Liu Bei is one of the heroes of the day, although just at the moment he may lack soldiers and leaders. His mind is set upon restoring the dynasty to its pristine glory, and at Runan the two commanders, Liu Pi and Gong Du, though bound to him by no ties, were content to die for the sake of his ideals. You, Illustrious Sir, like Liu Bei, are a scion of the imperial stock. Now the Princely One has recently suffered defeat and thinks of seeking a home in the east with Sun Quan. I have ventured to dissuade him, saying that he should not turn from a relative and go to a mere acquaintance; telling him that you, Sir, are well known as courteous to the wise and condescending to scholars, so that they flock to you as the waters flow to the east sea, and that certainly you would show kindness to one of the same ancestry. Wherefore he has sent me to explain matters and
“He is my brother,” said Liu Biao, “and I have long desired to see him, but no opportunity has occurred. I should be very happy if he would come.”

Cai Mao, who was sitting by, here broke in, “No, no! Liu Bei first followed Lu Bu, then he served Cao Cao, and next he joined himself to Yuan Shao. And he stayed with none of these, so that you can see what manner of man he is. If he comes here, Cao Cao will assuredly come against us and fight. Better cut off this messenger’s head and send it as an offering to Cao Cao, who would reward you well for the service.”

Sun Qian sat unmoved while this harangue was pronounced, saying at the end, “I am not afraid of death. Liu Bei, the Princely One, is true and loyal to the state and so out of sympathy with Lu Bu, or Cao Cao, or Yuan Shao. It is true he followed these three, but there was no help for it. Now he knows your chief is a member of the family, so that both are of the same ancestry, and that is why he has come far to join him. How can you slander a good man like that?”

Liu Biao bade Cai Mao be silent and said, “I have decided, and you need say no more.”

Whereat Cai Mao sulkily left the audience chamber.

Then Sun Qian was told to return with the news that Liu Bei would be welcome, and Imperial Protector Liu Biao went ten miles beyond the city to meet his guest.

When Liu Bei arrived, he behaved to his host with the utmost politeness and was warmly welcomed in return. Then Liu Bei introduced his two sworn brothers and friends and they entered Jingzhou City where Liu Bei finally was lodged in the Imperial Protector’s own residence.

As soon as Cao Cao knew whither his enemy had gone, he wished to attack Liu Biao, but Cheng Yu advised against any attempt so long as Yuan Shao, the dangerous enemy, was left with power to inflict damage.

He said, “My lord should return to the capital to refresh the soldiers so that they may be ready for a north and south campaign in the mild spring weather.”

Cao Cao accepted his advice and set out for the capital. In the first month of the eighth year of Rebuilt Tranquillity (AD 203), Cao Cao once again began to think of war, and sent to garrison Runan as a precaution against Liu Biao. Then, after arranging for the safety of the capital, he marched a large army to Guandu, the camp of the year before, and aimed at Jizhou.

As to Yuan Shao, who had been suffering from blood-spitting but was now in better health, he began to think of measures against Xuchang, but Shen Pei dissuaded him, saying, “You are not yet recovered from the fatigues of last year. It would be better to make your position impregnable and set to improving the army.”

When the news of Cao Cao’s approach arrived, Yuan Shao said, “If we allow the foe to get close to the city before we march to the river, we shall have missed our opportunity.
I must go out to repel this army."

Here his son Yuan Shang interposed, "Father, you are not sufficiently recovered for a campaign and should not go so far. Let me lead the army against this enemy."

Yuan Shao consented, and he sent to Qingzhou and Youzhou and Bingzhou to call upon his other two sons and his nephew to attack Cao Cao at the same time as his own army.

Against Runan they beat the drum,
And from Jizhou the armies come.

To whom the victory will be seen in the next chapter.

Chapter 32
Jizhou Taken: Yuan Shang Strives;
River Zhang Cut: Xun You Schemes.

Yuan Shang was puffed up with pride after his victory over Shi Huan and, without deigning to wait the arrival of his brothers, he marched out with thirty thousand troops to Liyang to meet the army of Cao Cao. Zhang Liao came out to challenge him, and Yuan Shang, accepting the challenge rode out with spear set. But he only lasted to the third bout when he had to give way. Zhang Liao smote with full force and Yuan Shang, quite broken, fled pell-mell to Jizhou. His defeat was a heavy shock to his father Yuan Shao, who had a severe fit of hemorrhage at the news and swooned.

Lady Liu, his wife, got him to bed as quickly as possible, but he did not rally; and she soon saw it was necessary to prepare for the end. So she sent for Shen Pei and Peng Ji that the succession might be settled. They came and stood by the sick man’s bed, but by this time he could no longer speak. He only made motions with his hands.
When his wife put the formal question, “Is Yuan Shang to succeed?” Yuan Shao nodded his head. Shen Pei at the bedside wrote out the dying man’s testament.

Presently Yuan Shao uttered a loud moan, a fresh fit of bleeding followed, and he passed away.

Born of a line of nobles famous for generations,
He himself in his youth was wayward always and headstrong,
Vainly he called to his side generals skilled and courageous,
Gathered beneath his banner countless legions of soldiers,
For he was timid at heart, a lamb dressed as a tiger,
Merely a cowardly chicken, phoenix-feathered but spurless.
Pitiful was the fate of his house; for when he departed
Brother with brother strove and quarrels arose in the household.

Shen Pei and some others set about the mourning ceremonies for the dead man. His wife, Lady Liu, put to death five of his favorite concubines, and such was the bitterness of her jealousy that, not content with this, she shaved off the hair and slashed the faces of their poor corpses lest their spirits should meet and rejoin her late husband in the land of shades beneath the Nine Golden Springs. Her son followed up this piece of cruelty by slaying all the relatives of the unhappy concubines lest they should avenge their deaths.

Shen Pei and Peng Ji declared Yuan Shang successor with the titles of Regent Marshal and Supreme Imperial Protector of the four regions of Jizhou, Qingzhou, Youzhou, and Bingzhou and sent in a report of the death of the late Imperial Protector.

At this time Yuan Tan, the eldest son, had already marched out his army to oppose Cao Cao. But hearing of his father’s death, he called in Guo Tu and Xin Ping to consult as to his course of action.

“In your absence, my lord,” said Guo Tu, “the two advisers of your younger brother will certainly set him up as lord, wherefore you must act quickly.”

“Those two, Shen Pei and Peng Ji, have already laid their plans,” said Xin Ping. “If you go, you will meet with some misfortune.”

“Then what should I do?” asked Yuan Tan.

Guo Tu replied, “Go and camp near the city, and watch what is taking place while I enter and inquire.”

Accordingly Guo Tu entered the city and sought an interview with the young Imperial Protector.

“Why did not my brother come?” asked Yuan Shang after the usual salutes.
Guo Tu said, “He cannot come as he is in the camp unwell.”

“No the command of my late father, I take the lordship. Now I confer upon my brother the rank of General of the Flying Cavalry, and I wish him to go at once to attack Cao Cao, who is pressing on the borders. I will follow as soon as my army is in order.”

“There is no one in our camp to give advice,” said Guo Tu. “I wish to have the services of Shen Pei and Peng Ji.”

“I also need the help of these two,” said Yuan Shang. “And as I am always working at schemes, I do not see how I can do without them.”

“Then let one of these two go,” replied Guo Tu.

Yuan Shang could do no other than accede to this request, so he bade the two men cast lots who should go. Peng Ji drew the lot and was appointed, receiving a seal of office. Then he accompanied Guo Tu to the camp. But when he arrived and found Yuan Tan in perfect health, he grew suspicious and resigned.

Yuan Tan angrily refused to accept his resignation and was disposed to put him to death, but Guo Tu privately dissuaded him, saying, “Cao Cao is on the borders, and Peng Ji must be kept here to allay your brother’s suspicions. After we have beaten Cao Cao, we can at once make an attempt on Jizhou.”

Yuan Tan agreed and forthwith broke up his camp to march against the enemy. He reached Liyang and lost no time in offering battle. He chose for his champion Wang Zhao and, when Wang Zhao rode out, Cao Cao sent Xu Huang to meet him. These two had fought but a few bouts when Wang Zhao was slain. At once Cao Cao’s army pressed forward, and Yuan Tan suffered a severe defeat. Yuan Tan drew off his army and retired into Liyang, whence he sent to his brother for reinforcements.

Yuan Shang and his adviser Shen Pei discussed the matter and only five thousand troops were sent. Cao Cao hearing of the dispatch of this meager force sent Li Dian and Yue Jing to waylay them, and the half legion was destroyed. When Yuan Tan heard of the inadequate force sent and their destruction, he was very wrath and roundly abused Peng Ji.

Peng Ji replied, “Let me write to my lord and pray him to come himself.”

So Peng Ji wrote and the letter was sent. When it arrived, Yuan Shang again consulted Shen Pei.

The Counselor said, “Guo Tu, your elder brother’s adviser, is very guileful. Formerly he left without discussion because Cao Cao was on the border. If Cao Cao be defeated, there will certainly be an attempt on you. The better plan is to withhold assistance and use Cao Cao’s hand to destroy your rival.”

Yuan Shang took his advice and no help was sent. When the messenger returned to Liyang without success, Yuan Tan was very angry and showed it by putting Peng Ji to death. He also began to talk of surrendering to Cao Cao.

Soon spies brought news of this to Yuan Shang, and again Shen Pei was called in.

Yuan Shang said, “If Yuan Tan goes over to Cao Cao, they will both attack Jizhou, and we shall be in great danger.”

Finally Shen Pei and General Su You were left to take care of the defense of the city, and Yuan Shang marched his army to the rescue of his brother.

“Who dares lead the van?” said Yuan Shang. Two brothers named Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang volunteered, and thirty thousand troops were given them. They were the first to reach Liyang.
Yuan Tan was pleased that Yuan Shang had decided to play a brotherly part and come to his aid, so he at once abandoned all thought of going over to the enemy. He being in the city, Yuan Shang camped outside, making that an ox-horn formation of their strategic position.

Before long Yuan Xi, the second brother, and their cousin, Gao Gan, arrived with their legions and also camped outside the city.

Engagements took place daily, and Yuan Shang suffered many defeats. On the other hand Cao Cao was victorious and elated. In the second month of the eighth year of Rebuilt Tranquillity (AD 203), Cao Cao made separate attacks on all four armies and won the day against each. Then the Yuans abandoned Liyang, and Cao Cao pursued them to Jizhou, where Yuan Tan and Yuan Shang went into the city to defend it, while their brother and cousin camped about ten miles away making a show of great force.

When Cao Cao had made many attacks without success, Guo Jia proffered the following plan.

He said, “There is dissension among the Yuans because the elder has been superseded in the succession. The brothers are about equally strong and each has his party. If we oppose them, they unite to assist each other; but if we have patience, they will be weakened by family strife. Therefore send first a force to reduce Liu Biao in Jingzhou, and let the fraternal quarrels develop. When they have fully developed, we can smite them and settle the matter.”

Cao Cao approved of the plan. So leaving Jia Xu as Governor of Liyang and Cao Hong as guard at Guandu, the army went away toward Jingzhou.

The two brothers Yuan Tan and Yuan Shang congratulated each other on the withdrawal of their enemy, and their brother Yuan Xi and their cousin Gao Gan marched their armies back to their own districts.

Then the quarrels began. Yuan Tan said to his confidants Guo Tu and Xin Ping, “I, the eldest, have been prevented from succeeding my father, while the youngest son, born of a second wife, received the main heritage. My heart is bitter.”

Said Guo Tu, “Camp your army outside, invite your brother and Shen Pei to a banquet, and assassinate them. The whole matter is easily settled.”

And Yuan Tan agreed. It happened that Adviser Wang Xiu came just then from Qingzhou whom Yuan Tan took into his confidence.

Wang Xiu opposed the murder plan, saying, “Brothers are as one’s limbs. How can you possibly succeed if at a moment of conflict with an enemy you cut off one of your hands? If you abandon your brother and sever relationship, whom will you take in all the world as a relation? That fellow Guo Tu is a dangerous mischief-maker, who would sow dissension between brothers for a momentary advantage, and I beg you to shut your ears and not listen to his persuasions.”

This was displeasing to Yuan Tan, and he angrily
dismissed Wang Xiu, while he sent the treacherous invitation to his brother.

Yuan Shang and Shen Pei talked over the matter.

Shen Pei said, “I recognize one of Guo Tu’s stratagems and if you go, my lord, you will be the victim of their plot. Rather strike at them at once.”

Whereupon Yuan Shang rode out to battle. His brother Yuan Tan, seeing him come with fifty thousand troops, knew that his treachery had been discovered, so he also took the field. When the forces were near enough, Yuan Tan opened on Yuan Shang with a volley of abuse.

“You poisoned my father and usurped the succession. Now you come out to slay your elder brother?”

The battle went against Yuan Tan. Yuan Shang himself took part in the fight, risking the arrows and the stones. He urged on his troops and drove his brother off the field. Yuan Tan took refuge in Pingyuan. Yuan Shang drew off his army to his own city.

Yuan Tan and Guo Tu decided upon a new attack, and this time they chose General Cen Bi as Leader of the Van. Yuan Shang went to meet him. When both sides had been arrayed and the banners were flying and the drums beating, Cen Bi rode out to challenge and railed at his opponent. At first Yuan Shang was going to answer the challenge himself, but Lu Kuang had advanced. Lu Kuang and Cen Bi met but had fought only a few bouts when Cen Bi fell. Yuan Tan’s soldiers were once more defeated and ran away to Pingyuan. Shen Pei urged his master to press for the advantage, and Yuan Tan was driven into the city, where he fortified himself and would not go out. So the city was besieged on three sides.

Yuan Tan asked his strategist what should be done next, and Guo Tu said, “The city is short of food, the enemy is flushed with victory, and we cannot stand against them. My idea is to send someone to offer surrender to Cao Cao and thus get him to attack Jizhou. Your brother will be forced to return thither, which will leave you free to join in the attack. We may capture Yuan Shang. Should Cao Cao begin to get the better of your brother’s army, we will lend our force to help Yuan Shang against Cao Cao; and as Cao Cao’s base of supply is distant, we shall drive him off. And we can seize on Jizhou and begin our great design.”

“Supposing this scheme be attempted, who is the man for a messenger?”

“I have one Xin Pi, Xin Ping’s younger brother. Xin Pi is the magistrate here in this very place. He is a fluent speaker and good scholar and suited to your purpose.”

So Xin Pi was summoned and came readily enough. Letters were given him and an escort of three thousand soldiers took him beyond the border. He traveled as quickly as possible.

At that time Cao Cao’s camp was at the Xiping Pass and he was attacking Liu Biao, who had sent Liu Bei out to offer the first resistance. No battle had yet taken place.
Soon after his arrival, Xin Pi was admitted to the Prime Minister’s presence. After the ceremonies of greeting, Cao Cao asked the object of the visit. Xin Pi explained that Yuan Tan wanted assistance and presented his dispatches. Cao Cao read them and told the messenger to wait in his camp while he called his officers to a council.

The council met. Cheng Yu said, “Yuan Tan has been forced into making this offer because of the pressure of his brother’s attack. Put no trust in him.”

Lu Qian and Man Chong said, “You have led your armies here for a special purpose. How can you abandon that and go to assist Yuan Tan?”

“Gentlemen, not one of you is giving good advice,” interposed Xun You. “This is how I regard it. Since there is universal trouble, in the midst of which Liu Biao remains quietly content with his position between the River Zhang and the River Han, it is evident that he has no ambition to enlarge his borders. The Yuans hold four regions and have many legions of soldiers. Harmony between the two brothers means success for the family, and none can foresee what will happen in the empire. Now take advantage of this fraternal conflict and let them fight till they are weakened and have to yield to our Prime Minister. Then Yuan Shang can be removed, and when the times are suitable, Yuan Tan can be destroyed in his turn. Thus peace will ensue. This present combination of circumstances is to be taken advantage of to full measure.”

Cao Cao realized the truth of this and treated Xin Pi well.

At a banquet Cao Cao said, “But is this surrender of Yuan Tan real or false? Do you really think that Yuan Shang’s army is sure to overcome him?”

Xin Pi replied, “Illustrious Sir, do not inquire into the degree of sincerity; rather regard the situation. The Yuans have been suffering military losses for years and are powerless without, while their strategists are put to death within. The brothers seize every chance to speak evil of each other, and their country is divided. Add to this famine, supplemented by calamities and general exhaustion, and everybody, wise as well as simple, can see that the catastrophe is near and the time ordained of Heaven for the destruction of the Yuans is at hand. Now you have a force attacking the capital of Jizhou—Yejun—and if Yuan Shang will not return to give aid, the place of refuge is lost. If he helps, then Yuan Tan will follow up and smite him, making use of your power to destroy the remnant of his brother’s army, just as the autumn gale sweeps away the fallen leaves. Now Liu Biao’s Jingzhou is rich, the government peaceful, the people submissive, and it cannot be shaken. Moreover, there is no greater threat to it than the North of Yellow River. If that be reduced, then the task is complete. I pray you, Sir, think of it.”

“I am sorry that I did not meet you earlier,” said Cao Cao, much gratified with this speech.

Forthwith orders were given to return and attack Jizhou. Liu Bei, fearing this retirement was only a ruse, allowed it to proceed without interference and himself returned to Jingzhou.

When Yuan Shang heard that Cao Cao had crossed the Yellow River, he hastily led his army back to Yejun, ordering Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang to guard the rear.
Yuan Tan started from Pingyuan with a force in pursuit. He had proceeded only a dozen miles when he heard a bomb and two bodies of troops came out in front of him and checked his progress. Their leaders were Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang.

Yuan Tan reined in and addressed them, saying, “While my father lived, I never treated you badly. Why do you support my brother and try to injure me?”

The two generals had no reply to make, but they dismounted and bowed before him yielding submission.

Yuan Tan said, “Do not surrender to me but to the Prime Minister.”

And he led them back to camp, where he waited the arrival of Cao Cao and then presented the pair. Cao Cao received them well. He promised his daughter to Yuan Tan to wife, and he appointed the two brothers as advisers.

When Yuan Tan asked Cao Cao to attack Jizhou, the reply was: “Supplies are short and difficult to transport. I must turn the waters of River Ji into the White River whereby to convey my grain and afterwards I can advance.”

Ordering Yuan Tan to remain in Pingyuan, Cao Cao retired into camp at Liyang. The two brothers Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang, who were renegades from Yuan Shang, were now raised to noble rank and followed the army as supernumeraries.

Guo Tu noted this advancement and said to Yuan Tan, “He has promised you a daughter to wife. I fear that bodes no good. Now he has given titles of nobility to the two Lus and taken them with him. This is a bait for the northern people, and at the same time he intends evil toward us. You, my lord, should have two generals’ seals engraved and send them secretly to the brothers so that you may have friends at court ready for the day when Cao Cao shall have broken your brother’s power, and we can begin to work against him.”

The seals were engraved and sent.

As soon as the Lu brothers received them, they informed Cao Cao, who smiled, saying, “He wants your support so he sends you seals as officers. I will consider it as soon as Yuan Shang has been dealt with. In the meantime you may accept the seals till I shall decide what to do.”

Thenceforward Cao Cao planned Yuan Tan’s doom.

Shen Pei and his master also discussed the current situation. Yuan Shang said, “Cao Cao is getting grain into the White River, which means an attack on Jizhou. What is to be done?”

Shen Pei replied, “Send letters to Yin Kai, Commander of Wuan, bidding him camp at Maocheng to secure the road to Shangdang, and direct Ju Gu, son of Ju Shou, to maintain Handan as a distant auxiliary. Then you may advance on Pingyuan and attack Cao Cao.”

The plan seemed good. Yuan Shang left Shen Pei and Chen Lin in charge of Yejun, appointed two Commanders Ma Yan and Zhang Zi as Van Leaders, and set out hastily for Pingyuan.

When Yuan Tan heard of the approach of his brother’s army, he sent urgent messages to Cao Cao, who said to himself, “I am going to get Jizhou this time.”

Just at this time it happened that Xun You came down from the capital. When he heard that Yuan Shang was attacking his brother Yuan Tan, he sought Cao Cao and said,
“You, Sir, sit here on guard. Are you waiting till Heaven’s thunder shall strike the two Yuans?”

“I have thought it all out,” said Cao Cao.

Then he ordered Cao Hong to go and fight against Yejun, while he led another army against Yin Kai in Maocheng. Yin Kai could make no adequate defense and was killed by Xu Chu. His soldiers ran away and presently joined Cao Cao’s army. Next Cao Cao led the army to Handan, and Ju Gu came out to fight him. Zhang Liao advanced to fight with Ju Gu, and after the third encounter Ju Gu was defeated and fled. Zhang Liao went after him, and when their two horses were not far apart, Zhang Liao took his bow and shot. The fleeing warrior fell as the bowstring twanged. Cao Cao completed the rout, and Ju Gu’s force was broken up.

Now Cao Cao led his armies to an attack on Yejun. Cao Hong had arrived before, and a regular siege began. The army encompassed the city and began by throwing up great mounds. They also tunneled subterranean ways.

Within the city Shen Pei turned his whole care to the defense and issued the severest commands. The Commander of the East Gate, Feng Li, got intoxicated and failed to keep his watch for which he was severely punished. Feng Li resented this, sneaked out of the city, went over to the besiegers, and told them how the place could be attacked.

“The earth within the Pearly Gate is solid enough to be tunneled, and entrance can be effected there,” said the traitor.

So Feng Li was sent with three hundred men to carry out his plan under cover of darkness.

After Feng Li had deserted to the enemy, Shen Pei went every night to the wall to inspect the soldiers on duty. The night of the sapping he went there as usual and saw that there were no lights outside the city and all was perfectly quiet.

So he said to himself, “Feng Li is certain to try to come into the city by an underground road.”

Whereupon he ordered his troops to bring up stones and pile them on the cover of the tunnel opening. The opening was stopped up and the attacking party perished in the tunnel they had excavated.

Cao Cao having failed in this attempt abandoned the scheme of underground attack. He drew off the army to a place above the River Huan to await till Yuan Shang should return to relieve the city.

Yuan Shang heard of the defeat of Yin Kai and Ju Gu, and the siege of his own city, and bethought himself of relieving it.

One of his commanders, Ma Yan, said, “The high road will surely be ambushed. We must find some other way. We can take a by-road from the West Hills and get through by River Fu, whence we can fall upon Cao Cao’s camp.”

The plan was acceptable and Yuan Shang started off with the main body, Ma Yan and Zhang Zi being rear guard.

Cao Cao’s spies soon found out this move, and when they reported it, he said, “If Yuan Shang comes by the high road, I shall have to keep out of the way; but if by the West Hills’ by-road, I can settle him in one battle. And I think he will show a blaze as a signal to the besieged that they may make a sortie. I shall prepare to attack both.”

So Cao Cao made his preparations. Now Yuan Shang went out by River Fu east toward Yangping, and near this
he camped. Thence to Yejun was five miles. River Fu ran beside the camp. He ordered his soldiers to collect firewood and grass ready for the blaze he intended to make at night as his signal. He also sent Li Mu, a civil officer, disguised as an officer of Cao Cao’s army, to inform Shen Pei of his intentions.

Li Mu reached the city wall safely and called out to the guards to open. Shen Pei recognized his voice and let him in. Thus Shen Pei knew of the arrangements for his relief, and it was agreed that a blaze should be raised within the city so that the sortie could be simultaneous with Yuan Shang’s attack. Orders were given to collect inflammables.

Then said Li Mu, “As your food supply is short, it would be well for the old people, the feeble soldiers and the women to surrender. This will come upon them as a surprise, and we will send the soldiers out behind them.”

Shen Pei promised to do all this, and next day they hoisted on the wall a white flag with the words The populace of Jizhou surrender! on it.

“Ho ho! This means no food,” said Cao Cao. “They are sending away the non-combatants to escape feeding them. And the soldiers will follow behind them.”

Cao Cao bade Zhang Liao and Xu Huang laid an ambush of three thousand troops on both sides while he went near the wall in full state. Presently the gates were opened and out came the people supporting their aged folks and leading their little ones by the hand. Each carried a white flag. As soon as the people had passed the gate, the soldiers followed with a rush.

Then Cao Cao showed a red flag, and the ambushing soldiers led by Zhang Liao and Xu Huang fell upon the sortie. The troops tried to return and Cao Cao’s force made a direct attack. The chase continued to the drawbridge, but there Cao Cao’s force met with a tremendous shower of arrows and crossbow bolts which checked the advance. Cao Cao’s helmet was struck and the crest carried away. His leaders came to pull him back, and the army retired.

As soon as Cao Cao had changed his dress and mounted a fresh horse, he set out at the head of the army to attack Yuan Shang’s camp.

Yuan Shang led the defense. The attack came simultaneously from many directions. The defenders were quite disorganized and presently defeated. Yuan Shang led his troops back by the West Hills and made a camp under their shelter. Thence he sent messengers to urge Ma Yan
and Zhang Zi to bring up the supports. He did not know that Cao Cao had sent Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang to persuade these two into surrender and that they had already passed under Cao Cao’s banner, and he had conferred upon them the title of lordship.

Just before going to attack the West Hills, Cao Cao sent Lu Xiang, Lu Kuang, Ma Yan, and Zhang Zi to seize the source of Yuan Shang’s supplies.

Yuan Shang had realized he could not hold the hills, so he went by night to Lankou. Before he could get camped, he saw flaring lights springing up all around him and soon an attack began. He was taken aback and had to oppose the enemy with his men half armed, his steeds unsaddled. His army suffered, and he had to retreat another fifteen miles. By that time his force was too enfeebled to show any resistance, and as no other course was possible, he sent the Imperial Protector of Yuzhou, Yin Ku, to Cao Cao’s camp and ask that he might surrender.

Cao Cao feigned to consent, but that night he sent Zhang Liao and Xu Huang to raid Yuan Shang’s camp. Then it became flight, abandoning everything, seals, emblems of office, and even personal clothing. Yuan Shang made for the Zhongshan Mountains.

Then Cao Cao came to attack Jizhou City, and to help out this Xun You suggested drowning the city by turning the course of the River Zhang. Cao Cao adopted the suggestion and at once sent a small number of men to dig a channel to lead the water to the city. All told, it was seventeen miles.

Shen Pei saw the diggers from the city wall and noticed that they made only a shallow channel.

He chuckled, saying to himself, “What is the use of such a channel to drown out the city from a deep river?”

So he made no preparations to keep out the water.

But as soon as night came on, Cao Cao increased his army of diggers tenfold and by daylight the channel was deepened to twenty spans and the water was flowing in a great stream into the city where it already stood some spans deep. So this misfortune was added to the lack of food.

Xin Pi now displayed the captured seal and garments of Yuan Shang hung out on spears, to the great shame of their late owner, and called upon the people of the city to surrender. This angered Shen Pei, who avenged the insult by putting to death on the city wall the whole of the Xin family who were within the city. There were eighty of them, and their severed heads were cast down from the walls. Xin Pi wept exceedingly.

Shen Pei’s nephew Shen Rong, one of the gate wardens, was a dear friend of Xin Pi, and the murder of Xin Pi’s family greatly distressed him. He wrote a secret letter offering to betray the city and tied it to an arrow, which he shot out among the besiegers. The soldiers found it, gave it to Xin Pi who took it to his chief.

Cao Cao issued an order: “The family of the Yuans should be spared when the city should be taken and that no
one who surrendered should be put to death.”

The next day the soldiers entered by the west gate, opened for them by Shen Rong. Xin Pi was the first to prance in on horseback and the army followed.

When Shen Pei, who was on the southeast of the city, saw the enemy within the gates, he placed himself at the head of some horsemen and dashed toward them. He was met and captured by Xu Huang who bound him and led him outside the city.

On the road they met Xin Pi, who ground his teeth with rage at the murderer of his relatives and then struck the prisoner over the head with his whip, crying, “Murder! Blood drinker! You will meet your death!”

Shen Pei retorted, “Traitor! Seller of the city! I am very sorry I was not to have slain you before.”

When the captive was taken into Cao Cao’s presence, Cao Cao said, “Do you know who opened the gate to let me in?”

“No; I know not.”

“It was your nephew Shen Rong who gave up the gate,” said Cao Cao.

“He was always unprincipled, and it has come to this!” said Shen Pei.

“The other day when I approached the city, why did you shoot so hard at me?”

“I am sorry we shot too little.”

“As a faithful adherent of the Yuans, you could do no otherwise. Now will you come over to me?”

“Never; I will never surrender.”

Xin Pi threw himself on the ground with lamentations, saying, “Eighty of my people murdered by this ruffian. I pray you slay him, O Prime Minister!”

“Alive, I have served the Yuans;” said Shen Pei, “dead, I will be their ghost! I am no flattering time-server as you are. Kill me!”

Cao Cao gave the order. They led him away to put him to death.

On the execution ground he said to the executioners, “My lord is in the north, I pray you not to make me face the south.”

So Shen Pei knelt facing the north and extended his neck for the fatal stroke.

Who of all the official throng
In the North was true like Shen Pei?
Sad his fate! He served a fool,
But faithful, as the ancient humans.
Straight and true was every word,
Never from the road he swerved.
Faithful unto death, he died
Gazing toward the lord he’d served.

Thus died Shen Pei and from respect for his character Cao Cao ordered that he be buried honorably on the north of the city.

The Prime Minister then entered the city of Yejun. As he was starting, he saw the executioners hurrying forward a prisoner who proved to be Chen Lin.

“You wrote that manifesto for Yuan Shao. If you had only directed your diatribe against me, it would not have mattered. But why did you shame my forefathers?” said Cao Cao.
“When the arrow is on the string, it must fly,” replied Chen Lin.

Those about Cao Cao urged him to put Chen Lin to death, but he was spared on account of his genius and given a civil post.

Now Cao Cao’s eldest son was named Cao Pi. At the taking of the cities he was eighteen years of age. When he was born a dark purplish halo hung over the house for a whole day. One who understood the meaning of such manifestations had secretly told Cao Cao that the halo belonged to the imperial class and portended honors which could not be put into words.

At eight the lad could compose very skillfully, and he was well read in ancient history. Now he was an adept at all military arts and very fond of fencing. He had gone with his father on the expedition to Jizhou. When Yejun had fallen, he led his escort in the direction of the Yuan family dwelling, and when he reached it, he strode in, sword in hand. When some commander would have stayed him, saying that by order of the Prime Minister no one was to enter the house, Cao Pi bade them begone. The guards fell back and he made his way into the private rooms, where he saw two women weeping in each other’s arms. He went forward to slay them.

Four generations of honors, gone like a dream,
Fate follows on ever surely, though slow she seems.

The fate of the two women will be told in the next chapter.
Chapter 33
A Gallant Warrior, Cao Pi Marries Lady Zhen;
An Expiring Star, Guo Jia Settles Liaodong.

As was said, Cao Pi, having made his way into the Yuan’s palace, saw two women there whom he was about to kill. Suddenly a red light shone in his eyes, and he paused.

Lowering his sword he said, “Who are you?”

“Thy handmaid is the widow of the late Yuan Shao, Lady Liu,” said the elder of the two, “and this is the wife of Yuan Xi, his second son. She was of the Zhen family. When Yuan Xi was sent to command in Youzhou, her family objected to her going so far from home and she stayed behind.”

Cao Pi drew Lady Zhen toward him and looked at her closely. Her hair hung disordered, her face was dusty and tear-stained, but when, with the sleeve of his inner garment, he had wiped away these disfigurements, he saw a woman of exquisite loveliness, with a complexion clear as jade touched with the tender bloom of a flower petal, a woman indeed beautiful enough to ruin a kingdom.

“I am the son of the Prime Minister,” said he turning to the elder woman. “I will guarantee your safety, so you need fear nothing.”

He then put by his sword and sat down at the upper end of the room.

As Cao Cao was entering the gate of the conquered city of Yejun, Xu You rode up very quickly, passed him, and pointed with his whip at the gate, saying, “Sir Prime Minister, you would not have been here but for my plans!”

Cao Cao laughed, but his generals were very annoyed.

When Cao Cao reached the residence, he stopped at the gate and asked, “Has anyone gone in?”

The guard at the gate said, “Your son is within.”

Cao Cao called him out and chided him, but the wife of the late Imperial Protector interposed, saying, “But not for your son we had not been saved. I desire to present to you a lady, of the Zhen family, as a handmaid to your son.”

Cao Cao bade them bring out the girl and she bowed before him. After looking at her intently, he said, “Just the wife for him!”

And he told Cao Pi to take Lady Zhen to wife.

After the conquest of Jizhou had been made quite sure, Cao Cao made a ceremonial visit to the Yuan family cemetery, where he sacrificed at the tomb of his late rival, bowed his head, and lamented bitterly.

Turning to his generals, he said, “Not long ago when Yuan Shao and I worked together in military matters, he...”

1Lady Zhen, a famous lady in the North of Yellow River (Hebei), wife to Yuan Xi, son of Yuan Shao. When Yuan Shao was defeated by Cao Cao, both Cao Cao’s sons Cao Pi and Cao Zhi claimed her, not to mention Cao Cao himself. Cao Pi eventually won her hand, wedded her, and made her an empress. She later became the Goddess of River Luo, according to folktales.

2Xu You devised the plans to destroy the Wuchao granary of Yuan Shao.
asked me, saying, ‘If this disturbance does not cease, what fronts should be held?’ And I replied asking him what he thought. He said, ‘In the North of Yellow River, to the south I would hold the Yellow River; on the north, guard against Yan and Dai\(^3\) and absorb the hordes from the Gobi Desert. Thence southward I would try for the empire, and do you not think I might succeed?’ I replied saying, ‘I depend upon the wisdom and force of the world directed by scholars; then every thing would be possible.’ These words seem as if spoken only yesterday, and now he is gone. Thinking over it I cannot refrain from tears.”

His officers were deeply affected. Cao Cao treated the widow generously, giving her gold and silks and food to her content.

He also issued a further order that the taxes in the North of Yellow River would be remitted in consideration of the sufferings of the people during the warlike operations. He sent up a memorial to the Throne and formally became Imperial Protector of Jizhou.

One day Xu Chu, riding in at the east gate, met Xu You, who called out to him, “Would you fellows be riding through here if it had not been for me?”

Xu Chu replied, “We fellows, those who survive and those who perished, risked our lives in bloody battle to get this city, so do not brag of your deeds!”

“You are a lot of blockheads, not worth talking about,” said Xu You.

Xu Chu in his anger drew his sword and ran Xu You through. Then he took Xu You’s head and went to tell Cao Cao the reason.

Said Cao Cao, “He and I were old friends, and we could joke together. Why did you kill him?”

Cao Cao blamed Xu Chu very severely and gave orders that Xu You should be buried honorably.

Cao Cao inquired for any wise and reputable people who were known to be living in the region and was told: “Commander Cui Yan, of Dongwu, who had on many

\(^3\) Yan and Dai were two ancient states in the north during the Warring States period.
occasions given valuable advice to Yuan Shao. As the advice was not followed, he had pleaded indisposition and remained at home.”

Cao Cao sent for this man, gave him an office and said to him, “According to the former registers, there are three hundred thousand households in the region so that one may well call it a major region.”

Cui Yan replied, “The empire is rent, and the country is torn; the Yuan brothers are at war, and the people have been stripped naked. Yet, Sir, you do not hasten to inquire after local conditions and how to rescue the people from misery, but first compute the possibilities of taxation. Can you expect to gain the support of our people by such means?”

Cao Cao accepted the rebuke, changed the policy, thanked him, and treated him all the better for it.

As soon as Jizhou was settled, Cao Cao sent to find out the movements of Yuan Tan. He heard Yuan Tan was ravaging Ganling, Anping, Bohai, and Hejian. Moreover, the scouts brought the news that Yuan Shang had fled to Zhongshan, and Yuan Tan led an expedition against him, but Yuan Shang would not face a battle. He had gone away to Youzhou to his brother Yuan Xi. Yuan Tan, having gathered Yuan Shang’s troops, prepared for another attempt on Jizhou.

Whereupon Cao Cao summoned him. Yuan Tan refused to come, and Cao Cao sent letters breaking off the marriage between Yuan Tan and his daughter. Soon after Cao Cao led an expedition against Yuan Tan and marched to Pingyuan, whereupon Yuan Tan sent to Liu Biao to beg assistance. Liu Biao sent for Liu Bei to consult about this.

Liu Bei said, “Cao Cao is very strong now that he has overcome Jizhou, and the Yuans will be unable to hold out for long. Nothing is to be gained by helping Yuan Tan, and it may give Cao Cao the loophole he is always looking for to attack this place. My advice is to keep the army in condition and devote all our energies to defense.”

“Agreed; but what shall we say?” said Liu Biao.

“Write to both the brothers as peacemaker in gracious terms.”

Accordingly Liu Biao wrote thus to Yuan Tan:

“When the superior person would escape danger, that person does not go to an enemy state. I heard recently that you had crooked the knee to Cao Cao, which was ignoring the enmity between him and your father, rejecting the duties of brotherhood, and leaving behind you the shame of an alliance with the enemy. If your brother, the successor to Jizhou, has acted unfraternally, your duty was to bend your inclination to follow him and wait till the state of affairs had settled. Would it not have been very noble to bring about the redress of wrongs?”

And to Yuan Shang, Liu Biao wrote:

“Your brother, the ruler of Qingzhou, is of an impulsive temperament and confuses right with wrong. You ought first to have destroyed Cao Cao in order to put an end to the hatred which your father bore him and, when the situation had become settled, to have endeavored to redress the wrongs. Would not that have been well? If you persist in following this mistaken course, remember the hound and the hare, both so wearied that the peasant got them all.”

From this letter Yuan Tan saw that Liu Biao had no intention of helping him, and feeling he alone could not withstand Cao Cao. He abandoned Pingyuan and fled to Nanpi, whither Cao Cao pursued him.

The weather was very cold and the river was frozen, so that the grain boats could not move. Wherefore Cao Cao ordered the inhabitants to break the ice and tow the boats. When the peasants heard the order they ran away. Cao Cao angrily wished to arrest and behead them. When they heard this, they went to his camp in a body and offered their heads
“If I do not kill you, my order will not be obeyed,” said Cao Cao. “Yet supposing I cut off your heads, but I cannot bear to do that severity. Quickly flee to the hills and hide so that my soldiers do not capture you.”

The peasants left weeping.

Then Yuan Tan led out his army against Cao Cao. When both sides were arrayed, Cao Cao rode to the front.

Pointing with his whip at his opponent, Cao Cao railed at him, saying, “I treated you well. Why then have you turned against me?”

Yuan Tan replied, “You have invaded my land, captured my cities, and broken off my marriage. Yet you accuse me of turning against you!”

Cao Cao ordered Xu Huang to go out and give battle. Yuan Tan bade Peng An accept the challenge. After a few bouts Peng An was slain; and Yuan Tan, having lost, fled and went into Nanpi, where he was besieged. Yuan Tan, panic-stricken, sent Xin Ping to see Cao Cao and arrange surrender.

“He is nothing but a tickle-minded child,” said Cao Cao. “He is never of the same mind two days running, and I cannot depend upon what he says. Now your brother Xin Pi is in my employ and has a post of importance, you had better remain here also.”

“Sir Prime Minister, you are in error,” said Xin Ping. “It is said that the lord’s honor is the servant’s glory; the lord’s sadness is the servant’s shame. How can I turn my back on the family I have so long served?”

Cao Cao felt he could not be persuaded and sent him back. Xin Ping returned and told Yuan Tan the surrender could not be arranged.

Yuan Tan turned on him angrily, saying, “Your brother is with Cao Cao, and you want to betray me also!”

At this unmerited reproach such a huge wave of anger welled up in Xin Ping’s breast that he was overcome and fell in a swoon. They carried him out, but the shock had been too severe, and soon after he died. Yuan Tan regretted his conduct when it was too late.

Then Guo Tu said, “Tomorrow when we go out to battle, we will drive the people out in front as a screen for the soldiers, and we must fight a winning battle.”

That night they assembled all the common people of the place and forced into their hands swords and spears. At daylight they opened the four gates, and a huge party with much shouting came out at each, peasantry carrying arms in front, and soldiers behind them. They pushed on toward Cao Cao’s camps, and a melee began lasted till near midday.
But this was quite indecisive, although heaps of dead lay everywhere.

Seeing that success was at best only partial, Cao Cao rode out to the hills near and thence had the drums beaten for a new attack under his own eye. His officers and troops, seeing that he could observe them in person, exerted themselves to the utmost, and Yuan Tan’s army was severely defeated. Of the peasantry driven into the battlefield, multitudes were slain.

Cao Hong, who displayed very great valor, burst into the press of battle and met Yuan Tan face to face. The two slashed and hammered at each other, and Yuan Tan was killed.

Guo Tu saw that his side was wholly disorganized and tried to withdraw into the shelter of Nanpi. Yue Jing saw this and opened a tremendous discharge of arrows so that Guo Tu fell and the moat was soon filled with dead.

The city of Nanpi fell to Cao Cao. He entered and set about restoring peace and order. Then suddenly appeared a new army under two of Yuan Xi’s generals, Jiao Chu and Zhang Neng. Cao Cao led out his troops to meet them, but the two commanders laid down their arms and yielded. They were rewarded with the rank of lordship.

Then Zhang Yan, the leader of the Black Hills Brigands, came with one hundred thousand troops and gave in his submission. He was made General Who Pacifies the North.

By an order of Cao Cao, the head of Yuan Tan was exposed, and death was threatened to anyone who should lament for him. Nevertheless a man dressed in mourning attire was arrested for weeping below the exposed head at the north gate. Taken into Cao Cao’s presence, he said he was Wang Xiu and had been an officer in Qingzhou. He had been expelled because he had remonstrated with Yuan Tan. But when the news of Yuan Tan’s death came, he had come to weep for his late master.

“Did you know of my command?” said Cao Cao.
“‘I knew it.”
“Yet you were not afraid?”
“When one has received favors from a man in life, it would be wrong not to mourn at his death. How can one stand in the world if one forgets duty through fear? If I could bury his body, I would not mind death.”

Cao Cao said, “And there were many such as this in the north. What a pity that the Yuan family could not make the best of them! But if they had done so, I should never have dared to turn my eyes toward this place.”

The intrepid mourner was not put to death. The remains of Yuan Tan were properly interred, and Wang Xiu was well treated and even given an appointment.

In his new position Wang Xiu was asked for advice about the best way to proceed against Yuan Shang, who had fled to his second brother, but Wang Xiu remained silent, thereby winning from Cao Cao renewed admiration for his constancy.

“He is indeed loyal!” said Cao Cao.
Then he questioned Guo Jia, who advised him, saying, “Give Yuan Xi’s former generals the command and ask them to attack Youzhou.”

Whereupon Jiao Chu and Zhang Neng were given the command and reinforced by the armies under Lu Xiang, Lu Kuang, Ma Yan, and Zhang Zi to bring about the surrender of Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang. Then six generals, to attack
Youzhou along three routes. Other armies led by Li Dian, Yue Jing, and Zhang Yan were sent against Gao Gan at Bingzhou.

The two Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang heard of Cao Cao’s advance with dismay for they had no hope of successful resistance. Therefore they abandoned Youzhou and hastily marched into Liaoxi to seek refuge with the Wuhuan tribespeople in the frontier Wuhuan State.

Then Wuhuan Chu, new Imperial Protector of Youzhou, was not disposed to incur the enmity of the powerful Cao Cao, so he called his subordinates together to swear them to support him.

Wuhuan Chu said, “I understand that Cao Cao is the most powerful man of the day, and I am going to support him, and those who do not go with me I shall put to death.” Each in turn smeared his lips with the blood of sacrifice and took the oath, till it came to the turn of Han Heng.

Instead he dashed his sword to the ground, crying, “I have received great promotions and benefits from the Yuans. Now my lord has been vanquished. My knowledge was powerless to save him, and my bravery insufficient to cause me to die for him: I have failed in my duty. But I refuse to commit the crowning act of treachery and ally myself with Cao Cao.”

This speech made the others turn pale.

The chief said, “For a great undertaking, there must be lofty principles. However, success does not necessarily depend upon universal support, and since Han Heng is actuated by such sentiments, then let him follow his conscience.”

So Wuhuan Chu turned Han Heng out of the assembly. Wuhuan Chu then went out of the city to meet and welcome Cao Cao’s army and rendered his submission. He was well received and the title given him of General Who Guards the North.

Then the scouts came to report: “Generals Li Dian, Yue Jing, and Zhang Yan had marched to Bingzhou, but that Gao Gan had occupied Huguan Pass and could not be dislodged.”

So Cao Cao marched thither himself. The defender still maintaining his position, Cao Cao asked for plans. Xun You proposed that a band should go over pretending to be deserters. Cao Cao assented and then called the two Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang, to whom he gave whispered orders. They left with their companies.

Soon they came near the pass and called out, saying, “We are old officers in Yuan Shao’s armies forced into surrender to Cao Cao. We find him so false and he treats us so meanly that we want to return to help our old master.
Wherefore quickly open your gates to us.”

Gao Gan was suspicious, but he let the two officers come up to the pass; and when they had stripped off their armor and left their horses, they were permitted to enter.

And they said to Gao Gan, “Cao Cao’s troops are new to the country and not settled. You ought to fall upon their camp this very evening. If you approve, we will lead the attack.”

Gao Gan decided to trust them and prepared to attack, giving the two brothers the leadership of ten thousand soldiers. But as they drew near Cao Cao’s camp, a great noise arose behind them and they found themselves in an ambush attacked on all sides. Realizing too late that he had been the victim of a ruse, Gao Gan retreated to the pass, but found it occupied by Li Dian and Yue Jing. Gao Gan then made the best of his way to the Chieftain of the Xiongnu People. Cao Cao gave orders to hold the passes and sent companies in pursuit.

When Gao Gan reached the boundary of the Xiongnu State, he met Ce Xian, the Khan of the northern tribespeople.

Gao Gan dismounted and made a low obeisance, saying, “Cao Cao is conquering and absorbing all the borders and your turn, O King, will come quickly. I pray you help me and let us smite together for the safety of the northern regions.”

Ce Xian the Khan replied, “I have no quarrel with Cao Cao. Why then should he invade my land? Do you desire to embroil me with him?”

He would have nothing to do with Gao Gan and sent him sway. At his wits’ end, Gao Gan decided to try to join Liu Biao and go southward so far on his journey as Shanglu when he was taken prisoner and put to death by Governor Wang Yan. His head was sent to Cao Cao, and Wang Yan received lordship for this service.

Thus Bingzhou was conquered. Then Cao Cao began to discuss the overthrow of the Wuhuan State.

Cao Hong, speaking in the name of other officials, said, “The two Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang are nearly done for and too weak to be feared. They have fled far into the Sea of Sand. If we pursue them thither, it may bring down Liu Biao and Liu Bei upon the capital. Should we be unable to rescue it, the misfortune would be immense. Wherefore we beg you to return to Xuchang.”

But Guo Jia was of different advice.

“You are wrong,” said he. “Though the prestige of our lord fills the empire, yet the peoples of the desert, relying upon their inaccessibility, will not be prepared against us. Wherefore I say attack, and we shall conquer them. Beside Yuan Shao was kind to the nomads, and the two brothers have been more so. They must be destroyed. As for Liu Biao he is a mere gossip, who needs not cause the least anxiety. And Liu Bei is unfit for any heavy responsibility and will take no trouble over a light one. You may leave the base with perfect safety and make as long an expedition as you choose. Nothing will happen.”

“You speak well, O Guo Jia,” said Cao Cao.

He led his legions, heavy and light, to the edge of the desert, with many wagons. The expedition marched into the Gobi Desert. The rolling ocean of yellow sand spread its waves before them, and they saw far and near the eddying sand pillars, and felt the fierce winds that drove
them forward. The road became precipitous and progress difficult. Cao Cao began to think of returning and spoke thereof to Guo Jia, who had advised the journey.

Guo Jia had speedily fallen victim to the effects of the climate, and at this time he lay in his cart very ill.

Cao Cao’s tears fell as he said, “My friend, you are suffering for my ambition to subdue the Gobi Desert. I cannot bear to think you should be ill.”

“You have always been very good to me,” said the sick man, “and I can never repay what I owe you.”

“The country is exceedingly precipitous, and I am thinking of going back. What think you?”

Guo Jia replied, “The success of an expedition of this kind depends upon celerity. To strike a sudden blow on a distant spot with a heavy baggage train is difficult. To ensure success the need is light troops and a good road to strike quickly before an enemy has time to prepare. Now you must find guides who know the road well.”

Then the sick adviser was left at Yezhou for treatment, and they sought among the natives for some persons to serve as guides. Tian Chou, one of Yuan Shao’s old generals, knew those parts well, and Cao Cao called him and questioned him.

Tian Chou said, “Between autumn and summer this route is under water, the shallow places too heavy for wheeled traffic, the deep parts insufficient for boats. It is always difficult. Therefore you would do better to return and at Lulong cross the Baitan Pass into the desert. Then advance to Liucheng and smite before there is time to prepare. One sudden rush will settle King Mao Dun.”

For this valuable information and plan, Tian Chou was made General Who Calms the North, and went in advance as leader and guide. Next after him came Zhang Liao, and Cao Cao brought up the rear. They advanced by double marches.

Tian Chou led Zhang Liao to White Wolf Hills, where they came upon Yuan Xi, Yuan Shang, and King Mao Dun and a force of ten thousand cavalry. Zhang Liao galloped to inform his chief, and Cao Cao rode up to the top of an eminence to survey the foe. He saw a large mass of cavalry without any military formation advancing in a disorderly crowd.

Said he, “They have no formation. We can easily rout...
them.”

Then he handed over his ensign of command to Zhang Liao who, with Xu Chu, Yu Jin, and Xu Huang, made a vigorous attack from four different points, with the result that the enemy was thrown into confusion. Zhang Liao rode forward and slew King Mao Dun, and the other generals gave in. Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang with a few thousand of horse got away east into Liaodong.

Cao Cao then led his army into Liucheng. For his services, Tian Chou was conferred the rank of Lord of Liucheng and Commander of that county.

But Tian Chou declined the rank, saying with tears, “I am a renegade and a fugitive. It is my good fortune that you spared my life, and how can I accept a rank for betraying Lulong? I would rather die than accept the lordship.”

Cao Cao recognized that reason was on Tian Chou’s side and conferred upon him the office of Court Counselor. Cao Cao then pacified the Xiongnu Chieftains, collected a large number of horses, and at once set out on the homeward march.

The season was winter, cold and dry. For seventy miles there was no water, and grain also was scanty. The troops fed on horse flesh. They had to dig very deep, three or four hundred spans to find water.

When Cao Cao reached Yezhou, he rewarded those who had remonstrated with him against the expedition.

He said, “I took some risk in going so far, but by good fortune I have succeeded. With the aid of Heaven I have secured victory. I could not be guided by your advice, but still they were counsels of safety, and therefore I reward you to prove my appreciation of advice and that hereafter you may not fear to speak your minds.”

Adviser Guo Jia did not live to see the return of his lord. His coffin was placed on the bier in a hall of the government offices, and Cao Cao went thither to sacrifice to his manes.

Cao Cao mourned for him, crying, “Alas! Heaven has smitten me: Guo Jia is dead!”

Then turning to his officers he said, “You, gentlemen, are of the same age as myself, but he was very young to die. I needed him for the future generation, and unhappily he has been torn from me in the flower of his age. My heart and my bowels are torn with grief.”

The servants of the late adviser presented his last testament, which they said his dying hand had written, and he had told them to say, “If the Prime Minister shall follow the advice given herein, then Liaodong will be secure.”

Cao Cao opened the cover and read, nodding his head in agreement and uttering deep sighs. But no other person knew what was written therein.
Shortly after, Xiahou Dun at the head of a delegation presented a petition, saying, "For a long time the Governor of Liaodong, Gongsun Kang, has been contumacious, and it bodes ill for peace that the Yuan brothers have fled to him. Would it not be well to attack before they move against you?"

"I need not trouble your tiger courage, Sirs," said Cao Cao smiling. "Wait a few days and you will see the heads of our two enemies sent to me."

They could not believe it.

As has been related the two Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang escaped to the east with a few hundreds of horse. The Governor of Liaodong was a son of Gongsun Du the Warlike, the General of Han. Gongsun Kang was a native of Xiangping. When he heard that Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang were on their way to his territory, he called a council to decide upon his plan.

At the council Gongsun Gong rose, saying, "When Yuan Shao was alive, he nourished the plan of adding this territory to his own. Now his sons, homeless, with a broken army and no officers, are coming here. It seems to me like the dove stealing the magpie’s nest. If we offer them shelter, they will assuredly intrigue against us. I advise that they be inveigled into the city, put to death, and their heads sent to Cao Cao, who will be most grateful to us."

Said the Governor Gongsun Kang, "I have one fear: Cao Cao will come against us. If so, it would be better to have the help of the Yuans against him."

"Then you can send spies to ascertain whether Cao Cao’s army is preparing to attack us. If it is, then save the Yuans alive; if not, then follow my advice."

It was decided to wait till the spies came back.

In the meantime, Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang had taken counsel together as they approached Liaodong, saying, "Liaodong has a large army, strong enough to oppose Cao Cao. We will go thither and submit till we can slay the Governor and take possession. Then when we are strong enough, we will attack and recover our own land."

With these intentions they went into the city. They were received and lodged in the guests’ quarters. But when they wished to see Gongsun Kang, he put them off with the excuse of indisposition.

However, before many days the spies returned with the news that Cao Cao’s army was quiescent and there was no hint of any attack.

Then Gongsun Kang called Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang into his presence. But before they came he hid swordsmen and ax-men behind the arras in the hall.

When the visitors came and had made their salutations, Gongsun Kang bade them be seated.

Now it was bitterly cold and on the couches where they were sitting were no coverings. So Yuan Shang said, "May we have cushions?"

The host said, "When your heads take that long, long journey, will there be any cushions?"

Before Yuan Shang could recover from his fright,
Gongsun Kang shouted, “Why do you not begin?”

At this out rushed the assassins and the heads of the two brothers were cut off as they sat. Packed in a small wooden box they were sent to Cao Cao at Yezhou.

All this time Cao Cao had been calmly waiting. His impatient officers had petitioned in a body, saying, “Let’s march to the capital to ward off Liu Biao’s threat if we are not going to attack the east.”

Cao Cao said, “I am waiting for the heads of the enemy. We will go as soon as the heads arrive.”

In their secret hearts they laughed. But then, surely enough, messenger soon came from Liaodong bringing the heads. Then they were greatly surprised.

And when the messenger presented Gongsun Kang’s letters, Cao Cao cried, “Just as Guo Jia said!”

He amply rewarded the messenger, and the Governor of Liaodong was made Lord of Xiangping and General of the Left Army. When the officers asked what had happened, Cao Cao told them what the late adviser had predicted. He read to them the dead officer’s testament, which ran something like this:

“Yuan Xi and Yuan Shang are going to Liaodong. Illustrious Sir, you are on no account to attack, for Gongsun Kang has long lived in fear lest the Yuans should absorb his country. When they arrive, Gongsun Kang will hesitate. If you attack, he will save the Yuans to help him; if you wait, they will work against each other. This is evident.”

The officers simply jumped with surprise to see how perfectly events had been foreseen. Then Cao Cao at the head of all his officers performed a grand sacrifice before the coffin of the wise Guo Jia. He had died at the age of thirty-eight, after eleven years of meritorious and wonderful service in wars.

When Heaven permitted Guo Jia’s birth,
It made him ablest man on earth.
He knew by rote all histories,
From him war kept no mysteries.
Like Fan Li’s, his plans were quite decisive,
As Chen Ping’s, his strokes were most incisive.
Too soon he ran his earthly race,
Too soon the great beam fell from place.
When Cao Cao returned to Jizhou, he sent off the coffin of his late adviser to Capital Xuchang where it was interred. Then Cheng Yu and others said, “As the north has been overcome, it is time to settle the south.” Cao Cao was pleased and said, “That has long occupied my thoughts.”

The last night he spent in Jizhou, Cao Cao went to the eastern corner tower and stood there regarding the sky. His only companion was Xun You.

Presently Cao Cao said, “That is a very brilliant glow there in the south. It seems too strong for me to do anything there.”

“What is there that can oppose your heaven-high prestige?” said Xun You.

Suddenly a beam of golden light shot up out of the earth.

“Surely a treasure is buried there,” remarked Xun You. They went down from the city wall, called some guards, and led them to the point whence the light proceeded. There the men were ordered to dig.

The southern skies with portents glow,
The northern lands their treasures show.

What the diggers found will appear in the next chapter.

Chapter 34
Behind The Screen, Lady Cai Overhears A Secret;
Across The Tan Torrent, The Dilu Horse Carries Its Master.

The diggers at the spot whence the golden light proceeded presently unearthed a bronze bird. Looking at it, Cao Cao turned to his companion, saying, “What is the portent?”

“You will remember that the mother of the praiseworthy King Shun dreamed of a jade bird before his birth, so certainly it is a felicitous omen,” said Xun You.

Cao Cao was very pleased, and he ordered forthwith the building of a lofty tower to celebrate the find, and they began to dig foundations and cut timber, to burn tiles and to smooth bricks for the Bronze Bird Tower on the banks of the River Zhang. Cao Cao set a year for the building.

His younger son, Cao Zhi, said, “If you build a terraced tower, you should add two others, one on each side. The center tower as the tallest should be called the Bronze Bird Tower. The side towers named Jade Dragon Tower and Golden Phoenix Tower. Then connect these by flying bridges and the effect will be noble.”

“My son, your words are very good; and by and bye when the building is complete, I can solace my old age therein.”

Cao Cao had five sons, but this one Cao Zhi was the most clever and his essays were particularly elegant. His father was very fond of him and, seeing that the young man took an interest in the building, Cao Cao left him with his elder brother Cao Pi at Yejun to superintend the work, while he led a half-a-million army that had recently been captured from the Yuans back to Capital Xuchang.

When he arrived, he distributed rewards liberally and 1King Shun was an ideal king in ancient China. King Yao gave him the throne due to his virtues and merits.
memorialized the Throne obtaining the title of the Pure Lord for the late Guo Jia. And he took Guo Jia’s son, Guo Ye, to be brought up in his own family.

Next Cao Cao began to consider the reduction of Liu Biao’s power.

Xun You said, “The Grand Army has only just returned from the north and needs rest. Wait half a year that the soldiers may recover from the fatigue of the campaign, and both Liu Biao and Sun Quan will fall at the first roll of the drums.”

Presently Cao Cao approved of this plan. To enrich his troops, he assigned certain lands to them to till while they rested.

In Jingzhou, Liu Biao had been very generous to Liu Bei ever since he had come as a fugitive seeking shelter. One day at a banquet there came news that two generals, Zhang Wu and Chen Sun, who had tendered their submission, had suddenly begun plundering the people in Jiangxia. They evidently meant rebellion.

“If they really rebel, it will cause a lot of trouble,” said Liu Biao, rather dismayed.

“Do not let that trouble you. I will go and settle it,” said Liu Bei.

Pleased with this proposal, Liu Biao told off thirty thousand troops and placed them under his friend, and the army marched as soon as the orders were issued. In a short time it reached the scene, and the two malcontents came out to fight. Liu Bei, Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun took their stand beneath the great banner and looked over at the enemy.

Zhang Wu was riding a handsome prancing horse, and Liu Bei said, “He certainly has a fine steed.”

As he spoke, Zhao Yun galloped out with his spear set and dashed toward the enemy. Zhang Wu came out to meet him, but the combat was very brief for Zhang Wu was soon killed by a spear thrust. Thereupon Zhao Yun laid a hand upon the bridle of the fallen man’s horse to lead it back to his own side. The slain rebel’s companion Chen Sun at once rode after Zhao Yun, whereupon Zhang Fei uttered a loud shout and rode out to meet him. With one thrust Zhang Fei slew the rebel. Their followers now scattered, and Liu Bei speedily restored order in Jiangxia and returned to Jingzhou City.

Liu Biao, grateful for this service, rode out to the
boundary to welcome the victors. They reentered the city and grand banquets were instituted, at which they emptied great goblets in congratulations over the victory.

At one of these banquets the Imperial Protector said, “With such heroism as my brother has shown, Jingzhou has one upon whom to rely. But a source of sorrow is the borders with the lands of Yue, Wu, and Shu\(^2\), from which a raid may come at any time. Zhang Lu of Shu and Sun Quan of Yue and Wu are to be feared.”

“But I have three bold generals,” said Liu Bei, “quite equal to any task you can set them. Send Zhang Fei to keep ward on the southern border of Yue, Guan Yu to guard the city of Guzi against Zhang Lu in the west, and Zhao Yun holding the Three Gorges will protect you from Sun Quan. Why need you grieve?”

The scheme appealed strongly to the Imperial Protector, but Cai Mao did not approve.

So he spoke to his sister, Liu Biao’s wife, saying, “Liu Bei is putting his troops in such commanding positions all round the region. That is the danger.”

Lady Cai, thus influenced by her brother, undertook to remonstrate, and that night began by saying to Liu Biao, “Some in the Jingzhou army seem to have a great liking for Liu Bei. They are always coming and going. You ought to take precautions. I do not think you should let Liu Bei stay in the city. Why not send him on some mission?”

“Liu Bei is a good man,” replied the Imperial Protector. “I think others differ from you,” said the lady.

Liu Biao said nothing but muttered to himself. Soon after he went out of the city to see Liu Bei and noticed he was riding a very handsome horse. They told him it was a prize taken from the recently conquered rebels; and as he praised it very warmly, Liu Bei presented it to him. Liu Biao was delighted and rode it back to the city. Kuai Yue saw it and asked where it had come from. The Imperial Protector told him it was a gift from Liu Bei.

Kuai Yue said, “My passed-away brother, Kuai Liang, knew horses very well, and I am not a bad judge. This horse has teartracks running down from its eyes and a white blaze on its forehead. It is called a Dilu horse, and it is a danger to his master. That is why Zhang Wu was killed. I advise you not to ride it.”

Liu Biao began to think.

Soon after he asked Liu Bei to a banquet and in the

\(^2\)Yue, Wu, and Shu were three states during the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States periods. Yue and Wu’s territory was approximately that of the South Land. Shu was in the mountainous region west of Jingzhou.
course of it said, “You kindly presented me with a horse lately, and I am most grateful. But you may need it on some of your expeditions and, if you do not mind, I would like to return it.”

Liu Bei rose and thanked him.

The Imperial Protector continued, “You have been here a long time, and I fear I am spoiling your career as a warrior. Now Xinye in Xiangyang is no poverty-stricken town. How would you like to garrison it with your own troops?”

Liu Bei naturally took the offer as a command and set out as soon as he could, taking leave of the Imperial Protector the next day. And so he took up his quarters in Xinye.

When he left Jingzhou City, he noticed in the gate a person making him emphatic salutations, and the man presently said, “You should not ride that horse.”

Liu Bei looked at the man and recognized in the speaker one of the secretaries of Liu Biao named Yi Ji, a native of Shanyang. So Liu Bei hastily dismounted and asked why.

Yi Ji replied, “Yesterday I heard that Kuai Yue told the Imperial Protector that that horse was a Dilu horse and brought disaster to its owner. That is why it was returned to you. How can you mount it again?”

“I am deeply touched by your affection,” replied Liu Bei, “but a person’s life is governed by fate, and what a horse can interfere with that?”

Yi Ji admitted his superior view, and thereafter he kept in touch with Liu Bei wherever he went.

The arrival of Liu Bei in Xinye was a matter of rejoicing to all the inhabitants, and the whole administration was reformed.

In the spring of the twelfth year of Rebuilt Tranquillity (AD 207), Liu Bei’s wife, Lady Gan, gave birth to a son who was named Liu Shan. The night of his birth a crane settled on the roof of the house, screeched some forty times and then flew away westward.

Just at the time of birth a miraculous incense filled the chamber. Lady Gan one night had dreamed that she was looking up at the sky, and the constellation of the Great Bear had fallen down her throat. And she conceived soon after.

While Cao Cao was absent from the capital on his northern expedition, Liu Bei went to Liu Biao and said to him, “Why do you not take this opportunity to march against the capital? An empire might follow from that.”

“I am well placed here,” was the reply. “Why should I attempt other things?”

Liu Bei said no more. Then the Imperial Protector invited him into the private apartments to drink. While they were so engaged, Liu Biao suddenly began to sigh despondently.

“O brother, why do you sigh thus?” asked Liu Bei.

“I have a secret sorrow that is difficult to speak about,” said Liu Biao.

Liu Bei was on
the point of asking what it was when Lady Cai came and stood behind the screen, whereat Liu Biao hung his head and became silent. Before long host and guest bade each other farewell, and Liu Bei went back to his own place at Xinye.

That winter they heard that Cao Cao had returned from Liucheng, and Liu Bei sighed when he reflected that his friend had paid no heed to his advice.

Unexpectedly a messenger came from the capital city with a request that Liu Bei would go thither to consult with the Imperial Protector. So he started at once with the messenger to Jingzhou City. He was received very kindly, and when the salutations were over, the two men went into the private quarters at the rear to dine.

Presently Liu Biao said, “Cao Cao has returned, and he is stronger than ever. I am afraid he means to absorb this region. I am sorry I did not follow your advice for I have missed an opportunity.”

“In this period of disruption, with strife on every side, one cannot pretend that there will be no more opportunities. If you only take what that offers, there will be nothing to regret.”

“What you say, brother, is quite to the point,” replied Liu Biao.

They drank on for a time till presently Liu Bei noticed that his host was weeping, and when he asked the cause of these tears, Liu Biao replied, “It is that secret sorrow I spoke of to you before. I wished to tell you, but there was no opportunity that day.”

“O brother, what difficulty have you, and can I assist you? I am entirely at your service.”

“My first wife, of the Chen family, bore me a son Liu Qi, my eldest. He grew up virtuous but weakly and unfitted to succeed me in my office. Later I took a wife of the Cai family, who bore me a son named Liu Zong, fairly intelligent. If I pass over the elder in favor of the younger, there is the breach of the rule of primogeniture. But if I follow law and custom, there are the intrigues of the Cai family and clan to be reckoned with. Further, the army is in the hollow of their hands. There will be trouble, and I cannot decide what to do.”

Liu Bei said, “All experience proves that to set aside the elder for the younger is to take the way of confusion. If you fear the power of the Cai faction, then gradually reduce its power and influence, but do not let doting affection lead you into making the younger your heir.”

Liu Biao pondered silent. But Lady Cai had had a suspicion why her lord had summoned Liu Bei and what was the subject of discussion, so she had determined to listen secretly. She was behind the screen when the matter was talked over, and she conceived deep resentment against Liu Bei for what he had said.

On his side, Liu Bei felt that his advice had fallen upon a forbidden subject, and he arose and walked across the room. As he did so he noticed that he was getting heavy and stiff, and a furtive tear stole down his cheek as he thought of the
past. When he returned and sat down, his host noticed the
traces of weeping and asked the cause of his sorrow.

“In the past I was always in the saddle, and I was slender
and lithe. Now it is so long since I rode that I am getting
stout, and the days and months are slipping by—wasted. I
shall have old age on me in no time, and I have accomplished
nothing. So I am sad.”

“I have heard a story that when you were at Xuchang at
the season of green plums, you and Cao Cao were discussing
heroes. You mentioned this name and that to him as humans
of parts, and he rejected everyone of them. Finally he said
that you and he were the only two persons of real worth in
the whole empire. If he with all his power and authority did
not dare to place himself in front of you, I do not think you
need grieve about having accomplished nothing.”

At this flattering speech Liu Bei, as wine was getting
the better of him and in a half maudlin manner, replied, “If
I only had a starting point, then I would not be afraid of
anyone in a world full of fools.”

His host said no more and the guest, feeling that he
had slipped up in speech, rose as if drunk, took leave,
and staggered out saying he must return to his lodging to
recover.

The episode has been celebrated in a poem:

When with crooking fingers counting,
Cao Cao reckoned up the forceful
Humans of real determination,
Only two he found; and one was
Liu Bei. But by inaction
He had grown both fat and slothful;
Yet the months and years in passing
Fretted him with nought accomplished.

Though Liu Biao kept silence when he heard the words
of Liu Bei, yet he felt the more uneasy. After the departure
of his guest, he retired into the inner quarters where he met
his wife.

Lady Cai said, “I
happened to be behind
the screen just now and
so heard the words of Liu
Bei. They betray scant
regard for other people
and mean that he would
take your territory if he
could. If you do not remove him, it will go ill with you.”

Her husband made no reply, but only shook his head.

Then Lady Cai took counsel with her kinsman Cai Mao,
who said, “Let me go to the guest-house and slay him
forthwith, and we can report what we have done.”

His sister consented and he went out, and that night told
off a party of soldiers to do the foul deed.

Now Liu Bei sat in his
lodging by the light of a
single candle till about
the third watch, when he
prepared to retire to bed. He
was startled by a knock at
his door and in came Yi Ji,
who had heard of the plot
against his new master and
had come in the darkness
to warn him. He related the details of the plot and urged
speedy departure.

“I have not said farewell to my host. How can I go
away?” said Liu Bei.

“If you go to bid him farewell, you will fall a victim to
the Cai faction,” said Yi Ji.  
So Liu Bei said a hasty good-bye to his friend, called up his escort, and they all mounted and rode away by the light of the stars toward Xinye. Soon after they had left the soldiers arrived at the guest-house, but their intended victim was already well on his way.  

Naturally the failure of the plot chagrined the treacherous Cai Mao, but he took the occasion to scribble some calumnious verses on one of the partitions.  

Then he went to see Liu Biao to whom he said, “Liu Bei has treacherous intentions, as can be seen from some lines written on the wall. And his hurried departure is suspicious.”  

Liu Biao felt doubtful, but he went to the guest-house and there on the wall he read this poem:

Too long, far too long I have dreamed life away,  
Gazing at scenery day after day.  
A dragon can never be kept in a pond,  
He should ride on the thunder to heaven and beyond.

Greatly angered by what he read, Liu Biao drew his sword and swore to slay the writer. But before he had gone many paces, his anger had already died down, and he said to himself, “I have seen much of the man, but have never known him write verses. This is the handiwork of someone who wishes to sow discord between us.”  

So saying, he turned back and with the point of his sword scraped away the poem. Then, putting up his sword, he mounted and rode home.  

By and bye Cai Mao reminded him, saying, “The soldiers are awaiting your orders to go to Xinye and arrest LiuBei.”  

‘There is no hurry,” he replied.  
Cai Mao saw his brother-in-law’s hesitation and again sought his sister.  
She said, “Soon there is to be the great gathering at Xiangyang, and we can arrange something for that day.”  

Next day Cai Mao petitioned the Imperial Protector, saying, “We have had several fruitful harvests recently. I pray you, Sir, attend the Full Harvest Festival at Xiangyang. It would be an encouragement to the people.”  

“I have been feeling my old trouble lately. I certainly cannot go,” replied he, “but my two sons can go to represent me and to receive the guests.”  

“They are full young,” replied Cai Mao. “They may make some mistakes.”  

“Then go to Xinye and request LiuBei to receive the guests,” said Liu Biao.

Nothing could have pleased Cai Mao more, for this would bring Liu Bei within reach of his plot. Without loss of time he sent to Liu Bei requesting him to go to preside at the Festival.
It has been said that Liu Bei made the best of his way home to Xinye. He felt that he had offended by that slip in speech, but determined to keep silence about it and attempt no explanation. So he discussed it with nobody. Then came the message asking him to preside at the Festival, and he needed counsel.

Sun Qian said, “You have seemed worried and preoccupied lately, and I think something untoward happened at Jingzhou. You should consider well before you accept this invitation.”

Thereupon Liu Bei told his confidants the whole story.

Guan Yu said, “You yourself think your speech offended the Imperial Protector, but he said nothing to show displeasure. You need pay no attention to the babble of outsiders like Yi Ji. Xiangyang is quite near and, if you do not go, Liu Biao will begin to suspect something really is wrong.”

“You speak well,” said Liu Bei.

Said Zhang Fei, “Banquets are no good; gatherings are no better. It is best not to go.”

“Let me take three hundred horse and foot as escort: There will be no trouble then,” said Zhao Yun.

“That is the best course,” said Liu Bei.

They soon set out for the gathering place, and Cai Mao met them at the boundary and was most affable and courteous. Soon arrived the Imperial Protector’s sons at the head of a great company of officers, civil and military. Their appearance put Liu Bei more at ease. He was conducted to the guest-house, and Zhao Yun posted his men so as to guard it completely, while he himself, armed, remained close to his chief.

Liu Qi said to Liu Bei, “My father is feeling unwell and could not come, wherefore he begs you, Uncle Liu Bei, to preside at the various ceremonies and give encouragement to the officers who administer the region.”

“Really I am unfit for such responsibilities,” said Liu Bei. “But my brother’s command must be obeyed.”

Next day it was reported that the officials from forty-two counties of nine territories of Jingzhou had all arrived.

Then Cai Mao said to Kuai Yue, “This Liu Bei is the villain of the age and if left alive will certainly work harm to us. He must be got rid of now.”

“I fear you would forfeit everybody’s favor if you harmed him,” replied Kuai Yue.

“I have already secretly spoken in these terms to the Imperial Protector,” said Cai Mao, “and I have his word here.”

“So it may be regarded as settled. Then we can prepare.”

Cai Mao added, “My brothers are ready. Cai He is posted on the road to the Xian Hills from the east gate; Cai Zhong and
Cai Xun are on the north and south roads. No guard is needed on the west as the Tan Torrent is quite safeguard enough. Even with legions, Liu Bei could not get over that.”

Kuai Yue replied, “I notice that Zhao Yun never leaves him. I feel sure he expects some attack.”

“I have placed five hundred men in ambush in the city.”

“We will tell Wen Ping and Wang Wei to invite all the military officers to a banquet at one of the pavilions outside the city, and Zhao Yun will be among them. Then will be our opportunity.”

Cai Mao thought this a good device for getting Zhao Yun out of the way.

Now oxen and horses had been slaughtered and a grand banquet prepared. Liu Bei rode to the residence on the horse of ill omen, and when he arrived, the steed was led into the back part of the enclosure and tethered there. Soon the guests arrived, and Liu Bei took his place as master of the feast, with the two sons of the Imperial Protector, one on each side. The guests were all arranged in order of rank. Zhao Yun stood near his lord sword in hand as a faithful henchman should do.

Then Wen Ping and Wang Wei came to invite Zhao Yun to the banquet they had prepared for the military officers. But he declined. However, Liu Bei told him to go, and, after some demur, he went. Then Cai Mao perfected his final arrangements, placing his people surrounding the place like a ring of iron. The three hundred guards that formed the escort of Liu Bei were sent away to the guest-house.

All were ready and awaiting the signal. At the third course, Yi Ji took a goblet of wine in his hands and approached Liu Bei, at the same time giving him a meaningful look. Then in a low voice he said, “Make an excuse to get sway.”

Liu Bei understood and presently rose and went to the inner chamber, and then he went to the backyard. There he found Yi Ji, who had gone thither after presenting the cup of wine.

Yi Ji then told him, saying, “Cai Mao plots to kill you, and all the roads have been guarded except that to the west. My lord, you must lose no time to depart.”

Liu Bei was quite taken aback. However, he got hold of the Dilu horse, opened the door of the garden, and led it out. Then he took a flying leap into the saddle and galloped off without waiting for the escort. He made for the west gate. At the gate the wardens wanted to question him, but he only whipped up his steed and rode through. The guards at the gate ran off to report to Cai Mao, who quickly went in pursuit with five hundred soldiers.

As has been said Liu Bei burst out at the west gate. Before he had gone far, there rolled before him a river barring the way. It was the Tan Torrent, many score spans in width, which pours its waters into the River Xiang. Its current was very swift.

Liu Bei reached the bank and saw the river was unfordable. So he turned his horse and rode back. Then, not far off, he saw a cloud of dust and knew that his pursuers were
therein. He thought that it was all over. However, he turned again toward the swift river, and seeing the soldiers now quite near, plunged into the stream. A few paces, and he felt the horse’s fore legs floundering in front, while the water rose over the skirt of his robe.

Then he plied the whip furiously, crying, “Dilu, Dilu, why betray me?”

Whereupon the good steed suddenly reared up out of the water and, with one tremendous leap, was on the western bank. Liu Bei felt as if he had come out of the clouds.

In after years the famous court official, Su Dongpo, wrote a poem on this leap over the Tan Torrent:

I’m growing old, the leaves are sere,
My sun slopes westward, soon will sink,
And I recall that yesteryear
I wandered by Tan River brink.
Irresolute, anon I paused,
Anon advanced, and gazed around,
I marked the autumn’s reddened leaves,

And watched them eddying to the ground.
I thought of all the mighty deeds
Of him who set the House of Han
On high, and all the struggles since,
The battlefields, the blood that ran.
I saw the nobles gathered round
The board, set in the Banquet Hall;
Amid them, one, above whose head
There hung a sword about to fall.
I saw him quit that festive throng
And westward ride, a lonely way;
I saw a squadron follow swift,
Intent the fugitive to slay.
I saw him reach the River Tan,
Whose swirling current rushes by;
Adown the bank he galloped fast,
“Now leap, my steed!” I heard him cry.
His steed’s hoofs churn the swollen stream;
What chills he that the waves run high?
He hears the sound of clashing steel,
Of thundering squadrons coming nigh.
And upward from the foaming waves
I saw two peerless beings soar;
One was a destined western king,
And him another dragon bore.
The Tan still rolls from east to west.
Its roaring torrent never dry.
Those dragons twain, ah! Where are they?
Yes, where? But there is no reply.
The setting sun, in dark relief
Against the glowing western sky.
Throws out the everlasting hills
While, saddened, here I stand and sigh.
Humans died to found the kingdoms three,
Which now as misty dreams remain.
Of greatest deeds the traces oft
Are faint that fleeting years retain.

Thus Liu Bei crossed the rolling river. Then he turned and looked back at the other bank which his pursuers had just gained.

"Why did you run sway from the feast?" called out Cai Mao.

"Why did you wish to harm a person who has done you no injury?" replied Liu Bei.

"I have never thought of such a thing. Do not listen to what people say to you."

But Liu Bei saw that his enemy was fitting an arrow to his bowstring, so he whipped up his steed and rode away southwest.
“What spirits aided him?” said Cai Mao to his followers.

Then Cai Mao turned to go back to the city, but in the gate he saw Zhao Yun coming out at the head of his company of guards.

*By wondrous leap the dragon steed his rider’s life could save,
Now follows him, on vengeance bent, his master’s henchman brave.*

The next chapters will tell what fate befell the traitor.

Chapter 35
Liu Bei Meets A Recluse At Nanzhang;
Shan Fu Sees A Noble Lord At Xinye.

Just as Cai Mao was going into the city, he met Zhao Yun and his three hundred coming out. It had happened that, while at the banquet, Zhao Yun had noticed some movement of soldiers and horses and had at once gone to the banquet-hall to see if all was well with his lord. Missing Liu Bei from his place, Zhao Yun had become anxious and gone to the guest-house. There he heard that Cai Mao had gone off to the west gate with troops. So he quickly took his spear, mounted and went, he and the escort, in hot haste along the same road.

Meeting Cai Mao near the gate, he said, “Where is my lord?”

“He left the banquet-hall quite suddenly, and I know not whither he has gone,” was the reply.

Now Zhao Yun was cautious and careful and had no desire to act hastily, so he urged his horse forward till he came to the river. There he was checked by a torrent without ford or bridge.

At once he turned back and shouted after Cai Mao, “You invited my lord to a feast. What means this going after him with a squadron of horse?”

Cai Mao replied, “It is my duty to guard the officials of forty-two counties who have assembled here, as I am the Chief Commander.”

“Whither have you driven my lord?” asked Zhao Yun.

“They tell me he rode quite alone out through the west gate, but I have not seen him.”

Zhao Yun was anxious and doubtful. Again he rode to the river and looked around. This time he noticed a wet track on the farther side. He thought to himself that it was almost an
impossible crossing for a person and a horse, so he ordered his followers to scatter and search. But they also could find no trace of Liu Bei.

Zhao Yun turned again to the city. By the time he had reached the wall, Cai Mao had gone within. He then questioned the gate wardens, and they all agreed in saying that Liu Bei had ridden out at full gallop. That was all they knew. Fearing to reenter the city lest he should fall into an ambush, Zhao Yun started for Xinye.

After that marvelous life-saving leap over the Tan Torrent, Liu Bei felt elated but rather dazed. He could not help telling himself, “My safety is due to an especial interposition of Providence.”

Following a tortuous path, he urged his steed toward Nanzhang. But the sun sank to the west and his destination seemed yet a long way off. Then he saw a young cowherd seated on the back of a buffalo and playing on a short flute.

“If I were only as happy!” sighed Liu Bei.

He checked his horse and looked at the lad, who stopped his beast, ceased playing on the pipe, and stared fixedly at the stranger.

“You must be Liu Bei, the general who fought the Yellow Scarves,” said the boy presently.

Liu Bei was taken aback.

“How can you know my name, a young rustic like you living in such a secluded place?” said he.

“Of course I do not know you, but my master often has visitors, and they all talk about Liu Bei, the tall man whose hands hang down below his knees and whose eyes are very prominent. They say he is the most famous man of the day. Now you, General, are just such a man as they talk about, and surely you are he.”

“Well, who is your master?”

“My master’s name is Sima Hui. He belongs to Yingchuan and his Taoist appellation is Water Mirror.”

“Who are your master’s friends that you mentioned?”

“They are Pang Degong and Pang Tong of Xiangyang.”

“And who are they?”

“Uncle and nephew. Pang Degong is ten years older than my master; the other is five years younger. One day my master was up in a tree picking mulberries when Pang Tong arrived. They began to talk and kept it up all day, my master did not come down till the evening. My master is very fond of Pang Tong and calls him brother.”

“And where does your master live?”

“In that wood there, in front,” said the cowherd pointing to it. “There he has a farmstead.”

“I really am Liu Bei, and you might lead me to your master that I may salute him.”

The cowherd led the way for about one mile, when Liu Bei found himself in front of a farm house. He dismounted and went to the center door. Suddenly came to his ear the sound of a lute most skillfully played and the air was extremely beautiful. He stopped his guide and would not allow him to announce a visitor, but stood there rapt by the melody.
Suddenly the music ceased.
He heard a deep laugh and a man appeared, saying, “Amidst the clear and subtle sounds of the lute, there suddenly rang out a high note as though some noble man was near.”
“That is my master,” said the lad pointing.
Liu Bei saw before him a figure slender and straight as a pine tree, a very “chosen vessel”. Hastening forward he saluted. The skirt of his robe was still wet from the river.
“You have escaped from a grave danger today, Sir,” said Water Mirror.
Liu Bei was startled into silence, and the cowherd said to his master, “This is Liu Bei.”
Water Mirror asked him to enter; and when they were seated in their relative positions as host and guest, Liu Bei glanced round the room. Upon the bookshelves were piled books and manuscripts. The window opened upon an exquisite picture of pines and bamboos and a lute lay upon a stone couch. The room showed refinement in its last degree.
“Whence come you, Illustrious Sir?” asked the host.
“By chance I was passing this way and the lad pointed you out to me. So I came to bow in your honored presence. I cannot tell what pleasure it gives me.”
Water Mirror laughed, saying, “Why this mystery? Why must you conceal the truth? You have certainly just escaped from a grave danger.”
Then Liu Bei told the story of the banquet and the flight.
“I knew it all from your appearance,” said his host. “Your name has long been familiar, but whence comes it that, up to the present, you are only a homeless devil?”
“I have suffered many a check during my life,” said Liu Bei, “and through one of them am I here now.”
“It should not be so. But the reason is that you still lack the one person to aid you.”
“I am simple enough in myself, I know. But I have Sun Qian, Mi Zhu, and Jian Yong on the civil side, and for warriors I have Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, and Zhao Yun. These are all most loyal helpers, and I depend upon them not a little.”
“Your fighting generals are good: Fit to oppose a legion. The pity is you have no really able adviser. Your civilians are but pallid students of books, not people fitted to weave and control destiny.”
“I have always yearned to find one of those marvelous recluses who live among the hills till their day arrive. So far I have sought in vain.”
“You know what the Teacher Confucius said, ‘In a hamlet of ten households there must be one true person.’ Can you say there is no one?”
“I am simple and uninstructed. I pray you enlighten me.”
“You have heard what the street children sing:

_In eight and nine years begins decay,
Four years, then comes the fateful day,
When destiny will show the way,
And the dragon flies out of the mire!_

“This song was first heard when the new reign style was adopted. The first line was fulfilled when Imperial Protector
Liu Biao lost his first wife, and when his family troubles began. The next line relates to the approaching death of Liu Biao, and there is not a single person among all his crowd of officers who has the least ability. The last two lines will be fulfilled in you, General.”

Liu Bei started up in surprise, crying, “How could such a thing be?”

Water Mirror continued, “At this moment the marvelously clever people of the earth are all here and you, Sir, ought to seek them.”

“Where are they? Who are they?” said Liu Bei quickly.

“If you could find either Sleeping Dragon or Young Phoenix, you could restore order in the empire.”

“But who are these two?”

His host clapped his hands, smiled and said, “Good, very good!”

When Liu Bei persisted and pressed home his questions, Water Mirror said, “It is getting late. You might stay the night here, General, and we will talk over these things tomorrow.”

He called to a lad to bring wine and food for his guest and his horse was taken to the stable and fed. After Liu Bei had eaten, he was shown to a chamber opening off the main room and went to bed. But the words of his host would not be banished, and he lay there only dozing till far into the night.

Suddenly he became fully awake at the sound of a knock at the door and a person entering. And he heard his host say, “Where are you from?”

Liu Bei rose from his couch and listened secretly.

He heard the visitor reply, “It has long been said that Liu Biao treated good people and bad people as they each should be treated. So I went to see for myself. But that reputation is undeserved. He does treat good people correctly but he cannot use them, and he treats wicked people in the right way, all but dismissing them. So I left a letter for him and went away. And here I am.”

Water Mirror replied, “You, capable enough to be the adviser of a king, ought to be able to find someone fit to serve. Why did you cheapen yourself so far as to go to Liu Biao? Beside, there is a real hero right under your eyes and you do not know him.”

“It is just as you say,” replied the stranger.

Liu Bei listened with great joy for he thought this visitor was certainly one of the two he was advised to look for. Liu Bei would have shown himself then and there, but he thought that would look strange. So he waited till daylight, when he sought out his host.

“Who was it came last night?” said Liu Bei.

“A friend of mine,” was the reply.

Liu Bei begged for an introduction. Water Mirror said, “He wants to find an enlightened master, and so he has gone elsewhere.”

When Liu Bei asked his name, his host only replied, “Good, good!”

And when Liu Bei asked who they were who went by the names of Sleeping Dragon...
and Young Phoenix, he only elicited the same reply.

Liu Bei then, bowing low before his host, begged him to leave the hills and help him to bring about the restoration of the ruling house to its prerogatives.

But Water Mirror replied, “People of the hills and woods are unequal to such a task. However, there must be many far abler than I who will help you if you seek them.”

While they were talking, they heard outside the farm the shouts of troops and neighing of horses, and a servant came in to say that a general with a large company of soldiers had arrived. Liu Bei went out hastily to see who these were and found Zhao Yun. He was much relieved, and Zhao Yun dismounted and entered the house.

“Last night, on my return to Xinye,” said Zhao Yun, “I could not find you, my lord, so I followed at once and traced you here. I pray you return quickly, as I fear an attack on the city.”

So Liu Bei took leave of his host, and the whole company returned to Xinye. Before they had gone far another army appeared, and, when they had come nearer, they saw Guan Yu and Zhang Fei. They met with great joy, and Liu Bei told them of the wonderful leap his horse had made over the torrent. All expressed surprise and pleasure.

As soon as they reached the city, a council was called and Zhao Yun said, “You ought first of all to indite a letter to Liu Biao telling him all these things.”

The letter was prepared and Sun Qian bore it to the seat of government in Jingzhou City. He was received, and Liu Biao at once asked the reason of Liu Bei hasty flight from the festival. Whereupon the letter was presented, and the bearer related the machinations of Cai Mao and told of the escape and the amazing leap over the Tan Torrent.

Liu Biao was very angry, sent for Cai Mao, and berated him soundly, saying, “How dare you try to hurt my brother?”

And he ordered Cai Mao out to execution.

Liu Biao’s wife, Cai Mao’s sister, prayed for a remission of the death penalty, but Liu Biao refused to be appeased.

Then spoke Sun Qian, saying, “If you put Cai Mao to death, I fear Uncle Liu Bei will be unable to remain here.”

Then Cai Mao was reprieved, but dismissed with a severe reprimand.

Liu Biao sent his eldest son Liu Qi back with Sun Qian to apologize. When
Liu Qi reached Xinye, Liu Bei welcomed him and gave a banquet in his honor. After some little drinking, the chief guest suddenly began to weep and presently said, “My step mother, Lady Cai, always cherishes a wish to put me out of the way, and I do not know how to avoid her anger. Could you advise me, Uncle?”

Liu Bei exhorted him to be careful and perfectly filial and nothing could happen. Soon after, the young man took his leave and wept at parting.

Liu Bei escorted Liu Qi well on his way and, pointing to his steed, said, “I owe my life to this horse. Had it not been for him, I had been already below the Nine Golden Springs.”

“It was not the strength of the horse, but your noble fortune, Uncle.”

They parted, the young man weeping bitterly. On reentering the city, Liu Bei met a person in the street wearing a hempen turban, a cotton robe confined by a black girdle, and black shoes. He came along singing a song:

“The universe is rived, O! Now nears the end of all.
The noble mansion quakes, O! What beam can stay the fall?
A wise one waits his lord, O! But hidden in the glen,
The seeker knows not him, O! Nor me, of common humans.”

Liu Bei listened.

“Surely this is one of the people Water Mirror spoke of,” thought he.

He dismounted, spoke to the singer, and invited him into his residence. Then when they were seated, he asked the stranger’s name.

“I am from Yingchuan, and my name is San Fu. I have known you by repute for a long time, and they said you appreciated humans of ability. I wanted to come to you but every way of getting an introduction seemed closed. So I bethought me of attracting your notice by singing that song in the market place.”

Liu Bei thought he had found a treasure and treated the newcomer with the greatest kindness. Then San Fu spoke of the horse that he had seen Liu Bei riding and asked to look at it. So the animal was brought round.

“Is not this a Dilu horse?” said San Fu. “But though it is a good steed, it risks his master. You must not ride it.”

“It has already fulfilled the omens,” said Liu Bei, and he related the story of the leap over the Tan Torrent.

“But that was saving his master, not risking him. It will surely harm someone in the end. But I can tell you how to avert the omen.”

“I should be glad to hear it,” said Liu Bei.

“If you have an enemy against whom you bear a grudge, give him this horse and wait till it has fulfilled the evil omens on this person, then you can ride it in safety.”

Liu Bei changed color.

“What, Sir! You are but a new acquaintance, and you would advise me to take an evil course and to harm another for my own advantage? No, Sir! I cannot listen.”
His guest smiled, saying, “People said you were virtuous. I could not ask you directly, so I put it that way to test you.”

Liu Bei’s expression changed. He rose and returned the compliment, saying, “But how can I be virtuous while I lack your teaching?”

“When I arrived here, I heard the people saying:

“Since Liu Bei came here, O blessed day! We’ve had good luck, long may he stay!”

“So you see, the effects of your virtue extend to the ordinary people.”

Thereupon San Fu was made Commanding Adviser of the army.

The one idea that held Cao Cao after his return from Jizhou was the capture of Jingzhou. He sent Cao Ren and Li Dian, with the two brothers Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang who had surrendered, to camp at Fancheng with thirty thousand troops and so threaten Jingzhou and Xiangyang. Thence he sent spies to find out the weak points.

Then the two Lu Xiang and Lu Kuang petitioned Cao Ren, saying, “Liu Bei is strengthening his position at Xinye and laying in large supplies. Some great scheme is afoot, and he should be checked. Since our surrender we have performed no noteworthy service and, if you will give us five thousand soldiers, we promise to bring you the head of Liu Bei.”

Cao Ren was only too glad, and the expedition set out. The scouts reported this to Liu Bei who turned to San Fu for advice.

San Fu said, “They must not be permitted to cross the boundary. Send Guan Yu and Zhang Fei left and right, each with one thousand troops, one to attack the enemy on the march, the other to cut off the retreat. You and Zhao Yun will make a front attack.”

Guan Yu and Zhang Fei started, and then Liu Bei went out at the gate with two thousand troops to oppose the enemy. Before they had gone far they saw a great cloud of dust behind the hills. This marked the approach of the Lu brothers. Presently, both sides being arrayed, Liu Bei rode out and stood by his standard.

He called out, “Who are you who thus would encroach on my territory?”

“I am the great General Lu Kuang, and I have the order of the Prime Minister to make you prisoner!” said the leader.

Liu Bei ordered Zhao Yun to go out, and the two generals engaged. Very soon Zhao Yun with a spear thrust had disposed of his opponent, and Liu Bei gave the signal
to attack. Lu Xiang could not maintain his position and led his troops off. Soon his force found themselves attacked by an army rushing in from the side led by Guan Yu. The loss was more than a half, and the remainder fled for safety.

About three miles farther on they found their retreat barred by an army under Zhang Fei, who stood in the way with a long spear ready to thrust, crying out, “Zhang Fei is waiting!”

Zhang Fei bore down upon Lu Xiang, who was slain without a chance of striking a blow. The troops again fled in disorder. They were pursued by Liu Bei, and the greater part killed or captured.

Then Liu Bei returned into Xinye where he rewarded San Fu and feasted his victorious soldiers.

Some of the defeated troops took the news of the deaths of the leaders and the capture of their comrades to Cao Ren at Fancheng.

Cao Ren, much distressed, consulted Li Dian who advised, saying, “The loss is due to our underestimation of our enemy. Now we should stay where we are, hold on, and request reinforcements.”

“No, no, not so,” said Cao Ren. “We cannot support calmly the death of two leaders and the loss of so many soldiers. We must avenge them quickly. Xinye is but a crossbow-slug of a place and not worth disturbing the Prime Minister for.”

“Liu Bei is a man of metal,” said Li Dian. “Do not esteem him lightly.”

“What are you afraid of?” said Cao Ren.

“The Rule of War says ‘To know your enemy and yourself is the secret of victory,’” replied Li Dian. “I am not afraid of the battle, but I do not think we can conquer.”

“You are a traitor!” cried Cao Ren angrily. “Then I will capture Liu Bei myself.”

“Do so. I will guard this city,” said Li Dian. “If you do not go with me, it is a proof that you are a traitor,” retorted Cao Ren.

At this reproach, Li Dian felt constrained to join the expedition. So they told off twenty five thousand troops with which they crossed the River Yu for Xinye.

The officers all keenly felt the shame of many slain, The chief determines on revenge and marches out again.

What measure of success the expedition met with will be related in the next chapter.
Chapter 36
Shan Fu’s Strategy: Fankou Is Captured;
Xu Shu’s Affection: Zhuge Liang Is Recommended.

In hot anger, Cao Ren lost no time in marching out to avenge the loss of so many of his army. He hastily crossed the River Yu to attack Xinye and trample it in the dust.

When Shan Fu got back into the city, he said to Liu Bei, “When Cao Ren, now at Fancheng, hears of his losses, he will try to retrieve them and will come to attack us.”

“What is the counter move?” asked Liu Bei.

“As he will come with all his force, his own city will be left undefended. We will surprise it.”

“How will you do it?”

The adviser leaned over and whispered to his chief. Whatever the plan was, it pleased Liu Bei, who made arrangements. Soon the scouts reported Cao Ren crossing the river with a mighty host.

“Just as I guessed,” said Shan Fu, hearing of it.

Then he suggested that Liu Bei should lead out one army against the invaders. Liu Bei did so, and, when the formation was complete, Zhao Yun rode to the front as champion and challenged the other side.

Li Dian rode out and engaged. At about the tenth bout Li Dian found he was losing and retired toward his own side. Zhao Yun pressed after him, but was checked by a heavy discharge of arrows from the wings. Then both sides stopped the battle and retired to their camps.

Li Dian reported to his chief: “Our enemy are brave, very full of spirit, and we will be hard to overcome. We had better retreat to Fancheng and wait for reinforcements.”

Cao Ren angrily replied, “You damped the army’s spirit before we started, and now you betray us. You have been bought, and you deserve death.”

wherefore certain orders were issued and Zhao Yun, leading five hundred troops, rode out on his prancing steed to break the array. He burst in, as directed, at the southeast and,
with great clamor and fighting, reached the center. Cao Ren made for the north, but Zhao Yun, instead of following him, made a dash westward and got through. Thence he turned round to the southeast again and smote till Cao Ren’s army was in disarray. Liu Bei gave a general advance signal, and the victory was complete. The beaten enemy retired.

San Fu forbade pursuit, and they returned. The loss of the battle convinced Cao Ren of the wisdom of his colleague Li Dian, and he sent for Li Dian to consult.

“They certainly have some very able person in Liu Bei’s army since my formation was so quickly broken,” said Cao Ren.

“My chief anxiety is about Fancheng,” said Li Dian.

“I will raid their camp this night,” said Cao Ren. “If I succeed, we will decide upon what should be done next. If I fail, we will return to Fancheng.”

“Their camp will be well prepared against such a thing, and you will fail,” said Li Dian.

“How can you expect to fight successfully when you are so full of doubts?” said Cao Ren, angrily.

He held no more converse with his cautious colleague, but himself took command of the van and set out. Li Dian was relegated to the rear. The attack on the enemy’s camp was fixed for the second watch.

Now as San Fu was discussing plans with his chief a whirlwind from the northeast went by, which San Fu said, “There will be a raid on the camp tonight.”

“How shall we meet it?” said Liu Bei.

“The plans are quite ready,” was the reply.

San Fu whispered them to the chief. So at the second watch, when the enemy arrived, they saw fires on all sides, the stockades and huts burning. Cao Ren understood at once that all hope of a surprise was vain, and he turned to get away as quickly as possible. This was the signal for Zhao Yun to fall on, and that cut Cao Ren’s return road. He hastened north toward the river, and reached the bank, but, while waiting for boats to cross the stream, up came Zhang Fei and attacked.

By dint of great efforts and with the support of Li Dian, Cao Ren got into a boat, but most of the soldiers were drowned in the stream. As soon as he got to the farther shore, he bolted for Fancheng. He reached the wall and hailed the gate, but, instead of a friendly welcome, he heard the rolling of drums, which was soon followed by the appearance of a body of troops. Guan Yu led them.

“I took the city a long time ago!” shouted Guan Yu.

This was a severe shock to Cao Ren, who turned to flee. As soon as he faced about, Guan Yu attacked and killed Li Dian.
many of his force. The remnant hastened to Xuchang. On the road the beaten general wondered who had advised his opponents with such success, and he asked the natives for the answer.

While the defeated Cao Ren had to find his way back to the capital, Liu Bei had scored a great success. Afterwards he marched to Fancheng, where he was welcomed by Magistrate Liu Mi, himself a scion of the ruling family, who had been born in Changsha. Liu Mi received Liu Bei as a guest in his own house and gave banquets and treated him exceedingly well.

In the train of the Magistrate, Liu Bei saw a very handsome and distinguished-looking young man, and asked who he was.

Liu Mi replied, “He is my nephew, Kou Feng, son of Lord Kou of Luo. I have taken care of him after his parents died.”

Liu Bei had taken a great liking for the lad and proposed to adopt him. His guardian was willing, and so the adoption was arranged. The young man’s name was changed to Liu Feng. When Liu Bei left, he took his adopted son with him. Liu Feng was then made to bow before Guan Yu and Zhang Fei as uncles.

Guan Yu was doubtful of the wisdom of adopting another son, saying, “You have a son. Why do you think it necessary to adopt another? It may cause confusion.”

“How? I shall treat him as a father should, and he will serve me as befits a son.”

Guan Yu was displeased.

Then Liu Bei and San Fu began further discussions of strategy, and they decided to leave Zhao Yun with one thousand soldiers to guard Fancheng, and they returned to Xinye.

In the meantime Cao Cao’s defeated generals had gone back. When they saw the Prime Minister, Cao Ren threw himself on the ground weeping and acknowledging his faults. He told the tale of his losses.

“The fortune of war,” said Cao Cao. “But I should like to know who laid Liu Bei’s plans.”

“That was San Fu,” said Cao Ren.

“Who is he?” asked Cao Cao.

Cheng Yu said, “The man is not San Fu. When young this man was fond of fencing and used to take up the quarrels of other people and avenge their wrongs. At the end of Emperor Ling, he killed a man to avenge his friend, and then he let down his hair, muddled his face, and was trying to escape when a lictor caught him and questioned him. He would not reply. So they carted him through the streets beating a drum and asking if anyone recognized him. Nobody dared own to knowing him, even if they did so. However, his comrades managed to release him secretly, and he ran away under some other name. Then he turned to study and wandered hither and thither wherever scholars were to be found. He was a regular disputant with Sima Hui. His real name is Xu Shu and he comes from Yingchuan. San Fu is merely an assumed name.”

“How does he compare with yourself?” asked Cao Cao.

“Ten times cleverer.”

“It is a pity. If able people gather to Liu Bei, his wings will soon grow. What is to
be done?”

“Xu Shu is there now. But if you wanted him, it would not be difficult to call him,” replied Cheng Yu.

“How could I make him come?” said Cao Cao.

“He is noted for his affection for his mother. His father died young, leaving his mother a widow with one other son. Now that son is dead, and his mother, Lady Xun, has no one to care for her. If you sent and got his mother here and told her to write and summon her son, he would surely come.”

Cao Cao sent without loss of time and had the old lady brought to the capital, where he treated her exceedingly well.

Presently he said, “I hear you have a very talented son, who is now at Xinye helping on that rebel Liu Bei against the government. There he is like a jewel in a muck heap: It is a pity. Supposing you were to call him, I could speak of him before the Emperor, and he might get an important office.”

Cao Cao bade his secretaries bring along paper and ink, with which Lady Xun could write to her son.

“What sort of a man is Liu Bei?” asked she.

Cao Cao replied, “A common sort of person from Zhuo, irresponsible enough to style himself Imperial Uncle, and so claiming some sort of connection with the Hans. He is neither trustworthy nor virtuous. People say he is a superior man as far as externals go, but a mean man by nature.”

Lady Xun answered in a hard voice, “Why do you malign him so bitterly? Everyone knows he is a descendant of one of the Han princes and so related to the House. He has condescended to take a lowly office and is respectful to all people. He has a reputation for benevolence. Everyone, young and old, cowherds and firewood cutters, all know him by name and know that he is the finest and noblest man in the world. If my son is in his service, then has he found a fitting master. You, under the name of a Han minister, are really nothing but a Han rebel. Contrary to all truths, you tell me Liu Bei is a rebel, whereby you try to induce me to make my son leave the light for darkness. Are you devoid of all sense of shame?”

As Lady Xun finished speaking, she picked up the inkstone to strike Cao Cao. This so enraged him that he forgot himself and the need for caution and bade the executioners lead off the old woman and put her to death.

Adviser Cheng Yu, however, stopped this act, saying, “This old lady wished to die. But if you kill her, your reputation will be damaged and hers enhanced. Beside that will add a keen desire for revenge to the motives which led Xu Shu to labor in the interest of Liu Bei. You had better keep her here so that Xu Shu’s body and his thoughts may be in different places. He can not devote all his energies to helping our enemy while his mother is here. If you keep her, I think I can persuade the son to come and help you.”

So the outspoken old lady was saved. She was given quarters and cared for. Daily Cheng Yu went to ask after her health, falsely claiming to being a sworn brother of her son’s,
and so entitled to serve her and treat her as a filial son would have done. He often sent her gifts and wrote letters to her so that she had to write in reply. And thereby he learned her handwriting so that he could forge a “home” letter. When he could do this without fear of detection, he wrote one and sent it by the hand of a trusty person to Xinye.

One day a man arrived inquiring for one San Fu. He claimed to have a letter from home for him. The soldiers led the man to San Fu. The man said he was an official carrier of letters and had been told to bring this one. San Fu quickly tore it open and read:

“On your brother’s death recently I was left alone: No relative was near, and I was lonely and sad. To my regret, the Prime Minister Cao Cao inveigled me into coming to the capital, and now he says you are a rebel, and he has throw me into bonds. However, thanks to Cheng Yu, my life has been spared so far, and, if you would only come and submit too, I should be quite safe. When this reaches you, remember how I have toiled for you and come at once, that you may prove yourself a filial son. We may together find some way of escape to our own place and avoid the dangers that threaten me. My life hangs by a thread, and I look to you to save me. You will not require a second summon.”

Tears gushed from Xu Shu’s eyes as he read, and with the letter in his hand he went to seek his chief, to whom he told the true story of his life.

“I heard that Liu Biao treated people well and went to him. I happened to arrive at a time of confusion. I saw he was of no use, so I left him very soon. I arrived at the retreat of Sima Hui the Water Mirror late one night and told him, and he blamed me for not knowing a master when I saw one. Then he told me of you and I sang that wild song in the streets to attract your attention. You took me; you used me. But now my aged mother is the victim of Cao Cao’s wiles. She is in prison, and he threatens to do worse. She has written to call me, and I must go. I hoped to be able to render you faithful service, but, with my dear mother a captive, I should be useless. Therefore I must leave you and hope in the future to meet you again.”

Liu Bei broke into loud moans when he heard that his adviser was to leave.

“The bond between mother and son is divine,” said Liu Bei, “and I do not need to be reminded where your duty lies. When you have seen your venerable mother, perhaps I may have again the happiness of receiving your instruction.”

Having said farewell, Xu Shu prepared to leave at once. However, at Liu Bei’s wish, he consented to stay over the night.

Then Sun Qian said privately to his master, “Xu Shu is indeed a genius, but he has been here long enough to know all our secrets. If you let him go over to Cao Cao, he will be in his confidence, and that will be to our detriment. You ought to keep him at all costs and not let him go. When Cao Cao sees Xu Shu does not come, he will put the mother to death, and that will make Xu Shu the more zealous in your service, for he will burn to avenge his mother’s death.”

“I cannot do that. It would be very cruel and vile to procure the death of his mother that I might retain the son’s
services. If I kept him, it would lead to a rupture of the parental lien, and that would be a sin I would rather die than commit.”

Both were grieved and sighed.

Liu Bei asked the parting guest to a banquet, but he declined, saying, “With my mother a prisoner I can swallow nothing, nay, though it were brewed from gold or distilled from jewels.”

“Alas! Your departure is as if I lost both my hands,” said Liu Bei. “Even the liver of a dragon or the marrow of a phoenix would be bitter in my mouth.”

They looked into each other’s eyes and wept.

They sat silent till dawn.

When all was ready for the journey, the two rode out of the city side by side. At Daisy Pavilion they dismounted to drink the stirrup cup.

Liu Bei lifted the goblet and said, “It is my mean fortune that separates me from you, but I hope that you may serve well your new lord and become famous.”

Xu Shu wept as he replied, “I am but a poor ignorant person whom you have kindly employed. Unhappily I have to break our intercourse in the middle, but my venerable mother is the real cause. Though Cao Cao use all manner of means to coerce me, yet will I never plan for him.”

“Aafter you are gone, I shall only bury myself in the hills and hide in the forests,” said Liu Bei.

Xu Shu said, “I had in my heart for you the position of leader of the chieftains, but my plans have been altogether upset by my mother. I have been of no advantage to you, nor should I do any good by remaining. But you ought to seek some person of lofty wisdom to help you in your great enterprise. It is unseemly to be downcast.”

“I shall find none to help better than you, my master.”

“How can I permit such extravagant praise?” said Xu Shu. “I am only a useless blockhead.”

As he moved off, he said to the followers, “Officers, I hope you will render the Princely One good service, whereby to write his name large in the country’s annals and cause his fame to glow in the pages of history. Do not be like me, a person who has left his work half done.”

They were all deeply affected. Liu Bei could not bring himself to part from his friend. He escorted him a little further, and yet a little further, till Xu Shu said, “I will not trouble you, O Princely One, to come further. Let us say our farewell here.”

Liu Bei dismounted, took Xu Shu by the hands, and said, “Alas! We part. Each goes his way, and who knows if we shall meet again?”

His tears fell like rain and Xu Shu wept also. But the last goodbyes were said. When the traveler had gone, Liu Bei stood gazing after the little party and watched it slowly disappear. At the last glimpse he broke into lamentation.

“He is gone! What shall I do?”

One of the trees shut out the traveler from his sight, and Liu Bei pointed at it, saying, “Wish that I could cut down
every tree in the countryside!”
   “Why?” said his officers.

   “Because they hinder my sight of Xu Shu.”

   Suddenly they saw Xu Shu galloping back.
   Said Liu Bei, “He is returning: Can it he that he is going to stay?”

   So he hastened forward to meet Xu Shu, and when they got near enough, he cried, “This return is surely for no slight reason.”

   Checking his horse, Xu Shu said, “In the turmoil of my feelings, I forgot to say one word. There is a person of wonderful skill living about seven miles from the city of Xiangyang. Why not seek him?”

   “Can I trouble you to ask him to visit me?”

   “He will not condescend to visit you. You must go to him. But if he consents, you will be as fortunate as the Zhou when they got the aid of Lu Wang, or the Han when Zhang Liang came to help.”

   “How does the unknown compare with yourself?”

   “With me? Compared with him I am as a worn-out carthorse to a palomino, an old duck to a phoenix. This man often compares himself with the ancient sages Guan Zhong and Yue Yi but, in my opinion, he is far their superior. He has the talent to measure the heavens and mete the earth. He is a man who overshadows every other in the world.”

   “I would know his name.”

   “He belongs to Langye, and his name is Zhuge Liang. He is of the family of the former General Zhuge Feng. His father, Zhuge Gui, was the Deputy Governor of Taishan but died young, and the young fellow went with his uncle Zhuge Xuan to Jingzhou. Imperial Protector Liu Biao was an old friend of his uncle, and Zhuge Liang became settled in Xiangyang. Then his uncle died, and he and his younger brother, Zhuge Jun, returned to their farm in Nanyang and worked as farmers. They used to amuse themselves with the composition of songs in the Liangfu style.

   “On their land was a ridge of hills called the Sleeping Dragon, and the elder of the brothers took it as a name and called himself Master Sleeping Dragon. This is your man. He is a veritable genius. You ought really to visit him. And if he will help you, you need feel no more anxiety about peace in the empire.”

   “Water Mirror spoke that time of two persons, Sleeping Dragon and Young Phoenix, and said if only one of them could be got to help me all would be well. Surely he, whom you speak of, is one of them.”

   “Young Phoenix is Pang Tong of Xiangyang, and Sleeping Dragon is Zhuge Liang.”

1 Lu Wang was a master strategist, founding minister of Zhou Dynasty, counselor to King Wen. Before joining King Wen, Lu Wang had been a fisher, who mediated on the river bank on political events.

2 Zhang Liang was Liu Bang’s counselor.

3 Guan Zhong was priminister of Duke Huan of Qi. Guan Zhong made Qi a powerful state during the Spring and Autumn period.

4 Yue Yi was a great general of Yan. Yue Yi helped Yan overcome Qi, which was a dominant state during the Warring States period.
Liu Bei jumped with delight, “Now at last I know who the mysterious ones are. How I wish they were here! But for you I should have still been an unclued man,” said he.

Someone has celebrated in verse this interview where Xu Shu from horseback recommended Zhuge Liang:

Liu Bei heard that his able friend
Must leave him, with saddened heart,
For each to the other had grown very dear,
Both wept when it came to part.
But the parting guest then mentioned a name
That echoed both loud and deep,
Like a thunder clap in a spring-time sky,
And there wakened a dragon from sleep.

Thus was Zhuge Liang recommended to Liu Bei, and Xu Shu rode away.

Now Liu Bei understood the speech of the hermit Water Mirror, and he woke as one from a drunken sleep. At the head of his officers, he took the road to the city and having prepared rich gifts set out, with his brothers, for Nanyang.

Under the influence of his emotions at parting, Xu Shu had mentioned the name and betrayed the retreat of his friend. Now he thought of the possibility that Zhuge Liang would be unwilling to play the part of helper in Liu Bei’s scheme, so Xu Shu determined to go to visit him. He therefore took his way to Sleeping Dragon Ridge and dismounted at the cottage.

Asked why he had come, Xu Shu replied, “I wished to serve Liu Bei of Yuzhou, but my mother has been imprisoned by Cao Cao, and has sent to call me. Therefore I have had to leave him. At the moment of parting I commended you to him. You may expect him speedily and I hope, Sir, you will not refuse your aid but will consent to use your great talents to help him.”

Zhuge Liang showed annoyance and said, “And so you have made me a victim of the world’s sacrifice.”

So saying, Zhuge Liang shook out his sleeves and left the room. The guest shamefacedly retired, mounted his horse, and hastened on his way to the capital to see his mother.

To help the lord he loved right well,
He summoned the aid of another
When he took the distant homeward way
At the call of a loving mother.

What was the sequel will appear in the following chapters.
Chapter 37
Sima Hui Recommends A Scholar To Liu Bei;
Liu Bei Pays Three Visits To The Sleeping Dragon Ridge.

As has been said Xu Shu hastened to the capital. When Cao Cao knew Xu Shu had arrived, he sent two of his confidants, Xun Yu and Cheng Yu to receive the newcomer at the city gate, and so Xu Shu was led first to the Prime Minister’s palace.

"Why did such an illustrious scholar as you bow the knee to Liu Bei?" said Cao Cao.

"I am young, and I fled to avoid the results of certain escapades. I spent some time as a wanderer and so came to Xinye where I became good friends with him. But my mother is here, and when I thought of all her affection, I could no longer remain absent."

"Now you will be able to take care of your mother at all times. And I may have the privilege of receiving your instructions."

Xu Shu then took his leave and hastened to his mother’s dwelling. Weeping with emotion, he made his obeisance to her at the door of her room.

But she was greatly surprised to see him and said, “What have you come here for?”

“I was at Xinye, in the service of Liu Bei of Yuzhou, when I received your letter. I came immediately.”

His mother suddenly grew very angry.

Striking the table she cried, “You shameful and degenerate son! For years you have been a vagabond in spite of all my teaching. You are a student and know the books. You must then know that loyalty and filial piety are often opposed. Did you not recognize in Cao Cao a traitor, a man who flouts his king and insults the mighty ones? Did you not see that Liu Bei was virtuous and upright as all the world knows? Moreover, he is of the House of Han, and when you were with him you were serving a fitting master. Now on the strength of a scrap of forged writing, with no attempt at any inquiry, you have left the light and plunged into darkness and earned a disgraceful reputation. Truly you are stupid. How can I bear to look upon you? You have besmirched the fair fame of your forefathers and are of no use in the world!”

The son remained bowed to the earth, not daring to lift his eyes while his mother delivered this vilifying tirade. As she said the last word, she rose suddenly and left the room. Soon after one of the servants came out to say Lady Xun had hanged herself. Xu Shu rushed in to try to save her, but was too late. A eulogy of her conduct has been written thus:
Wise Mother Xun, fair is your fame,
The storied page glows with your name,
From duty’s path you never strayed,
The family’s renown you made.
To train your son no pains you spared,
For your own body nothing cared.
You stand sublime, from us apart,
Through simple purity of heart.
Brave Liu Bei’s virtues you extolled,
You blamed Cao Cao, the basely bold.
Of blazing fire you felt no fear,
You blenched not when the sword came neat,
But dreaded lest a willful son
Should dim the fame his fathers won.
Yes, Mother Xun was of one mold
With famous heroes of old,
Who never shrank from injury,
And even were content to die.
Fair meed of praise, while still alive,
Was yours, and ever will survive.
Hail! Mother Xun, your memory,
While time rolls on, shall never.

At sight of his mother dead, Xu Shu fell in a swoon and only recovered consciousness after a long time. By and bye Cao Cao heard of it and sent mourning gifts, and in due course went in person to condole and sacrifice. The body was interred on the south of the capital, and the dead woman’s unhappy son kept vigil at her tomb. He steadily rejected all gifts from Cao Cao.

At that time Cao Cao was contemplating an attack on the south.

His adviser Xun Yu dissuaded him, saying, “The winter is not favorable for this campaign. My lord should await milder weather.”

And Cao Cao yielded. But he began to prepare, and led the River Zhang’s waters aside to form a lake, which he called the Aquamarine Lake, where he could accustom his soldiers to fight on the water.

As has been said, Liu Bei prepared gifts to offer to Zhuge Liang on his visit. One day his servants announced a stranger of extraordinary appearance, wearing a lofty headdress and a wide belt.

“Surely this is he,” said Liu Bei, and, hastily arranging
his dress, he went to welcome the visitor. But the first glance showed him that it was the recluse of the mountains, Sima Hui. However, Liu Bei was glad to see him and led him into the inner apartment as he would an old friend.

There Liu Bei conducted him to the seat of honor and made his obeisance, saying, "Since leaving you that day in the mountains, I have been overwhelmed with military preparations and so have failed to visit you as courtesy demanded. Now that the brightness has descended upon me, I hope this dereliction of duty may be pardoned."

"I hear Xu Shu is here. I have come expressly to see him," replied Water Mirror bluntly.

"He has lately left for Xuchang. A messenger came with a letter telling of the imprisonment of his mother."

"Then he has just fallen into Cao Cao’s trap, for that letter was a forgery. I have known his mother to be a very noble woman. Even if she were imprisoned by Cao Cao, she would not summon her son like that. Certainly the letter was a forgery. If the son did not go, the mother would be safe; if he went, she would be a dead woman."

"But how?" asked Liu Bei dismayed.

"She is a woman of the highest principles, who would be greatly mortified at the sight of her son under such conditions."

Liu Bei said, "Just as your friend was leaving, he mentioned the name of a certain Zhuge Liang. What think you of him?"

Water Mirror laughed, saying, "If Xu Shu wanted to go, he was free to go. But why did he want to provoke Zhuge Liang into coming out and showing compassion for someone else?"

"Why do you speak like that?" asked Liu Bei.

He replied, "Five persons, Zhuge Liang of Nanyang, Cui Zhouping of Boling, Shi Guangyuan of Yingchuan, Meng Gongwei of Runan, and Xu Shu of Yingchuan were the closest of friends. They formed a little coterie devoted to meditation on essential refinement. Only Zhuge Liang arrived at a perception of its meaning. He used to sit among them with his arms about his knees muttering and then, pointing to his companions, he would say, ‘You, gentlemen, would become governors and protectors if you were in official life.’"

"When they asked him what was his ambition, he would only smile and always compared himself with the great ancient scholars Guan Zhong and Yue Yi. No one could gauge his talents."

"How comes it that Yingchuan produces so many able humans?" said Liu Bei.

"That old astrologer, Yin Kui, used to say that the stars clustered thick over the region, and so there were many wise people."

Now Guan Yu was there. When he heard Zhuge Liang so highly praised,
he said, “Guan Zhong\(^1\) and Yue Yi\(^2\) are the two most famous leaders mentioned in the Spring and Autumn and the Warring States Periods. They well overtopped the rest of humankind. Is it not a little too much to say that Zhuge Liang compares with these two?”

“In my opinion he should not be compared with these two, but rather with two others,” said Water Mirror.

“Who are these two?” asked Guan Yu.

“One of them is Lu Wang, who laid the foundations of the Zhou Dynasty so firmly that it lasted eight hundred years; and the other Zhang Liang, who made the Han glorious for four centuries.”

Before the surprise called forth by this startling statement had subsided, Water Mirror walked down the steps and took his leave. Liu Bei would have kept him if he could, but he was obdurate.

As he stalked proudly away, he threw up his head and said, “Though Sleeping Dragon has found his lord, he has not been born at the right time. It is a pity!”

“What a wise hermit!” was Liu Bei’s comment.

Soon after the three brothers set out to find the abode of the wise man. When they drew near the Sleeping Dragon Ridge, they saw a number of peasants in a field hoeing up the weeds, and as they worked they sang:

“The earth is a checkered board,
And the sky hangs over all,
Under it humans are contending,
Some rise, but a many fall.
For those who succeed this is well,
But for those who go under rough.
There’s a dozing dragon hard by,
But his sleep is not deep enough.”

Liu Bei and his brothers stopped to listen to the song and, calling up one of the peasants, asked who made it.

“It was made by Master Sleeping Dragon,” said the laborer.

“Then he lives hereabout. Where?”

“South of this hill there is a ridge called the Sleeping Dragon, and close by is a sparse wood. In it stands a modest cottage. That is where Master Zhuge Liang takes his repose.”

Liu Bei thanked him and the party rode on. Soon they came to the ridge, most aptly named, for indeed it lay wrapped in an atmosphere of calm beauty.

A poet wrote of it thus:

---

\(^1\)Guan Zhong was prime minister of Duke Huan of Qi. Guan Zhong made Qi a powerful state during the Spring and Autumn period.

\(^2\)Yue Yi was a great general of Yan. Yue Yi helped Yan overcome Qi, which was a dominant state during the Warring States period.
Not far from Xiangyang
There stands, clear cut against the sky,
A lofty ridge, and at its foot
A gentle stream goes gliding by.
The contour, curving up and down,
Although by resting cloud it’s marred,
Arrests the eye; and here and there
The flank by waterfalls is scarred.
There, like a sleeping dragon coiled,
Or phoenix hid among thick pines,
You see, secure from prying eyes,
A cot, reed-built on rustic lines.
The rough-joined doors, pushed by the wind,
Swing idly open and disclose
The greatest genius of the world
Enjoying still his calm repose.
The air is full of woodland scents,
Around are hedgerows trim and green,
Close-growing intercrossed bamboos
Replace the painted doorway screen.
But look within and books you see
By every couch, near every chair;
And you may guess that common persons
Are very seldom welcomed there.
The hut seems far from human ken,
So far one might expect to find
Wild forest denizens there, trained
To serve in place of humankind.
Without a hoary crane might stand
As warden of the outer gate;
Within a long-armed gibbon come
To offer fruit upon a plate.
But enter; there refinement reigns;
Brocaded silk the lutes protect,
And burnished weapons on the walls
The green of pines outside reflect.
For he who dwells within that hut
Is talented beyond compare,
Although he lives the simple life
Liu Bei soon arrived at the door of the retreat, dismounted, and knocked at the rough door of the cottage. A youth appeared and asked what he wanted.

Liu Bei replied, “I am Liu Bei, General of the Han Dynasty, Lord of Yicheng, Imperial Protector of Yuzhou, and Uncle of the Emperor. I am come to salute the Master.”

“I cannot remember so many titles,” said the lad.

“Then simply say that Liu Bei has come to inquire after him.”

“The Master left this morning early.”

“Whither has he gone?”

“His movements are very uncertain. I do not know whither he has gone.”

“When will he return?”

“That also is uncertain. Perhaps in three days, perhaps in ten.”

The disappointment was keen.

“Let us go back, since
we cannot see him,” said Zhang Fei.
“Wait a little time,” said Liu Bei.
“It would be better to return,” said Guan Yu, “then we might send to find out when this man had come back.”
So Liu Bei agreed, first saying to the boy, “When the Master returns, tell him that Liu Bei has been here.”
They rode away for some miles. Presently Liu Bei stopped and looked back at the surroundings of the little cottage in the wood.
The mountains were picturesque rather than grand, the water clear rather than profound, the plain was level rather than extensive, the woods luxuriant rather than thick. Gibbons ranged through the trees, and cranes waded in the shallow water. The pines and the bamboos vied with each other in verdure. It was a scene to linger upon.
While Liu Bei stood regarding it, he saw a figure coming down a mountain path. The man’s bearing was lofty. He was handsome and dignified. He wore a comfortable-looking bonnet on his head, and a black robe hung about his figure in easy folds. He used a staff to help him down the steep path.
“Surely that is he!” said Liu Bei.
He dismounted and walked over to greet the stranger, whom he saluted deferentially, saying, “Are you not Master Sleeping Dragon, Sir?”
“Who are you, General?” said the stranger.
“I am Liu Bei.”
“I am not Zhuge Liang, but I am a friend of his. My name is Cui Zhouping.”

“Long have I known of you! I am very glad to see you,” replied Liu Bei. “And now I pray you be seated just where we are, and let me receive your instruction.”
The two men sat down in the wood on a stone, and the two brothers ranged themselves by Liu Bei’s side.
Cui Zhouping began, saying, “General, for what reason do you wish to see Zhuge Liang?”
Liu Bei replied, “The empire is in confusion, and troubles gather everywhere. I want your friend to tell me how to restore order.”
“You, Sir, wish to arrest the present disorder, although you are a kindly man and, from the oldest antiquity, the correction of disorder has demanded stern measures. On the day that Liu Bang first put his hand to the work and slew the wicked ruler of Qin, order began to replace disorder. Good government began with the Supreme Ancestor (BC 206), and endured two hundred years—two centuries of tranquillity. Then came Wang Mang’s rebellion, and disorder took the place of order. Anon, arose Liu Xiu, who restored the Han Dynasty, and order once more prevailed. We have had two centuries of order and tranquillity, and the time of trouble and battles is due. The restoration of peace will take time. It cannot be quickly accomplished. You, Sir, wish to get Zhuge Liang to regulate times and seasons, to repair the cosmos, but I fear the task is indeed difficult, and to attempt it would be a vain expenditure of mental energy. You know well that he who goes with the favor of Heaven travels an easy road; he who goes contrary meets difficulties. One cannot escape
one’s lot; one cannot evade fate.”

“Master,” replied Liu Bei, “your insight is indeed deep, and your words of wide meaning. But I am a scion of the House of Han and must help it. Dare I talk of the inevitable and trust to fate?”

Cui Zhouping replied, “A simple denizen of the mountain wilds is unfitted to discuss the affairs of empire. But you bade me speak and I have spoken—perhaps somewhat madly.”

“Master, I am grateful for your instruction. But know you whither Zhuge Liang has gone?”

“I also came to see him, and I know not where he is,” said Cui Zhouping.

“If I asked you, Master, to accompany me to my poor bit of territory, would you come?”

“I am too dilatory, too fond of leisure and ease, and no longer have any ambitions. But I will see you another time.”

And with these words Cui Zhouping saluted and left. The three brothers also mounted and started homeward.

Presently Zhang Fei said, “We have not found Zhuge Liang, and we have had to listen to the wild ravings of this so-called scholar. There is the whole result of this journey.”

“His words were those of a deep thinker,” replied Liu Bei.

Some days after the return to Xinye, Liu Bei sent to find out whether Zhuge Liang had returned, and the messenger came back saying that he had. Wherefore Liu Bei prepared for another visit.

Again Zhang Fei showed his irritation by remarking, “Why must you go hunting after this villager? Send and tell him to come.”

“Silence!” said Liu Bei, “The Teacher Mencius said, ‘To try to see the sage without going his way is like barring a door you wish to enter.’ Zhuge Liang is the greatest sage of the day. How can I summon him?”

So Liu Bei rode away to make his visit, his two brothers with him as before. It was winter and exceedingly cold. Floating clouds covered the whole sky. Before they had gone far, a bitter wind began to blow in their faces, and the snow began to fly. Soon the mountains were of jade and the trees of silver.

“It is very cold and the earth is frozen hard, no fighting is possible now,” said Zhang Fei. “Yet we are going all this way to get advice which will be useless to us. Where is the sense of it? Let us rather get back to Xinye out of the cold.”

Liu Bei replied, “I am set upon proving my zeal to Zhuge Liang. But if you, my brother, do not like the cold, you can return.”

“I do not fear death: Do you think I care for the cold? But I do care about wasting my brother’s energies,” said Zhang Fei.

“Say no more,” said Liu Bei, and they traveled on.

When they drew near the little wood, they heard singing in a roadside inn and stopped to listen. This was the song:

*Although possessed of talent rare,*
*This man has made no name;*
*Alas! The day is breaking late*
*That is to show his fame.*
*O friends you know the Lu Wang’s tale:*
*The aged man constrained to leave*
His cottage by the sea,
To follow in a prince’s train
His counselor to be.
Eight hundred feudal chieftains met
Who came with one accord;
The happy omen, that white fish,
That leapt the boat aboard;
The gory field in distant wilds.
Whence flowed a crimson tide,
And him acknowledged chief in war
Whose virtues none denied;
That Zhang Liang, a Gaoyang rustic,
Fond of wine, who left, his native place
And went to serve so faithfully
The man of handsome face;
And one who spoke of ruling chiefs
In tones so bold and free,
But sitting at the festive board
Was full of courtesy;
And one, that was he who laid in dust
Walled cities near four score
But humans of doughty deeds like these
On earth are seen no more.
Now had these humans not found their lord
Would they be known to fame?
Yet having found, they served him well
And so achieved a name.

The song ended, the singer’s companion tapping the table sang:

We had a famous founder,
Who drew his shining sword,
Cleansed all the land within the seas
And made himself its lord.
In time his son succeeded him,
And so from son to son
The lordship passed, held firm until
Four hundred years had run.
Then dawned a day of weaker sons,
The fiery virtue failed,
Then ministers betrayed their trust,
Court intrigues vile prevailed.
The omens came; a serpent
Coiled on the dragon throne,
While in the hall of audience
Unholy haloes shone.
Now bandits swarm in all the land
And noble strives with chief,
The common people, sore perplexed,
Can nowhere find relief.
Let’s drown our sorrows in the cup,
Be happy while we may,
Let those who wish run after fame
That is to last for aye.

The two men laughed loud and clapped their hands as the second singer ceased. Liu Bei thought full surely the longed for sage was there, so he dismounted and entered the inn. He saw the two merry-makers sitting opposite each other at a table. One was pale with a long beard; the other had a strikingly refined face.

Liu Bei saluted them and said, “Which of you is Master Sleeping Dragon?”

“What are you, Sir?” asked the long-bearded one. “What business have you with Sleeping Dragon?”

“I am Liu Bei. I want to inquire of him on how to restore tranquillity to the world.”
“Well, neither of us is your man, but we are friends of his. My name is Shi Guangyuan and my friend here is Meng Gongwei.”

“I know you both by reputation,” said Liu Bei gladly. “I am indeed fortunate to meet you in this haphazard way. Will you not come to Sleeping Dragon’s retreat and talk for a time? I have horses here for you.”

“We idle folks of the wilds know nothing of tranquilizing states. Please do not trouble to ask. Pray mount again and continue searching Sleeping Dragon.”

So he remounted and went his way. He reached the little cottage, dismounted, and tapped at the door. The same lad answered his knock, and he asked whether the Master had returned.

“He is in his room reading,” said the boy.

Joyful indeed was Liu Bei as he followed the lad in. In front of the middle door he saw written this pair of scrolls:

By purity inspire the inclination;
By repose affect the distant.

As Liu Bei was looking at this couplet, he heard someone singing in a subdued voice and stopped by the door to peep in. He saw a young man close to a charcoal brazier, hugging his knees while he sang:

“The phoenix dies high, O!
And only will perch on a magnolia tree.
The scholar is hidden, O!
Till his lord appear he can patient be.
He tills his fields, O!
He is well-content and loves his home,
He awaits his day, O!
His books and his lute to leave and roam.

As the song ended Liu Bei advanced and saluted, saying, “Master, long have I yearned for you, but have found it impossible to salute you. Lately Water Mirror spoke of you and I hastened to your dwelling, only to come away disappointed. This time I have braved the elements and come again and my reward is here. I see your face, and I am indeed fortunate.”

The young man hastily returned the salute and said, “General, you must be that Liu Bei of Yuzhou who wishes to see my brother.”

“Then, Master, you are not Sleeping Dragon!” said Liu Bei, starting back.

“I am his younger brother, Zhuge Jun. He has another elder brother, Zhuge Jin, now with Sun Quan in the South Land as a counselor. Zhuge Liang is the second of our family.”

“Is your brother at home?”

“Only yesterday he arranged to go a jaunt with Cui Zhouping.”

“Whither have they gone?”

“Who can say? They may take a boat and sail away among the lakes, or go to gossip with the priests in some remote mountain temple, or wander off to visit a friend in some far away village, or be sitting in some cave with a lute or a chessboard. Their goings and comings are uncertain and nobody can guess at them.”
“What very poor luck have I! Twice have I failed to meet the great sage.”

“Pray sit a few moments, and let me offer you some tea.”

“Brother, since the master is not here, I pray you remount and go,” said Zhang Fei.

“Since I am here, why not a little talk before we go home again?” said Liu Bei.

Then turning to his host he continued, “Can you tell me if your worthy brother is skilled in strategy and studies works on war?”

“I do not know.”

Grumbled Zhang Fei, “The wind and snow are getting worse. We ought to go back.”

Liu Bei turned on him angrily and told him to stop.

Zhuge Jun said, “Since my brother is absent, I will not presume to detain you longer. I will return your call soon.”

“Please do not take that trouble. In a few days I will come again. But if I could borrow paper and ink, I would leave a note to show your worthy brother that I am zealous and earnest.”

Zhuge Jun produced the “four treasures” of the scholar, and Liu Bei, thawing out the frozen brush between his lips, spread the sheet of delicate note-paper and wrote:

“Liu Bei has long admired your fame. He has visited your dwelling twice, but to his great regret he has gone empty away. He humbly remembers that he is a distant relative of the Emperor, that he has undeservedly enjoyed fame and rank. When he sees the proper government wrested aside and replaced by pretense, the foundation of the state crumbling away, hordes of braves creating confusion in the country, and an evil cabal behaving unseemly toward the rightful Prince, then his heart and gall are torn to shreds. Though he has a real desire to assist, yet is he deficient in the needful skill. Wherefore he turns to the Master, trusting in his kindness, graciousness, loyalty, and righteousness. Would the Master but use his talent, equal to that of Lu Wang, and perform great deeds like Zhang Liang, then would the empire be happy and the throne would be secure.

“This is written to tell you that, after purification of mind with fasting and of body with fragrant baths, Liu Bei will come again to prostrate himself in your honored presence and receive enlightenment”

The letter written and given to Zhuge Jun, Liu Bei took his leave, exceedingly disappointed at this second failure.

As he was mounting, he saw the serving lad waving his hand outside the hedge and heard him call out, “The old Master is coming!”
Chapter 37

Liu Bei looked and then saw a figure seated on a donkey leisurely jogging along over a bridge.

The rider of the donkey wore a cap with long flaps down to his shoulders, and his body was wrapped in a fox fur robe. A youth followed him bearing a jar of wine. As he came through the snow he hummed a song:

“This is eve, the sky is overcast,
The north wind comes with icy blast,
Light snowflakes whirl down until
A white pall covers dale and hill.
Perhaps above the topmost sky
White dragons strive for mastery,
The armor scales from their forms riven
Are scattered over the world wind-driven.
Amid the storm there jogs along
A simple wight who croons a song.
‘O poor plum trees, the gale doth tear
Your blossoms off and leave you bare.’”

“Here at last is Sleeping Dragon,” thought Liu Bei, hastily slipping out of the saddle.

He saluted the donkey rider as he neared and said, “Master, it is hard to make way against this cold wind. I and my companions have been waiting long.”

The rider got off his donkey and returned the bow, while Zhuge Jun from behind said, “This is not my brother. It is his father-in-law Huang Chenyan.”

Liu Bei said, “I chanced to hear the song you were singing. It is very beautiful.”

Huang Chenyan replied, “It is a little poem I read in my son-in-law’s house, and I recalled it as I crossed the bridge and saw the plum trees in the hedge. And so it happened to catch your ear, Noble Sir.”

“Have you seen your son-in-law lately?” asked Liu Bei.

“That is just what I have come to do now.”

At this Liu Bei bade him farewell and went on his way. The storm was very grievous to bear, but worse than the storm was the grief in his heart as he looked back at Sleeping Dragon Ridge.

One winter’s day through snow and wind
A prince rode forth the sage to find;
Alas! His journey was in vain,
And sadly turned he home again.
The stream stood still beneath the bridge
A sheet of ice draped rock and ridge,
His steed benumbed with biting cold
But crawled as he were stiff and old.
The snowflakes on the rider’s head
Were like pear-blossoms newly shed,
Or like the willow-catkins light
They brushed his cheek in headlong flight.
He stayed his steed, he looked around,
The snow lay thick on tree and mound,
The Sleeping Dragon Ridge lay white
A hill of silver, glistening bright.

After the return to Xinye, the time slipped away till spring was near. Then Liu Bei cast lots to find the propitious day for another journey in search of Zhuge Liang. The day being
selected, he fasted for three days and then changed his dress ready for the visit. His two brothers viewed the preparations with disapproval and presently made up their minds to remonstrate.

The sage and the fighting generals never agree,
A warrior despises humility.

The next chapter will tell what they said.

Chapter 38
Zhuge Liang Plans For The Three Kingdoms;
Sun Quan Attacks Xiakou To Take Revenges.

Nothing discouraged by two unsuccessful visits to the retreat of the sage whose advice he sought to secure, Liu Bei made preparations for a third visit.

His brothers disapproved, and Guan Yu said, “Brother, you have sought him twice. Surely this is showing even too much deference. I do not believe in this fame of his for learning. He is avoiding you and dare not submit to the test. Why so obstinately hold this idea?”

“You are wrong, my brother. In the Spring and Autumn Period Prince Huan of Qi paid five visits to the Eastern Suburb before he got to see Guan Zhong. And my desire to see Zhuge Liang is even greater than his.”

“I think you are mistaken,” said Zhang Fei. “How can this villager be such a marvel of wisdom? You should not go again and, if he will not come, I will bring him with a hempen rope.”

“Have you forgotten the great King Wen’s visit to Lu Wang, the old man of the River Wei? If King Wen could show such deference to a wise man, where am I too deferential? If you will not go, your brother and I will go without you,” said Liu Bei.

“If you two go, how can I hang back?” said Zhang Fei.

1 Guan Zhong was priminister of Duke Huan of Qi. Guan Zhong made Qi a powerful state during the Spring and Autumn period.

2 Lu Wang was a master strategist, founding minister of Zhou Dynasty, counselor to King Wen. Before joining King Wen, Lu Wang had been a fisher, who mediated on the river bank on political events.
“If you go, then you must be polite.”
Zhang Fei said he would not forget himself, and the three set out. When they were a quarter of mile from the little cottage, Liu Bei dismounted, deciding to show his respect by approaching the house on foot. Very soon he met Zhuge Jun, whom he saluted with great deference, inquiring whether his brother was at home.
“He returned last evening. You can see him today, General.”
As Zhuge Jun said this, he went off with some swagger.
“Fortune favors me this time,” said Liu Bei. “I am going to see the Master.”
“That was a rude fellow,” said Zhang Fei. “It would not have hurt him to have conducted us to the house. Why did he go off like that?”
“Each one has his own affairs,” said Liu Bei. “What power have we over him?”
Soon the three stood at the door, and they knocked. The serving lad came out and asked their business.
Liu Bei said very deferentially, “I would trouble the servant of the genius, gentle page, to inform the Master that Liu Bei wishes to pay his respects to him.”
“My master is at home, but he is asleep.”
“In that case do not announce me.”
Liu Bei bade his two brothers wait at the door quietly, and he himself entered with careful steps. There was the man he sought, lying asleep on the couch, stretched on a simple mat. Liu Bei saluted him with joined hands at a respectful distance.
The time passed and still the sleeper did not wake. The two brothers left without, beginning to feel impatient, also came in, and Zhang Fei was annoyed at seeing his revered elder brother respectfully standing by while another slept.
“What an arrogant fellow is this Master?” said he. “There is our brother waiting, while he sleeps on perfectly carelessly. I will go to the back of the place and let off a bomb and see if that will rouse him.”
“No, no; you must do nothing of the kind,” whispered Guan Yu, and then Liu Bei told them to go out again.
Just then Liu Bei noticed that the Master moved. He turned over as though about to rise, but, instead, he faced the wall and again fell asleep. The serving lad made as if he would rouse his master, but Liu Bei forbade him to be disturbed, and Liu Bei waited yet another weary hour. Then Zhuge Liang woke up repeating to himself the lines:

“Can any know what fate is his?
Yet have I felt throughout my life,
The day would come at last to quit
The calm retreat for toil and strife.”

As he finished, he turned to the lad, saying, “Have any of the usual people come?”

“Liu Bei, the Uncle of the Emperor is here,” said the boy. “He has been waiting a long time.”

“Why did you not tell me?” said he, rising from the couch. “I must dress.”

Zhuge Liang rose and turned into a room behind to dress. In a short time he reappeared, his clothing properly arranged, to receive his visitor.

Then Liu Bei saw coming toward him a young man of medium height with a refined face. He wore a head-wrap and a long crane-white gown.

He moved with much dignity as though he was rather more than mortal.

Liu Bei bowed, saying, “I am one of the offshoots of the Han family, a simple person from Zhuo. I have long known the Master’s fame, which has indeed thundered in my ear. Twice I have come to visit you, without success. Once I left my name on your writing table. You may have my note.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “This hermit is but a dilatory person by temperament. I know I have to thank you for more than one vain visit, and I am ashamed to think of them.”

These courteous remarks and the proper bows exchanged, the two men sat in their relative positions as host and guest, and the serving lad brought tea.

Then Zhuge Liang said, “From your letter I know that you grieve for both people and government. If I were not so young and if I possessed any talent, I would venture to question you.”

Liu Bei replied, “Sima Hui and Xu Shu have both spoken of you. Can it be that their words were vain? I trust, O Master, that you will not despise my worthlessness but will condescend to instruct me.”

“The two men you speak of are very profound scholars. I am but a peasant, a mere farmer, and who am I that I should talk of empire politics? Those two misled you when they
spoke of me. Why do you reject the beautiful jewel for a worthless pebble?"

“But your abilities are world embracing and marvelous. How can you be content to allow time to pass while you idle away life in these secluded haunts? I conjure you, O Master, to remember the inhabitants of the empire and remove my crass ignorance by bestowing instruction upon me.”

“But what is your ambition, General?”

Liu Bei moved his seat nearer to his host and said, “The Hans are sinking: Designing ministers steal away their authority. I am weak, yet I desire to restore the state to its right mind. But my ignorance is too vast, my means are too slender, and I know not where to turn. Only you, Master, can lighten my darkness and preserve me from falling. How happy should I be if you would do so!”

Zhuge Liang replied, “One bold person after another has arisen in various parts of the empire ever since the days of the rebel Dong Zhuo. Cao Cao was not so powerful as Yuan Shao, but he overcame Yuan Shao by seizing the favorable moment and using his soldiers properly. Now he is all-powerful: He rules an immense army and, through his control of the court, the various feudal lords as well. You cannot think of opposing him. Then the Suns have held their territory in the South Land for three generations. Their position in that old state of Wu may not appear too secure, but they have popularity to appeal to. You can gain support but win no success there.

“The Region of Jingzhou rests on the two Rivers Han and Mian to the north, and their interests lie in all to the south of these rivers. On the east they touch Wu, and on the west they extend to the ancient states of Ba and Shu. This is the area in which decisive battles have to be won, and one must hold it in order to be secure, and Heaven has virtually made it yours.

“The Region of Yizhou in the west is an important place, fertile and extensive, a country favored of Heaven and that through which the Founder of Han obtained the empire. Its ruler Liu Zhang is ignorant and weak. The people are noble and the country prosperous, but he does not know how to hold it all, and all the able people of the region are yearning for an enlightened prince.

“As you are a scion of the Family, well known throughout the land as trusty and righteous, a whole-hearted hero, who greatly desires to win the support of the wise, if you get possession of Yizhou and Jingzhou, if on the west you are in harmony with the Rong Tribes, on the south win over the ancient states of Yi and Viet, make an alliance with Sun Quan of Wu, and maintain good government, you can await confidently the day when Heaven shall offer you the desired opportunity. Then you may depute a worthy leader to go to the northeast while you take command of an expedition to the northwest, and will you not find the warmest welcome prepared for you by the people? This done, the completion of the task will be easy. The Hans will be restored. And these are my counsels in all these operations, if you will only undertake them.”

Zhuge Liang paused while he bade the lad bring out a map. As this was unrolled Zhuge Liang went on, “There you see the fifty-four counties of the west. Should you wish to take the overlordship, you will yield the Heaven’s favor to Cao Cao in the north, and you will relinquish the Earth’s advantage to Sun Quan in...
the south. You, General, will hold the Human’s heart and complete the trinity. Jingzhou is to be taken first as a home, the River Lands\(^3\) next for the foundation of domination. When you are firmly established, you can lay your plans for the attainment of the whole empire.”

As Zhuge Liang ceased his harangue, Liu Bei left his place and saluted him, saying, “Your words, O Master, render everything so clear that the clouds are swept aside and I see the clear sky. But Jingzhou belongs to Liu Biao, my kinsman, and Yizhou to another kinsman Liu Zhang. I could hardly take the lands from them.”

“I have studied the stars and I know Liu Biao is not long for this world. Further, Liu Zhang is not the sort of man to endure. Both places will certainly fall to you.”

Liu Bei bowed his acknowledgments. And so, in one conversation, Zhuge Liang proved that he, who had lived in complete retirement all his life, knew and foresaw the tripod division into which the empire was to break. True, indeed, is it that throughout all the ages no one has ever equaled his intelligence and mastery of the situation.

\begin{quote}
\textit{Behold, when Liu Bei frets that he is weak,}
\textit{Then Sleeping Dragon is not far to seek;}
\textit{When he desires to know how things will hap,}
\textit{The Master, smiling, shows him on the map.}
\end{quote}

“Though I be of small repute and scanty virtue,” said Liu Bei, “I hope, O Master, you will not despise me for my worthlessness, but will leave this retreat to help me. I will assuredly listen most reverently to your words.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “I have long been happy on my farm and am fond of my leisure. I fear I cannot obey your command.”

Liu Bei wept. “If you will not, O Master, what will become of the people?”

The tears rolled down unchecked upon the lapel and sleeves of Liu Bei’s robe. This proved to Zhuge Liang the sincerity of his desire.

Hence, Zhuge Liang said, “General, if you will accept me, I will render what trifling service I can.”

Liu Bei was greatly delighted. He called in Guan Yu and Zhang Fei to make their bow and brought out the gifts he had prepared. Zhuge Liang refused all the gifts.

“These are not gifts to engage your services, but mere proof of my regard,” said Liu Bei.

Then the presents were accepted. They all remained that

---

\(^3\)The River Lands were West River Land, which was the region of Yizhou, and East River Land, which corresponded to Hanzhong. Both River Lands were the mountainous lands west of Jingzhou.
night at the farm. Next day Zhuge Jun returned, and his brother said to him, “Uncle Liu Bei has come thrice to see me, and now I must go with him. Keep up the farm in my absence and do not let the place go to ruin. As soon as my work is accomplished, I will certainly return.”

Then, turning from his humble home,
He thought of peaceful days to come,
When he should take the homeward way
And never beyond the valley stray.
But duty kept him in the west,
And there he found his place of rest.

An old poem may be quoted here:

The Founder of Han seized his gleaming blade
And at Mangdang Hills the blood of the white snake flowed.
He conquered Qin, destroyed Chu, and entered Xianyang.
After two centuries of rule the line was near broken,
But Liu Xiu restored the glory at Capital Luoyang.
And his children occupied the throne
Till decay began in the days of Huan and Ling.
The Emperor Xian removed the capital to Xuchang,
And, within the four seas, all was confusion.
Bold spirits started up in fierce contention.
Cao Cao, seized the favorable moment
And the imperial authority passed into his hands.
While the Suns made to themselves
A glorious heritage at the Great River,
Solitary and poor, Liu Bei wandered from place to place,
Till he found a haven in Xinye.

Sorely distressed he was at the sorrows of the people,   
But Sleeping Dragon conceived a noble ambition,   
Within his breast were thoughts   
Of great things to be accomplished by force of arms.   
Then, because of the parting words of Xu Shu,   
And by the thrice repeated visits to his retreat,   
The great hero found and knew his mentor.   
When the age of Zhuge Liang was but thrice nine years,   
He turned from his books, put aside his lute,   
And left the peaceful fields he had loved,   
Under his guidance Jingzhou was taken   
And the two Lands of the Rivers conquered.   
He unrolled great schemes, as one all knowing,   
In speech, he went to and fro in the world,   
The sound of war drums rolled from his tongue,   
The words from his heart stirred one to the utmost depths.   
The dragon pranced, the tiger glared,   
And peace was brought to the world.   
Through all the ages his fame shall never decay.

After taking leave of Zhuge Jun, Liu Bei and his followers left for Xinye, with Zhuge Liang as companion. When they took up their abode there, Zhuge Liang was treated as a mentor, eating at the same table, sleeping on the same couch as Liu Bei. They spent whole days conversing over the affairs of the empire.

Zhuge Liang said, “Cao Cao is training his troops for naval service in
Aquamarine Lake, and hence certainly intends to invade the country south of the Great River. We ought to send our spies to ascertain what Cao Cao and Sun Quan are really doing.”

So spies were dispatched.

Now after Sun Quan succeeded to the heritage of his father and brother, he sent far and wide to invite people of ability to aid him. He established lodging places for them in Kuaiji in Wu, and directed Gu Yong and Zhang Hong to welcome and entertain all those who came. And year by year they flocked in, one recommending another. Among them were Kan Ze of Kuaiji, Yan Jun of Pengcheng, Xue Yong of Beishan, Cheng Bing of Runan, Zhu Huan of Wujun, Lu Ji of the same place, Zhang Wen of Wucheng, Luo Tong of Kuaiji, and Wu Can of Wushang. All these scholars were treated with great deference.

Many able leaders came also. Among them were Lu Meng of Runan, Lu Xun of Wujun, Xu Sheng of Langye, Pan Zhang of Dongjun, and Ding Feng of Lujiang. Thus Sun Quan obtained the assistance of many people of ability both in peace and war and all went well with him.

In the seventh year of Rebuilt Tranquillity (AD 202), Cao Cao had broken the power of Yuan Shao. Then he sent a messenger to the South Land ordering Sun Quan to send his son to court to serve in the retinue of the Emperor. Sun Quan, however, hesitated to comply with this request, and the matter was the subject of much discussion. His mother, Lady Wu, sent for Zhou Yu and Zhang Zhao and asked their advice.

Zhang Zhao said, “Cao Cao wishes a son to be present at court as a hostage whereby he has a hold upon us, as formerly was the case with all the feudal chiefs. If we do not comply with this request, he will doubtless attack the region. There is some peril.”

Zhou Yu said, “Our lord has succeeded to the heritage and has a large army of veterans and ample supplies. He has able officers ready to do his bidding. So why should he be compelled to send a hostage to any person? To send a hostage is to be forced into joining Cao Cao, and to carry out his behests, whatever they be. Then we shall be in his power. It would be better not to send, but rather to wait patiently the course of events and prepare plans to attack.”

“That is also my opinion,” said the Dowager.

So Sun Quan dismissed the messenger but did not send his son. Cao Cao resented this and had since nourished schemes against the South Land. But their realization had been delayed by the dangers on the north and, so far, no attack had been made.

Late in the eighth year (AD 203), Sun Quan led his armies against Huang Zu and fought on the Great River, where he was successful in several battles. One of Sun Quan’s leaders, Ling Cao, led a fleet of light vessels up the river and broke into Xiakou but was killed by an arrow of Gan Ning, a general of Huang Zu. Ling Cao left a son, Ling Tong, fifteen years of age, who led another expedition to recover his father’s corpse and was so far successful. After that, as the war was inclined to go against him, Sun Quan returned again to his own country.
Now Sun Quan’s younger brother, Sun Yi, was Governor of Dangyang. He was a hard man and given to drink and, in his cups, very harsh to his people, ordering the infliction of severe floggings. Two of his officers, Military Inspector Gui Lan and Secretary Dai Yuan, bore their chief a grudge and sought to assassinate him. They took into their confidence one Bian Hong, of the escort, and the three plotted to kill their master at a great assembly of officials at Dangyang amid the banquets.

Sun Yi’s wife, Lady Xu, was skilled in divination, and on the day of the great banquet she cast a most inauspicious lot. Wherefore she besought her husband to stay away from the assembly. But he was obstinate and went. The faithless guardsman followed his master in the dusk when the gathering dispersed, and stabbed him with a dagger.

The two prime movers at once seized Bian Hong, of the escort, and the three plotted to kill their master at a great assembly of officials at Dangyang amid the banquets.

Sun Yi’s wife, Lady Xu, was skilled in divination, and on the day of the great banquet she cast a most inauspicious lot. Wherefore she besought her husband to stay away from the assembly. But he was obstinate and went. The faithless guardsman followed his master in the dusk when the gathering dispersed, and stabbed him with a dagger.

The two prime movers at once seized Bian Hong and beheaded him in the market place. Then they went to Sun Yi’s residence, which they plundered.

Gui Lan was taken with the beauty of the dead Governor’s wife and told her, “I had avenged the death of your husband, and you must go with me.”

Lady Xu pleaded, saying, “It is too soon after my husband’s death to think of remarriage. But as soon as the thirty-day mourning sacrifices are over, I will be yours.”

She thus obtained a respite, which she utilized to send for two old generals of her husband, Sun Gao and Fu Ying. They came and she tearfully told her tale.

“My husband had great faith in you. Now Gui Lan and Dai Yuan have compassed his death and have laid the crime on Bian Hong. They have plundered my house and carried off my servants. Worse than this, Gui Lan insists that I shall be his wife. To gain time I have pretended to favor this proposal, and I pray you now send the news to my husband’s brother and beg him to slay these two miscreants and avenge this wrong. I will never forget your kindness in this life or the next.”

And she bowed before them.

They wept also and said, “We were much attached to our master; and now that he has come to an untimely end, we must avenge him. Dare we not carry out your behests?”

So they sent a trusty messenger to Sun Quan.

On the day of the sacrifices Lady Xu called in her two friends and hid them in a secret chamber. Then the ceremonies were performed in the great hall. These over, she put off her mourning garb, bathed and perfumed herself, and assumed an expression of joy. She laughed and talked as usual, so that Gui Lan rejoiced in his heart, thinking of the pleasure that was to be his.

When night came she sent a servant girl to call her suitor to the palace, where she entertained him at supper. When he had well drunk, she suggested that they should retire and led him to the chamber where her friends were waiting. He followed without the least hesitation.

As soon as she entered the room, she called out, “Where are you, Generals?”

Out rushed Sun Gao and Fu Ying, and the drunken Gui Lan, incapable of any resistance, was dispatched with daggers.

Next Lady Xu invited Dai Yuan to a supper, and he was slain in similar fashion. After that, she sent to the houses of
her enemies and slew all therein. This done, she resumed
her mourning garb, and the heads of the two men were hung
as a sacrifice before the coffin of her husband.

Very soon her brother-in-law came with an army, and
hearing the story of the deeds of the two generals from
the widow, gave them the Commanderships and put them
over Dangyang. When Sun Quan left, he took the widow
to his own home so that she would be cared for. All those
who heard of her brave conduct were loud in praise of her
virtue:

Full of resource and virtuous, few in the world are like
her,
Guilefully wrought she and compassed the death of the
lusty assassins,
Faithful servants are always ready to deal with
rebellion,
None can ever excel that heroine famous in Wu.

The brigandage that had troubled the South Land had
all been suppressed, and a large fleet of seven thousand
battleships was in the Great River ready for service. Sun
Quan appointed Zhou Yu to be the Supreme Admiral and
Commander-in-Chief over all military forces.

In the twelfth year (AD 207), the Dowager Wu, feeling
her end approaching, called to her the two advisers Zhou
Yu and Zhang Zhao and spoke thus: “I came of a family of
the old Wu, but losing my parents in early life. My brother
Wu Jing and I went into the old Yue, and then I married
into this family. I bore my husband four sons, not without
premonitions of the greatness to be theirs. With my first, Sun
Ce, I dreamed of the moon and with my second, Sun Quan,
of the sun, which omens were interpreted by the soothsayer
as signs of their great honor. Unhappy Sun Ce died young,
but Sun Quan inherited, and it is he whom I pray you both
assist with one accord. Then may I die in peace.”

And to her son she said, “These two you are to serve as
they were your teachers and treat them with all respect. My
younger sister and I both were wives to your father, and so
she is also a mother to you, and you are to serve her after
I am gone as you now serve me. And you must treat your
sister with affection and find a handsome husband for her.”

Then she died and her son mourned for her that year.
The following year, they began to discuss an attack upon
Huang Zu.

Zhang Zhao said, “The armies should not move during
the period of mourning.”

However, Zhou Yu, more to the point, said, “Vengeance
should not be postponed on that account. It could not wait
upon times and seasons.”

Still Sun Quan halted between two opinions and would
not decide.

Then came Commander Lu Meng
who said to his master,
“While I was at Dragon
Gorge, one leader of
Huang Zu, Gan Ning
from Lingjiang, offered
to surrender. I found
out all about him. He is
something of a scholar,
is forceful, fond of
wandering about as
a fighter-errant. He
assembled a band of
outlaws with whom he
roamed over the rivers and lakes, where he would terrorize

Lu Meng
everybody. He wore a bell at his waist, and at the sound of this bell everyone fled and hid. He fitted his boats with sails of Xichuan brocade, and people called him the ‘Pirate with Silken Sails.’

“Then he reformed. He and his band went to Liu Biao, but they left him when they saw he would never accomplish anything, and now they would serve under your banner, only that Huang Zu detains them at Xiakou. Formerly when you were attacking Huang Zu, he owed the recovery of Xiakou to this same Gan Ning, whom he treated without liberality. When Commander Su Fei recommended Gan Ning for promotion, Huang Zu said, ‘He is unsuited for any high position as, after all, he is no more than a pirate.’

“So Gan Ning became a disappointed and resentful man. Su Fei tried to win him over to good humor and invited him to wine parties and said, ‘I have put your name forward many times, but our chief says he has no place suitable for you. However, time slips away and man’s life is not very long. One must make the most of it. I will put you forward for the magistracy of Exian, whence you may be able to advance.’

“So Gan Ning got away from Xiakou and would have come to you then, but he feared that he would not be welcomed, since he had assisted Huang Zu and killed Ling Cao. I told him you were always ready to welcome able people and would nourish no resentment for former deeds. After all, every person was bound to do his best for his master. He would come with alacrity if he only felt sure of a welcome. I pray you express your pleasure.”

This was good news for Sun Quan and he said, “With his help, I could destroy Huang Zu.”

Then Sun Quan bade Lu Meng bring Gan Ning to see him.

When the salutations were over, the chief said, “My heart is entirely captivated by your coming. I feel no resentment against you. I hope you will have no doubts on that score, and I may as well tell you that I desire some plan for the destruction of Huang Zu.”

Gan Ning replied, “The dynasty is decadent and without influence. Cao Cao will finally absorb the country down to the river unless he is opposed. Liu Biao provides nothing against the future, and his sons are quite unfitted to succeed him. You should lay your plans to oust him at once before Cao Cao anticipates you. The first attack should be made on Huang Zu, who is getting old and avaricious, so that everyone hates him. He is totally unprepared for a fight and his army is undisciplined. He would fall at the first blow. If he were gone, you would control the western passes and could conquer the lands of Ba and Shu. And you would be securely established.”

“The advice is most valuable,” said Sun Quan, and he made his preparations.

Zhou Yu was appointed Commander-in-Chief; Lu Meng was Van Leader; Dong Xi and Gan Ning were Generals. Sun Quan himself would command the main army of one hundred thousand troops.

\(^4\)Ba and Shu indicated the lands of two ancient states west of Jingzhou. These mountainous lands were often called West River Land.
The spies reported that to Huang Zu who, at the news of an expedition against him, called his officers together to consult. He placed Su Fei in chief command. He also appointed Chen Jiu and Deng Long as Van Leaders, and prepared for general defense. He had two hundreds of warships under the command of Chen Jiu and Deng Long. On these he placed strong bows and stiff crossbows to the number of more than a thousand and secured the boats to heavy hawsers so that they formed a barrier in the river. At the approach of the southern fleet, the drums beat for the ships to attack. Soon arrows and bolts flew thick, forcing back the invaders, who withdrew till several miles of water lay between them and the defenders.

“We must go forward,” said Gan Ning to Dong Xi.

So they chose a hundred light craft and put picked men on them, fifty to a boat. Twenty were to row the boats and thirty to fight. These latter were armored swordsmen. Careless of the enemy’s missiles these boats advanced, got to the defenders’ fleet, and cut the hawsers of their ships so that they drifted hither and thither in confusion. Gan Ning leaped upon one boat and killed Deng Long. Chen Jiu left the fleet and set out for the shore. Lu Meng dropped into a small boat and went among the larger ships setting them on fire. When Chen Jiu had nearly reached the bank, Lu Meng reckless of death went after him, got ahead, and struck him full in the breast so that he fell.

Before long Su Fei came along the bank with reinforcements, but it was too late. The armies of the South Land had already landed, and there was no hope of repelling them. Su Fei fled into the open country, but he was made prisoner.

Su Fei was taken to Sun Quan who ordered that he be put into a cage-cart and kept till Huang Zu should be captured. Then he would execute the pair. And the attack was pressed on. Day and night they wrought to capture Xiakou.

He sees his ships cut loose and burned,
By the Silk-sailed Pirate he once spurned.

For Huang Zu’s fate, see next chapter.
Chapter 39
At Jingzhou The Son Of Liu Biao Thrice Begs Advice;
At Bowang Slope The Directing Instructor Plans His First Battle.

Now Sun Quan fought against Xiakou. When Huang Zu recognized that he was beaten and could not maintain his position, he abandoned Jiangxia and took the road to Jingzhou. Gan Ning, foreseeing this, had laid an ambush outside the east gate of Jiangxia. Soon after the fugitive, with a small following, had burst out of the gate, he found his road blocked.

From horseback, Huang Zu said, “I treated you well in the past. Why do you now press me so hard?”

Gan Ning angrily shouted, “I did good service for you, and yet you treated me as a pirate. Now what have you to say?”

There was nothing to be said, and Huang Zu turned his horse to escape. But Gan Ning thrust aside his troops and himself rode in pursuit. Then he heard a shouting in his rear and saw General Cheng Pu coming up. Fearing lest this other pursuer should overpass him and score the success he desired for himself, Gan Ning fitted an arrow to his bow and shot at the fugitive. Huang Zu was hit and fell from his steed. Then Gan Ning cut off his head. After this, joining himself to Cheng Pu, the two returned bearing the ghastly trophy to their lord. Sun Quan ordered them to place it in a box to be taken back home and offered as a sacrifice to the manes of his father.

Having rewarded the soldiers for the victory and promoted Gan Ning, Sun Quan next discussed the advisability of sending a force to hold Jiangxia.

But his adviser, Zhang Zhao, said, “It is impossible to try to hold one distant city alone. It is better to return home and prepare for the expedition that Liu Biao will surely send in revenge. We will meet and defeat his worn army, push home the attack, and capture his whole region.”

Sun Quan saw the advice was wise, so he left Jiangxia and led his army home to the South Land.

Now Su Fei was still confined, but he got someone to go to Gan Ning to beg him to plead for mercy. Gan Ning had expected this although the prisoner had said no word, and he was averse from leaving his friend and one-time protector to perish.

“I should not have forgotten him even if he had said nothing,” said Gan Ning.

When the army had returned, Sun Quan gave orders for Su Fei’s execution that his head might be offered with that of Huang Zu.

Then Gan Ning went in to his lord and said, weeping, “Long ago, if it had not been for Su Fei, my bones would have been rotting in some ditch and how then could I have rendered service under your banner? Now he deserves death, but I cannot forget his kindness to me, and I pray you take away the honors you have bestowed on me as a set-off to his crime.”

Sun Quan replied, “Since he once showed kindness to you, I will pardon him for your sake. But what can be done if he run away?”

“If he be pardoned and escape death, he will be immeasurably grateful and will not go away. If he should, then will I offer my life in exchange.”

So the condemned man escaped death, and only one head was offered in sacrifice. After the sacrificial ceremonies, a great banquet was spread in honor of the victories. As it was proceeding, suddenly one of the guests burst into loud lamentations, drew his sword, and rushed upon Gan Ning. Gan Ning hastily rose and defended himself with the
chair on which he had been sitting. The host looked at the assailant and saw it was Ling Tong, whose father Ling Cao had fallen under an arrow shot by Gan Ning. The son was now burning to avenge his father’s death.

Hastily leaving his place, Sun Quan checked the angry officer, saying, “If he slew your noble father, then remember each was fighting for his lord for whom he was bound to exert himself to the utmost. But now that you both are under one flag and are of one house, you may not recall an ancient injury. You must regard my interests continually.”

Ling Tong beat his head upon the floor and cried, saying, “But how can I not avenge this? It is a blood feud, and we may not both live under the same sky.”

The guests interfered, beseeching the man to forgo his revenge, and at last he ceased from his murderous intention. But he sat glaring wrathfully at his enemy.

So soon after Gan Ning was dispatched with five thousand troops and one hundred warships to guard Xiakou, where he was beyond the reach of Ling Tong’s wrath. Then Sun Quan promoted Ling Tong, and so he was somewhat appeased.

From about this time the South Land enlarged her fleets, and soldiers were sent to various points to guard the river banks. The brother of the chieftain, Sun Kuang, was placed in command at Wujun, and Sun Quan himself, with a large army, camped at Chaisang.

Zhou Yu, Commander-in-Chief of the army and Supreme Admiral of the navy, was on the Poyang Lake training the naval forces, and general preparations were made for defense and attack.

By his spies, Liu Bei had tidings of the doings in the lower portion of the Great River, and knew of the death of Huang Zu. So he consulted Zhuge Liang as to his action. While they were discussing matters, there arrived a messenger from Liu Biao, begging Liu Bei to go to see him.

Zhuge Liang advised him to go and said, “This call is to consult you about avenging Huang Zu. You must take me with you and let me act as the circumstances direct. There are advantages to be got.”

Leaving Guan Yu in command at Xinye, Liu Bei set forth, taking Zhang Fei with five hundred soldiers as his escort.

On the way he discussed the course of action with his adviser, who said, “First you must thank Liu Biao for having saved you from the evil that Cai Mao planned against you at Xiangyang. However, you must not undertake any expedition against the South Land but say you must return to Xinye to put your army in good order.”

With this admonition Liu Bei came to Jingzhou and was lodged in the guest-house. Zhang Fei and the escort camped without the walls. In due course Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang were received, and after the customary salutations, Liu Bei
apologized for his conduct at the banquet.

The host said, “Worthy brother, I know you were the victim of a vile plot; and I should have put the prime mover to death for it, had there not been so universal a prayer for mercy. However, I remitted that penalty. I hope you do not consider that I was wrong.”

“Cai Mao hall little to do with it. I think it was due to his subordinates,” replied Liu Bei.

Liu Biao said, “Jiangxia is lost, as you know, and Huang Zu is dead. So I have asked you to come that we might take measures of vengeance.”

“Huang Zu was harsh and cruel and never used his people in the proper way: That was the real cause of his fall. But have you reflected what Cao Cao may do on the north if we attack the south?”

“I am getting old and weak, and I am unable to manage affairs properly. Will you aid me, brother? After I am gone you will have this region.”

“Why do you say this, my brother? Think you that I am equal to such a task?”

Here Zhuge Liang glanced at Liu Bei who continued,

“But give me a little time to think it over.”

And at this point he took his leave.

When they had reached their lodging, Zhuge Liang said, “Why did you decline his offer of the region.”

“Here Zhuge Liang glanced at Liu Bei who continued, “But give me a little time to think it over.”

And at this point he took his leave.

When they had reached their lodging, Zhuge Liang said, “Why did you decline his offer of the region.”

“He has always been most kind and courteous. I could not take advantage of his weakness.”

“A perfectly kind and gracious lord,” sighed Zhuge Liang.

Soon after the son of the Imperial Protector, Liu Qi, was announced, and Liu Bei received him and led him in.

The young man began to weep, saying, “My mother cannot bear the sight of me. My very life is in danger. Can you not save me, Uncle?”

“My worthy nephew, this is a family affair. You should not come to me.”

Zhuge Liang who was present, smiled. Liu Bei turned to him to know what he should do.

“This is a family affair. I cannot touch it!” replied Zhuge Liang.

The young man soon left, and when Liu Bei was saying good-bye, he whispered, “I will get Zhuge Liang to return your call, and you can do so and so. He will advise you.”

Liu Qi thanked him and left. Next day when the call was to be returned, Liu Bei pretended to be suffering from colic and made that an excuse to send Zhuge Liang to return the call.

The adviser went, and when he had reached the palace, dismounted, and was led in, Liu Qi conducted him into one of the inner rooms.

When the tea had been brought, Liu Qi said, “I am an object of my stepmother’s dislike. Can you advise me what to do?”

“As a mere stranger guest, I can hardly have anything to do with your own ‘bone and flesh’ matters. If I did, and the story got abroad, much harm might ensue.”

With this he rose to take leave.

But Liu Qi was unwilling to say farewell, and he said, “Your glory has turned in my direction. You cannot mean to go away so pointlessly.”

Liu Qi led his visitor into a private chamber and had refreshments brought. While they ate and drank, Liu Qi repeated his first request: What was he to do since his stepmother disliked him.
“It is not the sort of thing I can advise in,” replied Zhuge Liang, as he rose for the second time to take leave.

“Master, if you will not reply, that is well. But why incontinently leave me?”

So the adviser once more seated himself, and Liu Qi said, “There is an ancient writing I should like to show you.”

And he led his visitor to a small upper room.

“Where is the writing?” said Zhuge Liang.

Instead of answering Liu Qi wept, saying, “My stepmother cannot bear me. My life is in danger. O Master, will you not say a word to save me?”

Zhuge Liang flushed and rose to go away. But he found the ladder by which they had mounted had been removed.

Again Liu Qi besought some advice, saying, “Master, you fear lest it may get abroad! Is that why you are silent? Here we are between earth and sky, and what you say will come out of your mouth directly into my ear. No other soul can hear. Now can you tell me what to do?”

“Sow not dissension among relatives,” said Zhuge Liang. “Is it possible for me to make any plan for you?”

“Then is my life indeed in danger,” said the young man. “I will die at your feet.”

So saying, Liu Qi pulled out a dagger and threatened to make an end of himself.

Zhuge Liang checked him, saying, “There is a way.”

“I pray you tell me.”

“You have heard of the old tale of the brothers Shen Sheng and Chong Er, have you not? Shen Sheng stayed at home and died; his brother Chong Er went away and lived in peace. Now that Huang Zu is gone and Jiangxia is weakly defended, why do you not ask to be sent there to guard it? Then you would be out of the way of harm.”

Liu Qi thanked him. Then he called to his people to restore the ladder, and he escorted Zhuge Liang down to the level ground.

Zhuge Liang returned to Liu Bei and related the whole interview. The young man soon acted on the advice given him, but his father would not at first consent to let him go.

To settle his doubts Liu Biao sent for Liu Bei, who said, “Jiangxia is important, and your son is the most suitable man to defend it. You must let him go. The southeast will be defended by your son. The northwest I will look after.”

“I hear that Cao Cao has been training a naval force, and I am afraid he has intentions against us. We must be on our guard.”

1Shen Sheng was the eldest son of Duke Xiao of Jin in the Spring and Autumn period. But Duke Xiao wanted the son of his favorite concubine, Li Ji, to succeed him as the ruler of Jin. So Duke Xiao falsely accused Shen Sheng of trying to murder him. Shen Sheng committed suicide rather than flee. The second eldest son Chong Er would have suffered the same, but he knew of this and fled.
“I know all about it. You need feel no anxiety,” said Liu Bei.

He took leave of his relative and went home while Liu Qi received command of three thousand soldiers and went to guard Jiangxia.

At this time Cao Cao suppressed the three highest officers of state and exercised their functions himself as the Prime Minister. He appointed as his general secretaries Mao Jie and Cui Yan, and as literary secretary Sima Yi. Sima Yi of Henei was grandson of Sima Juan, Governor of Yingchuan; son of Sima Fang, Governor of Jingzhao; and younger brother of Sima Lang, Secretary General.

Cao Cao then called his officers to a council to discuss an expedition against the south. 

Xiahou Dun opened the debate, saying, “Liu Bei is drilling his army at Xinye, and is a source of danger. He should be destroyed.”

Accordingly Xiahou Dun was appointed Commanding General, and four assistants—Yu Jin, Li Dian, Xiahou Lan, and Han Hao—were given him. With these he led one hundred thousand troops to Bowang, whence he could observe Xinye.

Xun Yu was opposed to this and said, “Liu Bei is a famous warrior, and he has lately taken to himself as his Directing Instructor Zhuge Liang. Caution is needed.”

Xiahou Dun replied, “Liu Bei is a mean rat. I will certainly take him prisoner.”

“Do not despise him,” said Xu Shu. “Remember he has Zhuge Liang to help him, and so he is like a tiger who has grown wings.”

Cao Cao said, “Who is this Zhuge Liang?”

“He has taken a Taoist cognomen of Sleeping Dragon. He is a perfect genius, god and devil combined, the greatest marvel of the age. Do not despise him.”

“How does he stand as compared with you?” asked Cao Cao.

“There is no comparison. I am a mere glow-worm spark; he is the glory of the full moon,” replied Xu Shu.

“You are mistaken,” replied Xiahou Dun. “This Zhuge Liang of yours is of no account. Who would fear him? If I do not take him and his master prisoners in the first battle, then here is my head, a free gift to our lord, the Prime Minister.”

“Hasten to comfort me with news of victory,” said Cao Cao.

Xiahou Dun hastened to depart.

The advent of Zhuge Liang and the extravagant deference
shown him did not please Liu Bei’s sworn brothers who grumbled, saying, “He is very young, although he is clever and learned. Our brother really treats him too well. We have not seen any evidence of his wonderful skill.”

Liu Bei replied, “You do not know his worth. I have him as if the fish has got into the water again. Pray do not discuss this matter further, my brothers.”

They withdrew, silent but dissatisfied.

One day a man presented Liu Bei with a yak’s tail, and he at once put it in his cap as an ornament. Zhuge Liang came in and noticed it at once.

“Then you have renounced all ambitions, my lord. You are just going to attend to this sort of thing,” Zhuge Liang quietly remarked.

Liu Bei snatched off his cap and flung it away, saying, “I was only amusing myself with the thing.”

“How do you think you stand compared with Cao Cao?” asked Zhuge Liang.

“Inferior.”

“Yes; your army is less than ten thousand, and the chances are ten thousand to one that he will attack. How can we meet him?”

“I am greatly distressed about it, but I see no way.”

“You might recruit, and I will train them. Then we might be able to oppose him.”

So recruiting began and three thousand were enlisted. Zhuge Liang set about drilling them diligently.

Soon they heard that Xiahou Dun was leading an army of one hundred thousand troops against them.

When he heard it, Zhang Fei said to his brother, Guan Yu, “We will get this Zhuge Liang to go and fight them.”

Just at that moment they were summoned to their brother, who asked their advice.

“Why not send the ‘Water,’ brother?” said Zhang Fei.

“For method I rely on Zhuge Liang; but for action I put my faith in you, my brothers. Are you going to fail me?”

They went out, and Zhuge Liang was called.

“I fear your brothers will not obey me,” said Zhuge Liang. “Wherefore, if I am to direct the campaign, you must give me a seal of office and a sword of authority.”

So Liu Bei gave him both. Armed with these ensigns of power, Zhuge Liang assembled the officers to receive their orders.

“We will go just to see what he will do,” said Zhang Fei to Guan Yu.

In the assembly Zhuge Liang spoke, saying, “On the left of Bowang are Yushan Hills. On the right is Anlin Forest. There we will prepare an ambush. Guan Yu will go to Yushan Hills with one thousand soldiers. He is to remain there quiescent till the enemy has passed; but when he sees a flame in the south, that will be the signal to attack. He will first burn their baggage train. Zhang Fei will go to a valley behind Anlin Forest. When he sees the signal, he is to go to the old stores depot at Bowang and burn that. Liu Feng and Guan Ping will take five hundred soldiers each to the south, prepare combustibles and be ready with them beyond
Bowang Slope. The enemy will arrive about dusk, and then the two generals can start the blaze. Zhao Yun, now recalled from Fancheng, is to lead the attack, but he is to lose and not win. And our lord is to command the reserve. See that each one obeys these orders and let there be no mistakes.”

Then said Guan Yu, “All of us are to go out to meet the enemy, but I have not yet heard what you are going to do.”

“I am going to guard the city.”

Zhang Fei burst into a laugh, “We are to go out to bloody battle, and you are to stay quietly at home quite comfortable.”

“Here is the sword and here the seal!” replied the strategist, displaying the emblems of authority. “Disobedience of orders will be death.”

Liu Bei said, “Do you not understand that the plans elaborated in a little chamber decide success over thousands of miles? Do not disobey the command, my brothers.”

Zhang Fei went out smiling cynically.

Guan Yu remarked, “Let us await the result. If he fails, then we can look to it.”

The brothers left. None of the officers understood anything of the general line of strategy and, though they obeyed orders, they were not without doubts and misgivings.

Zhuge Liang said to Liu Bei, “You may now lead your soldiers to the hills and camp till the enemy shall arrive tomorrow evening. Then you are to abandon the camp and move away retreating till the signal is seen. Then you will advance and attack with all force. Mi Zhu, Mi Fang, and I will guard the city.”

In the city Zhuge Liang prepared banquets to celebrate the victory and also prepared the books to record exceptional services.

Liu Bei noted all these things, but his heart was also troubled not a little.

Cao Cao’s army of one hundred thousand troops in due course reached Bowang. Then half of them, the veterans, were told off for the first attack, and the remainder were to guard the baggage train and supplies. Thus they marched in two divisions. The season was autumn and a chilly wind began to blow.

They pressed forward. Presently they saw a cloud of dust ahead of them, and Xiahou Dun ordered the ranks to be reformed. He questioned the guides as to the name of the place.

“The place in front is Bowang Slope, and behind us is the River Luo,” was the reply.

Then Xiahou Dun rode to the front to reconnoiter, leaving Yu Jin and Li Dian to finish setting out the battle array.

Presently Xiahou Dun began to laugh and, when they asked the cause of this merriment, he replied, “Xu Shu praised Zhuge Liang to the very skies as something more than human. But now that I see how he has placed his soldiers and the stuff he has put into his vanguard, it seems to me that he is sending dogs or sheep against tigers and leopards. I bragged a little when I said I would take him prisoner, but I am going to make good my boast.”
Then he rode forward at full speed.
Zhao Yun rode to meet him, and Xiahou Dun opened a volley of abuse, “You lot, followers of Liu Bei, are only like wraiths following devils!"

This angered Zhao Yun and a combat began. In a little time Zhao Yun turned and retreated as if he was worsted. Xiahou Dun pressed after him and kept up the chase for some three miles.

Then Zhao Yun suddenly turned again and offered fight, but only to retreat after a few passes.

Seeing these tactics Han Hao, one of Xiahou Dun’s generals, rode up to his chief and urged him to use caution, saying, “I fear he is trying to lead us into an ambush.”

“With such antagonists as these, I should not fear even Ten Ambushes,” replied Xiahou Dun, pressing forward eagerly.

Just as he reached the slope, he heard the roar of a bomb and out came Liu Bei to attack.

“Here is your ambush!” said Xiahou Dun, laughing. “I will get to Xinye this evening before I have done.”

Xiahou Dun urged his soldiers forward, and his opponents retired in measure as he advanced. As evening came on, thick clouds overcast the whole sky. The wind increased but the leader still urged his troops after the retreating foe.

The two generals in the rear came to a narrow part of the road with reeds and rushes thick all round them.

“Those who despise the enemy are beaten,” said Li Dian to Yu Jin. “Away south there the roads are narrow, and streams and mountains make the country difficult. The forests are dense, and if the enemy used fire we should be lost.”

“You are right,” replied Yu Jin. “I will get on and warn the Commanding General. Perhaps he will stop. You can halt those who come up.”

Yu Jin rode forward shouting at the top of his voice, “Halt the train!”

Xiahou Dun saw him coming up and asked what was the matter.

Yu Jin said, “The roads here are narrow and difficult. Around us are thick forests. What if they use fire?”

Xiahou Dun’s ferocity had then somewhat abated and he turned his steed toward his main body.

Then there arose a shout behind him. A rushing noise came from in the reeds and great tongues of flame shot up here and there. These spread and soon the fire was in “the four quarters and the eight sides,” and fanned by a strong wind.

Xiahou Dun’s troops were thrown into confusion and trampled each other down. Many perished. Zhao Yun turned
on them again to make a slaughter. Xiahou Dun dashed through the fire and smoke to escape. Now Li Dian saw that things were going very badly, so he turned to get back to Bowang but fell upon a body of troops in the way, led by Guan Yu. He desperately dashed into their midst and managed to get clear. Yu Jin saw the supplies were being destroyed and there was nothing left to guard, so he escaped along a bye-path. Two other generals, who came to try to save the baggage train, met Zhang Fei; and Xiahou Lan was slain forthwith, but Han Hao managed to flee. Next morning the countryside was strewn with corpses and drenched with blood.

The armies met on Bowang Slope

And Zhuge Liang fought with fire;  
A perfect strategist, he bent  
All humans to his desire.  
But poor Cao Cao, his enemy,  
He trembled in his shoes  
Before the man, who’d never fought  
But yet could armies use.

Xiahou Dun drew up the battered remains of his army and led them back to Xuchang. Zhuge Liang ordered his armies to collect. As Guan Yu and Zhang Fei rode homeward, they confessed, saying, “Zhuge Liang is really a fine strategist!” Before long they saw Mi Zhu and Mi Fang leading out a small body of soldiers. Among them was a light carriage in which the Directing Instructor Zhuge Liang was seating. Guan Yu and Zhang Fei dismounted and bowed before him. The remaining bodies came in. The spoil was distributed among the soldiers and all returned to Xinye, where the populace lined the roads to bid them welcome.

“We owe our lives to the Prince!” they cried to Liu Bei. Said Zhuge Liang, “Xiahou Dun has been driven off, but Cao Cao will come with a stronger force.” “And what shall we do?” replied Liu Bei. “My plan is quite ready,” said Zhuge Liang.

Always battles, nowhere rest for horse or human;
Chapter 39

*Must rely on ruses, dodging where one can.*

The plan prepared against Cao Cao will be unfolded in the next chapter.

Chapter 40

Lady Cai Renounces Jingzhou; Zhuge Liang Burns Xinye.

When Liu Bei asked how his adviser hoped to repel Cao Cao, Zhuge Liang replied, “Xinye is a small city and unfitted for our lengthy occupation. Liu Biao is ill and failing fast, so this is the time to take his region as a base where we may be safe against Cao Cao.”

“You speak well, but Liu Biao has shown me great kindness, and I could not bear to serve him an ill turn.”

“If you do not take this opportunity, you will regret it ever after,” said Zhuge Liang.

“I would rather perish than do what is wrong.”

“We will discuss it again,” replied Zhuge Liang.

When Xiahou Dun reached the capital, he presented himself to his master in bonds and craved death. But his master loosed him and let him tell his tale.

And Xiahou Dun said, “I was the victim of Zhuge Liang’s evil machinations: He attacked with fire.”

“As a soldier from your youth, you should have
remembered that fire was a likely weapon in narrow roads."

“Li Dian and Yu Jin reminded me. I am sorry enough now.”

Cao Cao rewarded Li Dian and Yu Jin who had warned their leader.

“Liu Bei as strong as he is now certainly is a menace to our existence, and he must be quickly destroyed,” said Xiahou Dun.

"Liu Bei is strong as he is now certainly is a menace to our existence, and he must be quickly destroyed,” said Xiahou Dun.

“He is one of my anxieties,” replied Cao Cao. “Sun Quan is the other. The rest do not count. We must take this chance to sweep the south clean.”

Then orders were issued to prepare an army of five hundred thousand troops, in five divisions of ten legions each. Each division had two leaders: Cao Ren and Cao Hong were in command of the first division; Zhang Liao and Zhang He, the second; Xiahou Dun and Xiahou Yuan, the third; Yu Jin and Li Dian, the fourth. The fifth body was led by Cao Cao himself. The van was commanded by Xu Chu. The “horse” day of the seventh moon of the thirteenth year of Rebuilt Tranquillity was fixed for the march (AD 208).

The High Minister, Kong Rong, offered a remonstrance. He said, “Liu Bei and Liu Biao are both of the Imperial House and should not be attacked without grave reasons. Sun Quan in the six territories of the South Land is terrible as a crouching tiger and, with the Great River as his defense, he is very secure. If, Sir Prime Minister, you undertake this unjustifiable expedition, you will forfeit the respect of the world, I fear.”

“All three of them are disobedient ministers and rebels, and how can I fail to punish them?” replied Cao Cao.

Cao Cao was angry, and bade the adviser go from his presence. Presently Cao Cao gave formal orders that he would put to death anyone who remonstrated on the subject of his expedition.

Kong Rong went forth from the Palace sadly. Casting his eyes up to heaven, he cried, “Where is the chance of success when the perfectly inhumane attacks the perfectly humane? He must be defeated!”

One of the clients of the Imperial Inspector Chi Lu, whom Kong Rong had always treated contemptuously and disdainfully, happened to hear this apostrophe and told his patron who carried the tale to Cao Cao.

Chi Lu also added to it, saying, “Kong Rong habitually speaks disrespectfully of the Chief Minister and has been very friendly with Mi Heng. In fact the insults that Mi Heng had hurled at you had been deliberately arranged and intrigued by Kong Rong. Kong Rong and Mi Heng seemed to admire each other hugely, and Mi Heng used to say, ‘Confucius is not dead, because Kong Rong is he,’ and the other used to reply, ‘And his treasured disciple, Yan Hui, has risen again, because Mi Heng is he.’”
Chi Lu’s tale angered Cao Cao, who ordered the arrest execution of the high minister.

Now Kong Rong had two sons, both young, who were sitting at home playing chess, when one of their servants ran in and said, “Your father has just been carried off for execution. Why do you not run away?”

The youths replied, “When the nest is pulled down, are the eggs left unbroken?”

Even at that moment the same executors came and carried off the whole household. The two youths were beheaded. The father’s corpse was exposed in the streets.

Minister Zhi Xi wept over the corpse. This public exhibition of sympathy rekindled Cao Cao’s anger, and he was going to punish it with death.

However, this additional punishment was prevented by Adviser Xun Yu, who said, “You should not slay a righteous man who came to mourn over his friend’s corpse. Zhi Xi had often warned Kong Rong against the danger his severe rectitude might lead him into.”

Zhi Xi took up the remains of father and sons and buried them.

_Kong Rong, who dwelt on the north sea shore,_
_A noble reputation bore;_
_With him all guests warm welcome found,_
_And ceaselessly the wine went round._
_For skill in letters he was famed,_
_In speech, he dukes and princes shamed,_
_Historians his merits tell,_
_Recorders say that he did well._

After wreaking his wrath on Kong Rong, Cao Cao issued the order to march. Xun Yu was left in command of the capital.

About this time the Imperial Protector of Jingzhou became seriously ill, and he summoned Liu Bei to his chamber. Liu Bei went accompanied by his two brothers, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, and Directing Instructor Zhuge Liang.

Liu Biao said, “The disease has attacked my very vitals, and my time is short. I confide my orphans to your guardianship. My sons is unfit to succeed to my place, and I pray you, my brother, administer the region after my death.”

Liu Bei wept, saying, “I will do my utmost to help my nephews. What else could I do, indeed?”

Even at this moment came the news of the march of Cao Cao’s armies, and Liu Bei, taking hasty leave of his kinsman, was forced to hurry to his station. The evil tidings aggravated the sick man’s condition, and he began to make his last arrangements. In his testament he appointed Liu Bei the guardian of his son Liu Qi, who was to succeed in the lordship.

This arrangement greatly angered his wife, Lady Cai. She closed the inner doors against all and confided to her own partisans, of whom Cai Mao and Zhang Yun were her confidants, the keeping of the outer gates.
The heir was at Jiangxia, and he came to make filial inquiries as soon as his father’s condition became serious.

But Cai Mao refused him admittance and said, “Your father sent you to guard Jiangxia. Such a very responsible post should by no means have been quitted without orders. Suppose it was attacked, what might not happen? If your father sees you, he will be very angry, and it will make him worse. That would be most undutiful, and you should return to your command at once.”

Liu Qi stood out for some time, but admittance was denied him in spite of his tears. So he returned to his post. Meanwhile Liu Biao rapidly grew worse. He anxiously looked for his son, but Liu Qi came not. Suddenly Liu Biao uttered piercing shrieks and then passed away.

When the Yuans were lords of the north,  
And Liu Biao held the bank of the river,  
It seemed, so strong were they both,  
That they would endure forever;  
But the family affairs troubled their states,  
And, meddling, confusion made;  
It was mournful indeed to see  
How quickly the houses decayed.

So Imperial Protector Liu Biao died. Then the widow and her partisans took counsel together and forged a testament conferring the lordship of Jingzhou on the second son Liu Zong before they published the news of the death.

The wrongful heir was then fourteen years of age. But he was a cunning boy, so he assembled the officials and said, “My father has passed away, and my elder brother is at Jiangxia. More than that, our uncle is at Xinye. You have made me lord, but if my brother and uncle come here with an army to punish me for usurping the lordship, what explanation can I offer?”

At first no one replied. Then Adviser Li Gui rose and said, “You speak well. Now hasten to send letters of mourning to your brother and ask him to come and take his inheritance. Also call upon Liu Bei to come and assist in the administration. Then shall we be safe against our enemies---Cao Cao on the north and Sun Quan on the south. I consider this the most excellent plan.”

But Cai Mao replied harshly, “Who are you to speak thus wildly and oppose the testament of our late lord?”
Li Gui began to abuse him, saying, “You and your party have fabricated this testament, setting aside the rightful heir. Now the whole region is in the hands of the Cai family. If our dead lord knew your doings, he would slay you!”

Cai Mao ordered the lictors to take Li Gui away to execution. He was hurried out, but his tongue ceased not.

So the younger son was placed in his father’s seat, and the Cai clan shared among them the whole military authority of the region. The defense of Jingzhou was confided to Liu Xin and Deng Yi, while Lady Cai and her son took up their residence in Xiangyang so as to be out of the reach of the rightful heir and his uncle. They interred the remains of the late Imperial Protector on the east of Xiangyang, near the bank of the Han River. No notice of the death was sent to Liu Qi, the son, or to Liu Bei, his uncle.

Liu Zong arrived at Xiangyang, but, before he had had time to recover from the fatigue of the journey, the startling news of the approach of Cao Cao’s great army came in. He summoned Kuai Yue and Cai Mao and others to ask counsel.

One of the secretaries, Fu Xuan, offered his advice, saying, “Not only are we threatened by a great army from the north, but the elder son, who is the real heir, at Jiangxia, and his uncle at Xinye, are to be reckoned with. These two have not been notified of the death, and they will resent that. We shall be in sad case if they also march against us. But if you will adopt my suggestion, then our people will be as steady as Taishan Mountains and our young lord’s position and rank will be assured.”

“What is your plan?” asked the young lord.

“To offer the whole region to Cao Cao, who will treat our young master most liberally.”

“What advice!” said Liu Zong angrily. “Am I to yield my heritage to another before I have even fairly succeeded to it?”

“The advice is good,” said Kuai Yue. “Opportunism is a policy, and possibilities need consideration. In the name of government, Cao Cao is fighting against his neighbors. If our lord opposes him, he will be termed contumacious. Beside, any misfortune on our borders before our young lord is well established will react upon the internal administration, and our people will be panic-stricken at the mere news of the approach of a hostile army. How could we then offer any resistance?”

Liu Zong replied, “It is not that I disagree with you, but I should be a laughing stock to the whole world were I to abandon my heritage without an effort.”

He was interrupted by a speaker who said, “If their advice is good, why not follow it?”

They turned toward the speaker who was a certain Wang Can of Shanyang, a lean, cadaverous individual much below the middle height of a man.

However, his talents did not conform to his physical appearance. When he was yet a youth, he went to visit Minister Cai Yong, then a vice-chairman of the Secretariat; and although many guests of exalted rank were present, the host hastened to welcome the newcomer with the greatest deference. The others were astonished and asked why he was so respectful to a mere youth.

“He is a young man with the highest gifts,” said Cai Yong.

Wang Can was widely read and had a most retentive memory, better than any of his contemporaries. If he glanced at a roadside monument as he passed, he remembered every
word of the inscription. If he saw people playing chess and the board was suddenly overthrown, he could replace every pip in its proper place. He was a good mathematician and his poems were exquisite. At seventeen he was appointed a court official but did not take up the appointment. When the disturbance in the empire grew serious, he sought refuge in Jingzhou, where he was received with great honor as guest of the Imperial Protector.

What he said was this, “General, how do you compare with Cao Cao?”

“Inferior,” replied Liu Zong.

Wang Can continued, “Cao Cao has many soldiers and bold leaders. He is able and resourceful. He took Lu Bu at Xiapi and broke the power of Yuan Shao at Guandu. He pursued Liu Bei into Longyou and destroyed Mao Dun at White Wolf Hills. The destruction of such firmly established men shows his invincible character. Now he is on the way here, and it will be very difficult to withstand him. The plan proposed is the best you can expect, and you should not delay and hesitate till it is too late for ought but regret.”

“Worthy Sir, you indeed speak to the point. I must inform my mother,” said the young ruler.

But just then they saw his mother appear from behind a screen. She had been listening to all that was said.

“Why refer to me when three such gentlemen coincide in their opinions?” said Lady Cai.

So Liu Zong decided, and the letter of surrender was composed and entrusted to one Song Zhong to convey secretly to Cao Cao. Song Zhong went straight to Wancheng and presented the letter. It was received with joy, and the bearer well rewarded.

The submission was accepted, and Cao Cao said, “Tell Liu Zong to go out to meet me in the open country, and he will be in perpetual tenure of his land.”

Song Zhong left the city and took the homeward way. He had nearly reached the ferry when he fell in with a party of horse. On a closer look he saw the leader was Guan Yu. The messenger tried to escape observation, but was presently captured and taken to the leader to be questioned. At first he prevaricated but on being closely questioned told the whole story. Then he was carried off to Xinye and made to retell his story to Liu Bei who heard it with lamentations.

Zhang Fei said, “This being so, I propose that we put this fellow to death, then cross the river, attack Xiangyang, and make an end of the Cai tribe and Liu Zong as well. Then we can attack Cao Cao.”

But Liu Bei replied, “Hold on. I have something more to say.”

Then turning to the prisoner, Liu Bei shouted, “When they did all this, why did you not come to tell me? As things are now, there is nothing to be gained by killing you. You may go.”

Song Zhong stammered his thanks, threw his arms over his head, and ran away. Liu Bei was very sad.

Presently Yi Ji from Jiangxia was announced. Liu Bei was very fond of this man and went down the steps to
welcome him.
Then said Yi Ji, “The heir has heard that his father is
dead, but his stepmother and her family are keeping back
the news so that they may set up Liu Zong. He knows the
news is true, as he sent a special messenger to find out. He
thinks you, O Prince, may not know and has sent me to
inform you, and his letter begs you to lead all the troops you
can to Xiangyang to help him assert his claims.”

Liu Bei opened and read the letter.
Then he said, “Yes; you know that the younger son has
usurped the lordship, but you have not heard that he has
already sent to offer Jingzhou to Cao Cao.”

This news shocked Yi Ji, who asked, “How know you
this?”

Liu Bei told of the capture
of Song Zhong.
Yi Ji said, “You can go
to Xiangyang as if to attend
the mourning ceremonies
and so draw Liu Zong into
coming out of the city to
welcome you. Then you can
seize him, slay his party, and
take the region.”

“Youre advice is good,”
said Zhuge Liang, “and my
lord ought to take it.”

Liu Bei wept, saying, “In his last interview, my brother
confided his son and heir to my care. If I lay hands upon
another son and seize upon the inheritance, how shall I be
able to look my brother in the face when I meet him by and
by beyond the grave?”

“If you do not act in this way now, how will you repel
Cao Cao, who has already reached Wancheng?” said Zhuge
Liang.

“Our best plan is to take refuge in Fancheng,” replied
Liu Bei.

Just about this time the spies came to say that Cao Cao’s
army had reached Bowang. So Yi Ji was sent off with
instructions to take measures for the defense of Jiangxia,
while Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang discussed plans for meeting
the enemy.

Zhuge Liang said, “My lord should not worry. We have
burned the army of Cao Cao at Bowang Slope, so we will
see them fallen into another ruse in Xinye. This is no place
to live in. We will move over to Fancheng.”

Then notices were posted at all the gates that all the
people, without any exception, were to follow their ruler at
once to the new city to escape danger. Boats were prepared
and the people sent away under the direction of Sun Qian.
Mi Zhu saw to the safe conveyance of the families of the
officials.

Then the officers assembled for orders.
Zhuge Liang gave directions, “Guan Yu is to go to the
upper of the White River with one thousand troops. His
men are to carry bags to fill with sand and earth to dam the
river till the enemy shall be heard, about the third watch
next day. Then the waters are to be freed to drown one of
the armies. He is then to march down river.

“Zhang Fei is to go to the Boling Ferry, where the current
is slow. After the waters of the White River have been let
loose on Cao Cao’s soldiers, they will try to get over the
river at the ferry. They are to be attacked by Zhang Fei and
his one thousand troops.

“Zhao Yun is to divide three thousand troops into four
parties and take one to the east gate. The other three are for
the other gates. The roofs of the houses within the city walls
are piled with sulfur, saltpeter, and other combustibles. The
Chapter 40

intention is to set fire to the city when the army of the enemy has entered it for shelter. There will be a strong breeze next day in the evening which will fan the flames. When this wind begins to blow, fire arrows are to be shot into the city from all sides. When the flames are high, there is to be a great shouting outside to add to the general terror. The east gate is to be left free for escape, but the flying men are to be smitten after passing the gate.

“Mi Fang and Liu Feng are to take command of two thousand troops, one half with red flags and the other half with blue. They are to go to Magpie Tail Slope, about ten miles from the city and camp. When they see Cao Cao’s army coming along, the red flags are to move left and the blue right to confuse the enemy so that they shall be afraid to advance further. Then an ambush is to be laid to smite the enemy when the fire in Xinye starts. After that Mi Fang and Liu Feng are to go to the river to meet us.

“After the battle, all generals shall gather at Fancheng.”

All the orders given, the various leaders went their way to take up their positions and await the burning of the city. Zhuge Liang and Liu Bei went away to an eminence whence they could watch what happened and where they would await the reports of victory.

Cao Hong and Cao Ren, with their one hundred thousand troops, preceded by Xu Chu leading three thousand of mailed men, marched toward Xinye. They formed a mighty host and reached Magpie Tail Slope about noon. Looking ahead, they saw what seemed a goodly army with many blue and red flags. Xu Chu pressed forward. As he neared, the flags moved from side to side, and he hesitated.

He began to think, “It could be an ambush. It is unwise to advance.”

Finally Xu Chu decided to go no farther and called a halt, and he rode back to the main body to see Cao Ren.

“Those troops are only make-believe,” said Cao Ren. “Advance, there is no ambush. I will hasten up the supports.”

So Xu Chu rode to his own command again and advanced. When he reached the wood where he had seen the flags, he saw no one at all. It was then late in the afternoon but he decided to move on. Then he heard from the hills the sound of musical instruments and, looking up, saw on the hill top two umbrellas surrounded by many banners. There sat Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang quietly drinking.

Angry at their coolness, Xu Chu sought for a way up, but logs of wood and great stones were thrown down, and he was driven back. Further, from the rear of the hills came a confused roar. He could find no way to attack, and the sun began to set.

Then Cao Ren and Cao Hong arrived and ordered an attack on Xinye that he might have a place to rest in. They marched to the walls and found the gates wide open. They entered and found a deserted city. No one was visible.

“This shows they are
done,” said Cao Hong. “They have all run away, people and all. We may as well occupy the city and rest our soldiers ready for tomorrow.”

The soldiers were fatigued with marching and hungry as well, so they lost no time in scattering among the houses and setting about preparing food in the deserted kitchens. The leaders took up their quarters in the state residence to rest.

After the first watch the wind began to blow. Soon after the gate guards reported that a fire had started.

“The careless men have let sparks fly about,” said Cao Ren.

He thought no more about it just then, but along came other reports of like nature, and soon he realized that fires breaking out in all quarters were not due to accident. So he gave orders to evacuate the city. Soon the whole city seemed on fire, and a red glow hung in the sky. The army was beset with fire fiercer than what Xiahou Dun had experienced at Bowang Slope.

Thrice wicked was Cao Cao, but he was bold;
Though all in the capital he controlled,
Yet with this he was not content,
So southward his ravaging army went.
But, the autumn wind aiding, the Spirit of Fire
Wrought to his army destruction dire.

Officers and troops dashing through the smoke and fire in utter confusion sought some way of escape, and hearing that the east gate was free, they made for that quarter.

Out they rushed pell-mell, many being trodden down and trampled to death. Those who got through took the road to the east.

But presently there was a shouting behind them, and Zhao Yun’s company came up and attacked. Then Cao Cao’s troops scattered, each fleeing for his life. No stand was made. A little later Mi Fang and Liu Feng came to take another toll. The fleeing Cao Ren then had very few followers, and those left him were scorched and burned.

They directed their way to the White River, joyfully remembering that the river was shallow and fordable. And they went down into the stream and drank their fill, humans shouting and horses neighing.

Meantime Guan Yu, higher up its course, had dammed the river with sandbags so that its waters were collected in a lake. Toward evening he had seen the red glow of the burning city and began to look out for his signal. About the fourth watch, he heard down stream the sounds of soldiers and horse and at once ordered the breaking of the dam. The water rushed down in a torrent and overwhelmed the men just then in the bed of the river. Many were swept away and drowned. Those who escaped made their way to where the stream ran gently and got away.
Presently Cao Ren and his troops reached the Boling Ferry. Here, where they thought there would be safety, they found the road barred.

“You Cao Cao brigands!” shouted Zhang Fei. “Come and receive your fate!”

*Within the city the red flame leaps out; On the river bank burning anger is met.*

What happened will appear in later chapters.

Chapter 41

Liu Bei Leads His People Over The River; Zhao Yun Rescues The Child Lord At Dangyang.

The last chapter closed with the attack made by Zhang Fei as soon as his brother had let loose the waters on the doomed army. He met with Xu Chu and a combat began, but a fight with such a warrior was not to Xu Chu’s taste and he ran away. Zhang Fei followed till he came upon Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang, and the three went upstream till they came to the boats that had been prepared by Liu Feng and Mi Fang, when they all crossed over and marched toward Fancheng. As soon as they disembarked, Zhuge Liang ordered the boats and rafts to be burned.

Cao Ren gathered in the remnants of his army and camped at Xinye, while his colleague Cao Hong went to tell their lord the evil tidings of defeat.

“How dare he, this rustic Zhuge Liang!” exclaimed Cao Cao angrily.

Cao Cao then hastily sent an overwhelming army to camp near the place and gave orders for enormous works against the city, leveling hills and turning rivers to launch a violent assault on Fancheng from every side at once.

Then Liu Ye came in to see his lord and said, “Sir, you are new to this region, and you should win over the people’s hearts. Liu Bei has moved all the people from Xinye to Fancheng. If we march through the country, the people will
be ground to powder. It would be well to call upon Liu Bei first to surrender, which will prove to the people that you have a care for them. If he yields, then we get Jingzhou without fighting.”

Cao Cao agreed and asked who would be a suitable messenger. Liu Ye suggested Xu Shu.

“He is a close friend of Liu Bei, and he is here with the army,” said Liu Ye.

“But he will not come back,” objected Cao Cao.

“If he does not return, he will be a laughing stock to the whole world. He will come back.”

Xu Shu was sent for, and Cao Cao said, “My first intention was to level Fancheng with the ground. But out of pity for its people, you may carry an offer to Liu Bei that if he will surrender, he will not only not be punished but he shall be given rank. But if he holds on his present misguided course, the whole of his followers shall be destroyed. Now you are an honest man and so I confide this mission to you, and I trust you will not disappoint me.”

Xu Shu said nothing but accepted his orders and went to the city, where he was received by both Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang. They enjoyed a talk over old times before Xu Shu mentioned the object of his mission.

Then he said, “Cao Cao has sent me to invite you to surrender, thereby making a bid for popularity. But you ought also to know that he intends to attack the city from every point, that he is damming up the White River’s waters to be sent against you, and I fear you will not be able to hold the city. You ought to prepare.”

Liu Bei asked Xu Shu to remain with them, but Xu Shu said, “That is impossible, for all the world would ridicule me if I stayed. My old mother is dead, and I never forget my resentment. My body may be over there, but I swear never to form a plan for Cao Cao. You have the Sleeping Dragon to help you and need have no anxiety about the ultimate achievement of your undertaking. But I must go.”

And Xu Shu took his leave. Liu Bei felt he could not press his friend to stay. Xu Shu returned to Cao Cao’s camp and reported that Liu Bei had no intention of surrender. This angered Cao Cao who gave orders to begin the advance and siege.

When Liu Bei asked what Zhuge Liang meant to do, Zhuge Liang replied, “We shall abandon Fancheng and take Xiangyang.”

“But what of the people who have followed us? They cannot be abandoned.”

“You can tell them to do as they wish. They may come if they like, or remain here.”

They sent Guan Yu to prepare boats and told Sun Qian to proclaim to the people that Cao Cao was coming, that the city could not be defended, and those who wished to do so might cross the river with the army.

All the people cried, “We will follow the Prince even if it be to death!”

They started at once, some lamenting, some weeping, the young helping the aged, parents leading their children, the strong soldiers carrying the women. As the crowds crossed the river, from both banks arose the sound of lamentation.
Liu Bei was much affected as he saw all this from the boat.

"Why was I ever born," said he, "To be the cause of all this misery to the people?"

He made to leap into the river, but they held him back. All were deeply sympathetic. When the boat reached the southern shore, he looked back at the weeping crowds waiting still on the other bank and was again moved to tears. He bade Guan Yu hasten the boats before he mounted and rode on.

When Xiangyang came in sight, they saw many flags flying on the walls and that the moat was protected by barbed barriers.

Liu Bei checked his horse and called out, "Liu Zong, good nephew! I only wish to save the people and nothing more. I pray you quickly open the gates."

But Liu Zong was too frightened to appear. Cai Mao and Zhang Yun went up to one of the fighting towers and ordered the soldiers to shoot arrows down on those without the walls. The people gazed up at the towers and wept aloud.

Suddenly there appeared a general, with a small following, who cried out, "Cai Mao and Zhang Yun are two traitors. The princely Liu Bei is a most upright man and has come here to preserve his people. Why do you repulse him?"

All looked at this man. He was of eight-span height, with a face dark brown as a ripe date. He was from Yiyang and named Wei Yan. At that moment he looked very terrible, whirling his sword as if about to slice up the gate guards. They lost no time in throwing open the gate and dropping the bridge.

"Come in, Uncle Liu Bei," cried Wei Yan, "and bring your army to slay these traitors!"

Zhang Fei plunged forward to take Cai Mao and Zhang Yun, but he was checked by his brother, who said, "Do not frighten the people!"

Thus Wei Yan let in Liu Bei. As soon as he entered, he saw a general galloping up with a few men.

The newcomer yelled, "Wei Yan, you nobody! How dare you create trouble? Do you not know me, General Wen Ping?"
Wei Yan turned angrily, set his spear, and galloped forward to attack the general. The soldiers joined in the fray and the noise of battle rose to the skies.

“I wanted to preserve the people, and I am only causing them injury,” cried Liu Bei distressed. “I do not wish to enter the city.”

“Jiangling is an important point. We will first take that as a place to dwell in,” said Zhuge Liang.

“That pleases me greatly,” said Liu Bei.

So they led the people thither and away from Xiangyang. Many of the inhabitants of that city took advantage of the confusion to escape, and they also joined themselves to Liu Bei.

Meanwhile, within the inhospitable city, Wei Yan and Wen Ping fought. The battle continued for four or five watches, all through the middle of the day, and nearly all the combatants fell. Then Wei Yan got away. As he could not find Liu Bei, he rode off to Changsha and sought an asylum with Governor Han Xuan.

Liu Bei wandered away from the city of Xiangyang that had refused shelter. Soldiers and people, his following numbered more than a hundred thousand. The carts numbered scores of thousands, and the burden bearers were innumerable. Their road led them past the tomb of Liu Biao, and Liu Bei turned aside to bow at the grave.

He lamented, saying, “Shameful is thy brother, lacking both in virtue and in talents. I refused to bear the burden you wished to lay upon me, wherein I was wrong. But the people committed no sin, I pray your glorious spirit descend and rescue these people.”

His prayer was fraught with sorrow, and all those about him wept.

Just then a scout rode up with the news that Fancheng was already taken by Cao Cao and that his army were preparing boats and rafts to cross the river.

The generals of Liu Bei said, “Jiangling is a defensible shelter, but with this crowd we can only advance very slowly, and when can we reach the city? If Cao Cao pursue, we shall be in a parlous state. Our counsel is to leave the people to their fate for a time and press on to Jiangling.”

But Liu Bei wept, saying, “The success of every great enterprise depends upon humanity. How can I abandon these people who have joined me?”

Those who heard him repeat this noble sentiment were greatly affected.

In time of stress his heart was tender toward the people, And he wept as he went down into the ship, Moving the hearts of soldiers to sympathy. Even today, in the countryside, Fathers and elders recall the Princely One’s kindness.

The progress of Liu Bei, with the crowd of people in his train, was very slow.

“The pursuers will be upon us quickly,” said Zhuge Liang. “Let us send Guan Yu to Jiangxia for succor. Liu Qi should be told to bring soldiers and prepare boats for us at Jiangling.”

Liu Bei agreed to this and wrote a letter which he sent by
the hands of Guan Yu and Sun Qian and five hundred troops. Zhang Fei was put in command of the rear guard. Zhao Yun was told to guard Liu Bei’s family, while the others ordered the march of the people.

They only traveled three or four miles daily and the halts were frequent.

Meanwhile Cao Cao was at Fancheng, whence he sent troops over the river toward Xiangyang. He summoned Liu Zong, but Liu Zong was too afraid to answer the call. No persuasion could get him to go.

Wang Wei said to him privately, “Now you can overcome Cao Cao if you are wise. Since you have announced surrender and Liu Bei has gone away, Cao Cao will relax his precautions, and you can catch him unawares. Send a well-prepared but unexpected force to waylay him in some commanding position, and the thing is done. If you were to take Cao Cao prisoner, your fame would run throughout the empire, and the land would be yours for the taking. This is a sort of opportunity that does not recur, and you should not miss it.”

The young man consulted Cai Mao, who called Wang Wei an evil counselor and spoke to him harshly.

“You are mad! You know nothing and understand nothing of destiny,” said Cai Mao.

Wang Wei angrily retorted, saying, “Cai Mao is the betrayer of the country, and I wish I could eat him alive!”

The quarrel waxed deadly, and Cai Mao wanted to slay Wang Wei. But eventually peace was restored by Kuai Yue.

Then Cai Mao and Zhang Yun went to Fancheng to see Cao Cao.

Cai Mao was by instinct specious and flattering, and when his host asked concerning the resources of Jingzhou, he replied, “There are fifty thousand of horse, one hundred fifty thousand of foot, and eighty thousand of marines. Most of the money and grain are at Jiangling. The rest is stored at various places. There are ample supplies for a year.”

“How many war vessels are there? Who is in command?” said Cao Cao.

“The ships, of all sizes, number seven thousands, and we two are the commanders.”

Upon this Cao Cao conferred upon Cai Mao the title of the Lord Who Controls the South, and Supreme Admiral of the Naval Force; and Zhang Yun was his Vice-Admiral with the title of the Lord Who Brings Obedience.

When they went to thank Cao Cao for these honors, he told them, saying, “I am about to propose to the Throne that Liu Biao’s son should be perpetual Imperial Protector of Jingzhou in succession to his late father.”

With this promise for their young master and the honors for themselves, they retired.

Then Xun You asked Cao Cao, “Why these two evident self-seekers and flatterers have been treated so generously?”

Cao Cao replied, “Do I not know all about them? Only in the north, where we have been, we know very little of war
by water, and these two men do. I want their help for the present. When my end is achieved, I can do as I like with them.”

Liu Zong was highly delighted when his two chief supporters returned with the promise Cao Cao had given them. Soon after he gave up his seal and military commission and proceeded to welcome Cao Cao, who received him very graciously.

Cao Cao next proceeded to camp near Xiangyang. The populace, led by Cai Mao and Zhang Yun, welcomed him with burning incense, and he on his part put forth proclamations couched in comforting terms.

Cao Cao presently entered the city and took his seat in the residence in state. Then he summoned Kuai Yue and said to him graciously, “I do not rejoice so much at gaining Jingzhou as at meeting you, friend Kuai Yue.”

Cao Cao made Kuai Yue Governor of Jiangling and Lord of Fancheng; Wang Can, Fu Xuan, and Kuai Yue’s other adherents were all ennobled. Liu Zong became Imperial Protector of Qingzhou in the north and was ordered to proceed to his region forthwith.

Liu Zong was greatly frightened and said, “I have no wish to become an actual official. I wish to remain in the place where my father and mother live.”

Said Cao Cao, “Your protectorship is quite near the capital, and I have sent you there as a full official to remove you from the intrigues of this place.”

Liu Zong was greatly frightened and said, “I have no wish to become an actual official. I wish to remain in the place where my father and mother live.”

Said Cao Cao, “Your protectorship is quite near the capital, and I have sent you there as a full official to remove you from the intrigues of this place.”

InvainLiuZongdeclined the honors thus thrust upon him: He was compelled to go and he departed, taking his mother with him. Of his friends, only Wang Wei accompanied him. Some of his late officers escorted him as far as the river and then took their leave.

Then Cao Cao called his trusty officer Yu Jin and said, “Follow Liu Zong and put him and his mother to death. Our worries are thus removed.”

Yu Jin followed the small party.
When he drew near he shouted, “I have an order from the great Prime Minister to put you both to death, mother and son! You may as well submit quietly.”

Lady Cai threw her arms about her son, lifted up her voice and wept. Yu Jin bade his soldiers get on with their bloody work. Only Wang Wei made any attempt to save his mistress, and he was soon killed. The two, mother and son, were soon finished, and Yu Jin returned to report his success. He was richly rewarded.

Next Cao Cao sent to discover and seize the family of Zhuge Liang, but they had already disappeared. Zhuge Liang had moved them to the Three Gorges. It was much to Cao Cao’s disgust that the search was fruitless.
So Xiangyang was settled. Then Xun You proposed a further advance.
He said, “Jiangling is an important place, and very rich.
If Liu Bei gets it, it will be difficult to dislodge him.”

“How could I have overlooked that?” said Cao Cao.

Then he called upon the officers of Xiangyang for one who could lead the way. They all came except Wen Ping.

Cao Cao sent for him and soon he came also.

“Why are you late?” asked Cao Cao.

Wen Ping said, “To be a minister and see one’s master lose his own boundaries is most shameful. Such a person has no face to show to anyone else, and I was too ashamed to come.”

His tears fell fast as he finished this speech. Cao Cao admired his loyal conduct and rewarded him with office of Governorship of Jiangxia and a title of Lordship, and also bade him open the way.

The spies returned and said, “Liu Bei is hampered by the crowds of people who have followed him. He can proceed only three or four miles daily, and he is only one hundred miles away.”

Cao Cao decided to take advantage of Liu Bei’s plight, so he chose out five thousand of tried horsemen and sent them after the cavalcade, giving them a limit of a day and a night to come up therewith. The main army would follow.

As has been said Liu Bei was traveling with a huge multitude of followers, to guard whom he had taken what precautions were possible. Zhang Fei was in charge of the rear guard, and Zhao Yun was to protect his lord’s family. Guan Yu had been sent to Jiangxia.

One day Zhuge Liang came in and said, “There is as yet no news from Jiangxia. There must be some difficulties.”

“I wish that you yourself would go there,” said Liu Bei. “Liu Qi would remember your former kindness to him and consent to anything you proposed.”

Zhuge Liang said he would go and set out with Liu Feng, the adopted son of Liu Bei, taking an escort of five hundred troops.

A few days after, while on the march in company with three of his commanders---Jian Yong, Mi Zhu, and Mi Fang---a sudden whirlwind rose just in front of Liu Bei, and a huge column of dust shot up into the air hiding the face of the sun.

Liu Bei was frightened and asked, “What might that
Chapter 41

Romance of Three Kingdoms

Liu Bei’s wife and child - Lady Mi and Liu Shan

Jian Yong, who knew something of the mysteries of nature, took the auspices by counting secretly on his fingers.

Pale and trembling, he announced, “A calamity is threatening this very night. My lord must leave the people to their fate and flee quickly.”

“I cannot do that,” said Liu Bei.

“If you allow your pity to overcome your judgment, then misfortune is very near,” said Jian Yong.

Thus spoke Jian Yong to his lord, who then asked what place was near.

His people replied, “Dangyang is quite close, and there is a very famous mountain near it called Prospect Mountain.”

Then Liu Bei bade them lead the way thither.

The season was late autumn, just changing to winter, and the icy wind penetrated to the very bones. As evening fell, long-drawn howls of misery were heard on every side. At the middle of the fourth watch, two hours after midnight, they heard a rumbling sound in the northwest. Liu Bei halted and placed himself at the head of his own guard of two thousand soldiers to meet whatever might come.

Presently Cao Cao’s men appeared and made fierce onslaught. Defense was impossible, though Liu Bei fought desperately. By good fortune just at the crisis Zhang Fei came up, cut an alley through, rescued his brother, and got
him away to the east. Presently they were stopped by Wen Ping.

“Turncoat! Can you still look humans in the face?” cried Liu Bei.

Wen Ping was overwhelmed with shame and led his troops away. Zhang Fei, now fighting, protected his brother till dawn.

By that time Liu Bei had got beyond the sound of battle, and there was time to rest. Only a few of his followers had been able to keep near him. He knew nothing of the fate of his officers or the people.

He lifted up his voice in lamentation, saying, “Myriads of living souls are suffering from love of me, and my officers and my loved ones are lost. One would be a graven image not to weep at such loss!”

Still plunged in sadness, presently he saw hurrying toward him Mi Fang, with an enemy’s arrow still sticking in his face.

Mi Fang exclaimed, “Zhao Yun has gone over to Cao Cao!”

Liu Bei angrily bade him be silent, crying, “Do you think I can believe that of my old friend?”

“Perhaps he has gone over,” said Zhang Fei. “He must see that we are nearly lost and there are riches and honors on the other side.”

“He has followed me faithfully through all my misfortunes. His heart is firm as a rock. No riches or honors would move him,” said Liu Bei.

“I saw him go away northwest,” said Mi Fang.

“Wait till I meet him,” said Zhang Fei. “If I run against him, I will kill him!”

“Beware how you doubt him,” said Liu Bei. “Have you forgotten the circumstances under which your brother Guan Yu had to slay Cai Yang to ease your doubts of him? Zhao Yun’s absence is due to good reason wherever he has gone, and he would never abandon me.”

But Zhang Fei was not convinced. Then he, with a score of
his men, rode to the Long Slope Bridge. Seeing a wood near the bridge, an idea suddenly struck him. He bade his followers cut branches from the trees, tie them to the tails of the horses, and ride to and fro so as to raise a great dust as though an army were concealed in the wood. He himself took up his station on the bridge facing the west with spear set ready for action. So he kept watch.

Now Zhao Yun, after fighting with the enemy from the fourth watch till daylight, could see no sign of his lord and, moreover, had lost his lord’s family.

He thought bitterly within himself, “My master confided to me his family and the child lord Liu Shan; and I have lost them. How can I look him in the face? I can only go now and fight to the death. Whatever happen, I must go to seek the women and my lord’s son.”

Turning about he found he had but some forty followers left. He rode quickly to and fro among the scattered soldiers seeking the lost women. The lamentations of the people about him were enough to make heaven and earth weep. Some had been wounded by arrows, others by spears; they had thrown away their children, abandoned their wives, and were flying they knew not whither in crowds.

Presently Zhao Yun saw a man lying in the grass and recognized him as Jian Yong.

“Have you seen the two mothers?” cried he.

Jian Yong replied, “They left their carriage and ran away taking the child lord Liu Shan in their arms. I followed but on the slope of the hill I was wounded and fell from my horse. The horse was stolen. I could fight no longer, and I lay down here.”

Zhao Yun put his colleague on the horse of one of his followers, told off two soldiers to support Jian Yong, and bade Jian Yong ride to their lord and tell him of the loss.

“Say,” said Zhao Yun, “that I will seek the lost ones in heaven or hell, through good or evil. And if I find them not, I will die in the battlefield.”

Then Zhao Yun rode off toward the Long Slope Bridge. As he went, a voice called out, “General Zhao Yun, where are you going?”

“Who are you?” said Zhao Yun, pulling up.

“One of the Princely One’s carriage guards. I am wounded.”

“Do you know anything of the two ladies?”

“Not very long ago I saw Lady Gan go south with a party of other women. Her hair was down, and she was barefooted.”

Hearing this, without even another glance at the speaker, Zhao Yun put his horse at full gallop toward the south. Soon
he saw a small crowd of people, male and female, walking hand in hand.

"Is Lady Gan among you!" he called out.

A woman in the rear of the party looked up at him and uttered a loud cry.

He slipped off his steed, stuck his spear in the sand, and wept, "It was my fault that you were lost. But where are Lady Mi and our child lord?"

Lady Gan replied, "She and I were forced to abandon our carriage and mingle with the crowd on foot. Then a band of soldiers came up, and we were separated. I do not know where they are. I ran for my life."

As she spoke, a howl of distress rose from the crowd of fugitives, for a thousand of soldiers appeared. Zhao Yun recovered his spear and mounted ready for action. Presently he saw among the soldiers a prisoner bound upon a horse, and the prisoner was Mi Zhu. Behind Mi Zhu followed a general gripping a huge sword. The troops belonged to the army of Cao Ren, and the general was Chunyu Dao. Having captured Mi Zhu, he was just taking him to his chief as a proof of his prowess.

Zhao Yun shouted and rode at the captor who was speedily slain by a spear thrust and his captive was set free. Then taking two of the horses, Zhao Yun set Lady Gan on one and Mi Zhu took the other. They rode away toward Long Slope Bridge.
But there, standing grim on the bridge, was Zhang Fei.

As soon as he saw Zhao Yun, he called out, “Zhao Yun, why have you betrayed our lord?”

“I fell behind because I was seeking the ladies and our child lord,” said Zhao Yun. “What do you mean by talking of betrayal?”

“If it had not been that Jian Yong arrived before you and told me the story, I should hardly have spared you.”

“Where is the master?” said Zhao Yun.

“Not far away, in front there,” said Zhang Fei.

“Conduct Lady Gan to him. I am going to look for Lady Mi,” said Zhao Yun to his companion, and he turned back along the road by which he had come.

Before long he met a leader armed with an iron spear and carrying a sword slung across his back, riding a curvetting steed, and leading ten other horsemen. Without uttering a word Zhao Yun rode straight toward him and engaged. At the first pass Zhao Yun disarmed his opponent and brought him to earth. His followers
galloped away.

This fallen officer was no other than Xiahou En, Cao Cao’s sword-bearer. And the sword on Xiahou En’s back was his master’s. Cao Cao had two swords, one called “Trust in Heaven” and the other “Blue Blade”. Trust in Heaven was the weapon Cao Cao usually wore at his side, the other being carried by his sword-bearer. The Blue Blade would cut clean through iron as though it were mud, and no sword had so keen an edge.

Before Zhao Yun thus fell in with Xiahou En, the later was simply plundering, depending upon the authority implied by his office. Least of all thought he of such sudden death as met he at Zhao Yun’s hands.

So Zhao Yun got possession of a famous sword. The name Blue Blade was chased in gold characters so that he recognized its value at once. He stuck it in his belt and again plunged into the press. Just as he did so, he turned his head and saw he had not a single follower left. He was quite alone.

Nevertheless not for a single instant thought he of turning back. He was too intent upon his quest. To and fro, back and forth, he rode questioning this person and that.

At length a man said, “A woman with a child in her arms, and wounded in the thigh so that she cannot walk, is lying over there through that hole in the wall.”

Zhao Yun rode to look and there, beside an old well behind the broken wall of a burned house, sat the mother clasping the child to her breast and weeping.

Zhao Yun was on his knees before her in a moment. “My child will live then since you are here,” cried Lady Mi. “Pity him, O General! Protect him, for he is the only son of his father’s flesh and blood. Take him to his father, and I can die content.”

“It is my fault that you have suffered,” replied Zhao Yun. “But it is useless to say more. I pray you take my horse, while I will walk beside and protect you till we get clear.”

She replied, “I may not do that. What would you do without a steed? But the boy here I confide to your care.
I am badly wounded and cannot hope to live. Pray take him and go your way. Do not trouble more about me.”

“I hear shouting,” said Zhao Yun. “The soldiers will be upon us again in a moment. Pray mount quickly!”

“But really I cannot move,” she said. “Do not let there be a double loss!”

And she held out the child toward him as she spoke.

“Take the child!” cried Lady Mi. “His life and safety are in your hands.”

Again and again Zhao Yun besought her to get on his horse, but she would not.

She said no more. Throwing the child on the ground, she turned over and threw herself into the old well. And there she perished.

The warrior relies upon the strength of his charger. Afoot, how could he bear to safety his young prince?

Brave mother! Who died to preserve the son of her husband’s line; Heroine was she, bold and decisive!

Seeing that Lady Mi had resolved the question by dying, there was nothing more to be done. Zhao Yun pushed over the wall to fill the well, and thus making a grave for the lady. Then he loosened his armor, let down the heart-protecting mirror, and placed the child in his breast. This done he slung his spear and remounted.

Zhao Yun had gone but a short distance, when he saw a horde of enemy led by Yan Ming, one of Cao Hong’s generals. This warrior used a double edged, three pointed weapon and he offered battle. However, Zhao Yun disposed...
of him after a very few bouts and dispersed his troops.

As the road cleared before him, Zhao Yun saw another detachment barring his way. At the head of this was a general exalted enough to display a banner with his name Zhang He of Hejian. Zhao Yun never waited to parley but attacked. However, this was a more formidable antagonist, and half a score bouts found neither any nearer defeat. But Zhao Yun, with the child in his bosom, could only fight with the greatest caution, and so he decided to flee.

Zhang He pursued, and as Zhao Yun thought only of thrashing his steed to get away, and little of the road, suddenly he went crashing into a pit. On came his pursuer, spear at poise. Suddenly a brilliant flash of light seemed to shoot out of the pit, and the fallen horse leapt with it into the air and was again on firm earth.

A bright glory surrounds the child of the imperial line, now in danger,

The powerful charger forces his way through the press of battle,

Bearing to safety him who was destined to the throne two score years and two;

And the general thus manifested his godlike courage.
such valor that none could withstand him, so Cao Cao asked of his followers whether any knew the man. No one recognized him.

So Cao Hong galloped down into the plain and shouted out, “We should hear the name of the warrior!”

“I am Zhao Yun of Changshan!” replied Zhao Yun. Cao Hong returned and told his lord, who said, “A very tiger of a leader! I must get him alive.” Whereupon he sent horsemen to all detachments with orders that no arrows were to be fired from an ambush at any point Zhao Yun should pass: He was to be taken alive.

And so Zhao Yun escaped most imminent danger, and Liu Shan’s safety, bound up with his savior’s, was also secured.

On this career of slaughter which
ended in safety, Zhao Yun, bearing in his bosom the child lord Liu Shan, cut down two main banners, took three spears, and slew or wounded of Cao Cao’s generals half a hundred, all men of renown.

Blood dyed the fighting robe and crimsoned his buff coat;
None dared engage the terrible warrior at Dangyang;
In the days of old lived the brave Zhao Yun,
Who fought in the battlefield for his lord in danger.

Having thus fought his way out of the press, Zhao Yun lost no time in getting away from the battle field. His white battle robe was soaked in blood.

On his way, near the rise of the hills, he met with two other bodies of troops under two brothers, Zhong Jin and Zhong Shen. One of these was armed with a massive ax, the other a halberd.

As soon as they saw Zhao Yun, they knew him and shouted, “ Quickly dismount and be bound!”

He has only escaped from the tiger cave,
To risk the dragon pool’s sounding wave.

How Zhao Yun escaped will be next related.
Chapter 42
Screaming Zhang Fei Triumphs At Long Slope Bridge; Defeated Liu Bei Goes To Hanjin.

As related in the last chapter two generals appeared in front of Zhao Yun, who rode at them with his spear ready for a thrust. Zhong Jin was leading, flourishing his battle-ax. Zhao Yun engaged and very soon unhorsed him. Then Zhao Yun galloped away. Zhong Shen rode up behind ready with his halberd, and his horse’s nose got so close to the other’s tail that Zhao Yun could see in his armor the reflection of the play of Zhong Shen’s weapon. Then suddenly, and without warning, Zhao Yun wheeled round his horse so that he faced his pursuer, and their two steeds struck breast to breast. With his spear in his left hand, Zhao Yun warded off the halberd strokes, and in his right he swung the blue blade sword. One slash and he had cut through both helmet and head. Zhong Shen fell to the ground, a corpse with only half a head on his body. His followers fled, and Zhao Yun retook the road toward Long Slope Bridge.

But in his rear arose another tumultuous shouting, seeming to rend the very sky, and Wen Ping came up behind. However, although the man was weary and his steed spent, Zhao Yun got close to the bridge where he saw standing, all ready for any fray, Zhang Fei.

“Help me, Zhang Fei!” he cried and crossed the bridge.

“Hasten!” cried Zhang Fei, “I will keep back the pursuers!”

About seven miles from the bridge, Zhao Yun saw Liu Bei with his followers reposing in the shade of some trees. He dismounted and drew near, weeping. The tears also started to Liu Bei’s eyes when he saw his faithful commander.

Still panting from his exertions, Zhao Yun gasped out, “My fault---death is too light a punishment. Lady Mi was severely wounded. She refused my horse and threw herself into a well. She is dead, and all I could do was to fill in the well with the rubbish that lay around. But I placed the babe in the breast of my fighting robe and have won my way out of the press of battle. Thanks to the little lord’s grand luck I
have escaped. At first he cried a good deal, but for some time now he has not stirred or made a sound. I fear I may not have saved his life after all.”

Then Zhao Yun opened his robe and looked: The child was fast asleep.

“Happily, Sir, your son is unhurt,” said Zhao Yun as he drew him forth and presented him in both hands. Liu Bei took the child but threw it aside angrily, saying, “To preserve that suckling I very nearly lost a great commander!”

Zhao Yun picked up the child again and, weeping, said, “Were I ground to powder, I could not prove my gratitude.”

From out Cao Cao’s host a tiger rushed,  
His wish but to destroy;  
Though Liu Bei’s consort lost her life,  
Zhao Yun preserved her boy.  
“Too great the risk you ran to save  
This child,” the father cried.  
To show he rated Zhao Yun high,  
He threw his son aside.

Wen Ping and his company pursued Zhao Yun till they saw Zhang Fei’s bristling mustache and fiercely glaring eyes before them. There he was seated on his battle steed, his hand grasping his terrible serpent spear, guarding the bridge. They also saw great clouds of dust rising above the trees and concluded they would fall into an ambush if they ventured across the bridge. So they stopped the pursuit, not daring to advance further.

In a little time Cao Ren, Xiahou Dun, Xiahou Yuan, Li Dian, Yu Jin, Zhang Liao, Xu Chu, Zhang He, and other generals of Cao Cao came up, but none dared advance, frightened not only by Zhang Fei’s fierce look, but lest they should become victims of a ruse of Zhuge Liang. As they came up, they formed a line on the west side, halting till they could inform their lord of the position.

As soon as the messengers arrived and Cao Cao heard about it, he mounted and rode to the bridge to see for himself. Zhang Fei’s fierce eye scanning the hinder position of the army opposite him saw the silken umbrella, the axes and banners coming along, and concluded that Cao Cao came to see for himself how matters stood.

So in a mighty voice he shouted: “I am Zhang Fei of Yan. Who dares fight with me?”
At the sound of this thunderous voice, a terrible quaking fear seized upon Cao Cao, and he bade them take the umbrella away.

Turning to his followers, he said, “Guan Yu had said that his brother Zhang Fei was the sort of man to go through an army of a hundred legions and take the head of its commander-in-chief, and do it easily. Now here is this terror in front of us, and we must be careful.”

As he finished speaking, again that terrible voice was heard, “I am Zhang Fei of Yan. Who dares fight with me?”

Cao Cao, seeing his enemy so fierce and resolute, was too frightened to think of anything but retreat.

Zhang Fei, seeing a movement going on in the rear, once again shook his spear and roared, “What mean you? You will not fight nor do you run away!”

This roar had scarcely begun when one of Cao Cao’s staff, Xiahou Jie, reeled and fell from his horse terror-stricken, paralyzed with fear. The panic touched Cao Cao and spread to his whole surroundings, and he and his staff galloped for their lives. They were as frightened as a suckling babe at a clap of thunder or a weak woodcutter at the roar of a tiger. Many threw away their spears, dropped their casques and fled, a wave of panic-stricken humanity, a tumbling mass of terrified horses. None thought of ought but flight, and those who ran trampled the bodies of fallen comrades under foot.
Zhang Fei was wrathful; and who dared to accept his challenge? Fierce he glared; his thunderous voice rolled out, and then in terror fled Cao Cao’s armed soldiers.

Panic-stricken Cao Cao galloped westward with the rest, thinking of nothing but getting away. He lost his headdress, and his loosened hair streamed behind him. Presently Zhang Liao and Xu Chu came up with
This done he went to report to his brother and told him of the destruction of the bridge.

“Brave as you are, brother, and no one is braver, but you are no strategist,” said Liu Bei.

“What mean you, brother?”

“Cao Cao is very deep. You are no match for him. The destruction of the bridge will bring him in pursuit.”

“If he ran away at a yell of mine, think you he will dare return?”

“If you had left the bridge, he would have thought there was an ambush and would not have dared to pass it. Now the destruction of the bridge tells him we are weak and fearful, and he will pursue. He does not mind a broken bridge. His legions could fill up the biggest rivers that we could get across.”

So orders were given to march, and they went by a bye-road which led diagonally to Hanjin by the road of Minyang.

The two generals sent by Cao Cao to reconnoiter near Long Slope Bridge returned, saying, “The bridge has been destroyed. Zhang Fei has left.”

“Then he is afraid,” said Cao Cao.

Cao Cao at once gave orders to set ten thousand men at work on three floating bridges to be finished that night.

Li Dian said, “I fear this is one of the wiles of Zhuge Liang. So be careful.”

“Zhang Fei is just a bold warrior, but there is no guile
about him,” said Cao Cao.

He gave orders for immediate advance.

Liu Bei was making all speed to Hanjin. Suddenly there appeared in his track a great cloud of dust whence came loud rolls of drums and shoutings.

Liu Bei was dismayed and said, “Before us rolls the Great River; behind is the pursuer. What hope is there for us?”

But he bade Zhao Yun organize a defense.

Now Cao Cao in an order to his army had said, “Liu Bei is a fish in the fish kettle, a tiger in the pit. Catch him this time, or the fish will get back to the sea and the tiger escape to the mountains. Therefore every general must use his best efforts to press on.”

In consequence every leader bade those under him hasten forward. And they were pressing on at great speed, when suddenly a body of soldiers appeared from the hills and a voice cried, “I have waited here a long time!”

The leader who had shouted this bore in his hand the green-dragon saber and rode Red Hare, for indeed it was no other than Guan Yu. He had gone to Jiangxia for help and had returned with a whole legion of ten thousand. Having heard of the battle, he had taken this very road to intercept pursuit.

As soon as Guan Yu appeared, Cao Cao stopped and said to his officers, “Here we are, tricked again by that Zhuge Liang!”

Without more ado he ordered a retreat. Guan Yu followed him some three miles and then drew off to act as guard to his elder brother on his way to the river. There boats were ready, and Liu Bei and family went on board. When all were settled comfortably in the boat, Guan Yu asked where was his sister, the second wife of his brother, Lady Mi. Then Liu Bei told him the story of Dangyang.

“Alas!” said Guan Yu. “Had you taken my advice that day of the hunting in Xutian, we should have escaped the misery of this day.”

“But,” said Liu Bei, “On that day it was ‘Ware damaged when pelting rats.’”

Just as Liu Bei spoke, he heard war drums on the south bank. A fleet of boats, thick as a flight of ants, came running up with swelling sails before the fair wind. He was alarmed.

The boats came nearer. There Liu Bei saw the white clad figure of a man wearing a silver helmet who stood in the prow of the foremost ship.

The leader cried, “Are you all right, my uncle? I am very guilty.”

It was Liu Qi. He bowed low as the ship passed, saying, “I heard you were in danger from Cao Cao, and I have come to aid you.”

Liu Bei welcomed Liu Qi with joy, and his soldiers joined in
with the main body, and the whole fleet sailed on, while they told each other their adventures.

Unexpectedly in the southwest there appeared a line of fighting ships swishing up before a fair wind.

Liu Qi said, “All my troops are here, and now there is an enemy barring the way. If they are not Cao Cao’s ships, they must be from the South Land. We have a poor chance. What now?”

Liu Bei went to the prow and gazed at them. Presently he made out a figure in a turban and Taoist robe sitting in the bows of one of the boats and knew it to be Zhuge Liang. Behind him stood Sun Qian.

When they were quite near, Liu Bei asked Zhuge Liang how he came to be there.

And Zhuge Liang reported what he had done, saying, “When I reached Jiangxia, I sent Guan Yu to land at Hanjin with reinforcements, for I feared pursuit from Cao Cao and knew that road you would take instead of Jiangling. So I prayed your nephew to go to meet you, while I went to Xiakou to muster as many soldiers as possible.”

The new-comers added to their strength, and they began once more to consider how their powerful enemy might be overcome.

Said Zhuge Liang, “Xiakou is strong and a good strategic point. It is also rich and suited for a lengthy stay. I would ask you, my lord, to make it a permanent camp. Your nephew can go to Jiangxia to get the fleet in order and prepare weapons. Thus we can create two threatening angles for our position. If we all return to Jiangxia, the position will be weakened.”

Liu Qi replied, “The Directing Instructor’s words are excellent, but I wish rather my uncle stayed awhile in Jiangxia till the army was in thorough order. Then he could go to Xiakou.”

“You speak to the point, nephew,” replied Liu Bei.

Then leaving Guan Yu with five thousand troops at Xiakou he, with Zhuge Liang and his nephew, went to Jiangxia.

When Cao Cao saw Guan Yu with a force ready to attack, he feared lest a greater number were hidden away behind, so he stopped the pursuit. He also feared lest Liu Bei should take Jiangling, so he marched thither with all haste.

The two officers in command at Jingzhou City, Deng Yi and Liu Xin, had heard of the death of their lord Liu Zong at Xiangyang and, knowing that there was no chance of successful defense against Cao Cao’s armies, they led out the people of Jingzhou to the outskirts and offered submission. Cao Cao entered the city and, after restoring order and confidence, he released Han Song and gave him the dignified office of Director of Ambassadorial Receptions. He rewarded the others.

Then said Cao Cao, “Liu Bei has gone to Jiangxia and may ally himself with the South Land, and the opposition
recent death gives an excuse for me to be sent to convey
condolence and, once there, I shall be able to talk over Liu
Bei and the officers of the late Imperial Protector to combine
with you against Cao Cao. If Liu Bei does as I wish, then
success is yours.”

Sun Quan thought this a good plan, so he had the
necessary letters prepared, and the gifts, and sent Lu Su
with them.

All this time Liu Bei was at Jiangxia where, with Zhuge
Liang and Liu Qi, he was endeavoring to evolve a good
plan of campaign.

Zhuge Liang said, “Cao Cao’s power is too great for us
to cope with. Let us go over to the South Land and ask help
from Sun Quan. If we can set north and south at grips, we
ought to be able to get some advantage from our intermediate
position between them.”

“But will they be willing to have anything to do with
us?” said Liu Bei. “The South Land is a large and populous
country, and Sun Quan has ambitions of his own.”

Zhuge Liang replied, “Cao Cao with his army of a million
holds the Han River and a half of the Great River. The South
Land will certainly send to find out all possible about the
position. Should any messenger come, I shall borrow a little
boat and make a little trip over the river and trust to my little
lithe tongue to set north and south at each other’s throats.
If the south wins, we will assist in destroying Cao Cao in
order to get Jingzhou. If the north wins, we shall profit by
the victory to get the South Land. So we shall get some
advantage either way.”

“That is a very fine view to take,” said Liu Bei. “But how
are you going to get hold of anyone from the South Land
to talk to?”

Liu Bei’s question was answered by the arrival of Lu
Su, and as the ship touched the bank and the envoy came
“It is done!”

Turning to Liu Qi he asked, “When Sun Ce died, did your country send any condolences?”

“It is impossible there would be any mourning courtesies between them and us. We had caused the death of his father, Sun Jian.”

“Then it is certain that this envoy does not come to present condolences but to spy out the land.”

So he said to Liu Bei, “When Lu Su asks about the movements of Cao Cao, you will know nothing. If he presses the matter, say he can ask me.”

Having thus prepared their scheme, they sent to welcome the envoy, who entered the city in mourning garb. The gifts having been accepted, Liu Qi asked Lu Su to meet Liu Bei. When the introductory ceremonies were over, the three men went to one of the inner chambers to drink a cup of wine.

Presently Lu Su said to Liu Bei, “By reputation I have known you a long time, Uncle Liu Bei, but till today I have not met you. I am very gratified at seeing you. You have been fighting Cao Cao, though, lately, so I suppose you know all about him. Has he really so great an army? How many, do you think, he has?”

“My army was so small that we fled whenever we heard of his approach. So I do not know how many he had.”

“You had the advice of Zhuge Liang, and you used fire on Cao Cao twice. You burned him almost to death so that you can hardly say you know nothing about his soldiers,” said Lu Su.

“Without asking my adviser, I really do not know the details.”

“Where is Zhuge Liang? I should like to see him,” said Lu Su.

So they sent for him, and he was introduced.

When the ceremonies were over, Lu Su said, “I have long admired
Replied Zhuge Liang, “I know all Cao Cao’s infamies and wickednesses, but to my regret we were not strong enough to withstand him. That is why we avoided him.”

“Is the Imperial Uncle going to stay here?”

“The Princely One is an old friend of Wu Ju, Governor of Changwu, and intends to go to him.”

“Wu Ju has few troops and insufficient supplies. He cannot ensure safety for himself. How can he receive the Uncle?” said Lu Su.

“Changwu is not one to remain in long, but it is good enough for the present. We can make other plans for the future.”

Lu Su said, “Sun Quan is strongly posted in the six southern territories and is exceedingly well supplied. He treats able people and scholars with the greatest courtesy and so they gather round him. Now if you are seeking a plan for your Prince, you cannot do better than send some friend to confer with him.”

“There have never been any relations between my master and yours,” said Zhuge Liang. “I fear there would be nothing but a waste of words. Besides, we have no one to send.”

“Your elder brother Zhuge Jin is there as adviser and is longing to see you. I am but a simple wight, but I should be pleased to discuss affairs with my master and you.”

“But Zhuge Liang is my Directing Instructor,” said Liu Bei, “and I cannot do without him. He cannot go.”

Lu Su pressed him. Liu Bei pretended to refuse permission.

“It is important. I pray you give me leave to go,” said Zhuge Liang.

Then Liu Bei consented. And they soon took leave and the two set out by boat for Sun Quan’s headquarters.

A little boat sailed down the stream
With Zhuge Liang well content;
For he could see his enemies
To fiery perdition sent.

The result of this journey will appear in the following chapter.

Please visit the DW Three Kingdoms website to download Part 3!