

Zhougong

The Duke of Zhou
A novel of feudal China

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Approximately 1050 BCE the ruler of an independent province on the frontier of ancient China named Ji Fa defeated the reigning Emperor Di Xin's vast forces to found China's 3<sup>rd</sup> dynasty, the Zhou. The rise of the Zhou with their military, scientific, cultural, and economic superiority and their triumph over the Shang dynasty is the subject of this novel.

THIS BOOK IS A WORK OF FICTION; HOWEVER, IT DEPICTS ACTUAL, HISTORICAL EVENTS AS ACCURATELY AS CAN BE IMAGINED BY THE AUTHOR.

## **Succession Diagram**

[set as annex]

### **Zhou Characters**

**Ji Chang (Xibo): Prince of Zhou**, father of First Emperor of Zhou dynasty, principal author of *Book of Changes*, died 1049 BCE.

**Ji Fa (Wu Wang "Emperor Wang")**: Oldest grown son of Ji Chang (actual first son died young), Conqueror of the Shang, First Emperor of Zhou dynasty (ruled 1049-1038 BCE).

**Ji Dan (Prince of Lu), Prime Minister, Regent, ("Zhougong" / Duke of Zhou)**: 3<sup>rd</sup> son of Ji Chang; Regent of the Empire (1037-1031 BCE); major contributor to *Book of Changes*, author of works on political science, astronomy, mathematics, poetry; foremost sage of his time.

**Lu Shang, Teacher Uncle Shang ("Taigong" / Foremost Duke)**: Important minister and advisor to Ji Chang, Ji Fa and Ji Dan; inventor and foremost military commander of his age.

**Shih (Grand Guardian, "Shaogong" / Duke of Shao)**: Younger brother of Ji Chang (uncle to Ji Dan), great arbiter of disputes, Grand Guardian of child Emperor during the Regency period.

**Ji Song ("Cheng Wang" / Emperor Cheng)**: Second Emperor of Zhou dynasty, ascended to Throne at 12 yrs old (Regency period: 1037-1031), ruled 1037-1006 BCE.

**Ji Xian, Ji Du, and Ji Chu:** Second, fourth, and seventh sons of Ji Chang, Princes of Guan, Cai, and Hou respectively; Three Supervisors of Yin.

**Zhengdou, Ji Wu, Ji Feng, and Ji Zai:** fifth, sixth, eighth, and ninth sons of Ji Chang; Princes of Cao, Cheng, Kang (& Wei), and Dan respectively.

**Taisi:** wife of Ji Chang, daughter of Prince Yu Xiong of Chu.

**Yijiang:** wife of Ji Fa, daughter of Lu Shang.

**Boqin and Jun Chen:** sons of Ji Dan.

**Guo Shu:** younger half-brother and important advisor to Ji Chang, died 1061 BCE.

**Hongyao, Taidian, Nangong Kuo, and Shang Gao:** important advisors to Ji Chang and Ji Fa.

**Right Officer Li:** Captain of the vanguard regiment, later Duke of Bi.

**Officer Mimou:** engineer-builder, minister to Ji Fa and Ji Dan.

**San Yisheng:** Minister to Lord Shih

**Boyi and Shuqi:** eccentric advisors, pacifist protesters

## Shang (Yin) Characters

**Di Xin (Emperor Xin):** last Emperor of Shang dynasty (ruled 1086-1049 BCE), also called Emperor Zou (Bloodthirsty).

**Jizi (Senior Tutor):** Emperor Xin's advisor, most learned man of the age, founder of Korea, one of „three good men of Yin“.

**Bigan (Junior Tutor):** Jizi's assistant, important advisor to Emperor Xin, one of „three good men“.

**Shang Rong:** Prime Minister of the Empire under Emperor Xin, replaced by Feizong.

**Feizong:** corrupt minister, favorite of Emperor Xin.

**Daji:** Emperor Xin's evil concubine.

**Hu (Prince of Chong):** Emperor Xin's friend, enemy of Ji Chang.

**Qi (Prince of Wei):** Emperor Xin's older half-brother, one of the „three good men“ of Yin.

**Jaoli:** Provost Minister of Empire, leader of Yin army.

**Zuyi:** court minister.

**Wugeng:** son of Emperor Xin, never assumed throne.

Alas, how my health must have declined!  
For some time now I have not dreamt of Zhougong.

*Confucius*

When the Chinese speak of their foremost sages before Confucius, they always mention seven names: Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Emperor Wen [Ji Chang], Emperor Wu [Ji Fa], and Zhougong [Ji Dan]. Undoubtedly Zhougong was one of the most gifted men in ancient China.

K. C. Wu

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# Chapter 1

## Deeply Devoted to the People Was Duke Liu Spring, 1076 BCE

### Hexagram 20 GUAN. Wind above Earth

*Looking down.* The ablution has been performed, but not the sacrifice. Sincerity inspires respect.

*Wind blowing across the earth.* Ancient rulers visited the regions to watch and teach the people.

6 for the bottom place. Commoners are not blamed for immature views; Superior Men are.

6 for the fifth place. Watching through door-cracks is of value to women.

6 for the fourth place. By contemplating his own life, one knows the right course.

6 for the third place. The Superior Man chooses his homeland by studying the realm.

9 for the second place. The Superior Man is not blamed for knowing his charges well.

9 for the top place. The Superior Man studies himself during troubled times.

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Ji Chang, Prince of Zhou, had resolved to hunt and had instructed his attendants to awaken him early. Several bustled around his chamber, interrupting again and again the sun reflecting from the stamped earth floor. Through a portal on the North wall, Ji Chang could see the Liang Mountains. 'Not a good place to hunt in the spring,' he thought. Fierce nomadic tribes still roamed the far slopes. The same slopes his people had crossed following his grandfather the "Ancient Duke" who founded this city at the foot of Mount Qishan.

Through a portal on the South wall, he could see the thatched roof house tops of his people and beyond them the lush fields of the grain that supported on their thin stalks the culture and prosperity the people of Mount Qishan had achieved. Zhou was beholden to no far-away emperor for its glory. It had prospered on the backs of its industrious people under the enlightened leadership of generations of Zhou kings from remotest antiquity. 'I will not fail in my duty to continue the traditions that sustain us,' he thought.

While attendants draped his muscular body in black silks, his thoughts drifted to his grandfather, "Ancient Duke," and beyond him to his distant ancestor, Duke Liu.

"Hongyao," Ji Chang instructed a personal attendant, "summon Shang Gao. "Before the hunt today, I will sacrifice to Gong Liu. I will promise that this hunt is but a brief diversion and that there are no urges in me to leave the path of virtue. The Zhou people will never abandon the ways of Houji and roam the forests in savagery and blindness."

"As you wish, Prince Chang." Hongyao bowed and disappeared beyond the door. Ji Chang crossed to the west wall of the room to a small altar-like table upon which was draped a black silk covering embroidered with the fabled beast, Taotei, the awesome symbol of the House of Zhou. Taotei was a fierce, disembodied head. It could devour but not consume. Nothing crushed in its jaws could be held-- all would be merely shattered and lost, wasted to no purpose. Taotei symbolized the result of all unquenchable thirsts, all insatiable hungers.

Ji Chang looked upon the long-knife of his father cradled above Taotei. Its jade studded handle seemed serene and refined, while its bronze blade gleamed viciously in the morning light. With it his father, Ji Li, had killed many a savage nomad, raising the House of Zhou in power and prestige. Next to the knife was the jade block, also inherited from his forefathers. This was not a jade bauble, but a symbol of the striving for cultural advance. In contrast to the razor sharp knife, the block was bulbous and benign. On it he could write with a hair brush and dark lacquer only to wipe it clean again with a silk cloth.

A wave of pride swept over him as he handled these well known objects of the Zhou nation. These are the paramount tools of statecraft, he was taught by his father and other Zhou sages: the knife to assert your people's right to share in Heaven's blessings and the block and brush with which to advance your people's culture.

On the wall above the sword was a delicate silk tapestry, embroidered by his paragon grandmother, Tiajiang: few beyond his royal household knew of its significance. The white rooster in its center with one of its wings clipped yet trying vainly to fly was almost comical. Its one visible eye was dark and sightless, and mysterious images seemed to be revolving senselessly around the bewildered bird. Highest in the room above the small shrine, attached to the tip of a lance was the pair of yak tails given to Houji, divine progenitor of the House of Zhou, by the ancient sage Emperor Shun.

Ji Chang grasped from the table a yellow sash which he circled around his waist and turned, strapping on the sword. His most valued advisor was standing with his head lowered at his threshold.

"I will enjoy the chase today, Shang Gao, and need your sage advice. Should I hunt to the north over Mount Qishan or to the south near the Wei River? What quarry will I bring back for the honor of my kith and kin? Get your turtle shells so we might learn the will of Heaven."

"My noble Prince knows already what the Lord Above wishes," replied Shang Gao. "He would admonish you for harboring ill will toward your sovereign and for not respecting the path of Houji."

"You know me well, Shang Gao. I follow the ways of Houji with unswerving devotion," Ji Chang insisted. "Have I not encouraged cultivation of the fields? Have I not made the people of Qishan safe from the nomads? Have I not established ceremonies to emulate the Five Virtues? Were that not so, you would not be here at Mount Qishan yourself but would still be wandering among the states looking for some virtuous ruler to serve. Not true?"

"So it is, my Prince," admitted Shang Gao smiling.

Ji Chang, now fully dressed, moved toward the minister. "Heaven's blessings will not descend on a weak ruler or on a weak nation, but the savage tribes surely will. We don't hunt to feel the pride of skillful aiming. Our aim is martial strength to protect the Zhou nation from our enemies near and far, royal and primitive. Go now and ready your shells."

Shang Gao was replaced at the threshold by a servant with a food basket which was placed near the door. No sooner had Ji Chang sat down to eat than his oldest living son, Ji Fa, entered. "Are you well, father?" His head was bowed.

"Yes, steadfast and loyal son, I am. Are you making preparations for the hunt?"

"Of course. Ji Xian has gathered provisions, Zhendou has prepared your chariot, Ji Wu has your arms and armour ready, and I have assembled the soldiers."

"What greater blessing can the Lord Above bestow upon a man than so many dutiful sons?" Ji Chang continued eating silently, then added, "But what of Ji Dan?"

"He is with Shang Gao, preparing for your divination."

"Always the studious one, our Ji Dan," said Ji Chang, his heart warming at the thought of his virtuous fourth son. Though Ji Fa would inherit the throne of Zhou and make a fine ruler, Ji Chang knew Ji Dan was talented and obedient beyond all others. "Be close to your younger brother," he warned Ji Fa. "You will not find an abler minister once you take my place as ruler of Zhou."

Now finished with his meal, Ji Chang rose and stalked out of the prime-house toward the Hall of Concord, Ji Fa following. Here at the center of the city was the collected knowledge of his people, now under the reverential care of Ji Dan and the two primary ministers, Shang Gao and Guo Shu. To assist them Ji Chang employed several attendants of unquestioned repute, one having served the House since his grandfather's time. The room was cluttered with turtle shells and bones, recording the results of countless inquiries to the spirits, and bamboo and wood tablets upon which were scrawled the history and wisdom of Zhou from Houji onward. In the center of this cavernous chamber was the altar of his revered ancestors, wooden columns bearing the names of Ji Li, Gugong Danfu, and Gongliu the most elaborate and prominent among them.

Ji Dan, and the others bowed to the entering ruler and his heir as they approached." Today I will venerate Gongliu," proclaimed Ji Chang.

"But father," said Ji Dan, "Gongliu veneration day is at harvest time."

"No matter. First I will sacrifice to Liu, then Ji Fa will read the bone fissures and tell me what Heaven wills for this hunt." Shang Gao and Guo Shu looked furtively at each other; it would be Ji Fa's first divination. Even though he had studied the occult arts for many years, they felt he was not yet sufficiently adept.

Ji Chang knelt before the altar and began the rituals he had conducted all his life, rituals passed on from remotest times— graceful motions and chants that reverberated in the chamber and his consciousness. The chamber was filled with complex rhythms from nearby drums and hand-drums. Bells and flutes filled the chamber with captivating tones and harmonies. Lastly, a chorus of heavenly voices chimed in.

There was a truth in every song that would guide him in times of distress or times of plenty. Every twitch of every finger, every change of vocal rhythm or pitch had a meaning designed for one purpose, to please the spirits of his worshipful ancestors— to enlist their power to preserve and advance the house of Zhou; and he knew the Prince who ignored or forgot them imperiled the entire community.

Ji Fa had participated many times. After all, as the heir to the kingdom, he often served as the “ancestor impersonator.” He knew himself to be a man of action, not contemplation or study. In these acts of filial piety, he often concentrated so hard that his head would throb.

Ji Dan would always comfort him afterward, assuring him that he need not worry. “I, Ji Dan, the little brother, will always be here to instruct you if you forget a particular movement or sound,” he promised many times.

Ji Chang was now near the end of his ceremony. He recited the poem that had been written by a grandson of the ancient ruler many generations before:

*Duke Liu was devoted to his people.  
Uncomfortable and restless  
he scoured the villages, assembled the masses.  
He stored their accumulated produce,  
their dried meats and treated grains,  
in bags and sacks for transport,  
the people's safety and Zhou's glory on his mind.  
Then with the archers' weapons ready,  
with shields and halberds high,  
he ordered the march to Bin.*

*Duke Liu was devoted to his people.  
He had inspected the new lands,  
had climbed its mountains high  
and crossed its plateau wide.  
What prize should he have for his trials?  
Should it be jade or jewels?  
An ornamented belt for his knife?  
None of these.  
So afterward there would be no discontent  
among the immigrants and thriving multitude,  
only after all agreed did he issue his decree.*

*Duke Liu was devoted to his people.  
Their new lands were broad and long.  
He mapped the light and shade of their lands*



*and fixed the hours by the mountain shadows.  
He mapped the courses of waterways  
and measured the swamps and plateau  
even beyond where the sun sets.  
He established revenues on the well-field technique  
and armed three regiments of men.  
Thus the city of Bin grew strong and rich.*

*Duke Liu was devoted to his people.  
He found the place of a hundred springs.  
He stood on the southern ridge  
to survey the flat plains beyond,  
sighting the spot for their new city,  
a wild place with room for a multitude.  
He plotted the sites for many buildings;  
dwellings and others he diligently mapped.  
He took his plans to the populous:  
with many a citizen he discussed their fate.*

*Duke Liu was devoted to his people.  
When the work was done and the city built,  
he had all his officers assemble.  
He ordered benches and mats spread about  
and all lounged on the mats and perched on the benches.  
He ordered beef from the herds  
and pork from the swine pens  
and ladled out wine from the calabashes.  
Thus he brought them together in feast and fellowship,  
and they honored him as sovereign and sage.  
Duke Liu was devoted to his people.*

Ji Chang fell silent for a moment as attendants brought him a very small lamb the appropriate offering for the season. With the quickness of a lifetime's practice, Ji Chang slit the lamb's throat, spilling its blood into a bronze bowl. "Take this offering, my ancient and revered father," he said in a monotone, "as proof of my devotion. Convince the Spirit Above to protect us from harm." He washed his hands in a second, water filled, bronze vessel then rose and turned to the waiting entourage. "Are you ready, my son, to read the fissures?"

Ji Fa gestured Shang Gao to the hearth where coals were already glowing a deep vermilion. Guo Shu resumed pushing air over them with a large, bird-wing shaped fan as Shang Gao handed the turtle shell to Ji Fa. Imploring their distinguished ancestors to reveal the will of Heaven, he grasped the cool end of a thick, bronze bar which lay across the coals absorbing heat and power from the deities. He doused the convex top of the shell with water from a small cup, the water trickling into the coals in a cloudy hiss. Ji Fa then touched the underside of the shell with the red hot bar. Within seconds cracks appeared, which Ji Fa closely studied. The

faces of Boyi and Shuqi were inches from Ji Fa's shoulder so that they might whisper helpfully if need be to protect the heir from error.

"What are your questions, father?"

Ji Chang rubbed his chin. "Should I hunt in the northern Liang mountains or close to the Wei River in the south?"

Ji Fa's finger traced the meander of a prominent fissure. To him it resembled the place where Sandy Rock Creek entered the Wei. "By the river," he said looking around for agreement from Boyi, Shuqi, and Shang Gao. Shang Gao grinned slightly, saying "near Panxi."

"What shall be my prize there at Panxi?" Ji Chang leaned forward as if to eavesdrop on their whispers.

Ji Fa's finger pointed at various places on the shell as he and Shang Gao consulted in hushed tones. Guo Shu began offering suggestions, then Ji Dan. As Ji Chang began to pace impatiently, the buzzing and hissing of the diviners reached a fevered pitch.

"So much disagreement?" interrupted Ji Chang. "There must be a very bad message."

"None of us can see any quarry, father," said Ji Fa. "We see no dragons nor serpents, neither a tiger nor a bear."

"Do I even catch a measly fish?"

"No fish," said Ji Fa in a resigned voice. The other men nodded in agreement.

"Perhaps I shouldn't go hunting at all!" exclaimed Ji Chang in frustration.

Ji Dan stood erect facing the Prince. "You will catch no game, father, but something far more valuable to a ruler of men."

Dismissing Ji Dan's assertion with an exasperated grunt, Ji Chang bolted toward the door. "If my ancestors had such renowned diviners, the Kunyi barbarians would have overrun us long ago. Let's get on with it. I am anxious to see what this great prize might be."

Without further ceremony Ji Chang and his train streamed out into the sunlight where the huge hunting party was arrayed. Immediately upon his appearance in the courtyard, the multitude fell silent with heads bowed. To the east and west there were columns of infantry facing a broad center isle with wagons and chariots behind them. Near the portals leading beyond the palace grounds was a gathering of charioteers, the officers and male relatives of Ji Chang. In the center of the courtyard were the brilliant chariots, each harnessed to four black horses, to be used by the Prince and his principals: the heir Ji Fa, Ji Chang's several other adult sons, Shang Gao, Guo Shu, and lastly his younger half-brother Shih.

Besides the military value of these hunting expeditions, being a nearly full mobilization of the Zhou army on brief notice, there were political benefits as well. The pageantry of their departure and return instilled patriotism in the common people and raised their confidence in Ji Chang's ability to protect them from enemies. Traders from Yin and other states would return home with reports of Zhou's strength and wealth. The column's intrusive march through the countryside would frighten any nomadic tribes lurking about with plunder on their minds.

"How many divisions," Ji Chang asked Ji Fa, "are here today?"

"Eleven, father, each with 2,500 men. Nine are present. Two are still marching this way."

"Our population continues to grow. When we return we must convene a general council of officers. Which districts are late?"

"The newest ones. They are also the farthest away from Qishan."

"Send word to them that we will proceed toward Panxi and they are to meet us there."

Ji Chang joined a small group of women and children which had gathered to the side of the main portal. Taisi, his wife of twenty-eight years stood before them in colorful robes, her hair adorned with bits of turquoise and decorative feathers. As the years bore down on her she spent ever more effort on her appearance, fearful that Ji Chang's attentions might be drawn elsewhere to have his passions satisfied.

"Greetings, my handsome wife," said Ji Chang.

"Does my prince hunger for game these days more than in the past?" She looked downward as she spoke.

Ji Chang knew she was suggesting that he might secretly desire to escape from her into the arms of another. He raised her slightly wrinkled chin and looked into her eyes. "There is, no game in the wild better than what I have already. I thank my ancestors every day for the capture of lovely Taisi." He stepped back. "Besides, my diviners insist I will return empty handed." This last comment was meant to be overheard.

From Taisi's hip level came a voice. "Father," implored Ji Chu, "may I not accompany you on this hunt?"

"Perhaps the next... if you take your lessons well in the future." Two even smaller voices implored the same. "I have no doubt my youngest sons will someday ride the finest chariots of the Zhou for the largest military expeditions in the history of the Empire. But not yet."

Ji Chang touched the head of each son then turned and strode resolutely toward his team. As he approached it, a rumble of drums swept over them all. One after another of Ji Chang's primary officers mounted their chariots. On signal from Ji Fa, drums sounded another thunderous rhythm. A squad bearing the banners of Zhou, followed by the four-horse chariots, the drum and gong platoon, the infantry regiments each with its traditional pair of chariots, one heavy and one light, passed successively before the prime-house, through the streets of the town, and into the countryside beyond. The noise was deafening, no doubt loud enough to reach the ears of the Emperor Di Xin himself far away in the city of Yin.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Welcoming of Spring Spring, 1076 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 12**

**PI.**  
**Heaven above Earth**

*Stagnation caused by evil doers.* Omens of ill for the Superior Man, yet he must persist in virtue as the great and good decline while the mean approach.

*Heaven and earth are severed.* The Superior Man withdraws to protect his virtue declining earthly temptations.

6 for the bottom place. When weeds are uprooted, what is attached below is revealed. Persistence in a virtuous cause ultimately prevails.

6 for the second place. Fortune temporarily favors the mean; the Superior Man studies causes.

6 for the third place. He conceals his shame.

9 for the fourth place. Obedience to the commands of Heaven are always correct.

9 for the fifth place. Stagnation ends and fortune favors the Superior Man; he strengthens himself as if with a mulberry's bindings.

9 for the top place. Stagnation will be followed by joy in its time.

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"All... bow... to the Son... of Heaven!" came the cry across the Great Hall.

The Emperor's entourage consisted of Feizong, a favored advisor; Taili, his principal wife; Wugeng, his young son and heir; and various attendants. As they entered the room in splendid white silks, the entire assembly put their faces in their hands and their foreheads to the floor.

There were two reasons for the call to court. The powerful Prince of Chu had come to offer tribute to Emperor Xin, and it was the first day of Spring on which certain ceremonies were expected. They had received word three days before from the royal astrologer as was the custom.

Di Xin settled himself on his bejeweled throne before an elaborately embroidered silk screen. On it were the symbols and images of a glorious Shang past: a likeness of Tang the Successful, founder of the dynasty; the fabled Mulberry tree of the Emperor Taiwu; various military exploits of Shang heroes through the ages; Pangeng's removal of the capitol to Yin, among others. In the center was the great white rooster of the Imperial House.

As Senior Tutor Jizi mounted the dais, all others rose silently to their feet. "Let the princes from all the nations do obeisance to the Son of Heaven," he proclaimed, after which the Prince of Chu entered the hall trailed by dozens of his officers and advisors.

He approached the Emperor and kneeled, offering forth the jade insignia for verification of his titles. Di Xin took the insignia momentarily, testing its fit into a similar jade receptacle, then returned it to the prince. "Your majesty," said the prince, "in your honor I have returned from the lands around Mount Yangzhou to report the death of the chief of the Tufang nomads." He stood and extended his arm toward the main doors of the hall. A squad of soldiers marched in bearing the banners of Chu on high lances. Among them, dangling by the hair, was the severed head of the chief.

As the murmurs and whispers that had surged through the crowd subsided, the prince continued, "Will the Son of Heaven accept these modest gifts which it is my honor to bestow upon him and his house." Attendants followed the soldiers bearing bronze vessels, jade, ceremonial arrows and bows fashioned by Chu's best craftsmen, and several bolts of silk. The prince bowed low and fell silent for Di Xin's response.

"You have honored the imperial house, Prince Yu Xiong. Only a great warrior could have so easily slain the powerful Chief of the Tufang tribe." It was a lie, of course, for the war with the nomads had cost Chu hundreds of his men. "Please stay with me and enjoy hospitality until the next full moon when your journey back to Chu will be less arduous."

"I am grateful for your majesty's generosity," said Yu Xioung, "but there is much to restore in the cities of Chu now that the nomads have been subdued. Please allow me to depart quickly."

"So be it," commanded Di Xin with a wave.

Jizi, as master of rituals, stepped forward on the dais and began the Welcoming of Spring ritual. "These are the signs the 'small people' of the nations know as the season of spring: the east wind dispels the cold, the hibernating insects and reptiles begin to stir, the fish rise up under the ice where the otter catches them to eat, and the wild geese fly north in season." He was consulting the flat bamboo strips laid out on a small table at the side of the dais. "But from our wise and benevolent ancestors we know that, in the first month of spring, the sun is in the constellation Yingshih. The constellation Shen reaches its zenith at dusk, and the constellation Wei at dawn. The first two days of the month are "chia" and "i"; its divine ruler is Shenong, the Divine Husbandman; its attendant spirit is Goumang of the trees. Its creatures are scaly; its musical note is the lowest of the scale; its flute is Xaixou, the largest; its number is eight. Its taste is sour, its smell goatish, its sacrifice is at the inner door for which the offering's spleen is essential."

At this point Jizi turned full front to the assembly. "In all things," he continued, "one must not violate the way of Heaven, nor destroy the principles of Earth, nor bring confusion to the laws of man. If in the first month of spring a ruler carries out the rituals and proceedings proper only to summer, then the wind and rain will not come in season, the grass and trees will wither and dry up, and the states will be in great fear.

"If he carries out the proceedings proper only to autumn, then a great pestilence will strike the people, violent winds and torrential rains will come in abundance, and the destructive weeds will spring up together. If he carries out the proceeding proper only to winter, the rains and floods will cause great damage, frost and snow will wreak havoc, and the first seeds sown will not sprout. Therefore, the wisdom of our ancestors and the Lord Above require that the Son of Heaven and his officers exercise proper diligence and virtue in the matters of spring."

Jizi now turned and faced the Emperor. With his head lowered he read from the bamboo slats. "The Son of Heaven shall live in the apartment on the left side of the Green Bright Hall. He shall ride in a belled chariot drawn by horses in green harness and bearing green flags. He shall wear green robes with pendants of greenish jade. His food shall be winter wheat and mutton, his vessels coarse and open to signify a coming forth.

"The Son of Heaven having, fasted for three days to purify himself, shall lead the chief ministers and vested princes to the eastern suburbs to greet the spring. Upon his return he shall hold court and bestow rewards and honors upon them. He shall order his chief ministers to publish abroad his good teachings and to relax the prohibitions of winter.

Suddenly the Emperor stood and left the dais without a word, followed by his startled personal attendants. The assembly, in shock, barely had time to bow before he disappeared through the door. Embarrassed as he was, Jizi continued relating the requirements of ancient practice: how the Emperor and his highest officials should spend a day tilling the fields, instructions to the district supervisors to be passed on to the "small people," and the specific sacrificial ceremonies all must conduct during the season.

The assembled ministers all knew, of course, that his majesty had not fasted, would not wear green vestments, would not limit his diet to wheat and mutton, and would most certainly not spend a day laboring in the fields.

Lastly, Jizi covered the specific prohibitions for the season. "It shall be forbidden to cut down trees, to destroy nests, to kill young insects, the young yet in the womb or new born, or fledgling birds. All young animals and eggs shall be spared. Multitudes of people shall not be summoned for any non-emergency service, nor shall any construction be done on fortifications. In this month it is forbidden to take up arms, except for self defense, because that will surely call down the wrath of Heaven."

At a wave of the Senior Tutor's hand, the Court was suddenly inundated with the sound of drums, bells, and flutes. Jizi was relieved to have reached the ceremony's end. He did his obeisance to the Emperor's empty seat and retired from the hall.

In his own modest apartment at the rear of the palace garden, Jizi was joined by his nephew, Bigan, the Junior Tutor of the Court. "Uncle, what calamities are in store for the people of Yin if Di Xin persists in his sinful ways? What blame will we ministers bear?" His bow was cursory and his face was pained. "Now I have just seen him order a craftsman to carve his chopsticks out of ivory!"

Jizi sat looking wearied. "If he has ivory chopsticks, it is not likely he will continue to take his food in earthenware. Soon we will see him using jade bowls. With ivory chopsticks and jade bowls, he will not be content with coarse dishes, rough clothes and thatched roofs. I see garments of multiple layers of silk, high pavilions and ornate halls. The whole world may not be enough to gratify his wants. Oh, how I dread the future of Yin."

Jizi gathered some bamboo slats, retied them in the customary volume with strands of leather, and stored them in a subterranean cavity below his apartment. Without further comment, he left the room. As he crossed the royal compound, he couldn't help but hear the sounds of debauchery drifting from the Emperor's suite. Servants were filing toward his door with vessels of food and wine. Raucous laughter rang out like the gong of an advancing army.

Through a maze of buildings and courts, Jizi made his way to the apartment of Shang Rong, the Royal House's senior and most able administrator. He was crouched over his small work table, carefully examining some inscribed tablets."

Come in, friend and Senior Tutor. I must admit this morning's assembly was most instructive." Shang Rong's long gray hair obscured a playful twinkle in his eye.

"What new surprises are in store for us from his Majesty each day?" Jizi asked rhetorically.

Shang Rong called his attention to the tablets he was studying." Those who in ancient times invented writing drew three lines and connected them through the middle, calling the character "king". It is like the trigram representing "Heaven": three horizontal, unbroken lines. They added the vertical line connecting them..." Jizi looked over the old sage's shoulder as he reproduced the character "... like this. The three lines represent Heaven, Earth, and man; and that which passes through them joins all three. Occupying the center of Heaven, Earth, and man, passing through and joining all three— if not the Emperor, who could do this?"

"I know this is so, Shang Rong. Perhaps my memory of his childhood interferes with my judgement; he was an unruly brat. That is why I worry so. If Di Xin is but the proper executor of Heaven, then Heaven's will is for disaster to fall on us."

"Heaven's will is constantly to nourish and bring to age; and the changing seasons are the instruments of its will. Likewise, the will of the Emperor is to benefit the world. The loves and hates, joys and angers of Di Xin are no more than the seasons of Heaven. It is by cool and warm, cold and hot weather that all things are transformed and brought to fruition. If Heaven puts forth these in their proper season, then the year will be a ripe one; but if the weather is unseasonable, the year will be lean. In the same way, if the ruler of men exercises his love and hate, his joy and anger, in accordance with righteousness, then the year will be well governed. If not, there will be confusion."

Jizi thought for a moment then added, "So, you are saying that like some unseasonable weather, Di Xin's erratic behavior will soon moderate and we will not enter a period of turmoil or catastrophe."

"It is for us to influence that moderation. All Houses have had greater or lesser rulers. So it was that Yu the Great was followed by Taikang and later Jie; Tang the Successful was followed by Taijia; and Wuding was followed by Zugeng and, weakest of all Wuyi. The passions of man are one with the seasons of Heaven; therefore, do not despair, gentle Jizi."

For some time Senior Tutor Jizi assisted Shang Rong as envoys and officers came and went, receiving direction from the Emperor's chief administrator. A messenger from a distant prince pleaded for help against nomadic incursions. Shang Rong gave him a bamboo slat with instructions for one of the Shang army commanders. The city of West Bo needed help to restore a collapsed dike that had allowed much of their cropland to be flooded. Shang Rong dispatched a Royal engineer with conscription orders to the chiefs of all the villages in that area. Plans were discussed with various officials for a proposed bridge over the Huang River, a modest tributary to Yin's north, that would be constructed in the summer.

"It pains me, Shang Rong, to see so many important duties all delegated to ministers." Jizi did not imply that Di Xin's chief minister was not capable, only that many of these duties should be exercised by the Emperor himself.

Shang Rong ignored the comment. Instead, he went to the door and looked up at the sky." It is almost midday," he said." Summon everyone for the Welcoming of Spring. We must hurry, for a storm seems to be gathering in the valley."

Jizi went about the palace collecting those who were to join the procession to the suburbs: astrologers, diviners, scribes, Junior Tutor Bigan, and visiting princes and lords from Chong, Su, Yan, and other principalities. Escorted by a great contingent of soldiers, flag bearers and drummers, they marched, a splendid cacophony, through the City of Yin toward the altar to Earth where attendants had already built a bonfire. Here Jizi, substituting for the Emperor, sacrificed and prayed to Earth intensely.

Gripped with despair knowing that Earth would not accept his sacrifices but would in time heap calamity upon the House of Shang, Jizi went through the motions that should have been Di Xin's. Perhaps they would not realize the absence of their Emperor. At least the people would be alerted by the ceremonies that the first day of spring had come; and they would set about the tasks of planting summer crops.

Jizi gave them too little credit. The crowds of Yin's citizens who observed the Welcoming knew only too well that Di Xin was not among the procession's dignitaries and what that meant. As with the storm clouds gathering on the western horizon, there was a distant thunder threatening the House of Shang. Shang Rong and the two Tutors knew well what that thunder was, though his name had not yet crossed their tongues: Ji Chang of Zhou.

Well into the afternoon, the conscientious ministers of the Emperor conducted the rites meticulously, returning to the palace when the western sky reddened.

As the sun's orange disk touched the distant western peaks, preparations were begun for the feast Di Xin had ordered for Prince Yu Xiong. Feizong was in charge, as he was for most of the emperor's base merrymaking. While for some time these banquets had included huge quantities of wine, lately they had begun to involve some rather unsavory female entertainers which made Jizi very uncomfortable. Several of them were being guided to the banquet as Jizi walked toward the great hall. As he entered, the graying but still vital Yu Xiong was there quietly studying one of the ancient and revered "Nine Tripods", the symbol above all others of the Emperor's authority.

Jizi bowed as the prince glanced in his direction and spoke. "All the times I have been to the palace, Senior Tutor, I have never studied the Tripods closely. Yu must have been a man of wondrous learning to know the Nations so well so long ago. Look here on the Tripod of Yongzhou is Mount Huashan and the Wei River I have known since birth." He moved to another Tripod. "Here on the coast of the eastern sea is Feather Mountain and the Ji River. If one knows these Tripods well, one may travel the entire world without confusion."

"How many of the nations have you seen, Prince Xiong?" asked Jizi.

"The West and, of course, the Central Nation."

Jizi deftly steered the conversation toward what had become his most abiding interest lately, the Zhou. "I once saw the Wei valley. . . in my youth on a hunting expedition. It was not well cultivated or populated then. How is it now?"

Prince Xiong looked intently at Jizi. He was a small man, yet somewhat muscular for a bookish scholar. His countenance was gloomy, and the prince knew why. "The Zhou have filled the valley with villages and farms. It is like an ocean of wheat in winter and emerald green in summer from its thriving crops. There is not an acre that does not have its husbandman to care for it."



"Why does the Lord Above smile on them so? Is the prince of these people somehow extraordinary?"

Xiong thought a moment. "He is a wise and benevolent ruler of his people."

Jizi needed no further elaboration, which the prince would be loathe to give anyway. A prince loyal to his sovereign would not venture criticism to an imperial advisor.

Jizi had turned to leave when Prince Xiong spoke again. "Many years ago I offered my daughter to Ji Li, the ruler of Zhou as a means of settling some disputes between us. The House of Zhou was a much weaker state at the time. I had no son then; and Ji Li had no daughters, so the sight of the powerful Chu prince paying tribute to the weaker Zhou at a wedding ceremony would have had serious repercussions. As I and a host of the people journeyed toward Zhou, Ji Li's son raced against difficult odds to meet us at the Wei River. There he built a bridge of boats, decorating it with hundreds of silky ribbons, flowers, and colorful feathers upon which to greet his bride. The spectacle has always been remembered by the people. I was spared an indignity and a pact was sealed between Chu and Zhou which has never been broken."

His gloomy countenance turned to depression as Jizi left the Great Hall. He was shown through this tale the wisdom and virtue of Zhou's leaders, the kind of virtue Heaven could not fail to smile upon. He would understand or not understand according to his own intelligence. If the Zhou sank to outright rebellion, would the powerful Prince Xiong side with his western neighbor and son-in-law? Was his brief tale a subtle warning intended for the ears of the Emperor or only for his? What would be the Emperor's reaction if Jizi were to inform him that one of his most reliable Princes was possibly disloyal. Anyway, how could he advise an Emperor who refused to be advised?

Not anxious to witness the uncontrolled revelry of his Emperor/nephew, Jizi lingered as long as he dared in Bigan's lush garden. He considered whether he should resign his position to live among the peasants or slaves or to travel far beyond the Central Nation where he might escape the torment of serving a corrupt House. He retreated to a quiet grotto as far from the banquet room as he could get and sat in the silver moonlight.

He thought of Yi Yin, advisor to the first Shang Emperor whom he admired above all men, an adopted ancestor, an "ancestor of the heart." Yi Yin was a commoner, a farmer, who had gained great renown for his learning and virtue. Tang the Successful had asked him three times to enter his service as one of the Three High Councilors, and three times he had refused. Yet in the end he went to serve his sovereign. The words of that ancient sage echoed across the centuries to Jizi. "Having created these men, it is the will of the Lord Above that those who are enlightened earlier instruct those who are late in obtaining enlightenment; ones who become awakened to the high principles sooner help others awaken too. I am one of Heaven's people who have awakened sooner. It is for me to awaken the rest of the people. If I do not, who will?"

Jizi willed himself to his feet. "My sovereign, son of my beloved brother, grandson of my beloved father, must be served. I must influence him toward conduct harmonious with the will of Heaven." He made his way resolutely among the plants of the courtyard toward the banquet room.

He entered unnoticed by all but Junior Tutor Bigan, Shang Rong, and Prince Xiong. The festivities had already reached a fever pitch. Entertainers and tricksters occupied Di Xin and the several princes who lingered about the palace for no apparent reason save the decadent revelry Di Xin provided for them. Taking a stool at the long table between Bigan and Shang Rong, he began eating listlessly. He noted that the Emperor drank wine rather more than he ate. Jizi observed furtively the casual exchanges of wit and jokes which seemed the focus of attention, but he knew that their real interest was the women weaving about with serving dishes.

"In honor of the Prince of Chu," Di Xin suddenly shouted, "I have composed, with the help of my musicians, a song." A look of childish pride swept across his face. At a wave of his hand, several musicians came into the hall, gathered at a conspicuous place, and began a light and cheerful melody.

Jizi was shocked into rigidity. To have music, one of the most revered parts of their worship, the means by which harmony and culture were passed on through the generations, corrupted for mere dinner entertainment was a blow to his very heart. He looked at both Shang Rong and Bigan; both had stopped eating and were staring silently at their bowls.

Since the world's beginning, music had been the means of teaching right conduct and propriety among men, the means of honoring deities and eminent forefathers. Never before had Jizi felt so dishonorable as did as he watched Di Xin and his cohorts being entertained by this means. The Emperor and princes were watching with broad smiles as the sounds of harmony and veneration drifted sinfully among them.

Anticipating by his tension that he might rise and denounce his sovereign, an act that would bring instant death, Shang Rong gripped Jizi's elbow to hold him in his seat. Thus the three of them stoically endured this abomination as it was repeated again and again to the disgusting delight of Di Xin and the princes.

Yu Xiong had been staring blankly at the musicians, maintaining a polite silence, not joining the mirth yet not willing to insult the Emperor. At a break in the music, he addressed Di Xin. "Your majesty, I am a very old man. While I am greatly honored by this display of your respect, I must beg your permission to retire. I must leave for my fief at sunrise, lest my absence there cause more turmoil and confusion among my people. These younger subjects can surely enjoy your entertainments while I rest my old body."

With a grunt and a wave of the hand, Di Xin signaled irritated approbation. He and the younger princes then continued their raucous feasting.

Shortly thereafter, Jizi received another shock, one that compelled him to leave the feast no matter the risk. Shang Lu and the Prince of Su were flirting with each other. She was among the women who, between dances and songs were attending to and conversing with Di Xin and the princes. She was Lu, the youngest daughter of the Shang Rong; and, more alarming, she was the Emperor's current favorite concubine.

## Chapter 3

### The Man Grand Duke Had Looked For Spring, 1076 BCE

#### Hexagram 39

#### JIEN.

#### Flowing Water above Mountain

*Trouble.* The South and West are favorable. Advantage is gained by visiting a great man.

*Flowing Water upon a mountain.* The Superior Man cultivates success by transforming himself.

6 for the bottom place. Going out leads to trouble, while coming back leads to praise.

6 for the second place. The King's minister overcomes difficulties imposed upon him.

9 for the third place. To advance brings trouble; to withdraw, happiness within.

6 for the fourth place. Going out brings trouble; arrivals presage worthy ties.

9 for the fifth place. Friends arrive while turmoil persists.

6 for the top place. To advance brings trouble; to withdraw, excellent results.

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The people of Mount Qishan could hear the rumbling drums of the approaching column descending from the palace through the city long before it arrived. They could catch glimpses of their Prince and his high officers in their polished bronze chariots pulled by the magnificent black horses just behind the banners of Zhou—black with gold trim and adorned with the threatening images of Taotei. As he reached them, they all kneeled to rise again only as the first regiment of infantry arrived.

These they cheered exuberantly, for the infantry was made of their men: their sons, brothers, fathers, and uncles. Each family contributed "a warrior in a husbandman" who could be called to duty at a moment's notice to fight off any invader or serve in a natural disaster. Ji Chang's army was a people's army, trained as warriors but citizens expected to return to their lives as farmers as soon as their martial services were no longer needed.

On the outskirts of the city, the crowd was much thinner. The wind carried the sweet aromas of the abundant plant life in the valley. Industrious immigrants had been pouring into Zhou by the hundreds and were busily building dwellings and other structures in all directions. New roads veered off frequently from the main thoroughfare upon which the army advanced. Ji Chang occasionally halted their progress, climbing down from his chariot to personally inspect some public works project. He consulted with one of his ministers about the most advantageous path

for a drainage ditch at one point. At another, he solved a disagreement about the proper place for a new dwelling.

At a third location, where a reservoir was being dug, he was approached by a supervisor. "Forgive my interruption, Prince Ji Chang," he said bowing low to the ground. "We have uncovered a skeleton at the pond you decreed. What should we do with it?"

Ji Chang immediately responded, "Bury the dead fittingly at another place;" and he continued his observation of the work.

"But the dead has no one responsible for him. Who will conduct the funerary ceremonies and make the mourning sacrifices?"

Ji Chang turned back to the officer. "He who claims possession of the world must be responsible for everyone in the world. He who claims possession of a principality must be responsible for everyone in the principality. Should I not be responsible for this dead man? Prepare him for a fitting burial. Upon my return, he will sleep forever at the house of Ji Chang."

"As you instruct, my Prince." The officer bowed low again and returned to the work, astonished that a prince would conduct the rigorous funerary ceremonies for an unidentified commoner.

The city receded into the distance and was gradually obscured by rolling millet fields and orchards. The fertile Wei valley was cleared for cultivation as far as the eye could see, even into the foothills to the east. Farmland was divided into 600 acre parcels, each supporting a hamlet of five families. Each family had their own homestead, but each hamlet cultivated a common acreage for Zhou. Thus, as Ji Chang's column marched toward the Wei River, tiny communities dotted the landscape at regular intervals.

These were the people Ji Chang had called for when he proclaimed that each husbandman from anywhere under Heaven could join him and receive a hundred acres to cultivate for himself and his family. They had come from as far east as the eastern sea, from as far south as the principality of Chu, from as far north as the principality of Bei, and from Yin itself, seat of Emperor Xin.

At length they came upon the Lou river and turned south. Each day's march they saw fewer and fewer hamlets and cultivated fields; fewer and fewer settlers left their toils to watch the column pass. On the fifth day, Ji Chang considered himself in wild country and squads began foraging and stalking game. Near sunset on the sixth day they came to the Wei River, the southernmost reach of Ji Chang's fief. Ji Chang ordered the deployment of the troops for a permanent encampment, to be directed by Ji Fa and Ji Dan.

Ramparts were raised, skirmish lines laid out, horses corralled, and tents raised. These were no useless diversions; they rehearsed the skills of making war. Food and wine were distributed among the men at dusk. There would be a night of rest.

Ji Chang and his high officers assembled in the largest tent at the center of the camp. Outside they could hear periodically men returning from the forests bragging to each other on the game acquired or lamenting the quarry that escaped. Ji Chang surveyed the faces about him, boisterous, consuming food and wine hungrily, and sometimes arguing among themselves.

"Di Xin has disgraced the House of Shang again and again," asserted one.

"He has committed atrocities against the people and insulted the Lord Above," added another.

"Who are you to judge the actions of an emperor," countered a third.

"Yin will feel the disfavor of Heaven in due course," commented another, "but it will be the common man and woman who suffers."

These younger and lower ranked officers of Zhou all seemed anxious to prove their prowess in foolish and costly battles, and it was very brash of them to challenge the Emperor by name.

Ji Dan raised a hand to calm them. "What proof do you have, brothers, that Di Xin is so despicable as you say? What has he done but smite a few northern nomads and take too much credit for it?"

"He has over taxed the people for his own indulgence," offered Zhengdou. "How many palaces will he build to indulge his many concubines and royal hangers-on?"

"And when the people beseech him to mediate disputes or exercise a sovereign's judgement," continued Ji Wu, "he returns decisions pickled in the wine he drinks!" There was much laughter. Ji Chang had remained stoic, but a slight smile wrinkled his cheeks at Wu's remark.

"I have heard," said Ji Fa, "that it has been the practice of Di Xin's predecessors to have dozens of servants, concubines, and others killed at the times of their deaths to accompany them into Heaven." Loud cries of denial rose. "Shang Gao has traveled throughout the Central Nation before joining our House," he continued. "What do you say about it, Minister?"

The advisor toyed with the food in his bowl in silence, then said, "My future Prince knows no more nor less about the secrets of Di Xin's palace than I do. He also knows full well that I would not have come to be your father's subject but for one reason. Di Xin is the ruler of all under Heaven, myself included, so therefore as long as I walk the earth I owe my allegiance to him. Yet, Ji Chang is the wisest and most benevolent Prince in all the Nations and there is none other I would serve. My eyes will not look upon a ruler's violence to his people."

Ji Fa looked about the silent group triumphantly. "There, you see? He has confirmed the atrocities of Di Xin." Murmurs of assent and denial passed among them. "We all know," he continued, "that Shang Gao gave up the wealth and comfort of his family's house to come to Zhou where he assumed the life of a commoner out of admiration for Ji Chang. Who would dispute the word of such a righteous man?"

Ji Xian spoke for the first time, saying, "I wouldn't dispute his word, my brother; but he also said he has no way of knowing all the secrets of a palace he has never entered."

Noises of agreement and disagreement resumed for several minutes until Ji Dan interrupted them. "Friends and brothers, you are discussing a very serious matter here, loyalty to your rightful sovereign. All Houses have had rulers of both great and small virtue. Should Di Xin be condemned for the sins of his ancestor Wuyi, whom we all know to have been without honor? Nor should he be revered for the gallantry of Zujia, Wuyi's father. In criminal matters, it has been the policy of Ji Chang to not punish the relatives of a transgressor on this enlightened principle. So should we curse Di Xin for the transgressions of his kin?"

Ji Xian now interjected his own sentiments." But Ji Dan, do we not all receive honor from our virtuous ancestors? Our own grandfather, Jili, came to the throne of Zhou by the abdication of his two older brothers. In all things religious and common, to sacrifice for the good is prized above all else. Is not our House elevated by the sacrifice of Taibo and Zhongong?"

"Only if we also are righteous," replied Ji Dan.

"Ji Du chimed in, "Does not the Lord Above protect and reward a virtuous man? As long as Di Xin holds the throne by the will of Heaven, he cannot be considered unrighteous or he would lose the mandate to rule." Yet again a cry arose from the group as all began to express their opinions at once.

At the clearing of Ji Chang's throat, the gathering fell silent. "Remember, my sons and ministers, the wise leadership of long ago, the Emperor Shun in the day's of our Nation's beginning. He devised the five kinds of ceremonies: those pertaining to the worship of heaven, those pertaining to death and funerals, those pertaining to the conduct of war, those pertaining to public receptions, and those pertaining to marriages and births. Every detail of every ritual was proscribed by Shun so that each participant knows his exact function, and each must carry out that function perfectly for the ceremony to reach its proper conclusion. For a hundred generations we have followed these directions faithfully. Do you know why?"

"Because Shun was given them by Heaven," ventured Ji Du.

"Of course. Shun's ceremonies embody the guiding principles that maintain our nation. The principles of harmony and propriety contained in the rituals are what separates us from the barbarians. Shun's minister, Yu, could not have tamed the great flood without absolute unity of effort, without obedience. Each man must be enlightened to right conduct through the example of the rituals. Even though our own ancestors were severed from the ruling House many generations ago, the ceremonies have ever brought peace and harmony to the House of Zhou. This is what I mean when I say 'A ruler's goal is humanity'."

Ji Chang paused here, obviously further organizing his thoughts. Before continuing, he looked sideward to the face of Shang Gao, tense in anticipation of Ji Chang's words for he knew what Ji Chang said about Di Xin this night would have profound effects on the course of Zhou history.

"My grandfather, the Ancient Duke," he began again, " had a dream in his heart that one day the House of Zhou would inherit the Mandate of Heaven and "clip the wing of Shang." If that is ever to be the will of the Lord Above, it will come upon us not because of our might or bravery, but because of our virtue. Virtue requires filial piety, devotion to the people, sacrifice to the deities, and obedience to the will of Heaven and Heaven's chosen ruler. While I live, therefore, let no man disparage our sovereign."

At that, Shang Gao visibly relaxed, relieved that no remark by Ji Chang had put them on the road to war with Yin. After some long, uncomfortable moments, Ji Fa broke the silence. "So tell us, father, what should be our policies toward the Central Nation. What if some action taken by Di Xin should appear to be a threat to Zhou?"

"If my son and heir expects a simple answer to that, he may have difficulty ruling the House of Zhou after me. Does he not recall how the Emperor Yao, facing

the collapse of the nation by rampaging floods and knowing himself to be inadequate to the task— how he searched throughout the land for one able to guide him? He found Shun, did he not? And does not my son and heir recall how, faced with a crisis, the Emperor Tang searched long and hard for someone to offer him solutions? He found Yi Yin, did he not? Remember this eulogy to Tang:

*Our sovereign avoids dissolute music and women.  
He does not seek to accumulate wealth.  
To high office he raises the virtuous;  
He rewards meritorious service.  
He follows good counsel's advice  
As if from his own mind it sprang;  
He diligently corrects his own errors.  
Always compassionate and kind,  
His virtues shine on the multitudes.*

"Now also recall my own grandfather the Ancient Duke who founded the city at Mount Qishan, how he searched his entire reign for such a man as Shun or Yi Yin and never found him. Since Heaven had not burdened him with great calamities, it is no wonder that no great sage appeared. Heaven will protect the righteous ruler and provide good council in times of great turmoil."

Ji Fa was constantly amazed at his father's capacity to recite such things. He considered himself, not a scholar, but a man of action. 'My father's virtues are greater than all other men's', he thought, 'but Di Xin cannot expect to have such loyalty from Zhou after Ji Chang. I will see the day when the bird of Shang has but one good wing. '

The fellowship of the hunting lodge went on for some hours until one by one the leaders of Zhou retired, each to his own bivouac.

Ji Chang awoke at first light and, as was his custom, went out to feel the new day in relaxed silence. Since the camp was near the Wei, he decided to stroll along its bank and perhaps to find a handy log upon which to contemplate. Dawn and dusk are the moments when the forces of the world are most at balance, when the firm and creative forces of Heaven are blended with the yielding and destructive forces of the Earth. Greater messages are received from Heaven at these times, and the balance between the female moon and the male sun bestow greater blessings upon those wedded then.

His thoughts drifted back twenty-eight years to the warm spring dawn he met Taisi on the bank of this same river. His father had arranged his marriage to the oldest daughter of Prince Yu Xiong of Chu, renowned for her virtue and beauty, to seal a formal alliance between the two nations. Huge crowds from Zhou and Chu gathered on their respective sides of the river to watch as the two princes bound themselves to each other through their offspring.

Ji Chang had over two dozen boats lashed together side by side from one bank to the other. He had logs hewn flat on one side and laid end to end to form a floating bridge. Women decorated the bridge with strings of flowers, ribbons, and feathers. At the appointed time, an auspicious procession accompanied the lovely princess from Chu to Zhou across the boats. At her formal presentation to him,

the crowds roared their approval. There was never again a time of discord between Zhou and Chu, and there was never a time when Ji Chang did not feel blessed by Heaven for having Taisi.

While Ji Chang reminisced he failed to realize that he had wandered beyond the camp, accompanied by a platoon of guards keeping a respectful distance. He was so involved in his own thoughts he nearly stumbled over an elderly man angling on the bank. Since he was not wearing the trappings of his rank, the old man failed to kowtow in proper deference and, instead, continued fishing. Ji Chang's anger rose immediately at his insolence; but, at the same time, his curiosity was peaked. He noticed that the old man's hook had been straightened.

"How do you intend to feed yourself, old man, on fish you won't catch?" asked Ji Chang.

"I didn't come today to catch fish, but to ponder on how a fish is caught."

Ji Chang's anger receded quickly as he realized the old man proposed a game of wits with him. "That's easy," he said. "You draw the fish to you by sacrificing something the fish desires the same way one sacrifices to the deities— something small in value that is worthy by its meaning for something greater in value that is worthy by its purpose."

"But is filling my belly a worthy enough purpose for taking what belongs to the river deity and for sacrificing the cricket in the process?"

"A man cannot live without the blessings of Heaven and Earth," countered Ji Chang. "Earth has given him the fish and Heaven has instructed him how to conduct himself, even, as you say, in the process of filling his belly. Therefore, it is right and fitting to sacrifice the cricket and in taking the fish."

"So it is for a ruler." The old man lifted his straight hook from the water and threw it farther from the bank.

"How so, old one? I fail to see."

"If a ruler intends to catch a very fat fish, he must sacrifice many crickets— the crickets being his subjects; therefore, the fish he seeks must be truly worthy to warrant such great sacrifice. On the other hand, smaller fish require fewer crickets to be lost. Some fish are not worthy of the loss of any crickets at all. Since I am not hungry, I am loathe to sacrifice any crickets today; so I will catch no fish.

Ji Chang changed the subject in tacit recognition of the old man's superior wit. "By your dress I see you are from the eastern province of Li. What brings you here from so far away?"

"I am a poor man with no family. I have heard that in Zhou the aged are not left to starve, even if they have no offspring to care for them."

"This is true. But a man of your learning should find employment in any nation. What could you do to serve a sovereign?"

"I am a soldier now too old to fight." His reply was wistful. "Is this army you accompany seeking an enemy? There have been no incursions by the Kunyi tribes hereabouts."

"We partake of the chase to keep us fit and in readiness for the defense of our people. Come, old soldier, and criticize the garrison. Tell me what the eastern princes know." With that, Ji Chang helped the old man to his feet and the two moved toward the camp.



As they came upon the guards it was suddenly obvious to the old man that he had been conversing with a man of considerable rank since the soldiers and officers were bowing low as they passed. He stopped and bowed low himself, saying, "Forgive me for not recognizing your rank. My words would not have been so insolent had I known of your stature. I thought you were but one of the soldiers with whom I might pass the hours."

"I am, and so we will." Ji Chang ended the old man's anxiety, identifying himself by his family name with no reference to his title, "I am Ji Chang;" and he continued walking toward the garrison." What shall I call you, old soldier from the eastern fiefs?"

"I am Lu Shang," he replied.

The two of them strolled about the fortifications Ji Chang had ordered built, pointing out the deployment of the troops in various places. They examined some of the weapons and stores.

After a while, Lu Shang offered his first suggestion. "It was our practice in Qi to construct our ramparts with lateral projections at important points," he said. "We would station our best archers there." He waited for Ji Chang to recognize the significance of this tactic.

After a moment of intense thought, Ji Chang responded. "I will have a squad of men construct one under your direction."

At another point in their tour, Lu Shang ventured a second observation. "Once in a battle with the Yan tribes, I noticed that many of the nomads wore the shells of a particular tortoise strapped on their heads with leather bindings. I have noticed a very similar tortoise in the ponds and streams around here. They have a very hard shell."

Again after a moment of reflection, Ji Chang responded, "I will have a squad of men assembled to seek out these turtles if you will direct them to the spot."

"How many of these soldiers are conscripts," asked Lu Shang at another point, "and how many are professionals. He knew very well, of course, that all were conscripts. "The Prince's House should maintain at least a regiment of highly trained, full-time soldiers, a vanguard regiment of the highest calibre," he asserted.

This process went on for hours, only interrupted by a brief period when the two stopped to eat and when various officers sought instructions by Ji Chang for some particular task. Near sundown, the Prince brought Lu Shang into the company of his brothers and his highest ranking officers.

"This is Lu Shang," he announced. "I have discovered him by the banks of Panxi as the oracle bones predicted. He is such a man as my grandfather searched for. I will henceforth always refer to him as 'Teacher, Uncle Shang'."

## **Chapter 4**

### **Only Those Who Go Wrong Should Be Taken**

**Fall, 1073 BCE**

**Hexagram 21**  
**SHI HO.**  
**Fire above Thunder**

*Gnawing.* The time is favorable for legal processes.

*Lightning and thunder.* Ancient rulers enforced clear laws vigorously.

9 for the bottom place. Shackled feet immobilize the evil doer; no blame.

6 for the second place. The face is hidden when gnawing flesh, a necessary indiscretion.

6 for the third place. He was sick for a time from the dried meat he gnawed.

9 for the fourth place. He found an arrowhead in the dried meat, close to the bone.

6 for the fifth place. He found a gold nugget imbedded in the dried meat; no blame.

9 for the top place. The wooden yoke he wears obscures his ears; ignorance and blame.

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Jizi and Bigan had spent the entire morning preparing for assembly in the Great Hall. Di Xin would hold court, one of the few Imperial duties he still seemed to take seriously. To Jizi it was a welcome interval of sanity in the palace's nearly non-stop revelry and decadence. Traditionally it was Bigan's duty to preside over the presentation of arguments while Senior Tutor Jizi stood near the sovereign offering advice as appropriate.

Prince Xiong of Chu had departed, but Jizi couldn't help hearing the powerful prince's indirect warning, at least what he could consider a warning. Xiong, if not other western leaders, admired Ji Chang more than their rightful Emperor. That thought had a strange effect on him. It wasn't just anger that he felt, but anger mixed with some new emotion he didn't quite understand.

'Remember your ancestor of the heart Yi Yin,' he told himself again and again, 'and how he taught the Sovereign Taijia to honor the virtues of an enlightened ruler. His great risk to himself on behalf of the people was rewarded by Heaven; and when he died, he received an emperor's burial and honor from all the nations.' But he believed honor would come to him only if he were able to instill propriety in the Emperor. Di Xin's failures would be his failures, and it was a constant battle to maintain his resolve in the face of Di Xin's mounting depravity.

After all had assumed their required places and Di Xin was seated with copious fanfare, Bigan called the first offender, one of minor royal blood accused of killing his brother. Prostrate before Di Xin, the man pleaded for his life. As Bigan called forth several to testify under the questioning of Feizong, it became clear to everyone that the accused was hot tempered and lacked the piety expected of even his low level royalty. Di Xin ordered the sentence to be carried out.

The entire court knew of a long running feud between Sung the Lord of Anyi and Taiding the Prince of Yan. The dispute had escalated into violent clashes that

brought death and destruction on the population. Bigan called Lord Sung to testify.

As Feizong began to question him, tension in the hall mounted visibly." How long have you ruled the people of Anyi, Lord Sung?"

"Since my father died in the sixteenth year of his Majesty, Di Xin's rule."

"How have the people fared?"

"We have twenty-five square miles under cultivation."

"And how did you acquire this land?"

"It was granted to my father by his Majesty, Di Yi as a reward for valiant service."

It quickly became obvious to the court that Feizong was not probing but emphasizing Sung's positive attributes. At the first break in the dialogue, Shang Rong interjected a question." Was not your father a subject of the Prince of Yan at the time he was invested with this fief?"

Feizong turned an irritated gaze upon Shang Rong. Sung hesitated as if he preferred the questioning of Feizong.

"Answer the question," commanded Bigan.

"Yes, minister," he answered reluctantly.

Feizong attempted to prevent Shang Rong from penetrating into the truths of the matter." Lord Sung has defended his people from Prince Taiding's encroachments. Many have doubts about the prince's intentions. He is arrogant and impetuous. He gathers strength with the hope of someday challenging the Son of Heaven himself."

Really, Majesty," responded Shang Rong in the direction of Di Xin." I hardly think Prince Taiding could challenge you with a territory under his rule of but seventy square miles." The allusion to divine Emperor Tang was unmistakable to the educated men of the Court. Tang had begun his conquest of the Xia with but seventy square miles under his rule. Yet comparing the puerile Taiding with the mighty Tang was like comparing a mountain brook to the Great River. Predictable chuckles bubbled about in the crowd.

"Esteemed councilor Feizong," continued Shang Rong, "has failed to relate how this matter came to the attention of the court. Three town chiefs on the border between Yan and Anyi journeyed to the palace where they have fasted at the gate for many days so that their grievances might be aired before your Majesty."

The Emperor suddenly commanded, "Bring them here."

Feizong, visibly annoyed that Shang Rong's interference was having an effect, continued his interpretation of the situation. "In the last year, no less than a dozen square miles with the peasants on them have been forced or intimidated into swearing allegiance to Prince Taiding and to renounce Lord Sung. When has the Son of Heaven granted Taiding the title of Hegemon with the power to absorb territory with impunity?"

Three frail men were being escorted rather roughly into the hall. They prostrated themselves with a little help from the guards before the august body on the dais. Shang Rong asked them to proclaim their allegiance. "We had always considered ourselves under the authority of Prince Taiding," said one, "but five years ago Lord Sung's father came and told us the Emperor had given us to him. Since that time,

many from Anyi have joined us enjoying privileges by their relationship to Lord Sung."

"And do you find Lord Sung's rule adequate; has your township prospered under him?"

The three farmers hesitated, glancing at each other.

"Speak up!" commanded Shang Rong. "Did you not request protection from Prince Taiding? Did you not ask him to intervene on your behalf?"

The fearful three indicated assent.

Feizong addressed Di Xin with controlled intensity. "Lord Sung has honored your Majesty with generous tribute and by strengthening the fief Di Yi has granted him. Prince Taiding's punitive expeditions against one of your devoted subjects should not be tolerated." Feizong motioned toward Shang Rong. "Our Prime Minister's egalitarianism is well known, Majesty. Shang Rong should be punished for inciting princes toward rebellion." A moan rolled through the assembled mass.

"Rather than deal with the issue in dispute," returned Shang Rong, "Minister Feizong continues to debate irrelevancies. Lord Sung's generous tribute was extracted from an impoverished people, your Majesty. Further, their kinship and loyalty to Prince Taiding, one of your own kinsmen, should not be punished. Taiding offered settlements for the peaceful return of these villages, but these were accepted then ignored by Sung".

"Of course they were ignored. Sung could not avoid his duty to the Emperor or conduct himself contrary to his sovereign's will."

"Esteemed councilor Feizong over states the case," responded Shang Rong, "because of his close kinship with his nephew Sung. Even if these villages were clearly in the fief awarded by Emperor Yi, which is in doubt, Sung should have given Prince Taiding's former subjects the opportunity to rejoin their prince. Instead, if a husbandman escaped to Yan, Sung would have his family killed. Is it a wonder that few of the people left?"

At this point Senior Tutor Jizi interrupted the proceedings. "There is a story which many know about Tang the Successful, our venerated progenitor, from before he received the Mandate of Heaven and came to rule the nations. He is said to have come across a trapper who had set his nets in the forest in such a way that no wandering animal could ever hope to avoid them." Several around the room nodded in recognition of the tale. "They argued for many minutes, as Tang tried to convince the man to reduce his nets—to allow some escape for the poor creatures of Earth. 'Only those who go wrong should be taken,' he argued. If Emperor Tang's compassion extended even to animals, how can we not extend compassion to these men—to allow some means of escape for them from this trap created by their superiors."

Many knew that Jizi's appeal was for Di Xin's cold ears. The Emperor's face remained expressionless as the proceedings continued. Feizong rejoined the debate. "Which of your villages attacked an Anyi convoy killing Lord Sung's brother?"

The three farmers were struck motionless, then two of them looked at the third. After a second of tense silence he spoke. "It was my village, sir."

Shang Rong objected to this unnecessary detail." We are all aware of the consequences of strife," he shouted. "Must we endure hours of accusations in a conflict where many have been injured on both sides?"

Feizong was quick to respond. "If we must endure the telling of tales, then why should we not endure the telling of facts?" Murmurs surged through the hall.

"Enough!" All fell silent at this cry from Di Xin. He gathered his thoughts for a moment, then continued, "Killing a kinsman of Lord Sung requires the heaviest penalty. The chief of that village, his consorts, and his children shall be slain." Shang Rong stepped forward only to be stayed by the hand of Di Xin. "The rest of the village shall remain with Lord Sung. The other two villages shall be returned to Prince Taiding."

Jizi was relieved at this most conventional ruling even as he recognized Shang Rong's modest defeat by Feizong. Di Xin had resolved the the simpler issue of territorial control, but had not solved the more difficult question of personal loyalties. Jizi felt the unfortunate "little" people of these villages should be allowed to relocate if they so desired. They had not "gone wrong," he felt; so they should be allowed escape a fate they did not deserve. To Jizi's consternation, Shang Rong's failure to obtain mercy for the innocent was an ever more frequent occurrence. It was no wonder that emigration to provinces beyond the Central Nation, especially to Zhou, was on the rise.

Bigan ordered the farmers removed. Di Xin rose to leave the dais, signaling to all that the court would be adjourned. Bigan watched as Feizong and several minor officials and kinsmen escorted him from the Great Hall, all the while muttering who knew what manipulative flatteries in his ear. Jizi, Shang Rong, and the court scribes and attendants were conducting themselves out through another door. Bigan saw for the first time the gathering spheres of influence. He realized the time would come very soon when he would be forced to choose between the factions. Feizong's influence with Di Xin had been rising steadily as the old advisor catered more and more often to the Emperor's whimsy. Gathering his books and bamboo slats, he and the Imperial scribes filed out of the hall into the courtyard. There in the tranquil garden he watched Feizong and his associates gather about Di Xin as storm clouds rubbing a mountain peak. Bigan felt the cold wind of an approaching tempest.

As Bigan passed near the group he heard pieces of their conversation. He waved his assistants on to continue the work and lingered just out of sight of Di Xin and the others. Though they spoke in hushed tones, Bigan could discern their subject clearly. He heard the Prince of Hu name the Prince of Su. Then he heard the name of Di Xin's current favorite concubine. The satisfied look in Feizong's eyes and the anger rising in Di Xin's was unmistakable. Shang Rong's daughter was accused of infidelity.

Bigan hurried to his uncle's quarters. "I have very bad news, uncle," he said as he entered.

"I already know," answered Jizi without looking up from his task.

The Prince of Wei emerged from a shadow to Bigan's great alarm. The prince was half-brother to the Emperor, so Bigan feared speaking in confidence about any courtly intrigues.

Jizi assured him." Prince Qi knows as well. I advised the Prince of Su to return to his fief immediately. Prince Qi will attempt to soften the Emperor's rage. The woman is being brought to Di Xin as we speak. Shang Rong will protect her if he can. Do not be concerned about it."

Bigan gazed at the calm face of Qi. He was an older brother of the Emperor and would have inherited the Imperial throne had circumstances been only slightly different; but his mother was a concubine, while the mother of Di Xin was a principal wife. Bigan knew of the tension that gripped the Central Nation as Di Xin's father seriously considered naming Qi as his heir in spite of thousand year old traditions. In the end, Di Xin was named crown prince to the everlasting regret of the virtuous and wise of the Imperial House. Yet, Di Yi never really had a choice, for to break such traditions would plunge the nations into civil war and bring down the House of Shang. His moment of indecision itself left scars on his reign that still itched unhealed.

Seeing Qi here with Jizi, Bigan realized that the political factions were much better defined than he had thought, for Qi had his company of loyalists: the powerful Prince Xiong of Chu, for example, whom Bigan always felt might harbor Imperial ambitions, and most frightening of all, Ji Chang, that reputed giant of the West, outside of the Emperor's control and not beholden to the House of Shang for its protection. Bigan was electrified as the full ramifications of this casual meeting sank in. The House of Shang was indeed about to enter a tempest.

## Chapter 5

### **The River God's Wedding** **Summer, 1072 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 56** **LU.**

#### **Fire above Mountain**

*The traveler.* Success in mundane matters pursued persistently.

*Fire on the mountain.* The Superior Man expedites justice while remaining cautious.

6 for the bottom place. The undisciplined traveler suffers; mundane issues must not be ignored.

6 for the second place. The traveler reaches safety, valuables in tact; a servant's loyalty is gained.

9 for the third place. A careless traveler finds his destination scourged; no servant offers loyalty.

9 for the fourth place. The traveler laments his journey's end, though he is reimbursed.

6 for the fifth place. Though his arrow misses the pheasant, the hunter wins praise.

9 for the top place. A bird burns its own nest; the traveler laughs then weeps.

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Though the sun was already high in the summer sky, Ji Dan knew there was no need to rush. The River God's Wedding would not begin until he arrived. So he had instructed weeks before. On his last inspection tour of Zhou's northernmost district, the trees were bare and the wind driven snow rubbed his face raw in the cold. Now on this dry August day, the forest was teeming with insects and birds and the trees danced to the music of the wind. In the distance, a tiger's lazy growl could be heard now and then between the screeches of nervous monkeys. He was tempted to divert his escort to the chase.

At a stream the men rested and watered their horses while Ji Dan, on a fallen log, composed essays on the small bamboo slats he had ever with him. He was more comfortable with them, he knew, than with the long-knife at his waist. He wrote:

*Man is born to stillness, for stillness is his nature given by Heaven. In response to external things, he becomes active, activity being the expression of the desires of his nature. He pursues those activities that satisfy his likes and dislikes. If these likes and dislikes are not controlled within him and his understanding is beguiled by the external world, then he cannot return to his true self. His heart will turn to revolt and deception and his actions will become dissolute and rebellious.*

Ji Dan scanned the forest around him. The multitude of forms, the seeming chaos, had an underlying stillness, an underlying order to it. The trees sprang from tiny seeds and sprouts. The young animals sprang from the wombs of their mothers. As the seasons cycled, one after another, the temperature changed and the forest transformed itself from solitude and tranquility to interaction and writhing, back to tranquility again... like the turning of his chariot wheel.

He wrote more:

*The former Emperors set up rites and music so that men might be influenced by them. Music comes from within, rites from without. Music, coming from within is characterized by stillness, while rites which are from without are characterized by order. Great music must be easy, great rites simple.*

Ji Dan watched his escort of about two dozen armed men as they rested under several large shade trees. Many of the horses waded calmly in the stream drinking at their feet; the men stretched out in the grass. Off to one side, distancing himself from both the soldiers and Ji Dan, his worthy scribe and assistant sat on a stump staring downstream, wondering on the destination of the energetic water.

At one word from him these men would leap as ferocious warriors, smiting any enemy Ji Dan would name. Several of them were old enough to have fought at his grandfather's side when he pacified this area driving out the savage tribes. It was said that during one battle the blood ran so freely that horses were chest deep in

it. So it was in the forest. At any moment the lazy tiger's grumble can become a roar, the quiet rustling in the grass a serpent's strike.

He wrote again:

*Music induces an end to anger, rites an end to strife. Music is the harmony of Heaven and earth, rites are their order. Through harmony, all things are transformed, through order all things are distinguished. Music arises from Heaven, rites are patterned after earth; therefore, the sage creates music in response to Heaven and rites to emulate earth. When music and rites are fully realized, Heaven and earth function in perfect order.*

He assembled the bamboo slats into a bundle tied with leather strips and put them into his pigskin bag. He roused his escort for the short remaining leg of the trip to Yeh.

On his last inspection tour during the winter, Ji Dan had asked a simple question of the town's elders: 'What is your greatest problem?' He knew generally what the answer was bound to be. It was always that some barbaric and useless custom oppressed the people, sapped the life out of them while rendering them helpless and unable to better their lot. The elders' answer this time was immediate and unequivocal: "The River God's Wedding."

"Explain this rite to me." he had commanded.

"Each year in August, Yeh's leaders impose a tax on us to finance the marriage of a maiden to the River Deity, they explained. His bride is selected by a sorceress."

At Ji Dan's prompting, the townspeople revealed more details of the ceremony. The maiden was washed and would fast for several days, during which a raft was constructed and festooned with silky ribbons, colorful feathers, and exotic flowers. On the day of the wedding, she was placed in a structure on the raft called the Hall of Penance. As the population watched, the raft was set free to float in the river's treacherous currents. It would capsize or sink in but a little time.

Ji Dan insisted that he be invited to the next wedding ceremony and vowed to himself to end this abhorrent rite. At the time he had no idea how he might do that. If he simply executed the town officials and its wealthier gentry, these newly domesticated nomads might simply dissolve away into the forest, not having a recognizable culture after Ji Dan's disruption. Or they might be so angered that a general rebellion would ensue. How he enlightened them was all important.

Upon the arrival of the Prince of Zhou's important envoy, the town's officers did dutiful obeisance and escorted Ji Dan and his party to the banks of the Ju River. Hundreds had gathered, abandoning their fields for the spectacle in a month that Ji Dan knew was crucial to a good harvest. The sight was outrageous to him, but he remained absolutely reticent as befitted a solemn occasion.

On the pier where the raft was tied, Ji Dan approached the sorceress, an old woman in a shaman's knitted cap flailing her shoulders alternately with a mop of varied filaments and chanting incomprehensible syllables. "I wish to see the river deity's proposed bride," he interrupted, "to see if she is a fitting subject for such an honor." The large crowd was rapt at Ji Dan's sudden intervention. They were motionless from his first word.



The town chief fetched the young girl from the floating hall and presented her to Ji Dan. Through the filmy cloth in which she was barely clothed, Ji Dan could see her partially mature features; she was barely of child bearing age. Revolted as he was, Ji Dan's face was stoic. "This girl is too plain for the role of a deity's bride," he announced loudly. As the crowd murmured, he stroked his chin and paced up and down the pier muttering. "What should be done? What should be done?"

Turning suddenly to the sorceress, he asked, "Would the esteemed sorceress be kind enough to ask the River Deity to wait a few days while I seek out a more attractive consort for him?" Before she could say a word, he snapped his fingers and two of his guards tossed the wailing old woman into the river. Within minutes she disappeared in the swift current.

Groans and murmurs flowed through the crowd as Ji Dan studied the waves for any sign of the sorceress. Turning to the town chief he said, "You can't trust a woman to deliver even a simple message. May I impose on the town chief for this important mission?" At a nod from Ji Dan, the guards tossed him screaming into the water.

Again Ji Dan watched the river patiently for the return of his messengers. "What should we do?" he asked in the direction of the town officials and the gentry. "Should we send another messenger?" Upon hearing that suggestion, all the town's leading men prostrated themselves, moaning and knocking their foreheads on the ground so forcefully as to draw blood from one and all. "We'll wait a while for one of them to return," he sighed. All could hear his footsteps on the wooden structure as he paced.

After some tense moments, Ji Dan stood above them, saying, "Arise you town officials. Since the river deity has decided to retain our messengers as his permanent guests, there is no need to send anyone else. Arise and go to your homes."

Dan was momentarily frozen in anticipation of the population's reaction. A soft moan swelled up from the multitude, gradually becoming a roar of approval. As the town gentry and officers streaked off in every direction, Ji Dan approached several of the elders. "Gentlemen," he said, "there will be no further weddings of the river deity." He pointed to the oldest and grayest of the lot. "I will be at the prime-house of the settlement. You and elders from all over the area are to join me there." He and his guards then walked toward the village center.

The main house was indistinguishable from all others, but for size. Recessed into the ground some ten or twelve feet, it was covered with crisscrossing bamboo poles and sealed, but for two gaps, with thatched leaves. The gap at its center served as a flue for its fires, while the gap at its extreme eastern edge exposed a ladder on which Ji Dan and several of his guards descended to its floor. Ji Dan knew that the design of this house followed practices from the beginning of time, when the great winds blew constantly from the west. 'The great winds no longer blow,' he thought; 'so they must be taught to raise houses above the ground.' There was so much to tell them: how to deposit their wastes for the betterment of the crops, how to distinguish the right soil for millet and rice, how to bring adequate water from the streams and rivers, in general how to live in harmony with Heaven and Earth.

He found an appropriate place to sit on his stool with soldiers arrayed behind him on mats or skins. Within minutes the elders began to assemble. Each, after bowing reverently, joined the semi-circle of men forming on the floor. When it was obvious that no more elders were expected, Ji Dan began the conference.

"In view of the river deity's desire to keep the company of your traditional chief and sorceress, it will be necessary to pick a new leadership for the betterment of the people, by the will of Heaven and the Prince in Qishan," he began.

"First, you shall no longer employ any sorceress or shaman. Communication between Heaven and man will be stopped because the deities become too familiar with men, learning how evil men are and, thus, not deserving of Heaven's blessings. At the same time, men become too familiar with the deities, no longer standing in awe of them and, thus, not obedient to Heaven's wishes."

At that point one of the elders rose to dispute Ji Dan's assertions, saying, "Communication between Heaven and man cannot be stopped. Members of my family have always been able to hear the instructions of the Lord Above."

"Only the Emperor in Yin consorts with the Lord Above," Ji Dan responded. He paused and scanned the room. "What say you all, gentlemen?" The old men stared silently at him. "By your silence I interpret your agreement with me." He glanced at one of his guards who immediately drew his sword. It flashed in the light through the flue hole above. The disputatious elder's head rolled to the wall splattering blood about the floor, and his body crumpled next to the fire. The entire body of seated old men moved clumsily and in unison to distance themselves from the bleeding corpse. Many gasped loudly, but not one protested.

Ji Dan continued, "Second, you will be enlightened as to the proper times and conduct of veneration from the Prince in Qishan. No longer will every family have its own invocers."

Timidly, one of the elders asked in a near whisper, "How will we know whom to venerate," Lord Dan?"

"You may venerate the spirits that reside in this district only," answered Ji Dan, "and then only according to what is proper. Regarding veneration of your ancestors, only those whose laws and teachings have prevailed among the people, those who have laid down their lives in duty, those who have brought benefits for the people by their hard toil, and those who have warded off grave dangers or disasters shall be venerated. All others shall be outside the Book of Venerations."

"Third, the Prince in Qishan shall determine who shall be your village servitor, your clan preceptor, and your ward supervisor. He will select only from among the virtuous and talented among you: those who have cultivated the five virtues, those who practice the six types of righteous behavior, those who have learned the six arts. Only such as these shall be honored with the Prince's appointments."

"Every five families shall be considered a hamlet, every five hamlets a village, every four villages a clan, every five clans a ward. Thus the worthy and virtuous may be elevated for the good of the people."

"The five families of a hamlet shall work together for mutual gain and protection. The twenty-five families of a village shall shelter each other in times of great need. The one-hundred families of a clan shall bury their dead together, comforting each other in times of sorrow. The five-hundred families of a ward shall assist one another in emergencies."

Ji Dan paused to allow them a moment of thought, then asked, "Who in this village can be named in the Prince Ji Chang's Book of the Worthy and Capable?"

The elders whispered and muttered among themselves for some time, then one spoke the names of several villagers, one of the elders among them. The nominated elder rose and said with his head lowered, "Forgive me, sir, for I am not worthy to be so honored in the Prince's book."

Words of general support emitted from the group. Ji Dan leaned closer to him. "These fine gentlemen disagree with you," he challenged. "What do you feel is lacking in you that you may not be considered virtuous?"

"I have merely minded my own affairs and provided for my family. No great deeds as you have described may be attributed to me."

Ji Dan studied the man's face for several seconds. "The small man thinks," he said, "that insignificant acts of goodness are of no benefit and does not do them. He thinks that small acts of evil do no harm and does not abstain from them. Hence his goodness is diminished until it cannot be found, and his wickedness accumulates until it cannot be hid. For now, you shall be this ward's supervisor. What is your name, supervisor?"

"I am Jai, sir."

"Ji Dan drew some of the ever present bamboo slats from his pigskin bag and began to read from the laws and practices of the Zhou which were inscribed on them." Jai, you as ward supervisor shall be in charge of the conscription orders of the ward when the Prince assembles a defensive force at arms. From time to time you shall submit a count of all persons in the ward taking note of those males of conscription age. You shall assemble the entire ward to conduct spring and autumn veneration ceremonies, for funerals, for public works enterprises, and for martial exercises. After every assembly you shall read the law to the people. You shall record the names of those who are conscientious, quick of wit, dependable for independent assignments, and compassionate toward others."

"How will I obtain the knowledge for all of these responsibilities?" The man was trembling in fear.

"I will leave my assistant for the time being. I will return myself or send envoys to guide you."

"I am greatly honored." He bowed deeply to Ji Dan and sat down with the group.

"I am finished for now," proclaimed Ji Dan without further explanation. The elders knew they had been dismissed and withdrew quietly. He told his escort of his intent for the night. They would bed down here in and around the village house and leave for Qishan at daybreak. Several guards left the house and returned with a litter made of pine limbs and tied cross pieces wrapped in cloth. The body secured on the litter, the soldiers hoisted it into the daylight above.

Guards were posted, the body of the dead elder was removed, a fire for cooking was lit in the hearth pit, food and wine was distributed. Ji Dan retired to a pallet of skins the men laid out for him at the wall. As he drifted off to sleep the friendly conversations of his jovial soldiers rang like ceremonial ocarina notes in his ears.

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The sun had barely lightened the morning sky when the senior officer of his escort awakened him." Ji Dan," he said urgently." One of the guards has wounded an assassin."

Ji Dan sprang to his feet." Take me there," he groused.

The soldier bounded up the ladder into the morning's crisp air with Ji Dan on his heels. About a hundred feet from the village house, two guards stood over a man lying on the ground, bleeding profusely from the abdomen. He loosely held a bronze dagger in his hand. He was breathing heavily and his eyes were wide in fear.

"Summon Jai," barked Ji Dan as he studied the man. He was apparently less inclined to civilized behavior than other villagers here. For his task he had painted his face in a manner similar to the Kunyi tribesmen and was stripped to the waist—an altogether frightening spectacle to peaceful farmers but no match for Ji Dan's seasoned guard. They had been through this process many times as Zhou gradually pacified and domesticated the wandering nomadic people all about them.

The newly appointed village servitor was hustled before Ji Dan. "Who is this barbarian?" he demanded.

Jai looked closely at the man and identified him as a member of the old sorceress' family.

"I am not surprised," said Ji Dan. "Can we expect more of this treachery?"

"Jai looked sorrowful and bowed low. "You must hold me responsible if there are further incidents."

"The Zhou do not hold others responsible for the offenses of a criminal," he said; "therefore, I will not punish the assassin's family or the villagers." Nevertheless, as they carried the wounded man back toward the village center, crowds of villagers fell prostrate saying obeisance to Ji Dan, fearing that, for the act of this one man, all would be scourged.

"Impale him in the center of the village," ordered Ji Dan. He turned to his assistant. "I will leave you half my escort. Use them as you wish to deal with any other savages who are among us or who assault us from without." He then shouted mobilization orders to the men.

As Ji Dan and half his detachment mounted their horses, the screams of the would-be murderer echoed through the otherwise quiet forest, though he fell silent before they were barely beyond the village. To Ji Dan it was the last, dying cry of this village's barbarism. Soon they would come to appreciate the process of acquiring knowledge, leaving behind the darkness of nomadic savagery and passing into the light of Zhou culture.

But even as he felt a certain pride at being the instrument of cultural progress, he felt a tightening around his ribs— an inexplicable pain which he struggled to ignore.

As the envoy of Ji Chang and his escort journeyed silently southward through the forest toward Qishan, Ji Dan's thoughts once again turned to philosophy. He went over and over in his mind the thoughts he had been recording on the trip north:

*Music induces an end to anger, rites an end to strife. Music is the harmony of Heaven and earth, rites are their order. Through harmony, all things are transformed, through order all things are distinguished...*

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Power to be Crooked and Straight Spring, 1071 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 32**

#### **HUNG.**

#### **Thunder above Wind**

*Enduring.* Success without error; righteous persistence is rewarded; to pursue goals is favorable.

*Wind with thunder.* The Superior Man stands firmly rooted in righteousness.

6 for the bottom place. Longevity is not achieved by digging in, for opportunities are missed.

9 for the second place. Regret ceases with constancy and avoiding extremes.

9 for the third place. Having only intermittent virtue brings disgrace and shame.

9 for the fourth place. Where there is no game, one should not hunt.

6 for the fifth place. Subordination to one's husband brings good fortune, to one's wife brings misfortune.

6 for the top place. Extended violent action brings misfortune.

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As Jizi watched the forces of the Emperor prepare themselves for battle, he felt a wave of sorrow for the people of Su. Here at the entrance to their small valley the morning sun aroused the multitudes of small creatures just as it did the many farmers, still shadowed, in the lowlands below. The season of wood was just now coming into ascendance and already Earth's power was rising in the wild flowers and leaves of the countryside. Taking up arms was forbidden and the warming soils were desirous of receiving the seeds of summer's crops rather than the soaking of war's blood. Now was the time for the exercise of mastery through weakness rather than through strength, for wise leaders to attend to nutritional duties rather than martial ones, and to contemplate the matter of vision rather than speech. Wood is the power to be both crooked and straight.

Yet here they were overlooking the valley of Su about to descend on the helpless peasants below like a flood, the white banners of Shang waving in the crisp morning air as crane wings and their lances piercing the peace of Earth as crane beaks pierce the still water. Heaven would not abide Di Xin's replacement of the season of wood with the season of water. Great calamities would befall them for

their disunion with the world's proper order. The emotions of anger and sorrow battled for dominance beneath Jizi's inscrutable face.

When the army was deployed and still by the skill of Provost Minister Jioli, the Emperor's chariot rumbled to the fore. His eyes were aflame with passion as he barked the command to advance. The drums thundered, echoing across the valley. Jizi, in full battle armour, spurred his horse into his proper place behind both Jioli and Di Xin as the force began its descent into Su.

Long before they entered the cultivated fields, the farmers and their families had deserted them, no doubt to the fortifications of their city or beyond, fearing death and destruction from their sovereign for some heinous crime. How could they know that the glorious Son of Heaven had come to avenge the infidelity of a concubine?.

Di Xin deftly deployed his legion wide before the gates of Su's capitol. There were no more than a hundred armed conscripts about the wooden fortifications. This city could barely defend itself against a band of undisciplined nomads, but would simply tumble before the standing army of the Emperor.

No sooner had the forces of Di Xin drawn up to the city than a small group of Su's officers emerged from its gate. They carried a tall lance with the white rooster of Shang on a banner at its tip. Beneath that was the blue banner of Su, this configuration designed to demonstrate their supplication and loyalty. Slowly the humble color guard walked toward Di Xin where they kneeled with their faces in their hands and their foreheads to the ground. Di Xin looked regally down at them from his chariot.

"Please allow us to speak on behalf of the people of Su, your Majesty," said one. His voice cracked in utter terror.

"Where is your cowardly and treasonous prince?" Di Xin's voice boomed in malice, shaking his rotund midsection.

"We have heard of the indignities he has caused your royal person, your Majesty. He has been imprisoned by his younger brother who is loyal and humble before his sovereign beyond all question. We await your instructions as to what should be done with him, and we offer your Majesty our most precious objects as a demonstration of our piety."

"Where is this virtuous and loyal younger brother then?" bellowed Di Xin.

"It is I, Majesty." When Di Xin remained silent for several seconds, the bowing man slowly rose to his feet, turned slightly, toward the city's gate and waved. Instantly, a chariot burst forth from the city with two guards and a woman aboard. It raced to the side of the Su delegation where the guards quickly unloaded a small chest with jade, ivory, and other valued objects in it. After a quick glance at the offering, Di Xin gazed upon the woman. She was delicate and lovely, whiter than the rooster of Shang, no more than fifteen or sixteen years old.

"We are a poor people, Majesty. When we saw that our labors in gathering precious things yielded only this pitiful box, we were afraid your Majesty would be insulted by our tribute, so we searched the whole land of Su for the fairest maiden of our families. She is Daji, the daughter of my cousin. If you are pleased with her, spare us your wrath and the punishments we deserve."

Di Xin's rage must have softened by this singular demonstration of devotion. He dismounted from his chariot and approached the new Su leader. "You appear to be a man of wisdom. Tell me of your lineage."

"I am Fulu, the second son of Emperor Di Yi's grand-nephew, Majesty."

Di Xin studied the man closely for several minutes, then said, "Very well, I will accept your tribute. Have your disloyal brother beheaded along with his sons and wives. You are now the Prince of Su. Further you may expand your fief by another twenty-five square miles."

"The people of Su will be forever grateful for your generosity, Majesty."

Di Xin ordered the chest collected and the young woman's chariot driven by his own soldiers. "To the bivouac!" he shouted. The massive machinery of destruction began to withdraw from the valley toward their camp of the previous night.

"I will stay the night at your prime-house. Make a place for myself and six attendants." The new prince bowed obediently and the Su delegation withdrew toward the city. "One regiment will remain with us," he continued, this time addressing Jiaoli. "One company will escort us to the palace and the rest are to be deployed about in the city. Any treachery from these provincials will bring swift destruction on them all."

Di Xin spent the bulk of the day with Senior Tutor Jizi surveying the puny defenses and modest cultural achievements of Su. Jizi sought to improve Su's agricultural methods and reviewed their veneration ceremonies for correctness.

The evening was passed feasting and being entertained by the best story tellers among Su's courtesans. Although Di Xin was not aware of it, Jizi noticed a forced joviality among the diners. Though they were genuinely fond of Fulu, they obviously did not relish the prospect of executing their promiscuous former prince. Jizi wondered if he would be truly executed or if he would somehow manage to escape into exile beyond Su. No Matter, he thought. Di Xin's passions are placated and these people may continue their peaceful lives no worse off than they were. Why should they care who wears the silks of Su... or the silks of an Emperor, for that matter.

Earth's rotation through the endless cycles of life produce whatever Prince of Su or Son of Heaven is needed at that moment, just as rain always falls in the growing season and leaves in the autumn. The people need no heirs or tribute or royal dignity, he thought, for they are the waves on the water— unending continuity, rising or falling as the occasion warrants. Like the bow of a boat which slices through the gleaming lake, rulers and princes may move willfully through the Nations; and, when the royal vessel has passed, the fluid sea of human life closes behind it as if it were never there.

## **Chapter 7**

**He May Bestow His Mandate on Whom He Chooses  
Summer, 1070 BCE**

**Hexagram 34**  
**DA ZHUANG.**  
**Thunder above Heaven**

*Power of the Great.* Persistence on a righteous path brings reward.  
*Thunder in the sky.* The Superior Man advances only in propriety.

9 for the bottom place. Power in one's toes is soon exhausted, advancing brings misfortune.

9 for the second place. Persistence on a righteous path brings reward.

9 for the third place. A goat becomes entangled in the hedge. The Superior Man hides his horns.

9 for the fourth place. The hedge splinters; the goat is released; the cart axle holds great power.

6 for the fifth place. He takes the goat's life too lightly.

6 for the top place. A goat butts the hedge and is tangled. Later, blessed release will be gained.

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Choage, the Emperor's chosen site for Deer Terrace, was a day and night's ride on horseback to the south of the capitol. It was a small but prosperous city of which Jizi had fond memories. Even though the new pleasure palace for Di Xin was near complete and habitable, still the convoys carrying precious objects from all corners of the empire streamed in.

Jizi and Bigan were honored and lodged comfortably by the citizens of Choage when they arrived. Many of Bigan's relatives called on them, reporting important family events and petitioning for solutions to family problems. It was not often that Bigan's relatives could have direct access to the most successful of all the sons of Choage. For a time Jizi had participated, but it soon became apparent that he had little to contribute.

He retired to the garden alone to watch the full moon rise, its cold face a diagram of Jizi's soul: void but for the suggestion of a rabbit impressed upon it like his own suppressed energy and benevolence, trapped. His duty as Senior Tutor was to guide his sovereign, but Di Xin refused to be influenced by reason and propriety. He was becoming a picture of rampant passions, diseased by the flatteries of corrupt princes and attendants, most of all by Feizong and Prince Hu of Chong. One by one the wise of the empire were distancing themselves from the Emperor.

Over the ridge to the west of Choage, Jizi watched the moon encircle the new pleasure palace with a hazy, silver aura. Its roof tower was high above the city, so it had become the most prominent feature for miles around. Even boaters on the distant Great River could see it towering above the city on a clear day.

In the morning Di Xin and his newest obsession, Daji, would arrive. No doubt he would hold some elaborate celebration for the first day's occupancy in Deer Terrace. Jizi loathed the prospect of witnessing yet another decadent spectacle. His sleep that night was troubled and he was still tired when he was awakened by his host at dawn with news of the Emperor's approach.



While he refreshed himself with light bread and goat's milk, the family of his host Yu Wu went about their morning routines resolutely. His host was a potter, renowned for his skill; but Jizi had been impressed by the man's devoted family, particularly his three daughters who were obviously the source for his most whimsical pottery designs. Before Jizi was ready to depart, the family was prepared to greet their many customers. Indeed, there were traders from distant states already at his door.

"I suppose the Emperor's new pleasure palace will bring new wealth to your people," he commented in the midst of their furious activity.

"That is true, Senior Tutor," came his host's reply. "All the artisans of Choage have been busy beyond anything they have ever known before."

Jizi's heart warmed as he watched the family consumed in the tasks of everyday life. He envied their detachment from the vicious intrigues of the powerful. For a moment he resolved to escape from them himself; but the knowledge of his duty to the Central Nation and his sovereign was like a remonstrating parent.

For about an hour Jizi watched the traders come and go one by one, generally leaving burdened with three legged cooking pots or sculpted clay vessels. He took every opportunity to probe the merchants for information on conditions around the empire.

This is what he learned: in the Southeast Huaiyi and Xurong nomads were causing increased disturbances; in the Southwest the petty tyrant of Mi was inflicting cruelties on his subjects and there had been border skirmishes with two smaller states near him; in the Northeast the Prince of Qi had swallowed up several small fiefs and, while continuing to swear allegiance to the Emperor, had begun to call himself "Hegemon of the North" without imperial sanction.

But mostly Jizi wanted to know about the Prince of Zhou. These merchants from afar, not being informed of Jizi's position in the Emperor's court, spoke more freely. All across the Nations the people sang the praises of Ji Chang. They told of the immigrant multitudes pouring into Zhou every day, of Ji Chang's schools for the people, and of his elaborate methods for selecting the wise and beneficent for high office no matter their humble or distant origins. His wife, Taisi, hailed from the fief of Chu. His Provost Minister, Lu Shang, was a recent immigrant from Central Nation itself as was his primary diviner and astronomer, Shang Gao. In the West, Jizi concluded, the Prince of Zhou had begun to look more and more like an emperor, while Di Xin looked more and more like a scoundrel. Jizi, silently, began to question whether the Lord Above had decided to replace Di Xin on the throne of Heaven with Ji Chang.

One of Yu Wu's daughters interrupted his thoughts. "Honored Jizi, the Emperor has sent a messenger." She bowed at the door with Feizong's son Elai behind her. Of all the royal court, Jizi mistrusted Elai the most. He was a small man and reticent, unlike his lucidly arrogant father around whom he constantly clung. He seemed always to be lurking in the shadows listening, and his humility seemed forced.

"Senior Tutor, his Majesty will arrive shortly before noon," he began. "He has instructed me to help organize a great feast to warm the new palace. He wishes that preparations be made for a hundred."

Jizi winced. "Who are these hundred guests?" he grumbled.

"They have accompanied the Emperor from the court at Yin. There is also a delegation from Chong."

Jizi was saddened for he knew that a feast of this size would tax the provisions of Choage. Stores that were being preserved for the coming winter season would be needed, which would cause the people unnecessary harm months in the future after Di Xin and his company were back in Yin.

His face must have betrayed his frustration for Elai's voice was suddenly hushed." Will it be difficult to prepare the feast?" he asked.

"No, Elai, preparing the feast will not be difficult. The granery at Great Bridge will accommodate them."

"Perhaps I should ride back to Di Xin and convey to him that the storehouse grain should not be used."

Jizi looked at Elia suspiciously." If you do so it will not be on my recommendation." He waved to his host who had been listening from the side of the room." Go to the village officers and have the storehouse at Great Bridge opened. Soldiers will be there momentarily. Also tell them to send many geese and lambs to Deer Terrace." The humble potter left quickly.

Jizi continued his interaction with the merchants coming and going for another hour or more then left for Deer Terrace and a final inspection before Di Xin's arrival. Though the streets were thick with activity, his prominence and reputation cleared spontaneous paths before him.

Inside the gate of Deer Terrace he met Minister Jiaoli with an advance security contingent. Jiaoli was young for such a position. Although he had risen to his rank through hard work, talent, and some good luck, Jizi also knew that Feizong played a part in it, as Jiaoli was married to Feizong's youngest sister. The two men consulted on the afternoon's agenda beginning with veneration ceremonies at the suburban altar and ending with the late evening feast for a hundred.

Jizi accompanied Jiaoli as he explored the grounds, particularly the periphery, and then to the pleasure palace's highest level where a security watch would be posted. When he was satisfied that he had made adequate preparations, Jiaoli broached another subject.

"Senior Tutor, I have been facing a dilemma. Perhaps you can enlighten me on the proper course." Jizi listened intently." Prince Hu of Chong has been urging the Emperor to declare war on Zhou."

"Why do you think he is doing that?"

"He believes Ji Chang is preparing a rebellion against the House of Shang."

"Perhaps he fears his western neighbor more than he fears the Emperor; or perhaps he has his own ambitions. How does that concern us, Jiaoli? I see no dilemma there, only the commonest machinations of the ambitious."

"As the commander of his Majesty's armies, the course of politics has a greater impact on me than on a royal Tutor."

Jizi strolled around the room." I think a war with Zhou would have great impact on all of Yin." Jizi remained inscrutable. Jiaoli had not the talent it would take to reveal Jizi's doubts.

"My problem is this. Much of our resources are deployed along the northern borders of the Central Nation to discourage the Prince of Qi who has been increasingly contemptuous, while I have seen no evidence that Ji Chang of Zhou is

equally disloyal. Yet, if Prince Hu convinces Di Xin to antagonize Ji Chang or if he himself were to somehow instigate trouble in the West, how will I be able to defend both borders so far apart at the same time?"

"That is, indeed, a dilemma. Have you also considered Prince Yu Xiong of Chu in the South?"

"I have no doubt that the three combined could defeat me at my present strength, and I would be remembered as the general who gave the Throne of Heaven to another House."

Jizi pondered silently. There was, implicit in Jiaoli's predicament as he described it, a knowledge of the cause. If Di Xin were to commence hostilities against Zhou, it would be for irrelevant reasons. Ji Chang had never shown other than the utmost subjugation to the Emperor. Meanwhile, Jiaoli's own decision to deploy his resources toward Qi recognized a real threat to stability, namely Beibo the self proclaimed hegemon of the North, an altogether despicable man. Further, if the Emperor would war on Zhou, the powerful Prince Xiong would surely come to Ji Chang's aid, despite his loyalty to the Central Nation. After all, his own grandchild was heir to Ji Chang's throne. While Di Xin battled Zhou and Chu, the Prince of Li would side with one side or the other, either way eventually usurping the throne. At the very best, the empire would become mired in a long and destructive war among the princes. Jizi could only hope the Lord Above had not willed this horrible fate on the House of Shang and that partly through him, as Tutor, Heaven would influence events in such a way that destruction and death would not run rampant through the world.

Jizi finally answered the patiently waiting minister. "First, Jiaoli, the Throne of Heaven cannot be won or lost or given away by anyone. Do you remember the great declaration of Zhonghui, Tang's minister, after Tang ascended to the Throne? This is how he addressed the new Emperor as the nations of the world listened. " He recited from memory:

*You are now only following the natural course, honoring and obeying the Mandate of Heaven. The Xia emperor was but an offender who falsely used Heaven as a pretense to spread about his own commands. On this account, the Lord Above has viewed him with disapprobation, caused the Shang to receive His mandate, and employed you to bring light to the multitude.*

The Mandate of Heaven, Jiaoli, was bestowed upon the House of Shang by the Lord Above and He may bestow His mandate on whom He chooses.

"Second, you will be remembered and venerated by your descendants for your virtue or your vice, not for your heroics or achievements, just as the mountain is remembered for its majesty not for its height. And, lastly, do not suppose that your expectations are the will of Heaven or that Hu, Ji Chang, or Yu Xiong will behave as you expect. There are many outcomes in any sport; all arrows do not lodge themselves in their targets, but many fall to the ground unfulfilled."

"So you think I should continue to defend the northern border."

"Remember the Emperor Wuding who was faced with the greatest nomadic horde of all time? For almost a year before he struck against them in the northwest he staged a hunt far beyond the southeastern frontier. He did that for

two reasons, Jiaoli. He wished the northwestern tribes to be fooled into complacency by his apparent irresponsibility, and he wished to observe nomadic people closely. He used the knowledge he had gained to great advantage later in the great war."

Now it was Jiaoli's turn to pace and ponder.

"Come," concluded Jizi. "Let us descend from this lonely tower where we see far beyond the city but cannot tell what the objects are for their distance."

The wisdom of Jizi's counsel was not lost on Jiaoli, for no sooner had they descended, than the young commander had dispatched several officers toward Zhou with instructions to infiltrate by whatever means necessary and to return with specific types of information: military capabilities, of course, but also insight into the Zhou mind and culture.

"Let me know what you learn about our most feared enemy," Jizi urged in a somewhat patronizing tone.

"I have sent several of my most trusted and intelligent men," he responded. "If discovered, they have been told to reveal their missions and my desire to know more about the Zhou as a people. How they treat my clandestine envoys will reveal much about Ji Chang and his officers."

"So it will, minister," commented Jizi.

As the drums of the approaching imperial column grew louder, Jizi, Bigan, and their assistants prepared the suburban altar on which Di Xin could sacrifice to the spirits of the valley around Choage. It was late summer, time for ceremonies to greet the coming of autumn. After consulting the "River Scheme" and certain of his bamboo strips, Jizi acquired a sacrificial white dog, hemp, and white vestments for the Emperor. To the west of the city, a metal cage containing a white tiger was constructed at the center of a huge circle of metal tripods. Di Xin would do his obeisance facing west on the cage doubling as an altar, the first order of business upon his arrival.

To Jizi's dismay, Di Xin was drunk on wine when he arrived. He had to be assisted in every motion from his dismount to the killing of the dog. It seemed the only motion he could make without help was kneeling in obeisance. Nevertheless, after much stumbling, the rites were completed and his royal person was deposited in the white apartment on the west side of the central hall. Jizi could only hope that the gathered people of Choage had not too well noticed his Majesty's inebriation, but he had no doubt the Lord Above had seen.

As the sovereign slept, Jizi and Bigan met Shang Rong in the garden. After warm greetings, Shang Rong related the most important happenings at the Capitol before their journey to Choage.

"The Prince of Wei continues to avoid the Palace. At every opportunity he conveys his respects but cites some important challenge which keeps him at home in his fief. Soon Di Xin may begin to doubt Qi's devotion."

"No doubt about the devotion of Feizong and Prince Hu," remarked Bigan.

Jizi related the impressions he received from the traveling merchants, how Ji Chang's stock was rising at the Emperor's expense.

Shang Rong's face was dejected. "So we are told incessantly by Prince Hu. He has been urging Di Xin to mount an expedition against Zhou, himself leading the Imperial Army, of course."

All three of them knew the consequences if this treachery became known to Ji Chang. Chong would be summarily razed by the powerful Zhou. It could incite a fragmentation of the empire and a generation of civil wars.

"What should be done," asked Bigan, "to silence Prince Hu before a calamity befalls us?" They both looked at the young Junior Tutor. Was he suggesting assassination?

After a moment of silence, Jizi offered a solution based on the same wise counsel he had given General Jiaoli. "How might we arrange for Ji Chang to come to Yin? Perhaps his Majesty would be less inclined toward hostilities if he were acquainted with his potential foe."

"There is much risk in that," said Shang Rong. "Just as familiarity with the deities destroys the awe men have of them, Ji Chang might come to know Di Xin too well."

Bigan offered his own assessment of the risk. "Might not Di Xin, in a fit of passion, harm Ji Chang? And might not that action bring about the civil war we seek to prevent?"

"He is aware," added Jizi, "that Ji Chang has nine sons and powerful allies. I do not think he would harm Ji Chang on a diplomatic visit."

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"There must be some important reason for Ji Chang to come," said Shang Rong. He paused in deep thought. "There are two other princes that Di Xin is suspicious of. We can counsel him to revive the office of High Councilor and to appoint the three of them."

"These appointments as a ploy to observe his suspected enemies will appeal to him," concluded Jizi.

The three of them lapsed into silence. These were trying times for high officials bent on dutiful conduct. Jizi watched his two colleagues drift away into different recesses of Deer Terrace. He felt very alone in the silence.

## **Chapter 8**

### **The Bow String Must be Stretched and Loosened Summer, 1069 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 45**

#### **XUI.**

#### **Lake over Earth**

*Gathering. The King approaches the temple.* Consultations with a wise man will assure success. Persistence on a righteous course is rewarded after some sacrifice.

*Still water rising above the earth.* The Superior Man stores weapons for potential, future strife.

6 for the bottom place. Alternating assembling and dispersal are the result of insincerity.

6 for the second place. Unwilled involvement and sacrifice brings good fortune for the confident.

6 for the third place. Mournful gatherings portend good fortune from the above; action brings regret but no blame.

9 for the fourth place. Good fortune comes from involvement with the people.

9 for the fifth place. Assemblies are possible by authority, yet the people are insecure.

6 for the top place. His distress is not caused by his own error, his expressions are.

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Ji Chang's silence was disturbing. Some decision need be rendered, but the Prince of Zhou knew too little from the evidence presented. Predictably, he suggested that Ji Dan be dispatched to the province; and predictably Ji Xian protested. "My younger brother can be expected to side with his own, father. Your faith in him as a fair minded judge is unreasonable."

Ji Chang looked about the faces in his "Chamber of Concord," the central room in the modest, yet dignified, Zhou prime-house at Qishan. "Cannot the people of these two villages reconcile their differences without resorting to my authority?" he said. "These matters should be decided within the confines of their own villages by their own officers. Only in matters of the gravest consequence should an appeal to the Court be made, or in matters of government corruption. Further, petitioners need not leave their fields or their duties at home to have their cases heard."

He paused, then continued in a booming voice, "Who among our kinsmen can be considered the fairest of judgement?"

The crowd of assembled dignitaries looked about at each other. Several names were offered, including Guoshu, the senior tutor of Ji Chang's academy and Shang Gao, one of Ji Chang's ten advisors. Finally the name of Shih surfaced and was endorsed by consensus. Ji Chang was greatly honored that his younger brother would be so considered, especially since he was exceedingly modest and had never struggled to attain any high office.

"Where is my beloved brother?" he inquired. "Does he not attend his Prince when holding court?" Ji Chang knew he would be, where he usually was, out among the people. It was Shih as much as himself, Ji Chang knew, that brought prosperity and peace to the people of Zhou.

"He is with some recent immigrants, father," explained Ji Dan, "advising them on where they might find suitable places among your subjects."

Ji Chang motioned for one of the court scribes to approach. "Record this for dissemination throughout Zhou," he commanded. "From this day forward Lord Shih, youngest son of Ji Li my father, uncle of the Crown Prince of Zhou shall hold the title of Arbitrator. He shall convene assemblies throughout Zhou to hear petitioners or resolve perplexing disputes between villages, clans, or districts." He abruptly concluded the long debate with a simple command. "Send the petitioners to Shih."

Ji Chang then turned to his son Ji Dan. "Is the Kunyi delegation present?"

"Yes, father, and the small chest has been filled." Ji Dan waved at a pair of assistants who labored forward under its weight.

One of Ji Chang's younger sons protested. "Why must we continuously subject ourselves to this extortion? The Kunyi tribe cannot be considered a threat to Zhou, not since grandfather Li's campaigns against them. Let me lead an expedition to rid us of this humiliation."

"There is no need for bloodshed, Zhengdou. We have tried a number of times to instill Zhou culture in these people, causing them much sorrow. Does one continue to whip a fallen horse when it refuses to bear its load? The Emperor, Tang, won the hearts of all under Heaven by cherishing the defeated people of Ge. By providing the Kunyi with but a small token from our wealth, they may be encouraged to follow our example." Ji Chang then directed that the small chest and a large quantity of grain be carried out to the Kunyi nomads in the suburbs.

While Ji Chang was instructing his officers, a messenger entered the hall and whispered to Shang Gao, who in turn approached Ji Chang. All eyes were already fixed on him before he answered the unspoken question. "An envoy from the Emperor at Yin," he said bowing more from a knowledge of the seriousness of the event than from protocol.

Ji Chang would not hear any message from the Emperor unless he knew in advance what it would be. If he were caught by surprise in an open assembly, he might respond inappropriately. Correspondence from Di Xin demanded the most carefully worded response. Even a reluctance to answer might be construed as a sign of disloyalty, ultimately bringing the tyrant's wrath upon Zhou. Tension mounted in the silent room as Ji Chang considered his course of action.

"Escort the messenger to an apartment and see that he is afforded comforts," he instructed Shang Gao. "Also question him as cleverly as you can so that I may learn of the Emperor's will beforehand."

"What shall I tell him is the reason for the delay?"

"We are preparing for the communal archery ceremony. He will be a guest of honor."

A murmur swept through the assembly; Ji Fa expressed their annoyance. "Father, the guests of honor at communal ceremonies have always been those deserving recognition for their virtues. Who is this messenger from Yin? We know him not."

"Surely we may tolerate this small indiscretion. We all understand the import." Ji Chang nodded at Shang Gao who immediately moved toward the door, but he was halted by Ji Chang's additional directive. "And, Shang Gao, remain with our guest throughout the ceremony to enlighten him as to its purpose and procedure." Shang Gao departed quickly.

The sky was clear outside and the sun hot. It would be an uncomfortable day for communal archers, but the lack of a wind would show them to good advantage. Shang Gao was anxious about his assignment as escort to the Imperial messenger, fearing he might somehow damage the House of Zhou and be considered an unworthy minister. Further, his conduct might be reported to Di Xin unfavorably, a fearsome prospect in view of the many stories he had heard of corruption and intrigue at the palace. Yet his loyalty was to Ji Chang, and come what may he would serve Zhou's interests. He knew which apartment would

contain the royal emissary and proceeded there promptly. A servant announced his presence and led him inside.

"I am Shang Gao," he said bowing. "I will be your escort during your stay with us. Are your accommodations satisfactory?"

"Somewhat less than I am accustomed to," he responded.

Shang Gao's dislike for this man was immediate. "Forgive us, sir. We are a modest nation which would not rival the Emperor's wealth if that were possible."

"When will I be greeted by your prince? Does he not wish to hear the Emperor's words?"

"As the words of no other under Heaven; however, we are preparing a communal ceremony, one which has been held at this time each year for generations. I have been instructed by Prince Ji Chang to explain your part in it."

"My part?"

"Yes. You are to be one of the guests of honor." The two dignitaries seated themselves as they were brought food and wine.

"What is the purpose of this ceremony?"

"It is our way of recognizing our elders and men of virtue in the community."

"Ah," he remarked. "Our silk offering ceremony. I was not aware the ceremony was conducted so far and wide as to also encompass Zhou."

Shang Gao was aware of the Shang's "silk offering" ceremony where one honored one's superiors with the gift of a silk kerchief. He also knew that the Zhou rite was exactly the opposite. "It is a similar ceremony," he said, "but with our own innovations. "

"I am gratified that Prince Ji Chang has chosen to honor me in this way. I assume you will instruct me as to my proper conduct."

Shang Gao bowed in assent. "How should we address you, sir?"

"I am Zuyi, a minister in the Emperor's court."

"You must have his Majesty's trust to be sent so far. Tell me news of Yin. It has been many years since I have seen it."

Zuyi would not lie, yet he could obscure the truth: that the people of Yin were ever more hard pressed to satisfy the Emperor's appetites. He answered unenthusiastically, "More populous every year."

Shang Gao breached a subject calculated to encourage open discussion. "And what of the veneration ceremonies? Are Emperor Yi's reforms still practiced?" As a court officer, few other things would be as important to Zuyi.

"There is still great turmoil among attendants at the court. Some believe DI Xin's adherence to his father's reforms will bring Heaven's wrath upon the Empire."

"Yourself included?"

"I see no reason the veneration ceremonies need be completed in a single year. While the Welcoming of the Seasons ceremonies must necessarily rotate in harmony with them, the House of Shang has many distinguished ancestors who deserve their rightful veneration. My own grandfather was the Emperor Wuyi. Veneration of Wuyi should not be cast aside out of expedience."

'Neither your ancestor nor you should be forgotten,' thought Shang Gao. He had led the discussion into a most sensitive area, for now Zuyi would surely ask if Zhou conducted itself according to the Emperor's calendar, a clear indication of its



submission to the authority of Di Xin. Shang Gao, of course, anticipated the question, and his answer was acceptable. "We venerate the ancestors of Zhou in yearly cycles; we insert the leap month at the Emperor's command." He conveniently forgot to mention that the Zhou had varied the placement of leap months for many years before the Central Nation. In fact, Shang Gao considered Zhou's astronomical knowledge to be generally superior to that of the Shang.

'And the ancestor you most revere,' thought Zuyi, 'is Divine Houji, the Prince of Agriculture.'" He like all other Shang resented the Zhou claim of descent from Houji who was one of the most important Shang spirits.

A servant came to the apartment to announce the assembly for communal festivities. "Come, follow me, minister, said Shang Gao. You may find our humble ceremony interesting."

They led the Yin emissary out of Ji Chang's princely quarters into the streets of Qishan. Even though the bustling populous continued their commerce, all knew that the Salute and Give ceremony was to be conducted. They also seemed to know Shang Gao, bowing and greeting him as they passed.

For the first time, Zuyi took an interest in Shang Gao himself. "Are you the son or the brother of Ji Chang?" He naturally assumed one of high office must be a close relative of his country's leader.

"I was born in Choage. I am the son of a basket weaver." Choage was a small city about two day's ride from the capitol.

Zuyi's silence was caused by his surprise that an immigrant commoner had risen so high in Zhou society, but Shang Gao interpreted it to indicate his guest's indifference as his eyes flitted from object to object, structure to structure, obviously impressed by Qishan's scale and complexity so far beyond the western frontier of the Central Nation.

Soon they came to the suburbs; and Zuyi could see an estate, surrounded by a wooden fence, before which great numbers of people were amassing. The footpath Shang Gao followed split the crowd and led into a courtyard.

"What is this place?" asked Zuyi.

"It is the school for the people of Qishan. Each of our villages contains a school for the young."

Shang Gao led Zuyi through the gate into the school compound where a tri-level platform had been constructed. Stools and benches were arranged on the platforms so that a limited number could observe activity in the yard while seated. On the high, central stage were Prince Ji Chang and one other. To their right on the lower level, eight men were already situated. Shang Gao led his charge to the last remaining stool on this platform and remained standing behind him. No one else entered at this point, and the left-side seats still remained empty. The throng outside was obviously waiting for some signal or predetermined moment to enter.

At a signal from Ji Chang, bells, drums, flutes and voices filled the air with melody and rhythm. When the music faded, servants began circulating among the seated dignitaries dispensing cups of warm wine. Shang Gao leaned over Zuyi's shoulder so he could mutter explanations quietly. "The ritual requires the host, in this case Prince Ji Chang, to personally call at the home of the primary guest of honor and to escort him to the ceremony. After he and the other guests of honor

are seated, the host must toast, first the primary guest of honor, and then the other guests of honor."

Ji Chang had begun outlining the many virtues and achievements of the honored guest, one Nangong Kuo, a farmer "...and he has displayed filial piety not unlike Shun, the Emperor of old, who was elevated to the Throne of Heaven as a commoner by his virtue alone. He has contributed to the welfare of his people by his great knowledge of agriculture and the sharing of that knowledge...".

Shang Gao was providing background for his escort in a near whisper. "Nangong Kuo is famed for his success as a farmer. People from throughout Zhou come to him for advice.

Ji Chang's toast continued, "When asked why it is his duty to work excellently in the fields, he responds this way: 'To participate fully in nature's rites is the highest calling to service any man could receive.' Truly Nangong Kuo is the inheritor of Divine Houji's mantle as foremost promoter of agriculture among our people."

Shan Gao whispered further explanations. "Houji was. . ."

"I know very well," interrupted Zuyi, "that Qi was the progenitor of your Nation."

Ji Chang concluded his toast, ". . . so from this day forward Nangong Kuo shall be one of the five teachers at our academy. He shall spend all his time sharing his wisdom with the people of Zhou." At that point all in the school yard uttered Nangong Kuo's name and drank the wine in unison as the honored guest bowed humbly.

As servants proceeded to refill all of the chalices, Shang Gao continued his explanation. "Since Kuo is so young," he said, "he has only infant sons to inherit his farm, so the people of his village will maintain it for him until his oldest son is able."

Ji Chang then turned to the other guests of honor with his refilled chalice and uttered a few words of praise for all of them one after another including Zuyi. Thus they were all honored in their turn by the Prince.

Zuyi looked over his shoulder at Shang Gao. "Will we toast the multitude outside?" he asked. "I fear I will be unable to consume so much wine."

"There will be a few more toasts later," he explained amused. "Other than at communal festivities, the consumption of fermented grain or fruit is considered a barbarous and crude practice by our people even as it is frequently consumed; but we learn moderation and restraint through observance of the rituals."

When the toasting of the guests was concluded, the waiting crowd of Zhou officials and prominent citizens entered. Aged and high level officials proceeded to seat themselves on the lower platform to the left of Ji Chang and Kuo, while the rest of the crowd stood about the periphery of the school yard. As the crowd entered, all the honored guests stood and bowed to them.

At Ji Chang's signal, targets were installed near one wall and archers assembled at an opposite wall. One of Ji Chang's assistants began reading pairs of names from bamboo slats.

"The pairs of competing archers," said Shang Gao quietly, "are called the high team and the low team. The high team will be composed of honored guests; the low team of ranking officers in the Prince's service. I will be your low archer; we will shoot together."

After the pairs of high and low archers were named, Ji Chang and Kuo, the guest of honor, descended from their stage to begin the competition. Kuo would shoot from a small platform, while Ji Chang would shoot from the ground. As each arrow flew, cries of praise rose from the crowd, exuberant or polite as befitted the archer's skill.

Shang Gao noticed that his Yin visitor had begun to share some of the crowd's enthusiasm, especially when the high team's mostly unskilled competitors excelled. Many of the honored guests, like Kuo, were of "the small people," not soldiers or noblemen, but husbandmen, butchers, potters, or farmers. The one of them who commanded the most crowd support was at least an octogenarian. He required the help of two younger men to mount the shooting stage, and his arms were so weak his arrows failed to reach the target. Much glee was expressed that his arrows flew at all. In good nature he waved and smiled to the boisterous crowd as he was helped back to his seat.

Among the low archers was another elderly man who loosed his missiles effortlessly, striking the tiny center point of the target with awesome accuracy. Positive appraisals swept through the assembly like a summer wind. Zuyi turned to Shang Gao with an expression of marvel on his unmoving lips." He is Lu Shang," said Shang Gao, "the head of Prince Ji Chang's army."

The outcome was inevitable. The low archers, composed of ranking officers, soldiers, and noblemen, were all highly skilled by training and experience. The high archers, composed of civilians, were not. Yet, when the score was counted, it was remarkably close, leading Zuyi to suspect a good natured fraud." How can it be?, he asked." The low team was far superior by my count."

"The purpose of this competition is not to win, but to honor our righteous kinsmen and citizens. We practice discipline and respect for the humble even as we strive for triumph. The winners will now serve wine to the losers to encourage them toward greater accomplishments; but competition without restraint produces sorrow and joy in equal measure. We compare it to the stretching of a bow string. One cannot allow one's passions to be loose and have free reign, yet one cannot keep them perpetually under tight control. The bow string must be stretched and loosened, stretched and loosened. Only in this way does one live in harmony with his fellows."

Zuyi considered his escort's explanation as Shang Gao participated in the serving of the wine by the winners. He resolved to impart detailed descriptions of the Zhou archery rite to others at the Emperor's court. When Shang Gao returned to his side, he asked, "So why do you call it the Salute and Give Ceremony?"

"It has five purposes: the showing of respect for virtue and for age, the 'giving' of the high to the low, the 'giving' of the winner to the loser, the encouragement of self-improvement, and the exercise of self-discipline. Through communal ceremonies, the people of Zhou are taught the value of propriety and proper conduct."

By then the assembly was dispersing. As small groups were leaving the grounds, some were recounting humorous or spectacular episodes before the target. Shang Gao led his guest back toward Ji Chang's palace through the city.

"How did this ceremony come about?"

It is said that communal ceremonies have been practiced by the Zhou since ancient times, but that the Salute and Give Ceremony took its current form under Prince Ji Chang's grandfather to honor two of his sons who exiled themselves."

"Exiled themselves?"

"Yes. They disappeared into the wilderness so that the Prince's youngest son's child, who he favored, could inherit the throne."

Zuyi was puzzled. It was the practice of the House of Shang for the Emperor to be succeeded by his younger brothers in turn, then for the oldest son of the youngest brother to succeed. "But that would have been the case through the normal course, would it not?"

"Zhou princes have always been succeeded by their oldest sons; so, for the son of a youngest brother to become Prince, the two older brothers must not be present." Taibo and Zhongong exiled themselves, thus 'giving' the succession to their father's choice. This event has become a central tenet in our culture. It caused great sorrow in the House of Zhou, for shortly afterward, the Prince's wife took her own life at the loss of her sons." Both these educated men knew the origin of their differing succession patterns. Qi was the oldest son of Emperor Ku; but the throne went to another.

"Such a dangerous game for a ruler," commented Zuyi. While he was impressed with this insight into the complex culture of Zhou, he was far from emotionally moved. Indeed, he looked upon it as a sign of weakness, reinforcing his sense of Shang cultural superiority. Shang history was replete with struggles for power close to the monarch, all of which had caused great harm to the dynasty. No Shang emperor or crown prince would so foolishly toy with the succession which might plunge the empire into civil strife.

At length, Shang Gao and his escort arrived back at the guest apartment. Shang Gao would now attempt to discover the Emperor's message with the aid of his wits and the large quantities of wine already consumed by Zuyi. "Before the ceremony," he began, "we were discussing the yearly calendar. I have wondered about your mission here, and think it must be a decree from the Emperor's astronomers changing the days of the season." He pretended to be proud of his astute foresight. "What change has been decreed? As Ji Chang's principle diviner, I conduct many ceremonies. He will ask me to explain them, so I must know the changes right away." He allowed his voice to betray a certain naiveté.

Deceived and manipulated by his clever escort, Zuyi chuckled, "It is more important than that. Shang Gao, prepare yourself for a long journey back to Yin." Shang Gao's face revealed honest alarm. "Your prince has been named to the post of High Councilor to the Emperor!"

For several moments Shang Gao struggled to find words through his shock. There had been no High Councilors since the Emperor Zujia. What great policy crisis would necessitate its revival now? And why, of all people, would Di Xin appoint Ji Chang? Shang Gao became suspicious that some massive court intrigue was underway that might have dire consequences.

Fearing that Zuyi might interpret his responses as disrespectful of the Emperor's prerogatives, which in turn might reflect on Ji Chang, Shang Gao focused his response on a purely personal concern. "I would very much, at this time, not desire to accompany Ji Chang to Yin," he bemoaned. "Both my father

and mother are very old and frail. I would not leave them now when they need so much care." It was only partly true. His mother and father were indeed old; however, they were in good health. Yet, Shang Gao had only a year or so ago brought them to Qishan; and they were still not well accustomed to the ways of Zhou. They depended much on him for their welfare.

"Perhaps," added Zuyi, "Prince Ji Chang will be accompanied by other advisers." A bare hint of condescension shaded his comment. He was obviously completely fooled by Shang Gao's performance as intellectual inferior.

"Please excuse me, now," said Shang Gao. "I will pursue a summons from Prince Ji Chang so that you may bestow upon him the Emperor's honor."

He proceeded rapidly through the corridors toward Ji Chang's quarters, finding him and his closest confidants already discussing the Emperor's anticipated message— all uselessly speculating on its content.

The group fell silent as he entered, bowed, and spoke to Ji Chang. "The Yin envoy is here to confer upon you an honor from the Emperor. He has revived the office of Three High Councilors, and you are to be one of them."

There were mutters of disbelief from several present. Someone shouted, "Di Xin has decided at last to recognize Zhou as the foremost House among the Nations!" Another shouted to the contrary, "It is a trap to lure you to your death!" All of them knew that the office required its holder to reside at the Palace of the Emperor, a prospect of much peril.

"You cannot accept," said Ji Fa. "It is the cricket on Di Xin's hook."

"Yet to refuse," countered Ji Xian, "might insult him with catastrophic results." Ji Wu and Ji Feng agreed.

"Not so," said Ji Dan. "Zhou is not an enfeoffed state, beholden to Di Xin for its protection. What we have we hold through our own strength."

Ji Xian's voice raised its pitch slightly. "The Central Nation is a hundred times stronger than Zhou. How can we risk their ire?" He could be counted upon to oppose Ji Dan's point of view without fail.

Ji Fa, ever the confident one, insisted, "Whether the Emperor is aware of it or not, conflict with Zhou would be very costly to them. Has not Lu Shang made our forces many times stronger? Tell them, Lu Shang. How do we compare with the strength of Di Xin?"

The eminent minister of Ji Chang's army was seated at the periphery of the group watching the western sky turn a deep red. "When I watch the sun approach its resting place in the west," he said quietly, "I am always amazed at how it seems to grow in size even as its heat and brilliance are reduced. Some are saying that under Di Xin the House of Shang is declining— like the setting sun, growing large yet losing brilliance. If this is so, the House of Zhou must be like the rising sun of another day. Our forces, my friends, will acquit themselves admirably against any enemy— will inflict much pain and destruction at the command of Ji Chang; yet, he must not command but by the will of Heaven. It is the Lord Above who determines which sun will rise and which sun will set."

Ji Dan implored, "Refuse this offer, father. Whatever the Emperor's reaction, whatever the relative strengths of our two states, you must remain in the safer confines of Zhou."

Ji Chang had listened to the debate painfully. His response to Di Xin's appointment would have the utmost affects on the future of his people. If he refused, the Emperor might unleash a holocaust of destruction. If he accepted, he would be surrendering himself to a tyrant's whim.

At a wave of his hand, the mumbling crowd fell silent. "I have taught the people, as did our esteemed ancestors, to value culture and harmony; therefore, how can I now choose violence at the first sign of tribulation? I have valued loyalty among my officers and men above all other of their virtues; therefore, how can I be disloyal to my own acknowledged superior? Di Xin may or may not exercise righteousness; it is Heaven's place to judge a sovereign's virtue, not a subjects.

"Remember the example of Shun and how he suffered in silence throughout his youth at the hands of his despicable father. Never would he have defied his elder. If a father is not virtuous, should the son therefore refuse to serve him? If a sovereign is not well intentioned, should a subject refuse to minister to him on that score? I who have acknowledged allegiance to Di Xin will never rebel against him."

He abruptly stood." Summon the Emperor's emissary. He shall have my answer."

## **Chapter 9**

### **The Power to Soak and Descend**

**Winter, 1069 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 29**

**KUN.**

**Water over Water**

*Abys upon abys, grave danger.* If his confidence holds, all will be well.

*Ever flowing waters.* The Superior Man holds virtue dear as an example to others.

6 for the bottom place. Multiple abysses. He falls into one and suffers great misfortune.

9 for the second place. Successes in mundane matters do not win his release from trouble.

6 for the third place. He cannot escape from the abyss into which he has fallen.

6 for the fourth place. Nourishment is brought to him in the abyss. He is blameless.

9 for the fifth place. The water level in the abyss remains constant, it does not overflow.

6 for the top place. Bound and captive, for three years he suffers failure.

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On the morning he was to depart for Yin, Ji Chang held a massive sacrifice. From the suburban bonfire, a thick column of black smoke billowed high into midwinter's icy air, defying by its density the brisk wind. Boyi and Shuqi over the past several days had consulted the tortoise shells for clues of Heaven's will, with mixed results. Ji Chang himself had spent many hours contemplating the hexagram Kun, which he had received upon his inquiry with the milfoil stalks.

Water above water-- Kun. This hexagram had always meant "Abyss upon abyss," to those well versed in the oral traditions. These esoteric symbols had been accumulating and their meanings evolving since remotest antiquity when the legendary Fuxi invented the eight trigrams and assigned them names. He knew Kun as the harbinger of suffering, ever flowing waters whose undulating surfaces offer only illusory support. The firm, central line in each of the two trigrams insists that forceful effort neither prevents nor releases one from tribulation, while the two yielding lines in each one reaffirm that in Heaven's time all tribulations subside.

One of Heaven's most enduring distinctions, often lost on the simpler mind, is between rushing and still waters. They seem to be the same thing, yet they are more different than the difference between individuals or nations. Adrift on a raft in the calm marsh, one may meditate or plan. Adrift on the same raft on a rushing river, one may only cling desperately to life. On the calm pool, one's forceful action at the oar brings one safely to shore. On the rapids, strength and will mean nothing. Calm acceptance and patience through turbulent flow are a man's recourse then.

Armed with this small assurance that he would ultimately prevail, Ji Chang mustered his

courage and strode out into the sunlight. Those of his close relatives and advisors who were not already there fell into rough formation behind him as he walked the path from his quarters to the suburban altar, a trek he might never take again.

He refrained from looking at the faces of those who came to spend the few remaining hours with him. They gathered around the altar and bonfire as if participants at a funerary rite, solemn and silent. He sacrificed several animals and called upon his ancestors to intervene with the Lord Above to spare him the fate he expected at the hands of Di Xin. Most of all, he sought their protection for the nation he fully expected to not see again.

There would be a last assembly in the Chamber of Concord. As the somber procession wove through the streets of Qishan toward it, the people halted their energetic pursuits and bordered the promenade as foothills do a valley bowing reverently as he passed. Ji Chang's eyes were locked on the street before him, his face expressionless. He would give them no sign of weakness or fear to remember him by. If he did not return, they would recall only resolve and steadfast devotion to duty as he prepared to surrender himself into the hands of an enemy.

As Change's court waited in the chamber for him, he visited Taisi in her private apartment where she had been praying to her ancestors for his safety. Gazing upon her there kneeling before her small altar, he felt the great weight of leadership more than ever before. At this moment weariness and loathing rushed through him like storm winds. He feared he had not the strength to leave her.

"Why does my husband look so wearily on me?" she asked looking up at him.

"I was just thinking how many times my duty to the House of Zhou has taken me from you."

"With ten sons carrying your surname, I doubt anyone else would consider your absences excessive." Her wit was a poor attempt at lightening their sorrow. "Your responsibilities come from being the prince of your people. If you were not a prince, would you have married the daughter of Prince Yu Xiong of Chu?"

"You would have been beyond the reach of a mere subject, yet the will of Heaven seems to have involved the making of so many sons. We could not have avoided it."

"No more than we can avoid the will of the Son of Heaven."

Ji Chang leaned over, embraced her, and left quickly before her silent tears could materialize in his own eyes.

Gloom was permeating the chamber when Ji Chang finally arrived for what many believed would be the last assembly under his rule. His nine living sons, the five teachers of the academy, the venerable Lu Shang, Shang Gao and other close advisors, and his only brother Shih were all seated close to Ji Chang's throne, heads bowed and silent. Other relatives and attendants were seated along the walls.

The wisdom of his having accepted the appointment as High Councilor had been debated intermittently for months, even though Ji Chang's affirmative answer had been carried to the Emperor immediately. Those favoring refusal, such as Ji Dan, had ceased their attempts at persuasion, while those favoring acceptance took no pleasure in Ji Chang's probity. There was no disputation left as Ji Chang sat before them.

On the most auspicious occasions, such as the funerals of Princes or in the face of impending crises, it was a Zhou custom to review their heritage to bolster their courage and reinforce their sense of destiny. Ji Chang began where tradition demanded, with Zhou's founder Qi, the deified "Abandoned One," the venerable Houji, great-great grandson of the legendary Yellow Emperor, son of the Emperor Di Ku, and, most importantly, the Emperor Shun's famed Minister of Agriculture.

Ji Chang recited the ode to Houji that had become the foundation of all Zhou education. "As regards the birth of our people," he began:

*How were our people begun?  
The start was with Jiangyuan.  
At a bonfire sacrifice to Heaven,  
All prayed for the birth of a son.*

*She followed divine prints on the ground,  
Feeling his spirit all around.  
She placed her own foot in His print;  
It filled the space of a toe.  
Suddenly she was moved; became pregnant.  
Thus conceived and born was Houji.*

*She abandoned him in a narrow path,*



*But the oxen and sheep went around him.  
She abandoned him in the forest,  
But passing woodsmen found him.  
She abandoned him on the frozen stream,  
But birds let their warm wings surround him.*

"So it is," continued Ji Chang, "that the House of Zhou was begun. Houji became Shun's Minister of Agriculture during the great floods, saving the people from starvation while Shun rescued them from the raging waters. Thus, Shun bestowed on Houji his most prized possession, the pair of Yak tails, in honor of his devotion and skill. When Yu succeeded Shun on the Throne of Heaven, founding the House of Xia, Houji continued to serve his sovereign piously. Yu said, 'While I dredged the channels of the streams and rivers to end the great flood, Houji taught the multitude to grow food on the dry land. 'Houji's son, Buku, was chosen by Emperor Kai to continue the offices of his deceased father, helping the people prosper from toil in the fields; but Emperor Tiakang was unenlightened. He abolished the Ministry of Buku who fled into the wilderness.

"The House of Xia held the Mandate for many generations, while the House of Zhou struggled in the wild territories dishonored by Tiakang's injustice. When Buku was banished, the House of Zhou never rose up in defiance. When Hanzhou the Usurper murdered his sovereign, the House of Zhou never rose up in defiance. When Tang overthrew the Xia and inherited the Mandate, the House of Zhou never rose up in defiance.

"Duke Liu moved the people to Bin where the ways of Houji could be better followed. The Ancient Duke, Gugong Danfu, moved the people to Mount Qishan for the same reason; and Heaven has granted the people many blessings, prosperity, and peace for their devotion. So it is that the House of Zhou has continued."

Ji Chang then turned his attention to immediate concerns, sure that his chronicle would strengthen the family's resolve. "In my absence, all of my faithful and honorable officers shall continue in their responsibilities. You should look to my judicious brother Shih for advice in cases of differing opinion. Our revered Lu Shang shall continue to strengthen the forces of Zhou. Our beloved Shang Gao and my most learned son Ji Dan shall be consulted before any important action is taken. Most of all, do not forget the cares of the people."

His last directive was the most important." When the gravest decision is necessary and I am indisposed at Yin, the ultimate authority shall be my oldest living son Ji Fa." A slight gasp rose from the multitude. Ji Chang had just endorsed his oldest living son as his heir. If he failed to return from Yin, they were to recognize Ji Fa as his rightful successor.

Ji Chang wished to leave his kin and subjects with a level of hope he did not himself feel, so he continued by relating his interpretation of an historical event well known to his highly cultured officers. "You remember how Emperor Yao tested Shun to see if he was a fit successor. Shun was already famed for his filial piety but had not wed; so Yao married Shun to his two daughters and observed his compassion toward them. Yao then tested Shun's effectiveness in dealing with the high officers of the court, the blood relations of the imperial house, and the princes of the various nations.

"But having proved himself capable in all these things, Shun had a final test to pass: his obedience to Yao even when Yao's directive seemed cruel or inappropriate. Pretending to be displeased with Shun, Yao had him deposited alone in the great western plains where he suffered under the elements for two months. Shun was resourceful. He persevered and returned unconfused. To symbolize not only his perseverance, but also his transcendence, Shun returned with a pair of yak tails rent from that rare beast of the western deserts. Not long afterward Yao abdicated the Throne of Heaven to Shun.

"Kinsmen and subjects, I look upon my journey to Yin as a test similar to Shun's. Do not grieve or worry over my fate at the hands of Di Xin. I will return unconfused." With that Ji Chang rose and strode resolutely out into the mid-day sun.

Every space between the buildings of the city was filled with dignitaries and the common people from across Zhou, all bowing reverently. At the base of the prime-house steps was a single chariot with the black banner of Zhou proudly aloft, an escort chariot of three archers, and a pack-horse. Ji Chang had insisted that he not be accompanied by any of his chief advisors. He would imperil only himself and Hongyao.

Hongyao at the reins held the four horse team firm as Ji Chang mounted the chariot box with an almost cheerful step. At the crack of a whip the chariot and escort lunged toward the gate at full gallop. "They will see me rushing, as if enthusiastic, to do my duty to the Crown," he thought. Even though a number of the assembly rushed out, Ji Chang did not look back. His gaze was rigidly forward across the house tops and cultivated fields to the tiny silver thread of the Luo River and beyond, in his mind's eye, to the city of Yin. Somewhere deep inside him a feeling of anticipation began to rise, to strengthen.

As Ji Chang and his escort trotted through Qishan, his feelings of gloom began to subside. Yes, the divination of the hexagrams had produced 'Water over Water', a sign of impending tribulation. Yes it was also the season of water, ruled by Zhuangxi, the ancient emperor who had cut off communication between Heaven and man. Yes, water is the power to soak and descend. But just as winter is followed by spring, water is followed by wood. The power to soak and descend is followed by the power to be crooked and straight. The water level in the abyss is constant and does not overflow.

Enduring the tribulation was not the test for Shun, it was enduring the tribulation virtuously, not just returning, but returning unconfused. Shun's yak tails exhibited his triumph over savagery, for he refused to fall into the darkness and returned as cultured and enlightened as he had left. Only his fiercest devotion to virtue would see him through, Ji Chang knew. Failure is an abyss; loss of virtue an abyss within an abyss.

Over the rumbling of the chariot wheels and the thunder of the horses' hooves, Ji Chang encouraged his brave and loyal attendant. "Do not let the people see us tarrying, Hongyao," he said. "Let them see us rushing headlong toward our enemy. Let them see us streaking toward Yin like lightning through the dark sky." And Hongyao cracked the whip louder.

## Chapter 10

### One Cannot Stop the Rippling Spring, 1068 B. C.

#### Hexagram 10 LU. Heaven over Lake

*Treading.* Success comes to him who treads lightly on the tiger's tail.

*A body of water lies open to the broad sky.* The Superior Man steadies the populous through consultations with high and low alike.

9 for the bottom place. He progresses simply, without aid.

9 for the second place. The recluse advances peacefully and unconfused toward good fortune.

6 for the third place. A one eyed man can see, a one legged man can walk. Disaster befalls him who steps on the tiger's tail.

9 for the fourth place. Treading on the tiger's tail requires extreme caution; good fortune will come finally.

9 for the fifth place. Persistence may lead to disaster; tread delicately.

9 for the top place. Happiness comes to those who heed omens and watch their steps.

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Hongyao had been scouting for the best route down the eastern slopes." What is your recommendation?" asked Ji Chang.

"That way, there is a sheer cliff that is impassable," he answered pointing north. "That way," he said pointing south, "the terrain is rough and the snow hides many dangers."

On this twenty-third day of Ji Chang's journey, he crested the Tiahang mountain range to survey the land around Yin. Looking out over the valley, he could well understand why the Emperor Pangeng was willing to endure years of courtly turmoil and insidious intrigues in order to relocate his capitol here. To the north and south were remote foothills. To the east lay a vast plain tapering gradually lower from the mountain where he stood toward the distant bank of the Great River and beyond it, stretching a borderless distance beyond Ji Chang's ability to see. 'Such is the way of a man's life,' he thought, 'full of indistinct borders and destinations, ever tapering from a grand point of view which is but illusion. The high mountain peaks upon which men stand are, once crested, insignificant on the vast earth.'

He and his escort rested near the peak for two freezing nights and a wind buffeted day, believing the descent would be nearly as arduous as the climb had been.

"I am nearer to Heaven here than I have ever been before, he commented to no body in particular. "I regret that only an Emperor can sacrifice directly to the Lord Above." His own ancestors could only be venerated at their altars many miles away in Qishan; thus, cut off from his spiritual duties, he felt empty and very alone.

From a projecting rock, Ji Chang observed their only option, a route less steep which had been collecting snow all season.

"They look like the footprints of a giant," said Hongyao. He referred to a descending series of impressions which seemed to mark a path toward the base of the mountain.

"Indeed," remarked Ji Chang, "like the footprints that Jiangyuan walked in." Ji Chang felt a sudden confidence rise in him as he recognized Heaven's guidance in the snow. "Let us proceed toward Yin along the giant's path."

At the base of the range the wind was calmer and the snow patchy. The descent was less arduous than they had expected, but was still worthy of a day of rest. Also, with only a wide plane and well cultivated fields between them and Yin, Ji Chang felt confident they could reassemble his chariot. He intended to enter Yin appearing as if he had taken a leisurely excursion in the suburbs around the city.

Farther east, incidental contact with the farmers of the Central Nation increased. His progress was intentionally slow, for he wanted word of his arrival to reach the court long before he did. No doubt it would, for by the hour more and more of the populace took an interest in him. Clothed in his finest black cloth accented in silk, the gold trimmed banner bearing the fearsome image of Taotei waving above him, Ji Chang appeared serene and invulnerable, his four black stallions leading his coach quietly and inexorably closer to the seat of supreme power in the world.

As word spread of his identity, the people began to leave their fields and homes to line the roadsides. He needed no intimidating armed escort to incur their deference; his fame and reputation were sufficient to produce crowds of admirers. At first they simply stood and watched; but before he came into sight of the great city, they had begun to bow on one knee as he passed. Word of this reception by the people would reach the court also, no doubt inciting the anger and anxiety of Di Xin's officers.

Hongyao, held the reigns; and, standing in the chariot next to Ji Chang, had a worried look on his face. "My reception by the people of Yin is better than I could hope for, said Ji Chang. He knew as the leader of his own realm that a monarch fears his people far more than any outside army. When he began to notice a few of the people here and there along the road fully prostrate before him, he knew Di Xin would not dare to have him killed.

As he had hoped, a party of court officials came to the suburbs to greet him escorted by a squad of soldiers for crowd control. Ji Chang approached them so slowly that Hongyao had difficulty controlling the team. When they stopped just yards apart, Ji Chang's long journey had finally come to its end.

For a few tense moments, Ji Chang and the high official looked at each other across the few feet of road yet between them. Protocol demanded that visiting princes present their credentials to the court: the jade insignia held at the Emperor's pleasure to denote his rank. Of course, Ji Chang held no such insignia. The Zhou nation had been carved out of the wilderness by the blood and toil of its

people, not by the largess of Di Xin's forebears or by geopolitical cannibalism. Had he been greeted by some lesser man than Jizi, there might have been a diplomatic disaster.

Jizi knew full well that it was Ji Chang's place to dismount and approach with his insignia for authentication, after which Jizi would announce his title and rank, according him honor to all present. Absent the proper credentials, he must somehow afford dignity upon Ji Chang; so he and an attendant dismounted and approached. Peering up into the face of Ji Chang as if confirming an identity by memory, the attendant nodded in the affirmative to Jizi and withdrew.

Jizi then bowed humbly and turned to his escort of officials." His Majesty, Di Xin, and the people of Yin are honored by the arrival of Prince Ji Chang of the distant principality of Zhou!" he shouted. Quickly remounting his chariot coach, he gave the signals necessary to his escort to return to the palace. Following, Ji Chang speculated that he had been identified by Zuyi, the emissary sent to Zhou many months earlier and who was the only man in all of Yin who had ever set eyes on Ji Chang.

As the procession wound its way through the streets of Yin, Ji Chang resisted the urge to look about him and focused his gaze rigidly ahead. Nevertheless, he could not avoid seeing the massive wooden structures, their ornate architecture a testimony to the wealth and cultural advance of the Yin people. Zhou style, in contrast, was plainer and efficient reflecting the industry and practicality of a frontier nation. Though Yin society and commerce was energetic, Ji Chang felt a subtle melancholy lingering about the city. Here and there he noticed signs of urban decay: a crumbling house or an old person begging on the street, for instance. Ji Chang wondered at the contrasts and disparity evident.

As the procession rounded the corner of a rather large structure, Ji Chang saw the palace of Di Xin come suddenly into view sprawled across a knoll and separated from the rest of the city by a rambling stream and a small forest of cypress trees. Its roof lines topped the trees in places. They crossed a wide bridge and entered the palace grounds through the ornate, traditional triple gated portal symbolizing the three virtues of Yu; then through the second gateway into a large inner courtyard. Jizi dispersed the squad of soldiers as servants rushed out from various directions to assist with the horses and the unloading of Ji Chang's personal effects.

"Your apartment is this way, Prince Ji Chang," he said pointing to the west of the compound. "It is quite large since we expected you to be accompanied by a retinue of assistants." Jizi led the way into an east facing door on the western periphery of the courtyard. As Ji Chang followed, he looked to his right toward what he knew would be the chambers of Di Xin on the north side of the enclosure.

"We have arranged for the three High Councilors," continued Jizi, "to be quartered adjacent to each other here. The Prince of Jiu is to your right and the Prince of E is to your left."

Ji Chang had not before known what others were appointed to the post of High Councilor. Since both were respected and effective rulers of but very small states, their identities confirmed his suspicions. He had not been called to "discuss the principles and policies of government" with the Emperor as was expected of appointees, but to be observed and studied.

The opposite entrance to his apartment overlooked the large Imperial Garden filled with exotic plants and grazing animals from the far corners of the Nine Regions. Beyond that was the compound occupied by the various minor court officials. Di Xin's palace was a city unto itself, its multitude of citizens flowing to and fro energetically. As Ji Chang surveyed the grounds from the modest porch, marveling at the lush garden and refined architecture of the palace, Jizi quietly issued instructions to the servants in attendance then joined him on the gallery.

'So this is the famed and fearsome Ji Chang,' he thought, ruler of an alien state with almost mythical qualities, wealth and power enough perhaps to challenge the Emperor himself. But instead of a muscular giant, he saw a modest sized man with a rather rotund middle. Instead of a fierce and growling warrior, he saw a silent, thoughtful man who traveled nearly a month across hostile terrain, leaving his family and his nation's affairs in the hands of subordinates to satisfy the whim of his monarch, arriving at the gates of Yin, not with regiments of intrepid combatants, but with one manservant and three wily archers. Yet Jizi was also aware of Ji Chang's reception by the people in the countryside and in the suburbs of Yin itself. Reports of their reaction to his passing echoed through the palace.

Absent any sign from Ji Chang that he desired conversation, Jizi left the apartment.

Ji Chang passed the days in the Emperor's shadow by discoursing with various court officials and occasionally venturing out among the people of Yin. A reasonable friendship had developed between him and the other High Councilors; but over time he grew closer and closer to Senior Tutor Jizi. Ji Chang was forever inquiring of him on the intricacies of some subject, and Jizi was generous with his information and opinions. As winter waned and spring warmth gradually prevailed, the two could often be found strolling through the palace garden deeply engrossed in conversation.

On the conventions for wearing furs, Jizi instructed: "A gentleman wears black lambskin with a black robe or faun lambskin with a robe of undyed silk. With a yellow robe he wears fox fur. Fox and badger furs are worn in private except for periods of mourning, and black dyed lambskin must not be worn on visits of condolence."

On propitious conduct between men and women, Jizi counseled: "Men and women shall not touch hands in their giving and receiving; however, a gentleman who would not give his hand to a woman in distress is a brute."

On the basis of civilized society, Jizi theorized: "The foundation of the civilized world is the state, the foundation of the civilized state is the family, the foundation of the civilized family is the individual who values civil harmony and right conduct."

On ecology, Jizi deduced: "Unseasonable calamities such as storms and drought can result from an inharmonious balance between the five elements— water, wood, fire, metal, and earth."

"How is it, my new friend," asked Ji Chang, "that you have gained such respect throughout the Central Nation in so few years? In the months we have spent together I have observed the wealthy and powerful and multitudes of the insignificant approach for your counsel. My advisors in Zhou will question me intently on the nature of the great Senior Tutor when I return."

Jizi looked away from Ji Chang toward the prominent features of the palace. "Senior Tutor I may be," he answered, "but I do not pretend to greatness. To censure men in office and to criticize policies of the government are not important acts. A great tutor is one who can correct the error in a ruler's heart."

"In order to influence a sovereign, one must have his ear. In the months I have lingered here, I have seldom seen you in consultation with Di Xin."

"His Majesty's interests are elsewhere at the moment."

Ji Chang knew very well where Di Xin's interests lay: Daji, his current favorite concubine, given to him by the people of Su to soften his rage at their now banished former prince-- so much so, in fact, that the three High Counselors had not yet been received by the monarch they had come to serve.

Involved in conversation, they unknowingly strolled into the company of Ji Chang's counselor colleagues. The two princes had been conversing in hushed tones, but fell silent at Jizi's and Ji Chang's approach. They were obviously anxious.

"You need not be so secretive before my friend Jizi," said Ji Chang. "What seems to be agitating you so, gentlemen?"

"We are not as comfortable in our captivity as you are," said the Prince of Jiu. "Our every action is observed and recorded; our every correspondence is scrutinized." He glanced furtively at Jizi.

The Prince of E added his own complaints. "Our most reasonable entreaties for access to the Emperor are denied. Why are not the three High Counselors consulted on matters of state. Is not the Prince of Qi even now terrorizing the smaller states of the North while the Son of Heaven sleeps? In fact, as all of them knew, Di Xin was asleep during the daylight hours more and more often, as his revels and feasting often carried on deep into the night.

"Gentlemen, assured Ji Chang, "the machinations of ambitious princes are the commonest of diplomatic chores. The more often Di Xin would involve himself in them, the less would be his ability to intervene for resolutions. Our counsel will be held at Heaven's need."

Ji Chang could see by their expressions that they remained unconvinced. He had resolved before he arrived here to tread carefully around the tiger's tail, while his two colleagues wished, it seemed, to step on it. Besides, Ji Chang had no illusions. Their presence in the capitol was not to watch, but to be watched. In spite of Di Xin's frequent alcoholic stupors, Ji Chang had no doubt his majesty heard frequent reports of their conduct. Ji Chang's deepest secret was his desire to not be consulted by the court on any matter of even slight importance.

"We have been discussing," said the Prince of Jiu, "whether a spontaneous gift to Di Xin might warm his temperament toward us. We are aware of his softened anger toward the people of Su upon receiving the concubine Daji."

Jizi's face betrayed some alarm; however, only Ji Chang seemed to notice. "Consider your acts carefully, gentlemen," he said; and he and Jizi continued their stroll through the garden toward the bank of a large pond. Its smooth surface reflected the clear blue sky like a mirror.

While the younger Jizi stood on the bank of the pond, Ji Chang sat on a conveniently placed bench, watching both the famed Senior Tutor and the water. "This lake reminds me of the Hexagram I received at my last divination," he said.

Receiving no response, he continued. "I received the Hexagram 'Lu' as I lingered at the top of the Tiahang mountains to rest from the climb. While I understand its overall significance, the third line seems so contradictory, even as it is the only weak line in the formation."

Jizi suddenly pointed to the water's surface which had rippled from a brief gust of wind." Do you see how the sky is easily distorted by a small breeze? So it is with the desires of a man— Heaven's will may be subverted or distorted by the slightest intransigence or irresponsibility. That is why it is said that a one-eyed man can still see, though not entirely clearly. Meanwhile, only the surface of the lake has been disturbed. Beneath the surface the water is still and peaceful and the wise man is content to ignore the rippling distortions on its surface; and, even if he has but one leg, he can still proceed toward felicity, though his progress may be laborious and his path void of any aid or comfort."

Ji Chang rose and stepped to Jizi's side, both of them precariously close to the pond's edge." How wonderful it would be if one could reach down into the pond and keep it still— stop the rippling on its surface so that Heaven above would be reflected perfectly at all times. But, of course, that is not possible."

"No," agreed Jizi. "One cannot stop the rippling."

## **Chapter 11**

### **The Guardian of Treasures Summer, 1066 B. C.**

#### **Hexagram 54 GUEI MEI. Thunder above Lake**

*The marriageable maiden.* No goals or destinations are reached now; advance to disaster.

*Thunder above the pool.* The Superior Man must know his error in the beginning in order to reach a propitious end.

6 for the top place. A man's sacrificial lamb does not bleed; a woman's utility basket is empty.

6 for the fifth place. The princess, appropriately, wore a wedding gown less ostentatious than her maids'.

9 for the fourth place. Though the maiden delays, she marries late and but is rewarded.

6 for the third place. The servant girl is elevated to become a concubine.

9 for the second place. The one-eyed man still sees, the recluse still gains from meditations.

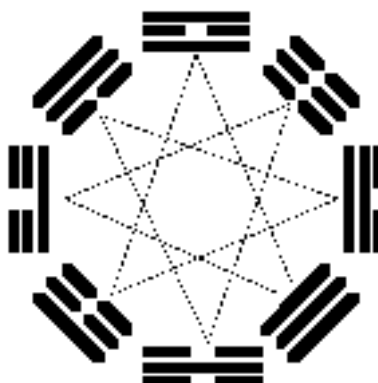
9 for the bottom place. The future old maid rather becomes a concubine; the lame man labors toward good.



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"Why do you arrange the trigrams in this way?" Jizi suddenly appeared looking over Ji Chang's shoulder as he manipulated a series of twigs on the table.

Ji Chang, deep in concentration and not aware of Jizi's approach, was startled but composed himself instantly. "If one were to draw a single line," he answered, "connecting all eight of the trigrams starting with Heaven, each of them would be touched in a certain sequence." He drew the line with his finger to demonstrate, beginning at the lower right:



"Heaven, in this sequence, is followed by Fire and Fire by Mountain, Mountain by Lake (still water) and Lake by Wind, Wind by [running] Water and Water by Earth, Earth by Thunder and Thunder by Heaven where the pattern ends... or begins again, of course. I call this arrangement 'linking the mountains'. Heaven's strong central line is replaced, in Fire, by a weak line. Then Fire's strong bottom line is replaced by another weak line in Mountain."

Jizi added his own insight. "So one would expect, following the pattern, that the next transformation would be the replacement of Mountain's strong top line with still another weak line resulting in Earth; but this cannot be."

"Of course. Earth must be preceded by Water and followed by Thunder— such is the way the world was created; so here the pattern changes. When Mountain's strong top line is replaced, so also are the other two lines. Mountain becomes lake."

"Lake," added Jizi, "is followed by Wind— two lines change?"

"Yes. Both the bottom and top lines change as Mountain becomes Lake and again when Lake becomes Wind."

"So, following this second pattern of change, one would expect the next transformation would be for the two strong lines in Wind to become weak lines thus becoming Earth; but again this cannot be."

"Of course, for Earth must be preceded by Water and followed by Thunder, as we know. So the pattern changes again and only the top line in Wind changes from strong to weak and, therefore, Wind becomes Water."

Jizi exposed his enthusiasm as he visualized the next step in this strange new way of viewing the ancient trigrams. "So now we return to a one-line changing pattern, and the middle line of Wind becomes weak making Earth at last!"

"Yes, then the bottom line of Earth becomes strong making Thunder in its proper sequence."

"But why does the last change, from Thunder to Heaven, break the pattern—two lines changing from weak to strong?"

Ji Chang stroked his chin and stood up from his stooped position. "Such is the mystery I have been contemplating, my Shang friend. Perhaps being that close to Heaven disrupts earthly laws, or perhaps there is still a more subtle pattern to the sequence of changes."

Jizi reiterated his long held view of the hexagrams. "If one could understand the changes that occur in this world completely, one could always choose the right action to achieve the desired result."

"Unless," contradicted Ji Chang, "one's desires are contrary to the will of Heaven."

"But is not Heaven's will always made known to men?"

"It can be, yet men do not always heed the Lord Above and his messages."

"I am in possession of a jade block," described Ji Chang, "passed down from my ancestors upon which I can write with brush and lacquer. I can leave messages for myself on the block and then wipe them away when I desire. In the same way Heaven projects messages to men but wipes them away quickly. We must be very observant or we will not know Heaven's intent."

"I must admit, Prince Cheng, that my knowledge of the stalks is cursory. We Shang rely exclusively on turtle shell cracks for our Heavenly messages."

"The *shi* stalks only guide the diviner to the hexagram containing the right guidance. Interpreting the hexagram delivered by the stalks is then called for based on the strong and weak lines indicated in that hexagram."

"How does one do that?"

"As you know, the solid or broken lines in the trigrams represent strong and weak forces. Yang, the solid line, relates to male, light, creative, divine, firm, assertive, and principles. Yin, the broken line relates to female, dark, receptive, earth, yielding, and passive principles. The eight trigrams correlate with the eight directions, the seasons, and the family of father, mother, three sons and three daughters, and so on in the lives of the people. Pairs of the eight trigrams are combined in specific ways into 64 Hexagrams, each hexagram having six lines either strong or weak. The two bottom lines represent the earth; the middle two, humans; and the top two, Heaven. The way of Heaven is dark and light like the passing of a day; the way of the earth is yielding or firm; and the human way is loving and just. By thinking through the order of these things as one encounters the conditions of life, we can put ourselves into accord with Heaven's will and power."

"Yet is it not true that there are more than 64 circumstances in a person's life? Life is in constant flux."

"The effects of change are read in the hexagrams according to a three step process: combining Yin 2s and Yang 3s."

"Ah, Prince Chang, there is certainly much I can gain from having a sage like yourself to learn from."

"On the contrary Senior Tutor, these things are already a part of your character. One only hopes you can inculcate a knowledge of propriety in his Majesty, Di Xin."

The two of them lapsed into silence, watching the evening sun sink behind the distant Taihang mountain range.

Jizi could almost feel Ji Chang's emptiness as he stared west toward his homeland. "You have received recent messages from your ministers in Qishan. Do they bear good tidings or bad?" They both knew that messages of political import would not be carried openly and that for all practical purposes Ji Chang was isolated from the business of governing Zhou.

"My fourth son Ji Dan has married. My brother Shih and my oldest son Ji Fa are visiting the fiefs of Ruan and Gong. My wife Taisi has been ill but is recovering."

"Not bad news on the face of it."

"How much will be of interest to Di Xin?" Ji Chang knew full well that his close relationship with the Senior Tutor had not escaped notice.

"Yes, my friend. I have been frequently questioned about you. I seem to be gaining much popularity among the ministers these days."

Ji Chang chuckled. "The guardian of a treasure is always befriended by the greedy. Do not fail to give them an accurate accounting." Ji Chang was subtly informing Jizi that he would not provide any dangerous information—that anything Ji Chang said would be irrelevant to courtly intrigues and could be relayed at will. He knew Jizi would prefer it that way, for, if asked, Jizi would observe dutiful conduct and reveal all he knew.

"Tomorrow, I am told, the Prince of Jiu will present a gift to His Majesty—another concubine." Jizi moved toward the door of Ji Chang's apartment.

Ji Chang stared out over the palace grounds at the darkening western sky. Presenting tribute to one's sovereign was one's duty; however, the nature of one's tribute could have unexpected consequences. A concubine always changed the dynamics of a ruler's household, usually for the worse. "You may know that we Zhou do not sanction concubines," he grumbled.

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As the days went by, Ji Chang became more and more submerged in intellectual studies, visiting the great Imperial library and discussing esoteric subjects with Yin notables such as Jizi and his nephew, Junior Tutor Bigan. Though he was personally more interested in the currents of Shang knowledge, he did not neglect charting the politics coursing through the palace. There was the constant rivalry of Di Xin's chief administrator, Shang Rong, and the scheming chief advisor, Feizong. There was the manipulative Prince Hu of Chong attempting to discredit other princes such as Qi of Wei, the Emperor's half brother and, Ji Chang had no doubt, himself. But like a rock in the river, Ji Chang remained reticent as tumultuous rapids swirled noisily past.

In particular, Ji Chang could be found in or near the thick cypress grove by the garden pond, usually studying some document from the Imperial archives or simply thinking. He had become the butt of some ridicule among the pettier officers who belittled the reputed giant of the west as no more than a royal nephew lounging at the palace. But Jizi knew better.

"I am at a loss," said Jizi, "to discern any great weakness in the man. He is accommodating in every way." Jizi had come to appreciate a man of extraordinary

intellect and ability; and, though he repeated that assessment to any who would listen, few heeded his judgement.

Shang Rong looked up from his work. "Perhaps that in itself is a weakness. Perhaps our noble Zhou prince lacks decisiveness."

Bigan paced repeatedly before the threshold at Shang Rong's private gallery. "Or perhaps Prince Ji Chang is aware of his own weaknesses in the face of Yin's military might."

Shang Rong's face was nearly pressed against a cage within which were several small birds. He took great pleasure from their songs and was even prone to tote them along on hazardous journeys. He had been criticized at times for this frivolous attachment but refused to deprive himself of them. "Even a very benign creature," he said, "can sometimes inflict pain. My little sparrows here are content to perch and sing; yet, if I were to reach into their safe haven, I might sustain injuries." After a pause he continued. "What have you heard from Jiaoli's observers sent to Zhou?"

"Only one of the three has returned," responded Bigan. "He reports a contented populous and a competent force at arms. Nothing out of the ordinary. Certainly no indication of belligerence toward Yin, though there is also no indication of any great love of His Majesty."

Jizi sighed. "Such is the state of affairs everywhere, I fear. The people of the Nations return Di Xin's devotion in equal measure to that which he gives."

Shang Rong glanced at Jizi rather angrily but did not respond, for he knew Jizi's assessment was only too accurate.

At that moment cries and screams penetrated into the chamber from the courtyard. All three men rushed out to find a squad of soldiers forcefully hauling the Prince of Jiu out of his apartment. Several of the prince's personal guards were lying bloody on the ground. Within moments the prince and his captors disappeared through the gate while the three ministers stood frozen in shock.

General Jiaoli was supervising the arrest from near the door to the great hall. The three ministers filed quickly over to within speaking distance of him.

"Where are they taking him?" asked Bigan.

The answer came from an expressionless face. "To the guardhouse compound. His Majesty has ordered the execution."

Shang Rong held his palm up toward Jizi and Bigan to indicate his desire for them to remain uninvolved. He then strode purposefully toward Di Xin's suite. At the threshold he found Feizong directing several attendants who were removing a bloody female corpse. She was the young woman offered by the Prince of Jiu to placate Di Xin. Obviously he did not find pleasure in her arms. On the far side of the chamber, Di Xin and his favorite, Daji, were being dressed by several servants, seemingly unaware of the gruesome activity nearby.

Shang Rong withdrew quietly—there was nothing he could do here but perhaps incite additional wrath from Di Xin. He knew what had probably occurred: the young maiden had objected to Di Xin's and Daji's perversity; and, in a fit of rage at her disobedience, one or the other or both of them had slain her on the spot. He knew also that the execution of a maiden was inconsequential, while executing one of the three High Counselors was a different matter.

As rapidly as his old body could carry him, he made his way back to Jizi and Bigan still motionless where they were. The general had departed. "Where is Prince Ji Chang?" he asked almost breathless from his pace.

"Zuyi has taken him into the city. They are observing the metal craftsmen of Yin." Jizi knew that, as luck would have it, Ji Chang was in the one safe place for him at this moment: out among the people.

"Go to him, Jizi. Tell him the Prince of Jiu and the concubine have been killed. Tell him to prepare for the worst."

"I will seek accommodations for him in the city so that he may remain away from the palace until calm is restored." Jizi then darted off toward the palace gate.

"Let us go to the Prince of E, Bigan. Our presence with him might restrain the soldiers from further carnage."

It was too late. They arrived at the prince's apartment and were told by servants he had gone to confront the Emperor. Bigan stayed behind as Shang Rong hurried toward Di Xin's suite. Though he was barred at the door by guards, he could see and hear what occurred plainly. An angry prince stood spouting denunciations at his sovereign who tried hard to ignore him.

"How does the Son of Heaven order a loyal subject, the Prince of a nation, a man of your own royal blood to be killed?" he shouted. "Was it on the orders of the Lord Above? Has he been convicted of treason? What great crime against the people has he committed?"

"No, the crime has been committed by Your Majesty. The Lord Above and all our worthy ancestors will turn their backs on us for this atrocity." Di Xin's temper was rising visibly, but Shang Rong at the doorway was powerless to interfere. The prince in his fury continued. "The Son of Heaven cannot hear Heaven's counsel over the noise of his revelries nor feel Heaven's touch through a body deadened with wine. He can hear only the whispers of a few venal ministers and feel the touch of an excremental concubine!"

Shang Rong winced. Of all the words rage could have summoned up from the depths of a tortured soul, one referring to Daji as human waste was the worst imaginable. Di Xin's reaction was swift and predictable. He leaped to his feet and seized the hilt of the nearest soldier's halberd. Hefting the halberd high, with all his strength he hewed the ranting prince who fell, first silent, then to the floor.

Shang Rong retreated sadly to his own apartment. Di Xin would shortly order the death of Ji Chang, plunging the empire into a generation of civil war, if the deaths of the other two High Counselors would not lead to that anyway. Devastated by his sovereign's profligacy, he turned to the only positive force he felt was left, their common ancestors, specifically, the Emperor Zujia.

Desperately he knelt before his personal altar and began imploring the ancestor of both himself and Di Xin to intervene, to approach the Lord Above and obtain Heaven's blessings upon the people of the nations that faced sorrow in the carnage that would surely descend upon the world.

He had not prepared the altar for a veneration this day, but as it was summer and the proper sacrificial animal for the season was fowl, he whisked across the room to the songbird cage, reached in, and grasped one of his beloved sparrows. Almost in tears back before the altar he deftly cut the throat of the tiny bird, draining its blood into the sacrificial bowl.

"Such is my sorrow and fear, beloved Zujia," he cried out, "that I am prepared to sacrifice all that is dear to me for the salvation of our people." Dropping the knife and bowl, he buried his weeping face in his hands.

## Chapter 12

### Emperor Zoo (Bloodthirsty) Summer, 1064 B. C.

#### Hexagram 50

#### DING.

#### Fire above Wood / Wind

*A sacrificial bowl.* Immeasurable success.

*Fire and wood combine to heat the sacrifice.* The Superior Man adhere's to Heaven's will.

6 for the bottom place. The sacrificial bowl may be tipped to rid it of decaying meat; one takes a concubine only to bear sons.

9 for the second place. The rituals are solid; my enemies have difficulty, but I am blameless.

9 for the third place. Without rope handles, the hot bowl cannot be moved, and meat is wasted.

9 for the fourth place. The Prince's food is spilt on him as a bowl's legs break; great misfortune.

6 for the fifth place. The bowl's cleats are gold; righteous persistence is rewarded.

9 for the top place. The bowl's cleats are jade; wondrous good fortune.

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Jizi could see the cloud of black smoke rising above the palace's roof tops. He knew what it meant; the "scorch and burn" punishment was underway. He hurried through the corridors to identify the current victim, a sick feeling in his abdomen intensifying with every step. Who would it be this time: the seamstress of a displeasing embroidery, a jade craftsman who embezzled a few chips, or a minor official who extorted a few bribes? Whoever came into contact with Their Majesties risked a horrible death for the slightest indiscretion.

From a gallery overlooking the courtyard, Jizi could see the royal coterie in gleeful session. Di Xin, guzzling wine, was enthroned before the raging fires encircling the greased pillar, his depraved concubine Daji was seated to his left, his corrupt minister Feizong stood to his right. The three were nearly surrounded by a small crowd of knaves and harlots, some with noble titles to defame and others with defamatory titles suited to their ignobility, among them Feilian and Elia.

A ragged commoner struggled to climb above the flames on a greasy pole, sliding downward when he weakened or scrambling higher in moments of strength. Inevitably, the slick pole and torrid flames outlived his stamina and, to raucous cheers, he slid screaming into the fire.

Such was the sad state of affairs around him that Jizi was relieved their most recent victim was not some visiting dignitary or otherwise potentially dangerous notable. Ji Chang, for instance, was safely tucked away at Youli prison near Deer Terrace. Jizi could travel there in less than a day and see to it that he was not so awfully treated as to suffer irreparable harm. Other princes of the Nations wisely kept their distance.

To Jizi's alarm, Di Xin, through a messenger, summoned him. He approached with trepidation and kow-towed deeply. "Your Majesty wishes to consult with his humble Tutor?"

"I wish for him to note," replied Di Xin in a particularly arrogant tone, "that since the institution of the 'scorch and burn' punishment, the princes of the nations have become exceedingly generous with their tribute. I have observed more frequent delegations approaching the throne with larger and more valued treasures." He and Daji grinned with satisfaction at each other.

Jizi knew otherwise. The Emperor in his usual alcoholic stupor was not perceiving well the passage of time. Nobles attended court as little as they felt they safely could; however, there had been a marked increase in the amounts of jade they offered to the throne, often through envoys who would flatter and praise the sovereign while professing excuses for their absent princes. Higher tribute to the crown meant higher taxes paid by the common people put to no good use.

"Your majesty's treasury is indeed bursting from the precious stones of your grateful subjects," admitted Jizi. Jade was, of course, the commodity most valued by Daji and least valued by the common people. Wise princes went out of their way to acquire jade to send to the palace, thus depriving their subjects of as little sustenance as possible while placating the court.

"Still, I am not wholly satisfied that the Nations are sufficiently devoted to me. What would you advise as a means for them to demonstrate their loyalty?"

Jizi thought briefly, then suggested a hunt. "It has always been the practice of our revered former emperors to stage hunts in the preserve— to invite all the princes from the four lands to join them. At these joyful exercises much important diplomacy has often been conducted."

"Inform my officers of my desire to stage a hunt beginning on the first day of the next month."

Jizi quickly withdrew, grateful he was not required to linger among the revelers. Feizong, more and more, controlled access to the Emperor and enjoyed allowing Shang Rong and other dutiful ministers to conduct the mundane affairs of government while he and other scoundrels idled about or participated in vile amusements.

Back in the presence of Shang Rong and his assistants, Jizi silently battled his own emotions of revulsion, anger, and despair as he transmitted Di Xin's expressed desire for a general hunt to the officers who would organize it.

Without warning and to everyone's surprise, Jizi blurted out thoughts he had long held suppressed. "We are all part of it!" he cried. "While we carry out our duties faithfully, we help Di Xin bring Heaven's curse upon us."

All work stopped abruptly; there was a moment of total silence. Shang Rong put down the wooden tablet he had been writing on and motioned for the clerks to leave the chamber.

"Fear not my gentle friend. Just as the rivers rise and fall and the snow gathers and melts in repeating patterns, so too will the passions of our sovereign."

Jizi had begun to doubt Shang Rong's professed optimism. "With each passing day I observe new atrocities and abominations. He and the woman seem to have unlimited capacity for indecency. You yourself have wept over the Son of Heaven's intransigence and brutality."

"Indeed, I have my own fluctuations of strength and weakness. I have prayed to our common ancestors for deliverance. I have sacrificed and suffered; and each time I have witnessed periods of moderation in Di Xin's impetuosity. What is it that our quiet enemy from the West said to you once: the sacrificial bowl may be tipped to rid it of decaying meat?"

Jizi was stunned by Shang Rong's suggestion that there are reasons honorable men might violate the holiest of laws, perhaps even loyalty to one's rightful sovereign. Shang Rong stepped closer and, in a near whisper, continued, "The Son of Heaven's son is even now preparing for his role." Jizi looked into his eyes. "That is all I am prepared to reveal at this time." Shang Rong then silently returned to his business at the table.

In the days that followed, Jizi paid renewed attention to movements in and around the palace. While minister Feizong, Sung the Lord of Anyi, Hu the Prince of Chong, and others of their ilk immersed themselves in appeasing their base desires, he noted increased contacts between Shang Rong, Wugeng the heir of Di Xin, Qi the Prince of Wei, and Provost Minister Jiaoli. Clandestine messengers fanned out across the empire fanning who knew what political blazes.

On the day Di Xin and his sinister fraternity departed for the great hunt, Jizi felt a heavy weight lift from his consciousness. His lightened spirits prompted a desire for the company of Ji Chang whom he had not seen since early Spring. On that visit he had promised to return with new milfoil stalks to replace Ji Chang's worn and broken ones; so he drifted along the streets of Yin in search of a particular skilled craftsman.

Inspecting the craftsman's delicate work, Jizi overheard a Yin commoner relating recent rumors concerning a ruler named Zoo; Zoo meaning "one who maims the righteous and cripples the good". When he realized that the commoners referred to their Emperor, he was so shocked he let the box of divining stalks fall noisily to the ground. He retrieved the fragile box, profanely cracked, while watching the startled commoners disappear into the crowd, alarmed that they may have been overheard by a court official.

Jizi paid for the stalks and returned to the palace grounds, his thoughts racing. If knowledge of this belittling epithet reached Di Xin, his fury might be unleashed on the people of his own capitol with far reaching consequences. He vowed absolute secrecy, then immediately changed his mind. He could not withhold this



information from Shang Rong. Afterward, if it became general knowledge, it would not be his doing.

While he prepared for his trip to Youli prison, he received yet another envoy from Zhou seeking an audience with the Emperor in order to plead for Ji Chang's release.

"I am Nangong Kuo," the envoy responded to Jizi's inquiry. "Prince Ji Chang's son, Ji Fa, has instructed me to offer these gifts to the court." He gestured toward a chest borne by two husky soldiers.

"His Majesty has repeatedly refused to receive Zhou emissaries," said Jizi sternly as he went about the chore of gathering provisions. "Return to Qishan and inform Lord Ji Fa that I am powerless to affect the release of his father. Tell him I am honored he has seen fit to approach the throne through me, but that I cannot accept gifts in payment for that which I cannot do." Jizi knew, of course, that Ji Fa would approach anyone in the court and had, in fact, already contacted several others.

He then dismissed the messenger rather brusquely. It would not be wise to display his own misgivings. Beyond the walls of the palace, none must ever know the manifold tensions and currents of discontent that flowed among His Majesty's ministers.

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In the presence of Shang Rong, Jizi always felt humbled. The great old minister manipulated the petty would-be power brokers about the palace with uncanny skill. They flowed in and out of his presence like bees around a hive. As Jizi had approached Shang Rong's apartment, General Jiaoli was departing; moments after Jizi's arrival, they were joined by the Queen.

Both officials bowed reverently. "How pleased and honored we are Highness to."

"Never mind the flattery, Chief Minister. You must advise me on the most important matter." She waved her two attendant maids away into the corridor. "I hear repeated rumors that the whore, Daji, is with child." Jizi was surprised at the Queen's bluntness. "You remember, of course, that as a child Di Xin was nearly passed over as rightful heir to the throne when his father, that altogether inconsequential fool, was captivated by a young concubine. Would it were possible for the Lord Above to strike old men impotent, the Empire would be far better off!"

Shang Rong revealed no emotion when he responded. "Do you suspect Di Xin has a similar disposition— to disown Wugeng in favor of Daji's child?"

"So she is pregnant!"

"To the contrary, Highness, I have seen no indication of that as yet. But it is not unusual for concubines to produce off-spring. Indeed, there have been instances when such events have proved to be immensely valuable. I know of no time Di Xin has expressed a desire to disown your son. The loyalties of the officers of the court are beyond question. Wugeng is the rightful heir, and I see no reason for you to fear for his future, whether Daji is with child or not."

Thus comforted, the Queen departed as abruptly as she had arrived. Jizi was not nearly so confident of a harmonious future. He described to Shang Rong the conversation he had overheard in the city.

"That is indeed disappointing to hear, Senior Tutor; for, if the people have irrevocably turned against Di Xin, I fear that all of our diplomatic skill may not suffice to preserve our house from ruin. Let us pray to our ancestors that these two men do not speak for all but only for themselves."

"I am about to leave for Youli prison," said Jizi.

Shang Rong drifted over to the threshold of his balcony. "Every passing day of Prince Ji Chang's captivity there increases tension among the Nations," he observed. "A means of his release has escaped me for so long, yet we must persist."

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As Jizi and his small contingent of soldiers made their way through the countryside, he frequently reminded himself that the people laboring on their farms were not purposefully disrespectful. Somehow those who ignored his passing train and those who took notice both seemed threatening to him. He felt a continuing urge to stop and explain to them how he and others toiled on their behalf. He was actually thankful when the fortifications of despicable Youli prison appeared ahead.

Inside the gate, Jizi was greeted by the commander of the garrison. "How is my cousin Bigan, Senior Tutor?"

"Well," he answered. Youli prison was near the town of Choage, Junior Tutor Bigan's home and the place where Jizi felt most comfortable. His urges to escape the heavy burdens of duty at the palace were increasing in frequency and strength. Certainly the turmoil of political intrigues and grave world crises seemed far removed from this quiet village.

Shang Rong had seen to it that their Zhou prisoner was removed from the general prison population as soon as he was able. Still, Ji Chang was treated harshly by the guards, ignorant of his stature, and the bevy of petty crooks with whom he was tossed when he first arrived. He was dangerously thin from poor nourishment and seemed to have contracted a painful, lingering cough.

Rising from the small writing table Jizi had provided for him, Ji Chang's face was genuinely brighter at sight of his friend, though his sixty-seven years of life had left deep creases.

"Each time I visit, my Zhou friend, this tiny cell seems that much smaller," observed Jizi.

"As I get older," Ji Chang replied, "I find I need less and less space to move around in. Heaven has provided me with all I need: prosperity and peace for my people, a brood of energetic if sometimes headstrong sons, and a true friend among my enemies who provides me with comforts at the most opportune times."

"You mean like these." Jizi produced the finely crafted box of milfoil stalks from within his baggage.

Ji Chang seized the box with relish, running his fingers over its intricately carved surface. Though he noticed the crack, he did not mention it. Inside were fifty delicate yarrow stems, seamless, jointless, and flawlessly straight, each one exactly the length of a man's forearm. As he manipulated them in his fingers, separating them according to certain patterns and then recombining them, Jizi

watched a moment then turned his probing eye to the bamboo slats upon which Ji Chang had been writing, obviously for some time since there were dozens of them.

"What is this you are laboring on at such length?" he asked.

"I am recording my interpretations of the Hexagrams."

"Have not traditions from ancient times prescribed their meanings? Have not the attentive always been provided valuable guidance by dividing the stalks?"

"Yet I find them incomplete— unsure renderings in many cases— and subject to inaccuracies in the oral transmission of them."

Jizi felt that Ji Chang's exercise in interpretation was just that: an exercise, though he would not begrudge an imprisoned man the diversions which might make captivity bearable. "Give me an example which we may discuss."

Ji Chang shuffled through the bamboo slats. "When one receives Water over Water, Gun, what do the sages of old tell us about this?"

Jizi, well versed in the traditions of divining, responded immediately. "Grave danger, of course. When Water is supported by Earth, a natural unity and balance is implied, such as that achieved between a ruler and the feudal lords; but when Water is supported by Water, one must keep a determined hold upon the mind or be lost and confused— swept away by tumultuous currents toward some unknown destination. The receiver of it would do well to not strike out on risky adventures."

Ji Chang nodded his agreement. "But what if this adventure is forced upon him?"

"Then he will gain respect either by having small achievements or by having expended great effort without complaint."

Ji Chang looked about his small cell. "There are two strong lines in Gun, both central to their respective trigrams. Why are they not enough to forestall his suffering? Does it not imply that there is some action he may take to improve his lot?"

"No," asserted Jizi. "He should content himself, as you are doing, with patience and forbearance. A time will come more favorable for forceful action."

"You see, my friend. This is my example of an incomplete rendering. The two central lines do indicate the need for positive action. It has to do with setting an example, with holding fast to virtuous conduct. One moment of weakness while under the influence of Gun, and the abyss within the abyss will swallow him up. There are multiple abysses in Gun."

Jizi drifted about in thought. "I see. A very astute rendering. But why do you propose to transcribe the interpretations? No amount of guidance will benefit the weak of heart or mind."

"Perhaps there are fewer with weak hearts and minds than we might guess. We cannot know of the presence of wind but by its rushing through the branches of trees. Accordingly, we cannot know of the strong of heart but by their virtuous deeds. Heaven must provide the opportunity for the exercise of virtue as well as vice. Perhaps it is we who cannot perceive of the righteous, rather than a dearth of righteous men."

Thinking of his intransigent sovereign, rapidly gaining a sordid reputation throughout the Empire, Jizi was swamped with cynicism. "That is greatly to be hoped," he said with a sigh.

## Chapter 13

### The Soil Will Be Washed By the River Spring, 1063 BCE

#### Hexagram 24 FU.

#### Earth above Thunder

*Friends arrive and depart without error, a seven day journey.* All going forth and returning brings success when goals are known.

*Thunder in the bowels of the earth.* Ancient rulers forbade travel during the solstice celebrations.

9 for the bottom place. Short journeys presage good fortune.

6 for the second place. Returning in gentleness results in Heaven's blessing.

6 for the third place. Multiple returns signify difficulty, yet we are blameless.

6 for the fourth place. Departure in company followed by a solitary return, leaving wayward companions, is necessary for success.

6 for the fifth place. Returning at auspicious times exhibits probity.

6 for the top place. Returning confused results in disaster lasting ten years.

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Jiaoli, commanding a large detachment of the Shang regular army, held his steed firmly so that Yu Xiong, the Prince of Chu, could assume a prominent position before their combined troops. He had advised the prince not to advance against the Yufang nomads in so crowded and uneven an area, yet he conceded to himself that the fierce tribesmen were outnumbered and ill equipped under the best of circumstances. The disciplined allies should overwhelm them with modest effort.

The Emperor's son and heir, Wugeng, drew his chariot up beside Minister Jiaoli, his bronze armor and weapons gleaming in the clear spring dawn under the waving white Imperial banners. The forces committed by the several princes from the South numbered five one-thousand man regiments, augmented by four from Yin. Arrayed along the crests of several foothills, multicolored banners rippling silent challenges, the rising eastern sun in front of them reflecting wildly off their arms and armor, they presented a frightening image to the ragtag nomad force in the valley below.

While the Prince of Chu challenged the soldiers to live up to their calling and Jiaoli studied the scene below, Wugeng spoke in his characteristically high pitched voice. "This must be all that remains of the Yufang. Surely they have no more strength to resist us."

Jiaoli pointed toward their southern flank. "There are likely spearmen in that ravine who will attack as we march toward the kraal. Also, out of sight behind that ridge," he continued, this time pointing directly ahead behind the kraal, "there are probably bowmen who will bombard our infantry as they approach. This will be the last engagement, and they will fight desperately."

"Why must we destroy the tiny hamlets?" asked Wugeng. "Why is our objective always the kraal?"

Jiaoli, cognizant that Wugeng had been ordered to battle by his father for educational reasons, had striven to be as instructive as possible. Still, he did not relish his role as teacher and his reserve was occasionally cracked by impatience. "Subjugation or dispersal; nomads must have no other choice."

At that instant the bronze drums signaling advance began their rumbling. From that point on there would be no moments for reflection or instruction, no relaxation or yielding until the Yufang kraal was leveled and their territories lifeless. As had been planned, the main Yin force, in two columns of infantry four abreast, marched straight toward the main line of defenders, an emaciated force which was, after months of conflict, heavily dependent on those too old and too young.

As Jiaoli had predicted, a dozen or so spearmen struck from the ravine, charging madly into the right flank of the double column. When they did, the right column flanked, advancing toward them halberds high. The left column continued forward relentlessly. Arrows rained on them as they approached the clumsy fortifications and ferocious hand to hand combat ensued as soldiers washed over the barricades into the compound, killing and burning as they went.

Then, as abruptly as it had begun, it was over. A few inconsequential fragments of the nomad force were melting away into the forest. Other remnants, captured, were being executed or herded into tight groups for forced transport to Yin. What remained of the kraal was utterly destroyed.

"What you have experienced, young prince, is the standard form of battle with the nomadic peoples." Jiaoli resumed his instruction now that hostilities had subsided. Though neither of them had been at the points of most intense fighting, both had drawn barbarian blood.

"The principle strength of the nomad is severalty, that is, to the extent that individuals are independent and rootless, those individuals are immune from subjugation; however severalty cannot resist coherence. The trees must bend to the wind; the soil will be washed by the river. Therefore, the Nations grow in number and subjugate the land with little resistance from disjointed nomads."

"Unless they organize into larger assemblages." Wugeng anticipated the progression of Jiaoli's discourse.

"Yes. Where there is coherence among the nomads, defiance of the Emperor increases; but their coherence renders them vulnerable to subjugation by force or diplomacy. There is no way for a nomadic people to be both independent and strong. Both coherence and severalty are the enemy of nomadic life. That is why for a thousand generations the nations have grown with little resistance and all the world lies prostrate before the Son of Heaven in Yin."

With the defeat of this last Yufang clan, Jiaoli could march his several regiments back to Yin. What remained of the threatening tribe could be handled

by the frontier princes. The trek back would take some eighteen days; but on the second night while the division camped, word reached Jiaoli that he should proceed with all haste— Ji Chang's release had been delayed. He immediately summoned his senior officers, instructing them to assume responsibility for their regiments. With a small mounted escort, he and Wugeng would race to Yin the next morning.

"What is the urgency in the release of Prince Ji Chang," wondered Wugeng. "Has he not been a captive for seven years?"

"Over twenty enfeoffed princes petitioned Di Xin, expressing their desire to see Ji Chang released or their determination to join him in captivity. A date for his release had been promised, now rescinded." His tone betrayed his frustration. "Even the Son of Heaven cannot ignore the will of his subjects so forcefully expressed."

Wugeng idly watched the soldiers as they relaxed about the camp. "Perhaps my father simply prefers to have soldiers on the march rather than resting in camp."

"Or perhaps some mean spirited royal advisors have schemed to have him break his word. There are times, Wugeng, when resting in camp projects a ruler's will better than a marching regiment."

At dawn the pair and their escort galloped toward the capitol. Jiaoli was in a sour mood the entire trip, thoughts of possible courtly intrigues parading through his mind. Who would gain the most from Ji Chang's continued imprisonment? Qi, the Emperor's half brother? Not likely unless he were involved in a serious plot to usurp the throne. Jiaoli knew that Qi had his supporters, but he was certain Qi did not have sufficient strength to threaten the crown.

Perhaps Shang Rong or one of his circle. The Chief Minister's constant campaigns over the years to weaken the central authority had often caused unnecessary stress between the throne and ambitious princes. Ji Chang's continued imprisonment could serve Shang Rong's egalitarian cause. No, he concluded, it would not be Qi or Shang Rong; it would more likely be Prince Hu of Chong who resented and feared Ji Chang more than he feared the Emperor himself. There is nothing that would serve Hu better than to have Ji Chang and Di Xin at each other's throats.

As his party hastened toward Yin, Jiaoli's anxieties caused the days and nights to seem sluggish. The rivers and streams all seemed swollen, the forests dense, the hills precipitous. His horse handled clumsily and resistant; nevertheless, they arrived at Yin on the day expected. The first high court official with which he had contact was Zuyi, the senior scribe and Shang Rong's top assistant, a man Jiaoli knew to be immanently truthful, though not very wise. He and several assistants bustled around in his quarters.

"How is it, Zuyi, that Prince Ji Chang has not been released? The princes of the southern and western regions were assured..."

"I do not know, minister." Zuyi was intently occupied with his tasks, and Jiaoli suddenly realized what he was doing: supervising the movement of wooden and bamboo books and divining shells and bones. Had the situation at the capitol deteriorated so much that some were removing their belongings? No, these were documents from the royal archive.

Jiaoli heard the drumming call to assembly. Looking around the palace grounds, he saw officials of the court beginning to move toward the Great Hall. Zuyi responded to the unspoken question. "His Majesty summons all to receive yet another delegation from Zhou."

Jiaoli proceeded to the palace archive where Shang Rong and numerous assistants were carefully inserting documents into metal coffers. "What are you doing, minister?" Workers were handing up documents from within a deep subterranean storage pit. "What emergency prompts you to disturb the archives?"

"Just a precaution. I have arranged for the ancient writings of greatest import to be stored for safety."

Jiaoli looked closely at the boxes: ten unmarked bronze cubes nearly large enough to serve as coffins. For a moment his alarm at this foreboding activity was supplanted by curiosity at their construction and content. Though he was best schooled in the military arts, he considered himself well educated; he knew and used some 1,000 written characters. Yet here were bronze tablets upon which were inscribed three times that many words. He picked one up for closer scrutiny.

Shang Rong noticed. "Those are lineage tablets, Minister, recording the names of our ancestors and sovereigns into remotest antiquity. The tablet you hold describes the Yellow Emperor. There are tablets here on all of the Three Primeval Emperors and the Five Premier Emperors."

Jiaoli was moved to be in such close contact with documents recorded by court scribes some fifty generations before him. These were legendary rulers with divine qualities.

"It is my duty to take precautions that will protect the royal archives from damage."

Knowing that tension among the states over Ji Chang's captivity was dangerously high, Jiaoli realized it might indeed be wise to have them moved to a place of safety where they would survive a period of turmoil.

"I assume by your demeanor that the Yufang campaign has been successful. How fares Prince Yu Xiong?"

"Well, Minister. Why do you not proceed to the assembly? Is there not a delegation to receive?"

"The envoys from Zhou have approached the throne through Feizong. They seem to feel that good fortune might come to them following a different path."

Jiaoli turned his back to Shang Rong considering intensely the ramifications of that apparently insignificant statement. The flashpoint of security in the entire world was an imprisoned Ji Chang. The threat of a concerted revolt by numerous princes prompted Di Xin to agree to Ji Chang's release; yet the release was inexplicably delayed. Then a delegation from Zhou approached the Emperor through an advisor reputed to be corrupt instead of the Chief Minister as was appropriate and usual.

Jiaoli turned back to Shang Rong. The shifting of power appeared to be inevitable. No doubt Feizong had delayed the release knowing that another Zhou delegation approached. When Ji Chang's release followed the Feizong assembly, all the nations would recognize the new power near the throne: not Shang Rong, not Qi, not Jizi, but Feizong! Jiaoli was disgusted that petty politics sparked around the volatile circumstances of Ji Chang's detention but was a bit relieved to fully

understand the shifting tide of power. The Zhou prince would ultimately be released, he knew, and order in the world would be maintained. He might not relish Feizong's new prominence; but he knew what should be done to preserve his own post as Provost Minister and maintain order in the empire—for the time being at least.

Shang Rong heard the curse Jiaoli muttered to himself and looked up from his work. "Fear not," he said. "Devotion to one's duty may sometimes be distasteful, but one who is so devoted is not himself soiled."

Jiaoli was, he realized, suddenly impatient with Shang Rong's penchant for spouting such epigrams and moralisms. As he walked out of the archive toward the Great Hall, he heard a final comment from Shang Rong, "Gather your strength, Minister, to defend the House of Shang."

Once in the hall, he lingered in the rear, rather than assume his customary place near the dais among other prominent figures. From this distance the ministers and officials seemed smaller, of course; but, as Jiaoli watched, he felt himself more detached from the glorious ceremonies he had always relished in the past. Feizong, the concubine Daji, and the Emperor were becoming something quite different right before his eyes.

Drums and gongs sounded as San Yisheng, the envoy from Zhou, was summoned into the throne room followed by a train of assistants, animal handlers, and archers. "To the most glorious Son of Heaven, the people of Zhou send their fondest objects, their most prized possessions, out of love and reverence for their sovereign. We hope that our humble offerings will soften your Majesty's heart so that our Prince Ji Chang will be forgiven his indiscretions and be ordered to return to his people and his loving family."

San Yisheng then waved his arm with a flourish toward his bevy of attendants who began bringing forth their tribute: bronze vessels studded with jade, a half-dozen zebras, three cages each containing a pair of white foxes, and four huge tortoises each supported by two strong men. The audience in the hall muttered and whispered to each other at the magnitude of Zhou's tribute. Lastly, in deference to the minister who had influenced Di Xin to receive the Zhou petition, a bow and single arrow were placed at the feet of Feizong. All in the chamber knew they were fashioned by Chui, the most famous craftsman in world history, who was the ancient Emperor Shun's Minister of Works. Then the entire delegation prostrated themselves and remained totally still in the silent hall.

Di Xin hesitated, then slowly rose to his feet. He seemed visibly moved by the splendor that had just been laid before him. He walked slowly over to one of the zebras and stroked its neck, then stooped to peer into a cage of foxes. He suddenly rose and turned toward San Yisheng. "Minister," he said loudly, "your prince must be as loyal to me as a son. Someone has misled me to believe he has committed transgressions against the throne. Any one of these gifts should have been enough to secure his release." Di Xin addressed an official near the dais. "Go quickly and summon Ji Chang to my presence."

Jiaoli knew that Ji Chang had probably already been transported from Youli prison and would be under guard in an antechamber, so he was not surprised when the soldier returned with the prince within minutes. Ji Chang was escorted to the front of the dais and fell prostrate near San Yisheng.



Di Xin stepped closer to him. "Rise, my faithful prince. I have come to understand your loyalty. There has been unspeakable treachery that will now be rectified." Ji Chang stood before the Emperor with his head bowed.

Up to this point, Di Xin followed an understood script, but what happened next was totally unexpected, a surprise to everyone present. Di Xin signaled to attendants who brought several armloads of symbolic weapons which they dropped before Ji Chang. Then the prince was given a jade insignia." Hence forth, Prince Ji Chang of Zhou shall be known as Xibo: 'Field Marshall of the West'. He shall have the full authority of Heaven's Throne to wage war and launch expeditions in my name."

The entire assembly was struck dumb except for the venal Chief Minister Feizong. Obviously Di Xin had decided to make this singular appointment without consulting any advisors but him. At the rear of the hall, Jiaoli's head drooped in exasperation. Whether Di Xin knew it or not, the Empire was now at Ji Chang's mercy. Many of the nations would look upon this appointment as an abdication by Di Xin or, at least, an invitation to abandon the Throne in favor of Zhou. At any time, Ji Chang might plunge the world into chaos and war. A shudder of fear coursed through him as he considered the ramifications of Di Xin's ill advised appointment.

The Emperor reseated himself on his throne while his sudden announcement was being absorbed by the multitude in the hall. Ji Chang was, of course, not prepared for it, and he weighed his remarks carefully in his mind. When he finally spoke, it was so quietly that Jiaoli strained to hear his words from near the back of the hall.

"Your Majesty is too gracious and generous with his subjects. I am not certain I can maintain the dignity of such an awesome office; however, this I can do. When I return to Zhou, I will instruct my ministers to immediately survey a thousand acres on the west bank of the Lou and convey them to Your Majesty. I will use the authority you have given me to broaden the lands of the Central Nation only and never the lands of Zhou. The Son of Heaven can call upon Xibo at any time to come to his aid or to the aid of any state loyal to the Throne. This promise... shall be kept... while I live."

Jiaoli concentrated intently, a look of grim skepticism on his face. "I am pleased you are so inclined, Xibo," responded Di Xin." I have been deeply saddened by your unjustified imprisonment and now wish to rectify your suffering. What can be offered to you in compensation?"

Ji Chang thought for a few seconds then said, "I would be most pleased by one thing in all the world, Majesty. I wish for the 'scorch and burn' punishment to be abolished." Murmurs rustled through the crowd as they realized the magnitude of Ji Chang's request. Not only had he refused the opportunity to acquire vast riches, but he had also requested that the Emperor and his favorite concubine sacrifice a great personal, though depraved, pleasure on his behalf.

"Is that all, Xibo?" Di Xin was noticeably irritated, but he did not appear to realize the far reaching consequences of Ji Chang's maneuver, only irritated at the loss of a petty gratification." Do you not request some singular honor, some magnificent adornment, some distinctive power?"

"No, Majesty." Ji Chang bowed to emphasize his humility. Jiaoli watched in admiration as Ji Chang's calculated words and actions won sympathy and respect from so many in the hall, Feizong, of course, not included.

"Do you not request, perhaps, additions to your regiments of soldiers?"

"No, Majesty; only that the 'scorch and burn' be abolished."

"Do you not wish to know who your adversaries are, who has cast aspersions on you, who has misled me into doubting your loyalty leading to your incarceration?"

"No, Majesty; only that the. . . ."

"Very well then, Xibo!" Di Xin's voice became louder. "The 'scorch and burn' punishment will be abolished from this day forward." His hand waved in frustration.

Ji Chang kneeled and put his face in his hands. "I cannot express the thanks in my heart, Majesty."

"Go to the West, Xibo, and secure the peace for my empire." A look of distaste crossed the emperor's face. He obviously was not threatened by his new Field Marshall of the West.

Ji Chang and the Zhou delegation began to withdraw from the hall; but before Ji Chang exited, Di Xin called out to him. "I will tell you, Xibo, who was responsible for your tribulations even though I know you will harbor no grudge. It was Hu, Prince of Chong!" Ji Chang turned and bowed to indicate he had understood, but he made no response.

Within seconds after the Zhou party had left, Di Xin and his entourage departed the hall. Jiaoli rushed along the corridors toward Di Xin's private chambers. At the entrance through which Di Xin had just passed, a small crowd was gathering, including Wugeng, the Tutors Jizi and Bigan, Qi, and Zuyi. Noticably absent was Chief Minister Shang Rong. Soldiers prevented their entrance into the sovereign's suite.

Just as Jiaoli reached them, Feizong appeared at the entrance. "His Majesty will see you now, ministers," he said, and the throng burst through the doorway jostling for prominent positions, gradually becoming still with bowed heads. Di Xin was being undressed by a half-dozen female attendants who were supervised by the concubine Daji.

Prince Qi of Wei spoke first. "Majesty, are you not aware that my own fief is very near your new Field Marshall? Have you considered the consequences if he should challenge the Emperor's brother? Such would be an affront to the dignity of the Throne."

Di Xin looked unusually calm and sober. "Of course, my loyal brother. I am counting on your strength and intelligence to hold Xibo accountable for his actions." Di Xin certainly would know and relish the thought of his childhood competitor to the crown itself being slaughtered by the new Xibo.

Wugeng then spoke nervously. "Father, will Ji Chang's greater authority not encourage new alliances between him and other princes?"

"To the contrary, my son. All the princes in the South and West will fear him more. They will fall over themselves rushing to the throne for protection. Do you not remember how Emperor Wuding elevated the two princes of Shiwei and Dapeng to Field Marshall while he engaged the Guifang nomads? After Wuding

had secured the peace and regained his strength, he easily destroyed the two pretentious hegemonies."

Senior Tutor Jizi spoke next. "But Majesty, the troublesome princes you refer to claimed their hegemony before Wuding ennobled them; and, more importantly, all the princes in the four lands already despised them for their tyranny and iniquity." To Jizi, Di Xin's analogy as justification was awfully wrong headed.

"No hegemon will gain much," pronounced Feizong, "without resistance from the princes. They will keep Ji Chang in his fief."

Jiaoli saw immediately the source of this mistaken strategy." Minister Feizong has underestimated Ji Chang," he said. "As Xibo exercises his new authority, and he most certainly will, many of the princes will desert the Throne and many others will die in the carnage."

Feizong's gaze upon Jiaoli was cold and intense. As he was about to defend his position, Di Xin interrupted." What is done is done." He was then fully redressed in more casual garb, though still regally. "I see that my good minister Jiaoli and my dutiful son have returned from Yufang. Has Prince Yu Xiong been victorious?"

Jiaoli bowed and answered in the affirmative. "The nomads of Yufang will trouble us no longer."

"And how did my son and heir conduct himself?"

"Admirably, Majesty."

"Excellent." Di Xin surveyed the cluster of ministers about him. "Let us have no more agitation about Xibo. Now I intend to eat and drink in peace. Be gone with you all!"

The party thus summarily dismissed, filed out into the corridors of the palace, each person going his separate way. Jiaoli drifted slowly toward one of the parapets on the periphery of the palace compound. From there he could see the Zhou delegation slowly receding toward the western frontier, Ji Chang's chariot in front.

"How benign and amicable Xibo seems as he makes so leisurely a course." Jiaoli looked over his shoulder into the face of Jizi who had just joined him.

"His course is leisurely, Senior Tutor, because he travels on roads built by the blood and sweat of Yin."

"I think Ji Chang is capable of building his own roads, Jiaoli. I pray to our ancestors that those roads lead west rather than east." He paused, then continued. "What have your infiltrators revealed to you about our enemies?"

"I have sent no fewer than ten of my trusted men; and each of them returns, one after another, with glowing reports on the loyalty of the Zhou people to the Throne."

"Do you begin to doubt your own men?"

"You have spent over seven years in Ji Chang's company. Do you doubt his integrity, his piety? The common people of the Central Nation refer to their lawful sovereign by a disparaging name. Do you doubt that Emperor Zoo is as bloodthirsty as Xibo is pious? Heaven, as you said many years ago, will bestow its mandate on whom it chooses. For myself, Senior Tutor Jizi, I expect to die by a Zhou knife. You would do well to prepare for the same fate."

Jiaoli abruptly walked away, leaving Jizi staring silently toward the setting sun.

# Chapter 14

## Act for the Work of Heaven Summer, 1061 BCE

### Hexagram 17 SUI. Lake above Thunder

*Following, great success.* Righteous persistence is rewarded.  
*Thunder rumbling within a swamp.* The Superior Man rests easy at night.

9 for the bottom place. Those in power change; purposeful, righteous gatherings bring good results.

6 for the second place. In service to the boy, he loses the man; both cannot be served.

6 for the third place. In service to the man, he loses the boy; but restraint brings good results.

9 for the fourth place. Following those with ulterior motives brings disaster.

9 for the fifth place. Trusting those we follow is admirable and brings good fortune.

6 for the top place. The Superior Man inspires allegiance while those above him forfeit it.

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Ji Chang was somewhat embarrassed by the unbridled enthusiasm of his subjects, and so he avoided the work site all day. Zhou's chief architect, Mimou, needed no supervision from him anyway. Lu Shang had only yesterday announced to the populous the construction of the new and opulent prime-house, and volunteers gathered in Qishan like storm clouds around a mountain.

This hot summer day had served well the stamping of Marvel Terrace's foundation. Scores of the people had labored since sunrise scraping a circular area measuring over a thousand square feet. The smooth, level substratum, three feet below surface level, was then ready for stamping.

Workers carrying woven baskets of mud streamed from near the spring where others had moistened the soil just excavated. The wet earth was spread evenly across the scraped substratum. As the hot sun sucked out its water, workers with heavy stone pestles pounded the spread mud smooth, flat, and hard. From sun and toil, three layers were formed, stone stiff, upon which their beloved prince would dwell.

The periphery of the floor was lined with logs; and at its center a large timber rose to support the coming heavy roof. Thus on the first day of construction the hardest work was done. Many of the volunteers drifted away as the day closed knowing they would not be needed further.

"I saw nothing in Yin to surpass your skills, Officer Mimou," said Ji Chang as he ran his fingers across the smooth new floor." But I shall not sleep a single night here."

Ji Fa and Mimou both looked at Ji Chang with surprise, for the orders had been issued in Ji Chang's name "to erect a Marvel Terrace for the pleasure of the Prince, to build a gate of polished marble, to employ at the new prime-house the fairest maidens, and to gather the finest bells, drums, and other ceremonial finery for the entertainment and edification of the royal family".

"Why will you not reside here, father? The Field Marshall of the West should have a prime-house befitting his stature."

Ji Chang hrumphed, "My shrewd advisor here agrees with you." He was referring to Lu Shang who had urged the new construction.

"We have in the end agreed," said Lu Shang, "to bide our time and gradually build up our arms and armaments, for the day will come when they are needed."

"Di Xin will be lulled into complacency upon hearing reports that Ji Chang has finally surrendered and is succumbing to the baser urges," said Ji Chang. "Tell me my zealous son in what way are things different now that I am Xibo? Is our Zhou homeland still strong or weak by our own efforts and virtue? Are not our people still prosperous or poor according to their devotion to duty? Are not the blessings of Heaven or the Spirits of our ancestors not attentive to our needs according to our observances of the rites?"

Ji Fa's response revealed his nationalistic streak. "The difference, father, is that Di Xin has abdicated the Holy Mandate to Zhou and, therefore, to the ruler of Zhou. Now all the people of the Nations anticipate your coming forth to seize the Throne of Heaven."

Ji Chang looked to Lu Shang with a pleading expression. "After I am gone to join our ancestors, Teacher Uncle Shang, I fear our people will be led into one disaster or another by one who is a slave to ambition."

Lu Shang smiled slightly. "In the matter of your title and authority, we all agree. Di Xin has granted you the license to conduct expeditions against his enemies or his friends at your will. By so doing, he has turned his back to the community of nations Heaven had assigned him to protect. Can a mother tiger turn away from her kittens?"

Ji Chang's brow wrinkled as he considered his response." Since we first met on the bank of Panxi, my venerable old friend, I have always enjoyed our verbal sparring, even though I am sometimes irritated by your unbreakable wisdom. Yet, on this matter of the building of Marvel Terrace and the transference of Heaven's Mandate to Zhou, I think you are wrong. Whether or not a mother tiger acts in error, she cannot refuse her duty to her kittens. Kittens, however, have been known to leave the den prematurely to their sorrow."

Ji Chang began to walk toward his prime-house with Ji Fa and Lu Shang trailing behind him. None of them noticed officer Mimou bowing reverently as they strolled away. "Do you not remember how the Emperor Wuding named Shiwei and Dapeng as Field Marshalls? It was not long before the two hegemony encountered the opposition of the various nations. They were, it is true, held in check until Wuding could recover from his struggle with the nomads. At the proper time, he wiped them from the Empire as he did the sweat from his brow."

It was Lu Shang's turn to ponder a response as the three men walked through the darkening dusk. "That is true," he admitted, "yet the circumstances are not wholly alike. Shiwei and Dapeng had already given themselves the titles of 'bo' out of arrogance and ambition. Furthermore, they expanded their power by force over the weaker states near them which incurred the anger and fear of other, more prominent princes. Lastly, they had not the respect of their own people."

"Nor the strength of Zhou," interjected Ji Fa.

Ji Chang turned to his impetuous son. "One must not confuse the opportunity and desire to rule with duty imposed by the Lord Above. Wuding was their rightful sovereign; and Heaven, disgusted by their rising appetites, could be expected to prostrate them painfully before Wuding."

Ji Fa was no match for the wit of the two Older men, but he had given the issue of Heaven's Mandate much thought. "But isn't it true, father, that Heaven has created the rulers and teachers of men in order to secure peace and prosperity for the people? If a ruler ceases to serve well the people, has he not also ceased to serve Heaven?"

The three men had reached the point where they must separate in order to proceed toward their individual quarters and had stopped walking. "When I was in Yin," said Ji Chang, "I consulted often with Senior Tutor Jizi. Once we were standing on the edge of a smooth pond looking at the clear reflection of Heaven there. Suddenly a breeze so soft it was imperceptible brushed the surface of the water and the clear image of the Heavens above the pool was distorted. This happened just as Jizi said, 'Heaven's will may be subverted or distorted by the slightest intransigence or irresponsibility.' Be sure, my son, it is Heaven's will that you wish to apply and not your own."

"I believe, father," insisted Ji Fa, "that Di Xin has relinquished the Mandate by turning his back on the people and by refusing to practice the ceremonies. The five elements will soon be thrown into disorder and tragedies will begin to descend on the people. How can the Way of Heaven be manifest on earth if the proper men are not willing to accommodate It's will?"

Ji Chang turned away as if to shield himself from his son's charges; but the truth of his argument was unavoidable. Ji Fa was expressing forcefully what none other in Zhou could express but many believed. Ji Fa continued, "I think, father, the time will soon come when you must accept Heaven's command." At that the three men parted for their separate quarters.

Ji Chang felt ill at ease. He was irritated at his brash son's forceful assertions, while recognizing the danger inherent in his circumstances as Xibo. Any of the states of the Empire might seek his protection, and Zhou might find itself hopelessly entangled with petty alliances built up over time as ambitious princes vied for preeminence. Zhou could expect only as much deference from other states as they wished to grant it based on fear or admiration, while incurring the anger and jealousy of whichever princes might be put to disadvantage. Isolationism in the community of states was henceforth no longer an option.

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Though Ji Chang had some difficulty sleeping, the morning arrived with its usual suddenness. His personal attendants had him prepared for the day's activity

efficiently. When he arrived at the building site of Marvel Terrace, Ji Dan and Shang Gao had collected all the required paraphernalia for the consecration ceremony. For nearly an hour, the music of bells, drums, and chanters reverberated through the streets of Qishan, an irresistible attraction to its inhabitants. At its conclusion, an ox was slain with two, sharp ax blows at its neck. Its blood, collected in a polished bronze bowl, was sprinkled around the entire periphery of the foundation. The ox was buried under the main threshold.

The sacrificial ceremonies complete, Ji Chang rose and turned to his gathered citizenry." People of Zhou," he began." Heaven, having produced the people below, appointed for them rulers and teachers. Both rulers and the people must act for the work of Heaven. From Heaven come the five relationships with their several duties: that between friend and friend, that between brother and brother, that between husband and wife, that between parent and child, and that between sovereign and subject.

"Being charged with those duties; behold, we see the five courses of honorable conduct: benevolence, righteousness, wisdom, good faith, and manners. From Heaven come the five ceremonies and the five punishments so that we may see the blessings of propitious conduct and the sorrow of iniquitous conduct.

"For forty-one years I have striven to rule according to Heaven's will. Except for seven of those years, I have been here among you day by day, toiling in the fields, pursuing our enemies. The Emperor in Yin removed me from my duties for those seven years. Cut off from my people and the places of veneration to our ancestors and other spirits in the land, the people ceased to receive good fortune from the Lord Above.

"Now that I have returned, I will strive ever the harder to advance the fortunes of Zhou. Therefore, to commemorate my return from Yin and my rededication to my people, I hereby proclaim this to be the First Year of the Second Reign of Ji Chang, Prince of Zhou and Field Marshall of the West!"

Ji Chang paused to let the people consider the ramifications of a second reign, then began again. "New things are produced by blending. Blending copper and tin produce the bronze for our utensils and arms. Blending water with earth produces the clay which is then blended with fire to produce pottery. Even the floor of a house is blended from water and earth. If there is one sound, it will not long be listened to; a plate of one color will not long be looked at; a tool of one substance will not long be used for it will have little solidity. This blending of differing things is called harmony.

"A ruler of men must seek harmony in his government; therefore, following the examples of the sage Kings of old, I will bring together the differing voices and opinions among our people to discuss the matters of administering the affairs of Zhou. This great-house we raise today will henceforth be known as Marvel Terrace, where the differing minds of our people shall blend together for the harmony desired by Heaven. The old shall impart knowledge on the young and the wise shall guide the foolish."

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Ji Chang abruptly concluded his dedication by giving the signal to Officer Mimou to commence construction of the house. He and his close associates and

family members removed to an observation point near enough to watch, yet distant enough to not interfere with the great human activity that began. At that distance, to the workers below, the small group of Zhou's royalty and appointed ministers, colorfully attired in their ceremonial silks, resembled a distant bouquet of wild flowers gently rustling in the summer breeze.

## Chapter 15

### Divested of Dignity Fall, 1061 BCE

#### Hexagram 23 BO. Mountain above Earth

*Ecdysis.* No goal can be reached successfully now.

*A mountain resting upon the earth.* The great shower blessings on those below.

9 for the top place. Ripe fruit for the worthy; the Superior Man gains a cart, the mean one loses his house.

6 for the fifth place. Fish on a string for the taking; maids in the prime-house enjoy high favor.

6 for the fourth place. He continues removing bedding even to the bare stuffing.

6 for the third place. He continues removing all bedding; no error is apparent, though he loses contact with those above and below.

6 for the second place. He continues removing linens at the edge of the bed; timidity results in misfortune.

6 for the bottom place. He starts removing his bedding in private. Allies are dismissed and misfortune results.

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Even the fall's radiance, its brilliant colors and crisp air, could not lift Bigan's perpetual melancholy. The garden through which he had just walked to deliver the message to the Emperor, his garden, was without blossoms to bolster his spirits. He felt as the leaves, vainly struggling to remain aloft in the wind tossed boughs.

"Provost Minister Jiaoli has returned from Zhou, Majesty," he reported. Shall he be received?" Bigan approached only so close as needed to convey his message which he did so with head bowed and eyes to the floor, more from revulsion than reverence.

"Has he been successful? Has he returned with Xibo's jade block?"

The jade block referred to was well known to be Xibo's most prized possession: a large jade stone, flat and smooth on one side, upon which he could write characters with a lacquer and brush, characters which could be easily wiped off with a cloth. Bigan responded reluctantly, "No, Majesty." Bigan wondered if the



Emperor wanted Ji Chang's block for its size, because of its unusual shape, or just because it belonged to Ji Chang.

"Why do you not send your armies after it?" Without looking up, Bigan recognized the voice of the evil concubine Daji. "Why do you tolerate this man Ji Chang and offer him titles and honors when he defies you?"

Di Xin's reaction was harsh. "Quiet woman. These are affairs of state." She chuckled.

Bigan conveyed the message from Ji Chang that discrete envoys had brought to Senior Tutor Jizi only days earlier. "Majesty, we have received word that Xibo refused because he prefers another liaison."

"Another liaison?"

"Apparently Provost Minister Jiaoli is not senior enough for him. His message names Feizong as his personal choice for liaison between himself and you."

Feizong approached from the far side of the chamber. "Xibo should be humored, Majesty," he said. "If he desires to have my humble self as your ambassador, I see no reason to refuse him." Bigan winced and consciously riveted his eyes to the floor. He knew Feizong's face would be glowing with pride.

"Very well, then. Feizong shall be my liaison with the Field Marshals of the West and North." His hand fluttered in mock ceremony. Bigan, you are to so instruct my ministers." He sighed, "Can we please get on with the filling of my wine pool?"

Bigan knew before entering Di Xin's chamber that he would witness some innovative new depravity, but what he observed this time sent shivers through his body. There was a forest of hanging animal carcasses, and in it naked young men and women were scampering and giggling, playfully chasing each other about the chamber. It was some sort of game the rules of which Bigan had no desire to know.

A pool had been dug in the floor of the chamber into which servants were pouring a large quantity of wine. It was nearly full, and a maiden was being disrobed in preparation for a bath in the wine pool. Bigan was horrified. The maiden was Daji.

Struggling to control his desire to flee screaming from the chamber, Bigan continued his report. "Jiaoli reports that Xibo has ordered the construction of a new pleasure-house called Marvel Terrace. He has ordered ladies in attendance to be gathered and the beating of drums and the ringing of bells when he holds court there."

"Di Xin's face brightened." So Xibo has succumbed. I am most pleased that I will not have to worry about him any more." He paused guzzling a chalice of warm wine. "Once Feizong has acquired the jade writing block for me, I will have no doubts about Xibo's loyalty.

Daji had eased herself into the pool, squealing and laughing, but without a splash. Suddenly, a pair of nudes playing chase around the chamber dashed past Bigan and hopped into the wine, the resulting shower dousing the stunned Junior Tutor.

With a muffled shriek, Bigan rushed from the chamber trailed by laughter from the revelers. He ran mindlessly between and beyond the buildings and then on the path along the nearby Huan River until the palace compound was out of sight beyond some hills before he slowed to a walk. Waves of intense emotion washed

over him then receded like surf. Anger and sorrow followed by disgust and indignation one after another coursed through him. Out of breath, he stumbled and came to rest on the river bank.

He remained there emotionally paralyzed until well after sundown. There were moments when he felt the urge to drown himself in the river or to cut his own throat. At those moments images of his own family at Choage confused his urges and confounded his desires. At other moments he felt capable of cutting the throat of Di Xin. This urge was confounded by other desires stemming from a lifetime of devotion to duty and a value system built entirely upon loyalty.

He must somehow distance himself from those he had grown to despise the most and those he loved the most, for Di Xin's cruelty knew no bounds. He had also begun to doubt if the time might not come when he would commit an act of despicable treachery.

For the first time, by the quiet river Huan, Bigan felt fear: fear for himself that he might harbor such evil desires, fear for his family and friends that their society might disintegrate, fear for his nation that they might suffer defeat, not from enemies without, but from decay within—from the loss of decency and honor. His greatest fear might be realized: that the House of Shang might not deserve to continue, that the Lord Above and the spirits of the land desired them to be divested of dignity.

Somehow as these thoughts and feelings coursed through him, he had not become tearful and gradually his nerves quieted. Gentle noises from the stream were comforting in the dark. Feeling soiled, he disrobed silently and stepped into the river. The cold water sweeping past caressed and consoled him.

## **Chapter 16**

### **When the Forces Are In Balance**

**Fall, 1060 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 53**

**CHIEN.**

**Wind / Wood above Mountain**

*Progress by stages.* A wedding results in good fortune; persistent virtue is rewarded.

*Tree upon a mountain.* The Superior Man's virtue inspires the people.

6 for the bottom place. The wild goose advances toward the river bank; a younger brother's scandals do not reflect on the family.

6 for the second place. The wild goose advances toward the rock; festive dining is fortunate.

9 for the third place. The wild goose advances toward dry land; a young husband's absence portends bad fortune.

6 for the fourth place. The wild goose advances toward its tree roost; no error shown.

9 for the fifth place. The wild goose advances toward the knoll; fulfillment of desires.

9 for the top place. The wild goose advances toward the north bank; its feathers used in rituals bring good fortune.

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"Yes, father. I know why the ancient sage Kings married queens from different families. Ji Fa's tone was dangerously patronizing. "The blending of disparate objects brings about general harmony. Is not Yijiang a maiden from the far east?"

So she was; but Ji Chang often forgot that his beloved Teacher Uncle Shang and his two daughters were recent immigrants to Zhou.

Ji Fa continued, "She is renowned for her beauty and virtue— acceptable to all, father."

"The opportunity to wed the grand-niece of Prince Yu Xiong of Chu should not be overlooked. Xiong's loyalty may be crucial at some precarious time in your future as ruler of Zhou."

"My father underestimates the influence he wields. Of all the princes of the nations, Xiong would be the *first* to side with Zhou in a crisis; therefore, you should arrange to have me marry the daughter of the Prince of Yan. He is least likely to be an ally of Zhou,"

Ji Fa's logic was indisputable. Under his son's intense pressure and sound reasoning, Ji Chang felt himself being persuaded.

"Truth is, my impetuous son, I will be relieved once you finally marry. A crown prince at forty without an heir has begun to stir anxieties. Very well," he sighed. "We will ask our ancestors for guidance in the matter. If the omens and signs are good, I will favor the match."

Father and son, the two leading men of the Zhou nation, marched back toward Ji Chang's prime-house, leaving the new metal forge and its threatening noises behind. Unlike the small bronze foundries scattered about Zhou making tripods and cups for profit, this one hammered out halberds, spears, long-knives and chariot parts: materials for war. Both Ji Chang and his father before him had greatly encouraged bronze manufacture so when Ji Chang decided to increase production of war materials, there was no shortage of skilled founders. Indeed, though none knew but Ji Chang himself, Zhou had created the largest war materials factory in the world, perhaps twice the size of the largest foundry he had visited in Yin.

Memories of Senior Tutor Jizi came into his mind. He often marveled at the openness of Jizi and certain other of the Emperor's high ministers. While he was in Yin, but before his imprisonment, he had complete freedom to observe the nooks and crannies of Shang culture and industry. It never seemed to occur to them that what he learned there might be used against them someday. They had an unjustified haughtiness, which was, in Ji Chang's opinion, their greatest weakness. That was why, on the one hand, they were neither secretive nor suspicious; and, on the other hand, why they would never consider ousting Di Xin no matter how depraved or deleterious he might become. Yet, as a prince of his

own realm, he could not bring himself to sanction Di Xin's overthrow. To do so would be to admit to worldly limitations on a sovereign's will.

"What are you mumbling about, father?" Ji Fa looked askance at the seventy-three year old man walking laboriously beside him. Although he revered his father more than any man on earth, he had begun to notice the inevitable weaknesses of old age, some no doubt aggravated by his seven-year captivity in Yin.

Ji Chang ignored the question as he and Ji Fa approached Ji Chang's prime-house, and he instead shouted for Shang Gao to prepare for a divination. He also sent Hongyao to fetch the princess Taisi. This was a most auspicious occasion; generations of Zhou culture governed the procedures.

Within seconds after Ji Chang and Ji Fa entered the chamber, Taisi appeared at the door more gaunt and frail than Ji Chang himself. Ji Fa noticed that slight glow in his father's face which always appeared whenever Taisi did." Our son wishes to marry at last, mother. Come let us decide together the right match."

With the help of several younger female family members, Taisi entered the chamber and seated herself near him. "Knowing that he is as brazen and shameless as his father, I suspect the two of you have already agreed on it; so why do you need to disturb an old woman?"

Ji Fa could not contain himself." I wish to wed Yijiang, mother, the older of Teacher Uncle Shang's daughters."

Taisi was relieved, for her son had developed what she felt was an unhealthy attachment lately to one of his nieces. In fact, having observed over the years her oldest son's sometimes audacious conduct, she had always feared his choice would be ignoble. After a pause, she said, "The choice is satisfactory."

Ji Fa then left the house while his father, with the help of Shang Gao consulted the tortoise shells and the shi stalks for the will of their ancestors. All would be in their hands now. If the match was satisfactory to the spirits, Ji Chang would select a go-between, a faithful friend. There would be gifts and pretenses, ceremonies and exhibitions of mutual honor at each dawn and dusk for five days. Only sunrise and sunset, when the strong and weak forces of the world were in balance, were the appropriate times for such actions.

The late afternoon shadows were lengthening as Ji Fa made his way through the city toward his own house. He was barely on his way when he encountered a party of strangers marching into the city from the countryside beyond, the eyes of the high ranking officers in their chariots flitting from object to object and person to person. They carried the banners of Yu and Rui, two small states on the west bank of the Yellow River. Ji Fa approached them amicably and bowed." Do you gentlemen from afar desire guidance?"

"We seek Xibo!" they replied exuberantly and in near unison.

It was both gratifying and frightening to hear those three words 'we seek Xibo'. Ji Fa knew that this was only the first of many delegations to approach the new Field Marshall who had the permission of the Emperor to either bolster or obliterate other states at will. Now they would begin to choose sides like archery teams in the Salute and Give Ceremony, each state reacting to the actions of others around it according to its prince's good or bad judgement. Yu and Rui appeared to have chosen Zhou.

"Xibo is consulting with our ancestors on a matter of family concern. I am his eldest son. Please accept the comfort of my house until tomorrow morning when an audience can be arranged."

As darkness fell on Qishan, Ji Fa and his foreign guests were made comfortable in Ji Fa's house by servants who brought them mats and soft furs to lie on, bronze cups to warm and drink wine from, and pottery bowls of grain and vegetables. The fire in the center of the house tinted every face with the warm orange glow of refuge from the cold night.

After his two visitor's appetites had been dampened, Ji Fa ventured conversation. "What business do you have with Xibo, gentlemen?"

The older of the two spoke. "I am Kuan Yi, Lord of Rui. He is my brother Kuan Wei, Lord of Yu. Our two states have grown very close together, and we have been at odds with each other for some time."

Ji Fa smiled. "I have many brothers and well know being at odds with them over small matters. I have been taught by my elders, brothers may fight among themselves inside the house, but they must fight together to defend the house."

"Our differences have not been over small matters." The younger brother, Wei continued, "We have not wished to approach the Emperor as his methods for solving disputes are not always..." His voice trailed off.

"You need not explain your reluctance to submit to Di Xin." Ji Fa knew well the cruelties the Emperor might inflict upon any who crossed his path.

The older, Kuan Yi, resumed the narrative. "Minister Feizong is now in general charge of the government. Feizong is well known to succumb to bribery, so neither of us would commit to mediation of our disputes at the Yin court."

Ji Fa's face was stoic, though he could barely contain his glee. It meant that Lu Shang's ploy of sending the jade writing block only through that despicable little man had worked. Along with the Emperor's own malevolence, Feizong's corruption would hasten the collapse of Di Xin's House.

"So you wish for Xibo to arbitrate?"

The two brothers looked at each other then back at Ji Fa. Kuan Yi shook his head and said, "That is why we came to Zhou; but we have resolved our dispute and now wish only to inform Xibo and pledge our devotion to him. My brother and I have been made ashamed of our argumentativeness. We have observed the good people of Zhou, how their sense of respect and consideration for others governs their conduct..."

Wei injected his own observations. "When we walked along your roads, the people all yielded the right of way courteously, and in the fields the husbandmen diverted their herds for our ease of passage."

Yi resumed his own narrative. "In your villages and hamlets the men and women are all working separately and we saw not one white-haired person burdened with heavy labor."

Wei interrupted again. "In one village we saw a young officer being promoted, but he protested that another deserved it."

Yi again continued. "We came to see that your people would be ashamed to contend over what we did."

Ji Fa was becoming amused at these two, though he would never reveal it and discredit them in that way. "What was your dispute about? Perhaps it was not as momentous as you at first thought?"

"There is a large hill between Yu and Rui," Yi explained, "which overlooks the Yellow River. We both decided to build our capitol cities there."

"Whoever held that hill," said Wei, "would surely dominate the entire valley."

"When my great-grand father founded this city," commented Ji Fa, "its height over the valley was an important factor."

"We are ashamed," continued Yi, ignoring Ji Fa's purely tactical analysis, "that each of us wished to hold ourselves higher than the other." The brothers again looked at each other.

Ji Fa rose and warmed himself by the hearth. "So what will be your resolution, Lords. Will you both abandon the hill?"

"No," answered Wei. "We will both build our prime-houses on the hill. We will build a new city there together—the way the people of Zhou have built a great nation to rival the House of Shang itself."

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When the sun rose the next morning, Ji Fa hurried to his father, having left instructions on the treatment of his guests. He must arrange for an audience for the two visiting lords. Ji Chang was already fully dressed and involved in his realm's affairs.

"Father, the Lords of Yu and Rui have come to Xibo. I have provided them with comfort for the night."

"I have heard. What do they wish from me. Are they under attack from some quarter?"

Ji Fa detected a note of reluctance in his aged father's voice. "No, father, they have simply come to declare themselves loyal to him who they respect more than any other." Ji Fa looked about the Chamber of Concord at those present: all his brothers and his uncle.

"I have gathered our closest kin, my son," declared Ji Chang, "to announce your betrothal." Taisi, accompanied by several female relatives, emerged from the inner chamber. "Our ancestors have blessed the match," he continued, "with good omens. Who do you wish to be our go-between?"

Ji Fa had already given it some thought. "I prefer your sister Taiyi, my aunt. She will attend to the customs diligently."

"Instruct my sister," Ji Chang ordered Hongyao, "to bring a laquer bowl for the 'declaration offering', a ceremonial bell for the 'good omen offering', and ten rolls of black cloth for the 'token offering'. These should please my Teacher Uncle Shang because they will please the lady."

"Father," interrupted Ji Fa, "I would like the nuptials to be completed by the month of rat." The anticipation was, of course, to produce a son in mid summer.

"So be it!" concluded Ji Chang. "Now let us see to our visitors. Ji Fa, bring them here so that we may afford them dignity."

Ji Fa knew the pair would be outside by then as he had instructed earlier. He went out, ushered them into his father's presence, but did not rejoin them. This would be a fine morning to escape into the countryside for a while. Autumn's chill

rode impish on the wind, but he was not uncomfortable. The season of golds and reds, just before Heaven blanketed the land with snow, was Ji Fa's favorite. Beyond the city he released his sense of direction and drifted aimlessly about the forest.

The brilliant colors of the fall disguised in its glory the reality of impending death as if regalia and august ceremony somehow rendered the cessation of nature's vitality ineffectual. The forest's funeral splendor far exceeded any that he could orchestrate for a fallen nobleman. 'It is another confirmation of ritual's verity,' he realized. He recalled the words of Nangong Kuo, the wisest farmer. 'To participate fully in nature's rites is the highest calling to service any man could receive.'

Ji Fa was so involved with his own thoughts, he was not aware that he had unintentionally come upon the training camp of Lu Shang. He sat down on a fallen log at the edge of a meadow and watched the training activities below: soldiers wielding bamboo sticks battling furiously, charioteers racing about launching projectiles at imaginary enemies, archers rehearsing controlled volleys.

Chariots—chariots by the dozens were rumbling across the meadow. Ji Dan wondered at Lu Shang's insistence on this extravagant multiplication of chariots. The Zhou army had always been divided into regiments of one hundred soldiers. Each regiment contained two chariots, one light and one heavy, both pulled by four-horse teams. One chariot, light and swift, carried a teamster and two fighters with bows and lances. The other chariot was heavier for transporting arms, equipment, and supplies. The chariots were supported by grooms, cooks, servants, and men to collect wood and water. The rest of each regiment was made up of foot soldiers with halberds, shields, and bows. Every soldier carried a long knife.

Lu Shang had formed a regiment made up of many light chariots without any infantry at all. It had only support personnel and several heavy chariots for transporting equipment. Even the support personnel were charioteers. Though his innovations were unproven, Lu Shang had Prince Chang's confidence; so none would challenge his command.

Just within earshot, Lu Shang was lecturing an assembly. They were scattered about on logs and rocks on the hill below Ji Dan, a makeshift amphitheater. Ji Fa noticed at least two of his younger brothers in the assembly—Ji Feng and Ji Zai.

"We will constantly seek the higher ground," he said. "We will value the sunlight over the shade and the dry over the wet, for our greatest enemy is not the enemy soldier, but sickness."

It was a familiar doctrine to Ji Dan, one the leaders of Zhou had all been required to learn from Lu Shang.

"In un-level places, we will encamp on high ground facing the south, so that if attacked, we can fight down hill. When taking up defensive positions, we will always rest our right rear on a hill, a dyke, or embankment."

"Why so, teacher Shang?" asked one of the conscripts.

"Because the soldiers carry their shields on their left arms," he replied. His tone betrayed a level of impatience.

"If we encounter the enemy on a salt flat or in a meadow," he continued, "we will take up positions close to grass and water with the trees to our rear."

"And water to the right," interjected the same pupil who had questioned him before.

"Correct," affirmed the Lu Shang, "If we wish to do battle, however, we will move to higher ground upstream and away from the water."

Again the student questioned the principle. "Upstream? Why so, officer?" Ji Dan was curious about this young student who so hungered for knowledge as to try the patience of his teacher.

"Because, if your enemy attempts to circle around you by boat, he will be rowing against the current and will be slowed or even stopped."

"And if we decide to circle, the current will aid us," exclaimed the student.

"Of course," confirmed Lu Shang. "There is one more condition to learn when our forces are on the march. When our enemy is advancing across a river, we will not meet him at the water's edge."

"Why not?" asked Ji Feng obviously skeptical of the old soldier's axiom. Several members from the assembled nobles could be heard. "Will it not be advantageous to bombard them with spears and arrows while they are helpless in the water?"

"No," he replied. "Most of their bodies will be protected from arrows by the water, so their floating heads will be small targets. Under attack, they will simply withdraw to the far bank; he will not continue to attempt his crossing."

"So what will be our tactic?"

"We will wait until half his force is fully across before we strike. That is the point when he is weakest; but he will be forced to continue the crossing, thus imperiling the remainder of his army." A murmur of appreciation rolled through the group.

"These are the ways to gain the help of the earth in our campaigns. Such is how the Yellow Emperor of old conquered the four Sovereigns, three in the North and one in the South."

"How will we know, teacher Uncle Shang," asked one student, "when to do these things; when to attack, and when to withdraw?"

"You will learn the various sounds of drums and bells because troops cannot easily hear voice commands. You will learn the various types of banners and flags because, in battle, troops cannot clearly see each other."

"These tactics may be useful, Teacher Shang," grumbled another, "yet is it not valor and skill at arms which gains one the advantage?"

"He who struggles for victory with naked blades is not a good general," retorted Lu Shang.

"I have heard," said Ji Feng, "that my grandfather was once attacked by a huge party of Kunyi. Though he was outnumbered by two to one, he was victorious. How did he accomplish such a feat?"

Before Lu Shang could respond, Ji Dan, who had approached quietly, interrupted. "Duke Ji tempted the naive nomad leader to divide his forces," he explained. "Then he attacked one battalion after the other."

"But if the enemy divided his forces," Ji Feng asked, turning to his uncle, "how did grandfather keep his army in one piece and attack in two places?"

"He didn't," said Ji Fa, "one may divide one's force into unequal parts. The simple Kunyi were confused by Duke Ji's unequal division. The small force simply circled around the Kunyi, eventually rejoining the main body of soldiers. By that time the Kunyi were only half as strong."



“One who is confused in purpose cannot respond to his enemy,” added Lu Shang.

“Have you come to observe the vanguard regiment?” asked Lu Shang turning to face Ji Dan.

“I have been observing” he replied. “The speed and power of your charioteers will strike terror in the hearts of all our enemies, Teacher Uncle Shang. They will flee as from a horde of bolting tigers.”

Ji Dan was not so confident. Indeed, he had expressed reservations and remained uncomfortable with Lu Shang’s revolutionary approach. He loathed the idea of loosing such destructive power on any population no matter how savage or uncultured.

“A hundred chariots can rout 10,000 foot soldiers,” asserted Lu Shang confidently.

“I sincerely hope,” said Ji Dan, “that we never have the occasion to face so many.”

“We shall always seek to subdue the enemy without fighting,” assured Lu Shang, “for one best conquers one’s enemies before his threats materialize.”

The young officers in the assembly were mesmerized by this unexpected debate by the highest ministers in Prince Ji Chang’s court.

“Who will lead this appealing force of destruction?”

Officer Li,” said Lu Shang. He gestured toward the group Ji Dan had been watching for the past half-hour and one student stepped forward.

Ji Dan studied the young man carefully for a moment. He was stern and reticent. These were traits that would serve him well as a leader of soldiers. Yet there was this hint of impatience Ji Dan had perceived earlier. “How will you use your swift charioteers, Officer Li, to best advantage.” While Ji Dan wanted assurances of his commanders bravery and ferocity, he also demanded that they show a respect for life and a reverence for virtue. Ferocity and compassion in equal measure in the same man was a rarity. Few men could meet Ji Dan’s standards.

“Lu Shang has taught me the eight occasions to use chariots and the ten occasions to not use them,” the young man replied. He was obviously nervous at Ji Dan’s impromptu examination of him, but presented a confident front. “Chariots are used to assault the enemy’s strong positions, thus easing the burden of fighting on a vulnerable infantry.” As Li recited from his indoctrination, his confidence rose. “Chariots are used to crush the most obdurate forces for the same reason; and they are used to bar his retreat once his resolve crumbles.”

Lu Shang’s face betrayed anxiety as his young officer mentioned barring retreats, for he knew Ji Dan’s position on this issue.

“I will not bar a defeated enemy from withdrawing, young Officer Li,” insisted Ji Dan, “for if they have no hope of survival, they will fight all the more ferociously.”

All had debated this point on several occasions. He knew the alternative argument was that the defeated soldiers would regroup for additional combat at a later time. Officer Li thought it best to defer the point. “I am grateful that I will have wiser ministers than myself to guide me in trying situations, Ji Dan.”

Ji Dan was impressed with the young man’s diplomacy even as he suspected he might have a rash streak in him. ‘Perhaps,’ he thought, ‘this is just the man to

command the vanguard force.' After mumbling some half audible agreement, Ji Dan drifted away from the group as casually as he had arrived.

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High above, near the realm reserved for spirits and ancestors, the massive seasonal migration of geese was underway. Ji Fa had always admired their grace, reliability, and focus. These birds were not flighty and witless. A goose knew at all times where he was intended to be. In the spring, he would fly north; and in the fall, he would fly south. In between he dignified his kith and kin. He was equally at home on land, on water, or in the heavens. He suddenly felt that there was an important message in the things he had experienced over the past two days: his marriage, the dignitaries from Ruan and Yu, and the new tactical methods of Lu Shang. The time would soon come, he knew, when the Heavenly Mandate would descend on Zhou. It didn't matter that his father refused to acknowledge their destiny; it was clear to him and many others that Zhou would eventually rule the Empire.

It all fit clearly in the scheme of things: he had mulled it over in his mind many times. The Shang color was white, the color of autumn. Autumn was also the season of the element metal. Metal is the power to be malleable. Autumn's divine ancient ruler was Shaohao who ascended to the Throne right after Yellow Emperor's immediate successor, a weak and irresolute leader.

Winter follows autumn wearing Zhou's color black, ruled by the divine spirit of Zhuanxu, the militant successor to Shaohao. Winter's element is water, the power to soak and descend, like the blood of Di Xin on the battlefield Ji Fa knew they would meet on for the first and only time. He, Ji Fa, would fulfill his ancestor Gugong Danfu's dream. He, Ji Fa, would finally "clip the wing of Shang."

Ji Fa resolved that the wild goose would in due course replace the Shang rooster as the image of Imperial authority.

## **Chapter 17**

### **The Power of Heaven's Designs Winter, 1059 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 7 THE ARMY.**

#### **Earth above Water**

*The Army.* Persistence by those in authority in a righteous course is rewarded.

*Water surrounded by land.* The Superior Man nourishes the people and treats them with mercy.

6 for the bottom place. An army's discipline gives it strength and prevents corruption.

6 for the second place. The successful general of the Army is three times honored by the king.

6 for the third place. The army transports wagon loads of corpses— disaster.

6 for the fourth place. The army halts and retreats— no error.

6 for the fifth place. Wild beasts roam the field; to avoid error, speech should be guarded; the eldest is in command while the younger carts corpses away; persistence leads to catastrophe.

6 for the top place. Heaven gives the mandate to a great Prince only; a mean man can only spread disorder.

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Lu Shang accompanied Ji Chang in his survey of the newly formed defenses arrayed near but just above the base of the hill. "Our total 'army' is 12,000 infantry and 500 chariots," he explained, "encompassing five divisions of 2500, which in turn is composed of 5 battalions of 500 (some of whom are support units), in turn made up of 100 man companies. We have mobilized two divisions for this engagement, Xibo."

They made their way to the crest of the hill where they could scan the entire valley below. It had been over two generations since any Zhou citizen had borne arms against an enemy. As before, their foe was the fierce Kunyi tribe. All of Zhou's division commanders had been anxious to test their meddle against the hated and feared nomadic tribesmen. Ji Chang, as well, found it hard to contain his anger at them, somewhat embarrassed that his long standing policy of appeasement had not kept them at bay. In fact, as the years went by, their extortion had become more than a nuisance.

"We must subdue them completely once and for all," said Ji Fa. He and his brother Ji Xian had been trailing behind them by some ten or more yards.

On the afternoon of their twenty-second day in the field, they had been assaulted by a small Kunyi force. It was easily repelled. Zhou's forces then fortified the positions at the base of the hill with the "vanguard regiment" of chariots hidden above. Scouts had been deployed in all directions in the valley; so Lu Shang knew that the Kunyi were hurrying along the shore of the river to engage Zhou's force.

"I expect them to arrive before sundown," added Lu Shang. "They will be tired from the forced march but will feel compelled to attack immediately rather than camp for the night. They will anticipate being attacked as they rest."

"Why will they not circle the hill and attack our rear?" asked Ji Fa.

"The terrain on that side of the hill is too steep and rocky for a large scale assault," answered Lu Shang, "and our archers can rain arrows on them like a waterfall as they climb."

"An impressive assembly, my friend," said Ji Chang;" but I am loath to feel pride with so many of our countrymen at risk of injury or death. Where are the Bolting Tigers?"

"They are obscured behind the trees on our left flank."

As predicted, Kunyi warriors began accumulating almost immediately in the dense woods on the far side of a large meadow with their backs to the river. Within a few hours they were in position to attack. They swarmed out suddenly, hacking

and stabbing at Zhou soldiers. They were ferocious, but the combined strength and ferocity of their force was no greater than the sum of its individuals. Meanwhile, the disciplined Zhou army, though outnumbered, was far stronger than the accumulation of individuals in it. As the Kunyi met an impenetrable wall of infantry in the valley below, the vanguard regiment of chariots, now referred to as the Bolting Tigers, pounced on them repeatedly, cutting broad swaths of death and injury with each foray.

By nightfall, the courage of the tribe wavered. When Ji Chang noticed the slight hesitation in the Kunyi lines, he ordered a general advance. Under the rumble of a hundred drums, the marching feet of thousands of soldiers were as silent as the pulsing of migrating geese. The retreating nomads soon became a panic stricken herd, stampeding through the night. Zhou battalions and companies scoured the territory for miles with little resistance seeking Kunyi skirmishers for capture or annihilation, mostly annihilation, far beyond the range of signal bells. As the carnage accelerated, orders were sent out in a vain attempt to halt the bloodshed. Only the general tiring of Zhou's soldiers stopped the killing.

When Ji Chang and his senior officers surveyed the battlefield, the valley was choked with fallen men. He then ordered his charioteer to bring him to his tent.

"The earth looks like the face of one of the Kunyi," observed Ji Xian. The Kunyi generally scarred and tattooed themselves, exercising a painful aesthetics. He didn't know if this practice was meant to frighten enemies or if it were some mysterious and unfortunate ritual practice.

Ji Dan recognized that Ji Xian was ridiculing them. "They are simple and unenlightened," brother Xian," admonished Ji Dan. "We should not relish such suffering and death. "

"The Kunyi have been a scourge upon our land for generations," retorted Ji Xian. "The time is long overdue for us to rid ourselves of this nuisance. "

Ji Dan knew that his arrogant older brother's view was held by most, but he regretted the deaths of so many. He recalled the times when he himself had ordered the deaths of individuals as the Zhou nations expanded its territory and influence in the west lands. Looking back he had begun to feel that perhaps these executions were ineffective and therefore unnecessary. He had come to regret his forceful actions which seemed so appropriate at the time. "How their children and wives will grieve in their absence," Ji Dan argued. "Do you not feel the loss of our own older brother Boyikao?"

"So I do, brother Ji Dan," said Ji Xian. "And it is avenging his loss which gives me a great satisfaction. Let the brothers of these dead savages feel their deaths as we have felt Boyikao's".

"Surely, Ji Xian, you do not blame these men for our loss. " Ji Dan gestured toward the bodies strewn across the battlefield.

"Was it not the presence of Kunyi which prompted us to leave the flatlands during the hunt and to use the mountain road rather than the valley road below—the rocky road that toppled our brother's chariot and took his life?"

"So you will take revenge on the Kunyi for their being there? I suppose you will also punish the mountain for its audacious elevation or the rocks on the ground for their refusal to be firm. "

Ji Xian's anger reddened his face. For a moment he might have struck his own brother, but instead he ordered his teamster to whip his chariot team and sped off toward the last areas of fighting in the valley, 'no doubt to vent his anger on a few fleeing Kunyi tribesmen,' surmised Ji Dan.

Disappointed in his brother's unfeeling rage and his own inept influence on him, Ji Dan had himself ferried to the principle tent of his father on the hill. As he stepped down from his coach box and walked to the tent, he could hear intense discussions underway inside. His entrance was barely noticed.

"We must march on the Prince of Mixu at once," urged Ji Wu.

"Mixu is irrelevant," argued Ji Feng. "It is the Prince of Chong who should be punished. He instigates intrigues and...".

"The Kunyi have used arrows clearly manufactured in Qi." Hongyao held up an arrow stained with blood. "This one came from the breast of my sister's son."

"The arms were purchased for them by Prince Hu's agents there," responded Ji Wu.

"Enough!" thundered Ji Chang, and the rowdy company fell cloud silent. "Neither the tortoise shells, the *shi* stalks, nor the deliberations of my sagacious advisors can lead me to the proper course." He was obviously distraught.

"So Xibo would be wise to do no more," interrupted Ji Dan, "until a proper course can be determined."

Ji Chang stared at the blaze in the center of the canvas pavilion. Smoke and cinders danced upward, and rising heat distorted the faces around him into which he looked for guidance. His thought processes were unruly. Even when he was imprisoned those years by the bloodthirsty Emperor Zoo, he always had a clear purpose in view.

Ji Dan wearied as the evening's fellowship and debate wore on. He quietly left the tent for a walk in the chill night. Several paces away from the entrance he came upon Tiadian staring up into the clear and starry night. "What message are you receiving from the spirits in Heaven, Tiadian."

"There is an unusual alignment in the stars tonight," he said. "I have been consulting my books in order to discern its message."

Ever the curious scholar, Ji Dan asked him to elaborate.

"Jupiter is in the constellation Quail Fire, the moon is in Heavenly Quadra, the sun is in the Ford of Split Wood, the sun's chen is in the Dipper's Handle, and Mercury is in Heavenly Turtle. Further, both the chen and Mercury are in the northern cord." Taidian smiled, enjoying a rare opportunity to expound on his favorite subject, astrology.

"And what can we draw from those observations?"

"There is no doubt. It is a clear message from the Lord Above. Zhou is on the right path according to Heaven's will." Soon we will "clip the wing of Shang" as our forefathers have predicted and ardently desired."

Thanking Tiadian for his instruction, Ji Dan continued his walk, then retired to his own tent; but, instead of being relieved by the eradication of the troublesome Kunyi, he went to sleep unnerved.

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As the sun rose the next morning, the Field Marshal of the West assembled his 5,000 man force for the march back to Qishan. A battalion would remain behind to bury the dead and tend the wounded until all were transported or assisted on the march home. During the several hours it took to dismantle the camp, Ji Fa instructed his teamster to ride him up the side of a nearby mountain. His excuse for the digression was to correct errors in his knowledge of this region's geography; but, in fact, he knew the place well.

The rolling of his chariot wheels across the hoar frost reminded him of a river's rush, perhaps the Wei. The landscape sparkled with ice crystals. He knew all along that their army had been battling furiously in the very shadow of the most sacred mountain of the West. Bridge Mountain was considered sacred even before the Yellow Emperor was buried on its peak. For the thousand years since, Emperors and commoners alike had made regular pilgrimages to its altars.

Ji Fa knew that the altar to Heaven on its snow buried peak was beyond reach during the winter but that on its southern side there was the shrine to the spirits of Earth. His astute observations of wear and erosion guided him easily to the spot where he dismounted from his coach box. As his teamster and archer waited, Ji Fa worshiped at the shrine, praying to mankind's most remote ancestor, the legendary Yellow Emperor, great-great grand-father of Divine Houji and progenitor of the human race.

Ji Fa was so engrossed in his commune with the Yellow Emperor, he almost didn't hear the cry of his stricken teamster. Instinctively, he sprang to cover behind the nearest boulder. Several arrows whizzed past within inches of him. Jerking his long knife out of its case, he leapt toward his chariot where his archer was fighting desperately with a Kunyi warrior for control of the team. The chariot was their only escape; it must not be wrested from their possession or Ji Fa knew they would both be killed.

Making a forceful leap from an opportunely placed outcropping, Ji Fa collided with attacker and attacked who both tumbled from the coach. All three men scrambled for firm footing knowing that the least agile of them would likely be killed. It was the Kunyi. Ji Fa marveled at his adversary's wild eyed and toothy grimace as his long knife slid easily into the savage's abdomen. He felt the man's hot blood drenching his hand and arm. He died still standing, as Ji Fa watched the man's eyes lose their earthly focus.

With his bleeding archer, clinging to his shoulder, Ji Fa took the reins of the chariot team and urged it into motion. He had no idea how many nomads were assailing them. His mind was engaged in a thousand calculations at once as he drove the chariot first one way, then another, dodging halberd bearers, arrows, and the inhospitable terrain of Bridge Mountain. But underneath the surface of his intensely engaged mind there was some isolated portion of his consciousness which was directing him from within. He did not feel alone or afraid. It was as if he were being guided by some inner person: a person with an indomitable spirit and the utmost confidence. Ji Fa wondered if it might be the spirit of the Yellow Emperor himself. He knew at that moment what his future held. No human foe could defeat him if he remained resolute. He need only open his consciousness to the power of Heaven's designs.

As Ji Fa's chariot gamboled about wildly on the mountain side, the image of Taotei on the huge black banner of Zhou fluttered and waved as the wings of some fearsome flying predator above the foliage. His struggle had attracted the notice of several officers in the army below.

"Lord Fa! Lord Fa!" they screamed as they raced up the hill toward him.

Behind and below the rushing rescuers, the vast Zhou infantry, like a tired tidal wave, halted to silently watch. Though it seemed in hours, in just minutes several chariots arrived. They sped about the hillside with their archers picking off scattering tribesmen with impunity.

By the time Ji Chang could be notified of the incident, mount his coach, and join the rescuers, all danger was past. Any barbarian still alive had disappeared into the thickest grove available. Xibo's teamster eventually drew up his team near Ji Fa resting under a tree while attendants nursed the injured archer. It was plain the wound was mortal. It was equally plain with whom the fallen soldier wished to spend his last few moments on earth. Ji Fa unwrapped a silken yellow scarf from around his own neck, dabbing blood from his faithful companion's eye. He gripped Ji Fa's arm tightly and stared intently into Ji Fa's twisted face, refusing to let him greet his arriving father. Great Xibo or no, the man would die holding fast to Ji Fa.

## Chapter 18

### We Shall Go As Far As Gong

Summer, 1057 BCE

#### Hexagram 1

QIEN.

Heaven above Heaven

*The Creative Force.* Sublime success; righteous persistence is rewarded.

*Celestial power in Motion.* The six bodies of Taotei appear; the Superior Man ever strengthens his own character.

9 for the bottom place. Taotei concealed; conflict is avoided until perfect harmony is reached.

9 for the second place. Taotei revealed; consultations with the wise are advantageous.

9 for the third place. The superior man labors long risking exhaustion; no error for this.

9 for the fourth place. To gamble on the cliff's edge does not bring blame.

9 for the fifth place. Taotei flutters high above; consultations with a wise man bring good results.

9 for the top place. Taotei unrestrained results in regrets.

9 for all six places. Heaven's will ordains honorable rule over the entire world.

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"Xibo must send his troops to deliver us from this menace," pleaded the envoy from Rui and Yu. Lord Kuan Yi was killed in the fighting. Lord Kuen Wei and a small contingent of loyal soldiers are hiding from Mixu's army in the wilds."

Ji Chang looked down upon the man with both sympathy and some frustration. Even in their devastated condition, the people there had managed to accumulate an offering to him: several jars of dye powder, nine lengths of sturdy willow suitable for bows, and several weasel furs.

"It has been two years since Xibo's army banished the Kunyi from our homeland," he continued. "We have yet to fully recover from their plundering; and now we are subjugated by the Lord of Mixu. "You are the Field Marshal of the West, honorable sir. The Emperor's Court Officials in Yin have dismissed my appeal as a duty of the Great Xibo."

Glancing around his Hall of Concord, Ji Chang saw the tense faces of his advisors and sons. He knew which ones would urge forceful action and which would counsel caution. Before they could gather their arguments for the predictable debate, Ji Chang nodded to his most astute advisor. "Shang Gao and my fourth son will consult the *shi* stalks," he said turning back to the pleading commoner. "You will know of my decision briefly. Please rest and refresh yourself comfortably until then." A servant appeared suddenly at the messenger's side and he was led away. Shang Gao, Ji Dan, Boyi, Shuqi and several others left the Chamber of Concord to seek the council of the spirits.

Taidian approached Ji Chang to whisper a reminder; there was an unpleasant but necessary task. Ji Chang's nod to attendants resulted in the entrance of a man under armed attendants. His knees buckled, but the guard held him erect.

Taidian in particular, but also a few others felt that the case need not be adjudicated by Xibo himself; but the plaintiff had insisted and Ji Chang could not refuse to.

"Summarize for me his transgressions, Taidian," he said.

"He is the oldest son in his family. His father was slain in the first battle against the Kunyi in Rui. When the savages were defeated and our soldiers returned, it was his duty to the family of his father to care for them. He has an elderly grandmother, his father's widow, and three minor sisters to care for, but he has been derelict. The widow has appealed for your help in the matter."

"What are you called?" asked Ji Chang.

The young man quaked. "Gu," he muttered looking at his toes.

"Why is he under guard, Taidian?" asked Ji Chang.

"He resisted the summons to your hearing." All knew this act was considered criminal.

"Explain yourself to me," commanded Ji Chang.

In a weak and trembling voice, the man explained, "I cannot resist the urge to breathe the smoke." It was, of course, the unfortunate legacy of their recent triumph over the Kunyi tribe.

Never before had so many of the citizens of Zhou had so much contact with them. Kunyi prisoners had been treated humanly and some had been allowed to return to their ancestral homeland in the far south after the war. Many who were unable to profess allegiance to Zhou had been banished to the far northwestern



steppes. Those who would profess loyalty had been allowed to remain as new immigrants to Zhou provided they abandoned their nomadic ways and adopted the agrarian culture of Divine Houji.

Unfortunately, one Kunyi practice was not so easy to abandon, mainly, burning dry hemp leaves and breathing the smoke. Still more troublesome to Zhou's leaders, the Kunyi's taste for hemp smoke had invaded some Zhou families.

The issue was bound to incite debate among Zhou's leaders. "His punishment will serve as an example to others," interjected Nanong Kuo. He was Ji Chang's minister most concerned with agricultural affairs and instructing the populous in horticulture. He had often complained about the Kunyi settlers' proclivity for hemp breathing.

"The Kunyi claim it aids them in their communion with the spirits," explained San Yisheng.

"Nonesense!" exclaimed Nangong Kuo. "It is another odious form of intoxication, like too much wine or spirits. It causes one to dream while still awake. The mixing up of sleep states and waking states is against the proper balance of things. Its use could bring the wrath of Heaven upon us. Let us stamp out its use, Xibo, and banish the remaining Kunyi settlers to the steppes."

The deep and velvet voice of Lord Shih emerged from a mumbling crowd. "Ciyou," was his one word argument.

All knew the story. Ciyou had swept through the southern provinces bent on rapine and destruction. He was eventually defeated and executed by the ancient Yellow Emperor but at a heavy price. The Kunyi were descended from Ciyou's tribe and had inherited many unenlightened ways from them, apparently the breathing of hemp smoke among them. Shih's obvious point was that the remnants of Ciyou's nomadic horde had since become enlightened. Most of the southern nations were populated with their descendants, but their breathing of the smoke had gradually subsided and virtually ceased.

"My wise brother's insight is understood," said Ji Chang after a moment's thought. "The mixing of disparate elements always brings about general harmony. Even though a few disharmonious notes may sound along the way, the blending of Kunyi immigrants with Zhou's citizens will be no exception." Ji Chang stroked his temples as he thought of the appropriate method for dealing with a young soldier who neglected his family and resisted the summons of his sovereign.

"Were you a brave and loyal soldier in the battles against the barbarians, Gu?"

"I was, Xibo," he replied weakly.

"Were you loyal and brave because you were more afraid of me than of the savages?"

"No, no, Xibo," the young man said urgently. "It is out of respect and admiration for you that all of Zhou's citizens fight against Zhou's enemies.

"The fight against the Kunyi is not yet over, Gu. The enemy is just more subtle now than before. A powerful enemy of propriety is hiding in the smoke. Why do you not fight this enemy of our culture the way you fought before, out of respect and admiration for me?"

Gu stood, head bowed and moist eyed. Self loathing pulsed through him with every heart beat. "I will try anew, Xibo. I had not understood the enemy's being in the hemp smoke."

Ji Chang was genuinely compassionate. Here was a valued soldier he knew he would probably need again in some future battle. Here was a valued older brother and son, needed by his family for sustenance. Yet he had also resisted Ji Chang's lawful summons so some punishment was appropriate. "Because you have shown desire to avoid your responsibilities to your family," Ji Chang declared, "you shall have the opportunity to know their absence. For this breach of faith you will be temporarily banished to the extreme northern village of Yeh where you shall live without family. For the crime of failing to respond to your sovereign's lawful summons, you shall remain in Yeh until I, and I only, summon you back to Qishan. If you fail to abide by this punishment, you shall be summarily executed." Ji Chang paused to emphasize with silence this last command, then he continued facing Taidian. "The other four families of his hamlet shall see to the care of his mother and sisters as long as they need it. They may receive aid from the central stores if necessary."

The young man moaned as he was led out of the Chamber of Concord.

Ji Chang was anxious to proceed to the most pleasant task of the day. He appreciated the opportunity to bestow honors on the worthy far more than to punish transgressors. "Is Li in our company?" he asked loudly. Li was, of course, captain of the Vanguard Regiment of charioteers. The fourth son of an obscure farmer, he had distinguished himself on previous mobilizations of Zhou's citizen army to such a degree as teamster and archer that Lu Shang himself took notice, naming him commander of the Bolting Tigers Battalion of charioteers. Li emerged from the assembled dignitaries and ministers. "I am at your service always, Xibo," he answered proudly.

"You are among my most worthy and capable officers, Li; and you have shown the utmost skill as Captain of the Vanguard Regiment. " Ji Chang beamed as he sang Officer Li's praises loudly. "During the campaign against the Kunyi, your Bolting Tigers took from the field the largest pile of enemy ears that has ever been seen. You were responsible for countless victories and saved many of Zhou's citizens from close combat and injury."

Ji Chang's use of the "Bolting Tigers" nickname for the charioteers brought smiles to all the officers in the assembly. The name was certain to gain legitimacy as a result.

"It is time you wore a signification of your value to our nation." At the gesture of his hand, an attendant came forward with his arms draped in a yellow silk cloth. "Henceforth you shall be called Right Officer Li and shall wear this yellow girdle to signify your rank and that I, Ji Chang of Zhou, consider you a member of my own family. "Ji Chang rose and tied the yellow sash around Li's waist himself. Then they both turned to face the assembly, smiling broadly at their cheers. Shouts of "Xibo, Xibo" and "Officer Li, Officer Li" bubbled out of the exuberant crowd.

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The afternoon passed at the same leisurely pace as a victorious army's march toward home. A tiring Xibo received dignitaries from nearby states and provinces, all of them expressing gratitude for Xibo's earlier deliverance from the rampaging Kunyi and pledging future support and devotion. Every offering of tribute was, upon Ji Chang's instructions, diverted to the Emperor. Every profession of

suppliance was refused and every supplicant was ordered to approach Heaven's throne in Yin. In view of the general loathing throughout the nations for the Emperor Zoo, no doubt many simply returned home to their own states.

After several hours, Ji Chang received word that Shang Gao and Ji Dan were returning from their divining session with the *shi* stalks. The room was suddenly buzzing, there was so much magnetism in the chamber. Ji Chang knew immediately that something extraordinary had occurred. As he sat on the bench, he was suddenly a bit weary. It was late afternoon, to be sure; but he was curious at his weakness. If they urged war, he knew, the superior forces of Zhou would not fail. Yet he realized that he had no appetite for it.

"In what mood did you find the spirits?" asked Ji Chang.

"Creative," replied Ji Dan. "The hexagram that revealed itself was Qien." Those who had not already heard the whispers, murmured. All of them harbored great respect for the hexagrams and for the manipulation of the *shi* stalks with which they were understood, even if they only partially understood their meanings. All of their attentions became focused on Ji Chang, waiting for him to indicate how he would respond. Ji Chang stared at the floor in silence.

"Heaven repeatedly urges you to take action, my father!" bellowed Ji Fa. The hexagram Heaven above Heaven is proof of the Lord above's desire for you to pursue Mixu, Li Ji Chang, or any other intransigent despot."

Ji Chang looked about his assembled ministers. "Is there not one dissenting voice?" Not Shang Gao, nor Ji Xian, nor his wife Taisi raised a whimper of protest. "Not even from Boyi or Shuqi?" he pleaded.

"We are reluctant to endorse the overthrow of our lawful sovereign," said Boyi from a place of obscurity in the crowd. "The interpretation of the *shi* stalks is not unanimous," added Shuqi.

Many in the room voiced dissent with the two well known pacifists.

"Very well, then, ministers of Zhou," he said rising wearily to his feet. "The four small states shall be restored to their former independence."

The assembly erupted in cheers and shouts of "Xibo, Xibo!" repeatedly. Ministers exploded out of the Chamber of Concord scattering in many directions to begin war preparations. Within only a few days, Lu Shang had reassembled and equipped his 20,000 man force including the fearsome Bolting Tiger regiment of charioteers. The earth fairly shook as the army of Zhou marched north eastward from Quishan toward the region of the four small states. Their feet, horses, and wheels churned up enough dust to cloud the sky for a hundred square yards behind them.

Also departing the city, but in the opposite direction, were Boyi and Shuqi— on foot.

## Chapter 19

### Clear and Icy Water Summer, 1057 BCE

**Hexagram 48**  
**JING.**  
**Water above Wind**

*A well.* A city may be moved, but its good water remains; misfortune results when the bucket rope breaks or is too short.

*Water over wood.* The Superior Man encourages others toward virtue.

6 for the bottom place. Abandoned wells attract no animals, for well bottom water is muddy and rancid.

9 for the second place. The perforated well bucket is useless but for harboring fish.

9 for the third place. The reconditioned well awaits utilization for the people's good.

6 for the fourth place. There is virtue in preserving the earth's beauty, so the old well is being tiled.

9 for the fifth place. The well's water comes from an icy spring.

6 for the top place. Good fortune comes because the well-rope is solid.

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The army of Zhou had been on the march for three months. Aside from a few isolated skirmishes, they had met no sizable contingent of Mixu soldiers.

"They flee like frightened monkeys," boasted Ji Fa.

"I am worried that we may be drawn into difficult situations caused by our over confidence," suggested Ji Dan. "These scampering soldiers must not be fearful of the consequences of cowardice; therefore, they must be baiting us into a trap."

He stepped down from his chariot's coach-box and climbed onto a large outcropping rock to better survey the valley below and the small river meandering through it. What was left of the primary village of the State of Gong straddled the stream which, since it was late summer, was barely alive with moving water. "This is hardly a good place for a village," mused Ji Dan. "The terrain is not well watered, and the land is too rocky for efficient agriculture."

Ji Fa was looking in the other direction and not listening. In fact, he sometimes found his younger brother's constant musings and commentary tiresome. He was looking for rising dust. To the north he saw the cloud of dust trailing the army of Zhou. It was straight as a wall across the northern heights of the valley. Far to the east, he saw the clouds of dust raised by the forces of Mixu. They were scattered and intermittent. Ji Fa concluded that they were lumbering, that is, dragging logs from a nearby forest into a clearing. "Our enemy is building fortifications," he muttered to Ji Dan.

Ji Dan was studying the abandoned village below. While the stream running through it was almost dry, there were several abandoned wells about. Abruptly, a young man emerged from a nearby glade and approached a well. He lowered the bucket, drew it back up, and poured water into an animal bladder. 'So the village is not so poorly situated,' thought Ji Dan. 'And not so abandoned either!'

Ji Dan and Ji Fa descended into the valley's floor rapidly. At first, the young man hid; but, when it became certain these were the sons of Xibo approaching, he and other villagers emerged from many directions, bowing and expressing gratitude for their rescue from the tyrant of Mixu.

"How long has it been since the enemy has passed this way?" asked Ji Fa looking down from his chariot.

"Three days, sir." came the reply.

"Do you know how many soldiers they have?"

"More than I have ever seen before, sir, but I do not know the number.

"They have been gathering their troops for a final defense." speculated Ji Fa to Ji Dan. "They must not have confidence in their success. We must advise our father to advance rapidly before their fortifications solidify completely."

"Sirs." the young man said to attract their attention again. "I do not know if it means anything, but beyond that slight hill there are dead soldiers." He pointed to the north.

Ji Fa and Ji Dan inspected the site. There were several Mixu officers on the ground riddled with arrows.

"These men were executed." said Ji Dan after inspecting the bodies closely. He suspected there must be dissension in the ranks of Mixu's army, a hopeful sign.

Within a few hours of hard riding, the teamsters of Ji Dan and Ji Fa ferried the two back to the advancing line of Zhou's army. Near the front of the column, but trailing the Bolting Tigers, Ji Chang's heavy chariot lumbered along under guard. At seventy-five, the aging Xibo could not be expected to ride standing up in a light war chariot for long marches. A heavy, four-wheeled chariot had been outfitted with a tent-like structure within which Ji Chang, could ride safely and comfortably under his waving banners.

Without halting the column Ji Fa and Ji Dan joined their father and the 83 year old Lu Shang in his vehicle.

"Mixu's forces are gathering at the mouth of this river," explained Ji Fa.

"Why has he not crossed the river?" asked Ji Chang.

"He is fortifying his position with logs if not other things. He obviously expects to fight to the end here," added Lu Shang.

"We must advance while his efforts are incomplete," said Ji Dan.

Ji Chang seemed, to both Ji Fa and Ji Dan, either despondent or preoccupied. "We may meet more of an enemy than we can defeat," he muttered. "Messengers have brought word that the Prince of Qi approaches from the East. He may cross the Great River as early as day after tomorrow."

"So we must advance quickly," said Ji Fa.

"After a forced march, our troops will arrive tired and unable to fight," said Lu Shang.

"We cannot risk their reinforcement from Li," insisted Ji Fa.

"Perhaps we could send the Bolting Tiger regiment ahead to disrupt the building of their defenses," suggested Ji Dan.

They all agreed. Further, Ji Fa would accompany the vanguard while Ji Dan remained with the main column. Ji Fa departed quickly.

“Our provisions are low and the campaign has been uncomfortably long,” said Ji Chang. “It seems that we are being propelled beyond our will or comprehension toward a heavy battle, the outcome of which is uncertain. ”.

”Heaven has decreed the outcome, father,” said Ji Dan. “I saw the abandoned capitol of Gong earlier today. There was hardly a building standing and the stream was nearly dry from the long summer. After the devastations of the Kunyi, Mixu’s army, and the dry season, the village appeared not much like a village at all. Yet, people crept out from the forested areas and drew water from its well, sweet, clear, and icy water. When we approached them, they greeted us with praise and gratitude. I have no doubt these people will rebuild their village and will prosper under our protection. So also are we under the protection of Heaven. Let us proceed to the fortifications’s of Mixu’s army with confidence, father. ”.

A tired Ji Chang looked at his son with silent admiration.

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At dawn the next morning, having marched all through the night, the main contingent of Zhou’s army arrived at the northern edge of a swampy clearing near the mouth of the river. Ji Chang emerged from his enclosed wagon to observe the scene. Hasty barriers had been built out of rough timber and perhaps as many as 10,000 soldiers were dug in behind them. Their backs were to the river. Ji Chang could see the Bolting Tiger regiment arranged on a slight ridge to the west. They had obviously not engaged the enemy.

Ji Fa’s chariot galloped across the clearing toward the main column, but Ji Dan did not need an explanation. He could see clearly why an attack was unnecessary. About a hundred yards from the fortifications, Ji Chang could clearly see the rotund figure of the Prince of Mixu. He was tied to a tree stump, his armor, weapons, and banners prominently displayed around him. He was moaning and cursing his mutinous troops. Near him on the ground were several more executed officers armored the same as Ji Dan had seen the day before.

“The army of Mixu has not been building fortifications, father,” said Ji Dan. He could see the men on the shore of the Great River working furiously to construct rafts. “They have been constructing barges to escape from this place. ”.

From a short distance behind Ji Chang, the chariots of his sons Ji Xian and Ji Du sped forward. “Shall we prepare for the attack, father?” asked Ji Xian. “No,” replied Ji Chang.

When Ji Fa’s chariot arrived, he confirmed Ji Dan’s conclusions.

“You were wise not to attack them” said Lu Shang to Ji Fa. “Make camp on this ridge and we will let them finish their work in peace.”

“We must make preparations for the arrival of the army of Qi, father.” reminded Ji Fa.

“Send a pair of chariot teams to cross the Great River near Pot’s Mouth. Have them survey the eastern provinces for information on the whereabouts of the Qi army. Tell them to proceed with caution and stealth but as fast as possible.”

“There are several likely places for an infantry to cross this time of the year, Xibo,” stated Lu Shang. “They would not cross anywhere without constructing barges. I can send officers to observe those locations.” Ji Chang nodded his assent.

The army of Zhou watched the army of Mixu disembark on the river a few at a time through the night as rafts were completed. The Prince of Mixu had stopped moaning after no more than a few hours. No one went to his aid.

After forty-eight hours, they received word that the Qi army was approaching from the east along the westward flowing river Ren. All were pleased to know they were no more than a few hours march from the point of their enemy's likely crossing.

"We will proceed to the opposite bank from Fen's mouth," commanded Ji Chang. There we will wait for them to cross. We must not let them become aware of our presence, or they will withdraw to another crossing, perhaps less advantageous."

Within a half-day, just before nightfall, the Zhou army had arranged itself in a position to swoop down upon their enemy as he emerged onto western shore of the Great River.

The Qi army would not be an undisciplined horde such as they had met two years earlier. Determined as the Kunyi were, the Kunyi could not organize and maneuver to better advantage than Xibo's army. The Kunyi had little more than ferocity and bravery, while the Field Marshal of the west had hundreds of chariots, each one powered by four horses and each bearing a teamster, an archer, and a spearman. The Kunyi had numbers—a seemingly endless supply of knife welding flesh—while Xibo had teacher Uncle Shang who had molded a fighting force like no one had ever seen before: disciplined as a colony of ants, stealthy as a serpent, armored as a tortoise, lethal as a tiger.

Nor would the army of Qi be timid and cowardly like those from Mixu. The Prince of Qi's forces were respected and feared far and wide. In fact, it was fairly well known that Lu Shang himself had been an officer in Qi many years earlier before he had immigrated to Zhou.

Lu Shang and Ji Fa moved about their skirmish line all night, occasionally whispering instructions but more often giving encouragement. From a slight ridge fifty or so yards from the west bank of the river, any movement by the enemy to cross the waters could not be missed. At night, the three-quarter moon was also coming to the aid of Zhou. The temptations to fire upon the helpless enemy floating or swimming across would be difficult to resist as thousands of archers were arranged in anticipation of their attempt. Ji Chang had commanded, however, that anyone who fired before his personal signal would be summarily beheaded.

For the patient and anxious alike, the rising sun revealed an eastern shore teeming with activity as the Qi forces prepared barges for the crossing. They had obviously trained well for this maneuver, for they started streaming across before mid-morning. Tensions in the Zhou lines rose with the sun.

"How will we know when half the Li force is across, Teacher Uncle Shang?" The powerful Field Marshall of the west sounded rather meek. They had positioned themselves as close to the west bank of the river as possible.

"I have been watching the raft builders," he replied. When the builders of barges stop hewing logs and move to help load the ones already afloat, at that point the number of soldiers waiting to be ferried across will be reducing faster than they can build new ferries. Then we will know that they have ferried across half of their forces.

In another hour, the raft builders ceased cutting trees and joined those loading materials onto barges. "The time has come," said Lu Shang.

Ji Chang's officers leapt to their chariots already loaded with weapons, teamsters, and archers. The rumbling of drums rolled across the little meadow as if a sudden thunderstorm was rushing in. From the point of view of the disembarking and disarrayed soldiers from Qi, the black waving banners and dark chariots and horses must have seemed an evil tidal wave descending on them from some heretofore unknown inland sea. Forty-thousand voices rose at once in an inharmonic groan that must have sounded like the death moan of the earth itself.

They scrambled to take up arms in some semblance of discipline, but before they could establish regular formations, the black horde of Zhou swept down and over them. In a panic, the trailing Qi force rushed onto the barges, poling and paddling furiously to join their besieged comrades on the west bank. Companies of Zhou archers advanced nearer to the shore and began a shower of lethal projectiles. Not a single additional Qi soldier could set foot on the west shore. The few who were still on the rafts lay silent and bleeding, drifting downstream. Soldiers' bodies and their implements of war became flotsam drifting with the wayward rafts.

Many miles below the mouth of the Fen, at the place where the Great River veers sharply off to the east, citizens near the great walled city of Chong were frightened. Fishermen and washerwomen wailed and screamed as hundreds of human corpses drifted down the river like useless garbage. Listening to reports of the incident, Prince Hu of Chong sat despondent and silent. Hatred and fear for Ji Chang and all things Zhou boiling inside him.

## **Chapter 20**

### **The Ridgepole Sags But Does Not Fall Spring, 1055 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 28**

#### **TA KUO.**

#### **Lake over Wind**

*Excess.* The ridgepole is bent; having a righteous goal in view is favorable.  
*An inundated forest.* The Superior Man does not fear isolation.

6 for the bottom place. Use ivory rushes in weaving floor mats; gentleness is not error.

9 for the second place. The old willow sprouts new shoots; the old man takes a young wife with whom he had amity.

9 for the third place. The ridgepole sags because of improper framing.

9 for the fourth place. The sagging ridgepole is not dislodged; good fortune.



9 for the fifth place. The old willow sprouts new shoots; the old woman takes a young husband neither praise nor blame is due.

6 for the top place. He sinks several times while fording the river; misfortune without blame.

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"Where is Prince Hu?" Servants and workers throughout the Imperial compound froze or turned to see the imposing figure of their Emperor, dazzlingly attired, though slightly disheveled, on the gallery of his palace. It was a rare sight, for Di Xin seldom ventured outdoors." Where is he?" he shouted as courtiers and attendants scurried about frantically searching for the Prince of Chong.

Jizi, just returning from the city, gazed up toward the sovereign of the world, not with reverence or even respect, but with a grim determination to endure Di Xin's inept rule. Sooner or later Heaven would dispense with him. Jizi only prayed that Heaven would not dispense with the entire House of Shang as well. He felt a nearly irresistible urge to turn back toward the city, to return to the house of Shang Rong.

The forced retirement of his lifelong friend was a mixed blessing for Jizi. While he was not in Shang Rong's distinguished company conducting the daily business of the Empire, Jizi could take temporary refuge at Shang Rong's comfortable residence in town whenever the frustrations of office overwhelmed him. Feizong was now Chief Minister; however, most of the Empire's day to day administration devolved to Shang Rong's, and now Feizong's, assistant, Zuyi. Feizong mostly contented himself with coordinating Di Xin's entertainment as he had always done.

Pointing down the hill toward Jizi, the Emperor screamed, "There is my Senior Tutor, the preeminent scholar in the Empire!" Jizi stopped walking and dropped to one knee with his head bowed." Why are you not here to advise me in my search for Prince Hu, Senior Tutor?"

The silliness of Di Xin's question told Jizi that his sovereign was inebriated as usual and need simply be humored. "I have just returned from the city, Majesty, where I was tending to the business of your empire. I will locate Hu and inform you promptly. Do not be distressed."

The Emperor grumbled some incoherence and wobbled back into his apartment. The working people returned to their chores relieved.

Jizi went directly to Zuyi's quarters, whom he found dutifully instructing messengers. "His Majesty commands us to locate Prince Hu," said Jizi. "Help me get word to him quickly."

Zuyi alternated his attention between the conversation with Jizi and the writing of messages on small bamboo strips. "Prince Hu is two days journey away. He has gone to prepare Chong for Xibo's advance."

Jizi was alarmed. "The Zhou march on the city of Chong?" All had been expecting a conflict between Zhou and the state of Qi for some time.

"I do not know in which direction they march. Xibo is like a stalking tiger in the forest. He may attack any place." Zuyi's remark was calculated. Although Jizi's loyalty to the Throne would not be questioned, he had defended Ji Chang's actions as being prompted by circumstances or good intentions. He defended Ji Chang's

rather cursory obliteration of the Kunyi tribe, for example, on the simple grounds that while a Prince might be generous, a Field Marshall could not endure the slightest extortion. He excused Ji Chang's route of Mixu's army on the grounds that Ruan and Gong were close Zhou allies which needed Xibo's protection from a would-be conqueror.

"You are correct to remonstrate me, Minister, for my unjustified defense of Xibo's aggressive behavior. I have sought to express positive motivations on his part out of respect. You yourself have experienced Xibo's rule in his own land, which I have not. What conclusions about a prince can be drawn from the nature of a prince's realm?"

"When a state is flourishing," answered Zuyi, "its ruler will be exhibiting the five virtues. The spirits of his land will be in harmony and the people at peace. These are as you have taught, Senior Tutor; and I returned from Zhou praising it on these grounds." Zuyi turned away from his message writing and stared out of his apartment at the quiet Huan River a short distance away. "But that was more than ten years ago; and there has been much turmoil around Ji Chang since then. One cannot say the spirits are in harmony and his people are at peace, for at this moment many may be embattled at Qi." Zuyi turned and faced Jizi defiantly. "Ji Chang swore to turn his army westward in the service of the Son of Heaven, yet a man could stand this moment on a peak of the Taihang range and see both the shining city of Yin and the glinting armor of Zhou from the same spot."

Jizi realized the anxiety Zuyi, and certainly others, felt. Imperial policy toward Zhou could be said to be Di Xin's, predicated on experience; but Jizi's high opinion of Ji Chang also influenced that policy. "Remember Shiwei and Dapeng?," explained Jizi. "During the troubled reigns of Wuding's father and four uncles, they were held in abeyance by the enfeoffed princes of the Eastlands. Only after Wuding had defeated the western nomads, consolidating the rule of Shang throughout the world, could he turn his attention to the two impertinent hegemon. When he did, he made short shrift of them."

Jizi moved closer to emphasize his point. "The very actions of Mixu, Qi, and Chong are predictable," he assured. "Zhou will most certainly be contained."

In fact, Jizi was not so confident. Ji Chang's formidable army was reputed to be a match for any in the Empire, though it had been lightly tested up to this point. Further, because of his intimate knowledge of Ji Chang's intelligence and abilities, Jizi was confident the Zhou army would not engage an unbeatable foe. His hope and prayer must be, therefore, that Ji Chang would remain loyal to his lawful sovereign.

As Jizi thought about these things, he gradually came to realize that the course of events was totally beyond his control and Heaven would do as Heaven willed with Ji Chang, Di Xin, and himself. He thought of Ji Chang's interpretation of the hexagram Water over Water, how its central strong lines indicate a need for the unseen positive action of holding fast to virtue in times of tumult.

"Convey this message to the Emperor," Jizi barked at a court worker. "Prince Hu has departed Yin for his own fief. He goes to improve its defenses." The messenger scurried off and Jizi proceeded toward his own house on the far edge of the compound.

As he arrived there the servant reappeared bowing and breathing heavily. "His Majesty wishes to know if Prince Hu was accompanied by anyone."

By "anyone" Di Xin meant one of Hu's wives to whom he had a particular affinity. Jizi had grown somewhat immune to the Emperor's perpetual assaults on his sensibilities and replied callously, "Tell His Majesty that I do not know."

As the messenger left, Jizi opened the storage pit cover in the floor of his apartment and removed the delicately decorated reed mat he always used for his veneration ceremonies and the bronze sacrificial three legged bowl handed down in his family for a dozen generations or more. Calling for a servant, he spread the mat on the floor and kneeled on it before the small altar upon which were the many wooden tablets which represented his revered ancestors. "Bring the lamb," he instructed softly. The servant retrieved the lamb Jizi had acquired earlier; it was no larger than a small dog. The servant stood aside as Jizi bowed several times to the altar, tinkled small bells, and chanted reverentially to his most esteemed ancestor, the Emperor Wuding who had been the most powerful of all Shang rulers.

"Intervene with the Lord Above, my ancient father," he pleaded, "to have him leave the Mandate with Di Xin. Interfere with Di Xin's stupor and irresponsibility and have him protect the Mandate, ancient father, so that the House of Shang may continue its prominence in the world." He then grasped the lamb, cut its throat, and laid its limp form in the sacrificial tripod. More chanting, bowing, and pleading followed.

After the lamb was removed by the servant, Jizi again went to the storage pit, this time retrieving a delicate box of milfoil stalks. He would divine and determine his best course of travel during this stormy time as he had been taught by his Zhou friend, Ji Chang. Sitting cross-legged on the mat, his fingers manipulated the stalks, rapidly separating and re-combining numbers of them according to specific patterns of change or continuance. Finally, the hexagram *Lake over Wind* resulted: *excess*. Jizi was not surprised, but he had hoped for something more favorable. Studying its forms, the symbols and meanings streamed through his mind.

*An inundated forest.* Water nourishes the trees, yet an excess of that nourishment renders the forest useless to Heaven and Earth and it will die.

*The Superior Man does not fear isolation.* Perhaps he should leave Yin and seek refuge in the wilderness or become obscure in some distant village.

*Use ivory colored rushes in weaving mats.* One should remain to do one's duty with skill and devotion, no matter the difficulty or tedium.

*He sinks several times while fording the river; no blame.* Though he may be embarrassed and his possessions have become soiled, there is no blame after he reaches the other bank, provided he journeys for humane reasons.

*The ridgepole sags from improper framing.* One cannot blame the roof beam that sags if it is not properly supported by its columns; one cannot blame the ruler for error if his advisors do not properly advise.

*The sagging ridgepole does not dislodge.* Even though the pole's position is precarious, it remains out of sheer tenacity and determination and the house continues to afford shelter.

Of course, thought Jizi. The answer is as it always will be. Righteousness is the living of a life that is not excess. Virtue is the pursuit of righteousness, while evil is the pursuit of excess. The virtuous man does not pursue excess, including intolerance of others' excesses. The ridgepole sags, but it does not fall; and if it does, the support beams must be blamed. If Di Xin were to be replaced, he Jizi would be at fault. If he were to escape, he would be doing more than stumbling during a ford. He would be indulging in excess, in evil which would incur blame. Even if he were to be dismissed so that he could not continue to serve his sovereign, as was Shang Rong, there would be blame in that he would have failed to ford the river through his own weakness.

As his resolve strengthened, he rose from his mat to see among his attendants the returned messenger again, patiently waiting for the Senior Tutor to complete his consultations with the shi stalks." Speak," he commanded of the man.

"His Majesty wishes to know if Prince Hu's departure was prompted by an impending attack from some quarter which His Majesty should know about."

Jizi was carefully putting the stalks back into the box." Tell His Majesty to remember Shiwei and Dapeng." At that, the messenger left.

The evening had fully descended upon Yin when Jizi completed his veneration. The moon was rising, nearly full, from the east, casting silvery threads across the night. In the distance he could hear the continuing revelries at the palace, though his slumber that night was less disturbed than it had been for a very long time. He greeted the next morning invigorated.

His first contact of the new day was not the messenger as he had half expected, but Zuyi." The Prince of Li has been defeated," he grumbled. "A messenger has just reported to Feizong who has gone to wake the Emperor." Jizi's refreshed optimism vanished, and the full weight of his former cynicism and resignation rushed back onto him like a tide, while Zuyi, in distress, rushed out of Jizi's house and across the compound toward the Emperor's chambers. Di Xin had still not risen from his bed; and a crowd of young, scantily clad or nude young men and women who had strewn themselves about the chamber during the night, had only just begun to stir from their drunken stupors.

He wailed, "Son of Heaven, Heaven is bringing to an end the dynasty of Yin. The wisest men and the shell of the tortoise do not know anything fortunate for us. It is not that the former kings do not aid us now, but by your dissoluteness and despicable sport you are bringing on the end yourself. Heaven has cast us off, and there are no good harvests to supply us with food. Men have no regard for their celestial nature, and pay no heed to the realm's laws. Our people now all wish the dynasty would perish, saying, "Why does some one with Heaven's great appointment not appear?"

An inebriated Di Xin offered a wine soaked defense, "Oh? Was my birth not in accordance with the appointment of Heaven?"

"And in Heaven," countered Zuyi, "is displayed all your crimes for which a Heavenly punishment will descend on Yin and afterward the people will punish Di Xin for his unrighteousness." Zuyi immediately left the chamber unsatisfied. Di

Xin, in a greater than usual alcoholic stupor, had heard little and comprehended less.

Jizi was still lingering about his apartment when Zuyi returned, his fright and anger replaced by depression. "It is clear to me, Senior Tutor, that the rise of Zhou is becoming irresistible."

"All is not yet lost, my friend," responded Jizi. "The ridgepole is weak but has not yet fallen. It is up to us to support it." His tone was weak and unconvincing.

There were a few moments of peace and quiet after Zuyi left. Jizi and several servants began the day's scheduled responsibilities. While he appeared to be attentive to these mundane activities, all knew his mind was engrossed in political affairs. 'I must get used to the idea of completely re-assessing the situation on a daily basis,' he thought.

"Excuse me, Senior Tutor." Turning, Jizi looked into the face of the returned messenger. "His Majesty wishes to know what day it is. None in his company can remember."

Jizi was stunned. For several moments he stared at the messenger blankly. Jizi's attendants froze in their positions waiting for his reaction. He sat and put his face into his palms, muttering, "How can the entire court not know what day it is? What a peril for all of us that the Senior Tutor of the Empire must be consulted for the passage of days." He looked up at the nervous messenger and spoke with a weary sigh. "Tell His Majesty that I do not know the day either."

## Chapter 21

### His Virtue Made His Sacrifices Manifest

Winter, 1054 BCE

#### Hexagram 36

MING YI.

Earth above Fire

*Darkening of the light.* Through adversity, righteous persistence rewards.  
*Light hidden in the earth.* Superior rulers, concealing light, nevertheless shine.

9 for the bottom place. The darkening during his flight caused him to alight.

6 for the second place. His steed saved him after his left leg was pierced.

9 for the third place. Wounded badly, his mad rage resulted in a southern victory.

6 for the fourth place. His darkening heart was plucked out while he was outside the walls.

6 for the fifth place. Prince Ji was injured, but his righteous persistence was rewarded and his light forever shines.

6 for the top place. What will lighten the darkness? Having climbed to heaven, he descended into the earth.

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Outside Ji Fa's house, a crowd was gathering despite the heavy snowfall which had begun just before sunset and which continued into the night. The numerous attendants surrounding Yixiang during her labor had chased Ji Fa out hours earlier. He had at first gone to a brother's house, but felt compelled to remain as close to Yixiang as he was permitted by custom.

It was not that Ji Fa was passionately in love with his young wife, though he felt he loved her; and there was passion, of course, for Yixiang was lovely. An intense devotion had grown over the six years since their marriage, and this surprised him. Thinking back, he realized he must have liked the lusty entertainments of his youth less then he thought at the time. Yixiang was perfectly capable of replacing these memories when she so desired, yet most times her companionship was a greater comfort to him.

Ji Fa lingered in the cold outside his modest house and endured the cries of pain from Yixiang as she attempted for the third time to produce a son and heir to the Throne of Zhou, her struggle disturbing the sleep of the entire town. At last, he heard the cries of his third child. They were robust and he knew right away what was to be confirmed in moments.

His sister and mother emerged from the door both holding the infant wrapped in furs and silk. "Here is your son and heir," they chorused. Ji Fa seized the child and sped to the main family altar in Ji Chang's prime-house. His father, brothers, and relatives were there patiently awaiting the news.

"Is it?" asked his brother Ji Dan as Ji Fa appeared.

"Yes."

Ji Fa placed the infant before the altar with its many decorated wooden tablets and began the ceremonies introducing the newborn to their ancestors. Music and drums, chanting and recitations, replaced the former screams of labor and cries of birth. At the duly appointed moment, Ji Fa proposed the name. "He shall take the surname Ji, as his father and grand father before him, in honor of Duke Ji, the beloved third born son of the Ancient Duke. His given name shall be Song."

Once the ceremonies were completed, the child was conveyed back to its mother. The men loitered about the prime-house until all were exhausted and drifted to their beds. Ji Fa was awfully relieved and rested well for the first time in many weeks, so well, in fact, that he nearly slept through that night's disturbances.

He was awakened by the shouting of people in mortal peril, the clash of bronze long-knives, and the rumble of chariots. Rushing to the prime-house, Ji Fa arrived to find several guards and intruders slain and his father crouching over his bleeding, elderly mother.

"Oh, Lord Above!" moaned Ji Chang. "Don't take her from me yet."

But for the drawn knives and spilt blood, the crowd gathered around Ji Chang mirrored the earlier group which had come to welcome a new life. Ji Fa surmised that his father's guards had gotten the best of several assassins. He immediately suspected them of having been sent by Prince Hu of Chong. He could see no wound on Ji Chang, but his mother Taisi had received a blow in her left side. He knew that a rough jostle might be enough to mortally wound her, for she was frail

and aged. She gasped for breath and her eyes were wide in fear as she lay face up on the floor.

Ji Chang began mumbling close to her ear and she gradually relaxed, the wildness in her eyes softening. With the help of all present, she was made comfortable on furs and straw. Within hours she was resting quietly.

The dawn found Ji Fa outside just as the dusk had, this time pacing in anticipation of a tragedy. He could barely contain a fiery rage toward Prince Hu as he pictured his fragile mother enduring pain and fear and his father prostrate over her.

Taisi did not die, but remained incapacitated, a fever appearing intermittently. The strain on Ji Chang broke his normal reserve and caused great discontent within the family. Every so often he spouted threatening harangues toward Hu. Several of Ji Chang's sons, including Ji Fa, urged instant retaliation.

"Prince Hu's responsibility is not at all proven," cautioned Ji Xian.

"As Xibo," insisted Ji Du, "you could be expected to smite the Kunyi and the armies of Mixu and Li because of their misbehaviors, father; but invading Chong would be a different matter. "

Though Ji Dan, Lu Shang, and Shih counseled caution, only Shang Gao adamantly opposed punishing Chong.

"I need no incontrovertible proof," insisted Ji Fa. "Hu was behind it!" Cries of agreement came from many around Ji Chang's Chamber of Concord." Now that Prince Yu Xiong has pledged his total allegiance to Zhou, only Chong of all the southern and western nations serves Emperor Zoo." The insulting name Zoo applied to Di Xin had become so commonplace throughout the nations that no one gave its use a second thought.

Shang Gao rose from his usual mat near the altar of Ji Chang's ancestors and stood before the group. "Gentlemen, in all the years I have served your father, I have never been one to interfere in affairs of state except when asked to advise. In this matter of war, however, I must do my best to dissuade you. As Shih has advised, Prince Hu is a favorite of Emperor Zoo and will likely come to his aid. As Lu Shang has advised, Hu's army is imposing and he has lately augmented his fortifications around Chong. As Ji Dan has advised, the people of Zhou will suffer the loss of many beloved husbands and sons."

Shang Gao moved closer to the altar. "As we discuss this, our ancestors observe whether or not we act in accord with their principles." He looked directly at Ji Fa. "Your great-grand father, the Ancient Duke, suffered grave insults at the hands of former Emperors; yet he would not take what was not rightfully his to possess." Shang Gao pointed to Ji Li's image on the altar. "Your grand father Prince Ji, for whom you are all named, suffered injury; but his adherence to righteous conduct was rewarded and his light shines forever."

Shang Gao's voice hushed and his articulation slowed to emphasize his final point. "Throughout the history of Zhou for countless generations no Prince has initiated hostilities but to protect his people from a threatening enemy." He turned at last to Ji Chang. "Do not let your heart darken, beloved Prince. Do not attack Chong." As if to punctuate his argument forcefully, Shang Gao bowed reverently to Ji Chang and quietly left the hall.

The room was silent but for the crackling in the hearth as all considered Shang Gao's impassioned plea. Ji Chang's thoughts were crowded with images of his bleeding wife and memories of his captivity in Yin. The disgusting face of Hu lurked in every shadow of the room; and the Emperor's parting words to him echoed through the recesses of his mind: 'I will tell you, Xibo, who was responsible for your tribulations. It was Prince Hu of Chong.'

Ji Fa made the case for retaliation. "Lu Shang has prepared Zhou well for conflict; and our citizen soldiers have proven their meddle over the past five years. Meanwhile, Prince Hu will not cease sending assassins and other chicanery."

"Chong is the strongest nation in the west, perhaps as strong a Zhou itself," responded Ji Dan. "Our first campaign, against the Kunyi nomads proved to be a mere exercise in mobilization and maneuvering, as the aggressive but disorganized savages attacked and scattered, attacked and scattered, like a swarm of bees. A year later, the campaign to repel the forces of Mixu from Ruan and Gong was even easier, for after one modest skirmish with Mixu's best trained regiment, the enemy disbursed. Finally, when the formidable army of Qi came from the east to aid Mixu, Only Lu Shang's tactical skill at the Great River resulted in their defeat."

"Chong is a very different matter," said Lord Shih. "Hu is as intelligent as he is despicable. He will not march noisily and brazenly across the westlands inviting Ji Chang's attacks. He will continue to send small, lethal squads of terrorists or instigate other harassments. If faced with a large Zhou force, he will retreat to the impregnable ramparts of his city and, if need be, wait for the Armies of the Emperor to aid him."

Yet, under all of these fears was the one piece of knowledge that urged Ji Chang to proceed energetically. "Hu of Chong is an evil man," he said. "He will not have the help of Heaven. His honorable ancestors will not come to his aid. He will face the armies of the Field Marshall of the West alone. His own people will likely undermine his efforts if given the chance."

At length Ji Chang rose and stood looking into the fire. "Shang Gao over states his case. I do believe that Prince Hu is a continuing threat to our people." He turned to Lu Shang, sitting quietly in the background of the assembly. "Well my old soldier, the time has come, as we knew it would, to test those many martial theories we have debated together. Let us make ready our ladders and engines of assault. Let us scale the walls of Chong." As the gathering disbursed, cries of "Death to Chong!" and "Death to Prince Hu!" arose.

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Orders were carried by horsemen to the villages far and wide calling the citizenry to arms. Lu Shang assembled all senior officers to facilitate a general mobilization. As the days passed, Shang Gao was seen less and less often outside of his personal quarters. It was obvious that the general population, far from sharing his pacifism, was thirsty for war with Chong as if only in this way would their dignity be maintained, as if there had been some pent up desire for combat. Regiment after regiment of citizen soldiers streamed into Qishan to be fitted with weaponry and equipped for the coming campaign. The frenzy continued for weeks.

Every neighborhood of five families sent 10 men-at-arms. With five neighborhoods in every village, four villages in every clan, five clans in every ward,



five wards in every district, and five districts in every department, Zhou's citizens produced two 12,500 man armies.

The main force had gathered and prepared in the suburbs, while the Bolting Tigers Regiment of Right Officer Li assembled at Ji Chang's prime-house. Charioteers all, the Bolting Tigers could easily catch up to the lumbering twenty-thousand man infantry. Thus with Ji Fa, Lu Shang, and Ji Dan at the fore, the wrath of Ji Chang began its inexorable plod over the hills and dales toward Chong.

Ji Chang in full armor paid a parting call on Taisi, still unmoved from the spot where she was wounded and attended continuously. She smiled as he appeared in the doorway.

"What splendor is this coming before me?" she mumbled. "Is it the spirit of an ancestor?" Her voice was frail and nearly inaudible, though she expended great effort.

"No," he replied coming close to her. "Just the poor husband of Taisi who is about to strike back at her assailant."

"I thought you had already slain the perpetrators."

"Only the instrument, not the instigator."

Taisi did not feel the need to retaliate as Ji Chang did, but forgave him his rage. "Come back to me whole, husband of Taisi, for this wound does not cause pain such as I would suffer without you." She knew he would not be deterred.

As a man would prostrate himself before his sovereign, Ji Chang kneeled to embrace Taisi, then rose and left the chamber. He felt strong and young again as he nearly leaped into his chariot. The cold winter sun reflected wildly on the polished bronze and lacquered wood of his equipment. Like the entire Army itself, his chariot team jostled and fidgeted in anticipation of their departure. Hongyao strained to hold them in place. For a second he glanced back at the prime-house, then Hongyao cracked the whip. His four black steeds lurched forward and his chariot wheels ground the stones below.

Ji Chang in the lead, the Bolting Tiger regiment rumbled through the streets of Qishan, through the suburb, and into the countryside. Those left behind fretted, encouraged, or surreptitiously felt relief. Those on the march either worried or felt confident. All wondered at the will of Heaven but trusted their ruler, Ji Chang, to know it.

On the evening of the ninth day, the army camped on the north bank of the Wei River, very near the place where Ji Chang had met Lu Shang twenty years earlier. The stream was relatively low, it being the winter season with mountain snows holding fast to their peaks. The slower currents made it easier to cross and it was not necessary to construct the bridge of boats they had prepared for. The following morning, Ji Chang ordered a squad to cross into Chong territory to reconnoiter the area. An hour later, the force returned reporting no hostile forces nearby. All who could had probably retreated behind the protective walls of Chong.

As the full force and power of Zhou prepared to invade the land of Ji Chang's enemy, he suddenly felt a wave of indecision wash over him. There would be great loss of life. Ji Chang also knew he would regret the great suffering his invasion would inflict upon the commoners of Chong. A huge invading army sweeping through their farms and villages would scourge the countryside.

Ji Chang drove his chariot to the crest of a hill above their planned river crossing. "Loyal men of Zhou," he shouted, "heed my words! Remember the honor of your ancestors. Spare the innocent their lives and dwellings. No wells shall be filled up, no trees shall be felled, and no domestic animals shall be taken for food. These are the commands of your Sovereign so that the honor of Zhou shall be maintained." At the wave of his hand, the crossing commenced. Within three days, advance contingents reported seeing the walls of Chong.

"There is nothing like it in all the world," exclaimed Ji Dan when he first saw them.

Chong had a tradition of wall building into the mists of ancient times, for its first prince was Gun, minister of works to the ancient sage Emperor Shun. Shun and his people faced the most formidable enemy in all history, the great flood, when all under Heaven were threatened. Gun built levees to fend off the rising waters, huge enterprises requiring the labor of thousands. Higher and higher rose the dikes to no avail. In the end it was Gun's own son Yu who implemented the solution: to widen and deepen the channels to help the waters of the Great River reach the sea as quickly as possible.

"The walls are truly a wonder," agreed Ji Fa, "but they are only as strong as the soldiers on them."

Ji Chang called out for Officer Mimou who galloped up from the interior of the Zhou lines. "How are they constructed, Mimou?"

"I can only speculate, but they must be built like the stamped earth floors of houses."

"They are higher than expected," interjected Lu Shang. "We must construct ladders from the taller trees around us." Dismounting, Lu Shang began issuing the orders necessary to create scaling ladders. Soon squads of soldiers had cut down numerous tall, thin trees. Each ladder contained up to six stanchions with strapped cross pieces at regular intervals. Soldiers could climb them three abreast. Mimou estimated the heights of various points along the walls and was confident the ladders were tall enough.

While the ladders were being assembled, Officer Li's Bolting Tigers tested the range and precision of Chong's archers by skirting the walls with racing charioteers.

"They need not be very skilled," commented Ji Fa, "since they have so many. Their arrows fall like a general rain."

"I think we should attack now," urged Ji Wu. "All our forces have arrived."

"We will have a more opportune time," suggested Lu Shang. "There are storm clouds gathering. When the bad weather arrives, we may attack to greater advantage under its cover."

Ji Chang sent heralds out numerous times before the assault began. "Let all those who desire tranquility leave the city of Chong under a black banner," they recited loudly over and over. "Xibo will treat them with magnanimity!" This parade outside the walls, after a while, ceased to draw fire from archers above.

The sun set early that night as the storm amassed then began its pounding on the tents of Zhou's army which had sprung up like early spring mushrooms in the forest around Chong. There were no further plans to make or tactics to agree

upon. All was ready for attack at dawn as the storm either continued its rage or subsided. Ji Chang and his closest advisors simply sat and waited.

At dawn the drums for assembly sounded. The rain still fell steadily and, as hoped, the morning was smokey with poor visibility. Archers on the high escarpments would be no more useful than spear throwers and the ladder bearers would better reach the base of the walls.

Before the readied lines of attackers, Ji Chang offered few words. "I am Xibo!" he shouted. "The Emperor Di Xin has charged me with the duty of protecting the West. Let us conduct ourselves according to Heaven's desire" He ordered the drums of attack to begin. The gentle sounds of the nurturing rain were drowned out by the deafening noise of battle: drums, rumbling chariots, crying voices.

Ladders were thrown upon the escarpments. Hundreds scaled them only to tumble into heaps at the walls' bases. The rough hewn ladder wood dripped with blood, became scarlet as if intentionally painted. Eventually the rain stopped and the sun appeared only to intensify the colors of death and noises of pain. For days, wave after wave of Zhou's manhood surged up the ladders in vain.

At times the defenders of Chong would launch counter offensives, plunging down the same ladders attempting to release Chong from the grip of siege. These were suicide missions, for the Bolting Tigers and other mounted detachments rushed out to meet them, cutting them down as farmers cut down millet stalks.

On one of the counter offensives, a particularly fierce battalion of Chong soldiers penetrated beyond the Zhou front line. Ji Chang and Lu Shang had been surveying the work of ladder making just out of archery range. When the Chong counter attackers burst through, Lu Shang's horse bolted, nearly tumbling the old commander out of his chariot box; and a Chong halberd struck Ji Chang in the thigh where he stood near the team. Dangling from a horse's neck, he was carried a few yards beyond the enemy's reach as Zhou fighters pounced upon the Chong squad.

At first, Chong's wound appeared superficial; but as the battle wore on, Ji Chang's mobility was increasingly impaired. He was in obvious pain at times.

At night it was tranquil as a spring meadow and the officers of Zhou would gather in a tent to discuss the day's efforts or tactics still to be tried or simply to wait for the dawn. As the days passed and the death toll mounted, the mood became somber. It was nearly three months and Chong stood as stubbornly as ever.

"We must devise some new tactic," insisted Ji Fa. "Xibo failing to defeat Hu now would have dire consequences."

"It is the soldiers," declared Ji Dan. "They tire and their resolve has weakened."

Suddenly, the door flap flew open and an exhausted messenger tumbled in. "Xibo, I have a message from Qishan," he gasped from the floor. "Princess Taisi has joined her ancestors." His message conveyed, the man collapsed into unconsciousness.

Ji Chang bolted erect. His eyes were oily and his face reddened. The muscles of his jaw tightened; but, instead of furious cries, he left the tent silently. Ji Fa summoned soldiers. "See to this man that he may recover from his arduous trek." Ji Fa then removed himself to a corner of the tent where he sought a measure of privacy.

In the morning, unlike almost all others since their first attack, the ramparts were quiet. During the night as had become usual, Chong defenders had removed all the ladders that Zhou attackers had left, no doubt adding them to their stores of firewood. All regiments were in their assigned places for the charge; however, with Ji Chang wandering in the forest in grief, his senior officers hesitated to give orders.

For an hour or so the army stood impatiently ready. Ji Chang emerged on foot from the woods. His leg wound had begun to bleed again. Long-knife in hand and battle armor clinging as tightly to him as his convictions, he limped out in front of the lines in view of all.

"I... am... Xibo!" he shouted, "and tonight... I shall rest my head inside the walls of Chong... or I shall rest it in Heaven with my ancestors!" As he turned and raised his knife, a roar erupted from the long lines of fighters like the rush of an ocean's surf. When Ji Chang lunged forward, the entire force of Zhou lunged forward with him. There was no strategy here, no sophisticated tactical maneuver, only their devotion to their prince and their desire to follow him and please him. All thoughts of weariness or discomfort vanished. Ji Chang, like a common foot soldier, rushing toward the bloodied walls infused a great energy into Zhou's men. Like the current of a vast river, Zhou poured itself onto Chong, and inch by inch the crest of Chong's walls were taken.

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In the days that followed, captives were released or executed as Ji Chang considered appropriate. It was learned that Prince Hu had fought ruthlessly until late in the final assault. Lu Shang, Ji Fa, and Lord Bi conducted mopping up exercises in the countryside around the city. After cutting off their left ears to accurately record them as casualties, the dead of both Zhou and Chong were fittingly buried and Ji Chang conducted funerary rights over all of them. On the first day of the month, Ji Chang conducted a massive sacrifice to the spirits of the Chong lands.

Citizens were conscripted from throughout Chong to dismantle the city. Not a trace of Chong's massive ramparts would remain, nor would there be any trace of the House of Hu. No one would come after him to continue revering his ancestors and they all would be forgotten. Chong citizens, hired as couriers, were dispatched to spread the news of Hu's demise. "Such is the fate of those who oppose Xibo," it was proclaimed across the South and West.

Many princes and lords came to Qishan upon Ji Chang's return pledging fidelity. For his protection and beneficence, he demanded only one thing: continue sending tribute to the Emperor in Yin. First to arrive, for the funerary rights of Taisi, was her aged father Yu Xiong. Of all the Lords in the Southland, it was Ji Chang's venerable father-in-law who he most respected. He had never once intimated that Yu Xiong should pledge allegiance to him.

"You have become a worthy husband to my daughter," he pronounced.

"Your daughter has been a worthy princess," returned Ji Chang. "It is from you she inherited her brilliant fame, and from her will come a hundred sons."

"Even if the Emperor had not entitled you Xibo, I should have long ago pledged Chu to your service."

"Do the people of Chu wish to be so pledged?"

"Like my own family, like my own children." He pointed to his oldest son who was about the same age as Ji Chang." They are devoted beyond all save Taisi herself."

The ceremony of Taisi's burial was not extravagant, yet it was attended by hundreds of the high and low alike from both Zhou and Chu. At its close, Ji Chang retired to his prime-house exhausted. It was as if suddenly and without warning Ji Chang's driving energy was cut off, his goals complete, his usefulness expired. Within days of Taisi's burial Ji Chang grew weak and morose; within weeks he was bed ridden.

While the leading men of Zhou divided their time, according to their sensitivity, between Ji Chang's bedside and the duties of government, Ji Dan devoted his entire attention to his father's care. As his condition worsened, Ji Chang's mind focused on fewer and fewer concerns.

"Continue our work with the hexagrams," he insisted at one point. "What we record concerning them is more important than defeating petty despots."

Ji Dan answered in the affirmative with only half a mind, for he was studying his own changing view of his father. Ji Dan had always held his father in such awe. To see him frail and in need of guidance was sobering.

"Look after your brothers," pleaded Ji Chang at another point, "especially Ji Xian. Though he is older than you he is impetuous and needs your wise counsel."

"I will do my best, father, to instill in him a healthy caution."

"My father," Ji Chang mumbled, "was equable, perspicacious, and sincere. His virtue made his sacrifices manifest and the spirits descended on Zhou with many blessings for the people. I, on the other hand, have brought death and destruction. The people suffer greatly at the loss of their sons and brothers who became spirits at Chong."

Ji Dan urgently tried to comfort his grieving father and struggled to understand how a man of his stature and vigor could be reduced in old age to uncertainty and regretfulness. "Virtue on the part of a ruler, father, is loyalty to the people and sincerity to the spirits. This is as you have taught us."

As word of Ji Chang's ever weakening condition spread, Ji Chang's closest kin and advisors crowded as close to his bedside as possible. It seemed as if the very spirits of the land were saddened as the wintry skies bruised darker hour by hour. Ji Chang's approaching death was like a river's vortex, drawing into Qishan Zhou's prominent leaders and Ji Chang's devoted relatives.

"Where is Ji Fa?" he muttered. "Summon my son and heir!"

Hongyao retrieved Ji Fa in moments. Unlike Ji Dan whose cerebral tendencies were no match for a dying man's sadness, Ji Fa's impervious strength and optimism bolstered Ji Chang's sagging spirit. In moments of pain it was Ji Fa's arm that the dying Xibo gripped. It was into Ji Fa's resolute eyes that he stared in his last moments. It was obvious to any observer that, though Ji Dan was his father's closest friend, Ji Fa had his heart.

"Hold fast to your brother Ji Dan, my son," he advised Ji Fa, "for he will guide you in righteousness." Ji Chang's voice was reduced to a near whisper, then he fell silent.

## Chapter 22

### Heaven Intervenes Summer, 1050 BCE

#### Hexagram 60 JIA. Water above Lake

*Passive restraint brings success.* Persist not in harsh restraint.

*Rapids behind levees above marshes.* The Superior Man promotes a systematic virtue.

9 for the bottom place. He knows when remaining at home is propitious; good fortune results.

9 for the second place. Hiding in the inner chamber of a house brings misfortune.

6 for the third place. Lamenting another's lack of restraint is laudable.

6 for the fourth place. Quiescence ended at the proper time brings success.

9 for the fifth place. Self-restraint brings reward; advancing afterward wins praises.

6 for the top place. Captivity is tragic, though regret passes.

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Having slept over eight hours and having consumed his usual portions of grain, millet, and milk, Ji Fa felt himself ready for the march. With Hongyao's help he donned the armor of his father and grandfather slowly and carefully, as if the stiff leather and heavy bronze were somehow delicate. Lifting the bejeweled long-knife of his ancestors, he felt the strange weight of rulership, somehow both heady and sobering—pride and fear blended. Ji Fa glanced around the room at his brother Ji Dan, Lu Shang, and his uncle Lord Shih feeling very self-conscious.

"My brother seems somewhat uncomfortable in our father's suit." Ji Dan's remark was calculated to release some of the moment's tension with humor, but Ji Fa was not amused. "I remember the day you conducted your first divination," Ji Fa continued. "You and Shang Gao scanned the surface of the tortoise shell diligently but could find no quarry father would take that day. Do you remember?" Ji Fa's face well expressed his impatience without a word being said. "Because you could see no tigers, bears, or dragons there, you assumed there would be none."

"And, of course," Ji Fa admitted, "that day father met Teacher Uncle Shang whom we can credit with successes over Li, Mixu, and Chong." Ji Fa nodded in Lu Shang's direction.

"Yes. It was a most auspicious event, replied Ji Dan. "Should we be surprised that, during times of greatest uncertainty, Heaven intervenes? Do not wear father's armor timidly brother. If the Lord Above has seen fit to withdraw his mandate from

Yin, who shall be its inheritor? You are as much an heir to the mandate of Heaven as you are the heir to the principality of Zhou."

Ji Fa hefted the polished long-knife in one hand and the scepter like rod with Shun's white yak tails in the other. Playfully acknowledging Ji Dan's unmatched skill at divination, Ji Fa turned to Lu Shang. "Teacher, how does one know in advance the outcome of a consultation with the tortoise shell before it is conducted or whether victory will be won before a war is fought?"

"If you pursue virtue and avoid evil," he answered, "the outcomes of all divinations will be propitious. Victory will always be won in war if you have won the hearts of the people beforehand." Lu Shang had turned the subject of conversation once again back to that which had been ceaselessly debated since the death of Ji Chang, namely, the Emperor and whether he should be deposed.

Ji Fa looked to Ji Dan, as his father had urged, for guidance. "But does not the entire world recognize Di Xin as the Son of Heaven and Zhou as subservient to him? Is victory possible in that case?"

Ji Dan had wrestled with his attitude toward rebellion for years. Though he, as most others did, considered his father's investiture as Xibo a surrender by Di Xin of the Heavenly Mandate, he also agreed with his father that by accepting that same investiture he had recognized Di Xin's right to bestow such titles, hence, he conceded the right to rebel against the sovereign. Thus while Ji Chang lived he was entrapped in this great dilemma: he held a mandate he could not exercise.

But Ji Chang's death and Ji Fa's accession to the leadership of Zhou ended that dilemma. Ji Fa had not accepted an Imperial title, while "Emperor Zoo" had still disregarded the Mandate." A ruler who dismisses propriety," responded Ji Dan at length, "steals the loyalty of unsuspecting subjects. A ruler who denies justice, himself becomes a felon. A ruler without the people's countenance, is but one alone. If you are challenging a thief, a criminal, and a solitary man, what has the Son of Heaven to do with it?"

Ji Fa had heard these arguments before, though not expressed so succinctly. "We shall see if the world agrees with you, gentlemen. We shall see how many of the Empire's princes will gather at Mengjin."

Ji Fa, now Prince of Zhou, trailed by his kinsmen and loyal ministers, strode boldly from the prime-house into the brilliant summer sun, into the company of Zhou's best warriors, and into the company of Xibo, by proxy in the form of an intricately carved tablet. He mounted the second chariot as he so often had in the past, behind his father's, this time bearing his father in effigy. His armored entourage of ministers and high officials raced to their chariots or onto their horses.

Just as he was about to order the march to commence, just a Hongyao in the chariot of Xibo was about to crack the whip, two rather unsavory looking men rambled out from the crowd of on-lookers to block his path. Ji Fa looked down upon a pair of tired and dirty recluses whom he did not at first recognize as his father's eccentric, occasional advisors, Boyi and Shuqi.

"Where is the son of the great Xibo going to?" pleaded Boyi. "Why has he summoned such a great host of men at arms? Boyi pointed to the war chariot which carried the wooden tablet representing Ji Chang and, consequently, Xibo's authority. "Xibo is among the spirits; yet, instead of putting him to rest or invoking

his name in prayer for the benefit of your people, you use his name to raise arms against your lawful sovereign."

Armed officers near Ji Fa sprang toward the two brothers intending to silence them." Hold!" cried Lu Shang. "However wrong they might be in this case, these are men who exercise sincere righteousness. Leave them be."

The guards withdrew. At Ji Fa's nod Hongyao cracked the whip, and Xibo's heavy chariot lurched forward. Drums immediately began to rumble; and, as the pacifist brothers hastened aside, the Zhou army commenced the march to Mengjin, about four days away.

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Mengjin was on the south bank of the Great River where it suddenly widened and shallowed considerably. Most of the time, horsemen could wade across there where the current slowed. Rafts and boats could be maneuvered across with relative ease. Thus, Mengjin was an important place on the road between the Southern principalities and the Central Nation.

The summer had been very dry, so no doubt the dust raised by Zhou's army could be seen from Mengjin long before it arrived from the southwest. The eight hundred princes and lords who had responded to Ji Fa's call were arrayed along both sides of the road for nearly a mile. Ji Fa, his top officers, and the Bolting Tigers vanguard regiment continued forward, while his 20,000 man army bivouacked on a hill within sight of, but comfortably distant from, the rest. As the vanguard passed, the leader of each state joined Ji Fa's procession; and the accumulated leadership of the entire southern and western territories assembled on a hill near the bank of the Great River, more than eight hundred of them. Their colorful banners aloft behind them and bearing bright bronze arms and armor, a large and colorful circle was formed so the friends of Zhou could all look upon each other for the first time.

Ji Fa sat patiently on a bench provided by attendants while the lords and princes settled in. Many of them were surprised, expecting to behold a giant or semi-divine figure. Ji Fa wore impressive armor, though it was more functional than elaborate and obviously tested in many a fight over several generations. The Zhou party included only Lu Shang, Ji Dan, Lord Li, and Ji Fa himself, gathered before a single black banner emblazoned with Taotei. More important, however, was the chariot behind them. Fixed to the center of the coach-box was the wooden funerary tablet of Ji Chang, Xibo's polished halberd, and the tall staff holding the ancient emperor Shun's yak tails. Thus the authority of the Field Marshall of the West could not be easily disassociated from Ji Fa. The spirit of Xibo hung over the assembly like the bough of a great, invisible tree.

The princes of Ruan and Gong were the first to render obeisance to Ji Fa. These two had shown particular devotion to Ji Fa's father after he had rescued them from the tyrant of Mixu. Immediately thereafter, the princes of Yu and Rui approached with a finely wrought ceremonial bowl. Ji Fa stood and raised a hand. "Stop!" he cried. "I will accept no tribute however modest or generous. Send this bowl with whatever it contains to the Emperor in Yin." The two princes retreated embarrassed.



Ji Fa quickly stalked over to the Yu-Rui delegation." The princes of the South and West are friends of Zhou, not Zhou's subjects," he said loudly enough for the entire assembly to hear." Turning them by embraces to face the assembly, he stood shoulder to shoulder with them and continued. "I am possessed of no extraordinary wisdom. I am here to share a fellowship with you all because of the wisdom and virtue of my forebears." He pointed to Ji Chang's chariot and funerary tablet." My father, Xibo, has brought us together in common bond: the pursuit of virtue and a loathing for evil. Let us establish means of reward and punishment whereby our mutual benefit will be continually assured." Ji Fa then returned to his seat as many of them repeated his name in admiration, "Prince Fa! Prince Fa!"

One by one the princes and lords of all the states pledged loyalty to Zhou and criticized the Emperor with varying degrees of vituperation, most referring to him with the insulting name Zoo, meaning bloodthirsty. Ji Fa, Lu Shang, and Ji Dan observed each of them carefully, as if it were possible to read their inner intentions by the movements of their brows. Occasionally they would quietly converse with each other under the din of the courtly rhetoric.

"There are here no more than half the states needed to subdue the empire," concluded Ji Fa.

"Let us not forget the intervening of the Lord Above," reminded Ji Dan.

"Let us not forget the bloody knives of Shang's soldiers," countered Lu Shang.

Once the testimonies were concluded, Ji Fa looked in sequence into the face of each prince. 'How can I know,' he thought, 'what each heart contains. These are all brave and steadfast men; yet the overturning of Zoo is like overturning a sacrificial bowl: an abhorrent act, loathsome to all good men. An attempt at conquest would be fraught with danger for himself and the entire empire. Failure would bring more than the annihilation of a state; Zhou would be vilified throughout history.'

Ji Fa and several attendants descended from the hillside bearing Zhou banners. Ji Fa stood before them facing the assembly and began to read from bamboo slats:.

Oh, rulers of all the friendly states, my brave officers, and loyal ministers, hear my declaration. Heaven is the parent of all creatures great and low including men. In order for the people to live in harmony and order, sincere men endowed with superior intelligence are given Heaven's mandate to rule. Emperor Bloodthirsty does not revere Heaven or his people and is given to drunkenness, lust, and cruel oppression. He extends the punishment of offenders to their innocent relatives. He wastes the wealth of his nation in useless and extravagant construction projects. He has tortured and burned the loyal and good and rent the bellies of pregnant women.

The Lord Above has withdrawn the mandate from Yin and bestowed its dignity on my father, Ji Chang; but he died before the work is done. Now I, the little child, Ji Fa, have considered taking charge in Yin with the help of you, my loyal allies.

Shou has no repentant heart. He sits on his heels not serving Heaven nor the spirits of Heaven and earth, neglecting the temple of his ancestors and not sacrificing in it.

I am apprehensive. I have received the command of my deceased father, Ji Chang. I have offered special rites and sacrifices and performed due worship services on behalf of the people. What the people desire, Heaven will provide.

Will you help me, the one man, to cleanse the empire? Now is the time! Let us not miss the opportunity!

The assembled nobles, ministers, and soldiers shouted slogans of support for Ji Fa's ambition, hurling insults at the hated tyrant in Yin.

Ji Fa drew Lu Shang near and imparted instructions. The venerable old minister, admired throughout the West-lands for his military prowess, went to Ji Chang's chariot and retrieved the bronze halberd and yak tails. These symbols of Xibo's authority in hand, he left the circle of assembled leaders and mounted a small outcropping near the river bank.

Pointing with the staff at the far shore, he bellowed, "Look upon the shore of the Emperor Bloodthirsty over there!" It was as if the potent voice of Xibo himself was projected through Lu Shang's compact frame. "Gather your strength; gather your fighters. Make your flatboats ready for the crossing. Those who join Xibo there by nightfall shall partake of every good fortune which can be bestowed upon him. Those who do not arrive there by nightfall shall die."

The south shore of the Great River thereafter vibrated with the movement of men. Squads fanned out into the nearby forests to fell trees with which to fashion rafts. Officer Mimou had a hundred massive trees cut and tied together with rope. All during their construction, observers from numerous small nations scampered back and forth spreading information on Zhou's methods. With impeccable organization, soon they had constructed a massive inland fleet; not a single soldier nor steed need swim the currents.

Soon the wide river became covered with floating soldiers. It was a splendid test of martial skill and organization. Watching carefully, Ji Fa and his ministers would learn quickly which state's force was fit for combat and which was not. It also irretrievably bound these states together, for a crossing into the Central Nation could not be called anything but invasion.

Officer Mimou summoned Ji Fa onto his newly built raft, a large and nearly seaworthy barge. Ji Fa, Lu Shang, and Ji Dan drove their teams right onto the barge. Zhou's black banners fluttered in the summer wind from shore to shore as Ji Fa's 20,000 man force streamed across the river behind him.

The barge was propelled forward by a dozen pole handlers. At one point, one of them stumbled, falling overboard. Though he struggled to maintain his footing, the current and the weight of his bronze armor were his undoing. "This is the answer to my prayers from the spirits of Mengjin's land and forests," exclaimed Ji Fa. "To pass here will cause sorrow, pain, and loss; but success will be ours in the end."

At midstream a small, pale fish leaped from the surface, landing at Ji Fa's feet. "This is the river god's answer to my prayer, telling me to pursue the course toward Yin. "Ji Fa, kneeling, offered the fish to Heaven; and, cutting it in two, tossed the pieces into the water.

At length the cumbersome barge nuzzled against the north bank as a child might snuggle against her mother. Ji Fa and his party disembarked, proceeding to the best vantage point available, a knoll nearby. Squads of soldiers rapidly stripped the hill of its timber and foliage, constructing temporary dwellings with

much of it, creating piles of firewood with some of it, and discarding the rest in a gully.

To the many soldiers and princes from other states not familiar with Zhou's advanced technology, Ji Fa's structure, built under the expert guidance of Officer Mimou, seemed to almost appear magically on the hill. Within what seemed to them like minutes, Ji Fa was inside conducting sacrifices to the spirits of the north bank lands. Fire burst through the flu hole. Many eyes were fixed on Ji Fa's house as a strange, large, red bird seemed to metamorphose from the flame and smoke, its call rich and mellow. Reports of the falling black clad marine, the leaping white fish, and the materialized red bird whizzed through the ranks. When their bivouacs were finished, hundreds gathered to gaze at Ji Fa's dwelling with the strange red fowl perched on its roof.

Inside, Ji Fa's close associates debated the meanings of what all knew were omens from above. "The red bird warns us of the spilling of blood," ventured Ji Xian.

"But the loss of but one soldier in the entire crossing is propitious," proposed Lord Rong.

"Red is the color of fire, the color of the summer season, the color associated with the South." Ji Dan's authoritative tone always commanded silence from those around him. "The summer is ruled by Suiren, Firemaker, and the sacrificial animal is fowl, not fish." Ji Dan paced around the room with a wrinkled brow. It was as if he were framing his conclusions at the same time as he was framing his words. "The drowned soldier wore the black of the House of Xia, the color we Zhou have always maintained in respect of our progenitor, Houji, the Abandoned One."

Ji Dan's face brightened as he moved closer to his brother Ji Fa near the hearth. "Just as the black clad soldier was replaced on the barge by the white fish, the black of the House of Xia was replaced by the white of Shang." His eyes widened and his voice pitch and volume rose as the explanation of the omens became clear to him. "But the white of Shang will not be replaced by black again; it must be replaced by red!"

Murmurs surged through the gathering of Zhou's leaders as many voiced agreement or otherwise commented. Ji Fa gazed intently into his brother's then Lu Shang's eyes as he considered this conclusion. His astute brother was right, he realized. Zhou must have a new color, one not associated with the former Xia dynasty, yet one clearly opposed to the white of Shang. The Lord Above had given them the omens: a new era would soon dawn under the color red.

"Send word out among the princes and their forces," commanded Ji Fa. "Tell the story of the omens and of the coming day when red shall replace white as the Imperial color."

As his instructions were passing down the chain of command beyond the lodge, several of the more powerful princes asked for an audience with Ji Fa.

"We have seen the omens," one of them said, "and wish to know if Xibo intends to stay here on the north bank or if he intends to proceed toward Yin."

A second prince chimed in. "We feel the time has come to punish Zoo."

But Ji Fa then knew that the time was not yet right. Many of the states' forces were not well enough trained for battle. There were many preparations to make, not the least of which was to transform the Zhou army into new colors: red,

fearsome red, blood red, mindful of the fate an opponent might suffer. Further, the crossing was painfully slow and the barges and wading forces easy targets in the ford. He thought of how Mixu's army was slaughtered as it emerged onto the southwestern shore of the Great River years earlier. A force twice the size of the current one, which Ji Fa knew would be needed to challenge the Emperor, would be devastated before it reached the northern bank. Lastly, he knew that to transport the forces across the plains of the Central Nation and over the Taihang Mountains into Yin, they would need five times the provisions and many more horses to carry it. He resolved to dispatch Lu Shang's best trainers to a number of southern states. He would double the size of his forces and increase their effectiveness several fold.

"I am grateful," said Ji Fa, "that my friends from the South and West are ready to challenge Zoo. Your loyalty and courage will serve you well when the time comes. But being familiar with the decrees of the Lord Above, I know that the time has not yet arrived. We will leave behind a few hundred troops as our eyes and ears on Yin's side of the river. Let us return to our own states, make sacrifices, and do obeisance to the spirits and our ancestors to help us grow strong. I have no doubt that Heaven will call for us very soon."

## **Chapter 23**

### **The Second Punishment**

**Winter, 1049 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 62**

**ZHIAO GWAN.**

**Thunder above Mountain**

*Diminutive Successes.* High flying fowl sing off key; only small achievements are possible, though righteous persistence is rewarded for the humble are favored.

*Thunder threatens above the peaks.* Even the Superior Man can act too penitent or self denying.

6 for the bottom place. Misfortune rides the fowl in flight beyond royal control.

6 for the second place. His departed mother's spirit lingers near his altar; ministers keep him from his Sovereign, so he is blameless.

9 for the third place. Without proper caution, he will be killed by a subordinate, extreme misfortune.

9 for the fourth place. While there is no error in a verbal challenge, advancing aggressively is dangerous.

6 for the fifth place. Dense clouds from the west bring no rain, the Sovereign's subterranean archery injures the innocent.

6 for the top place. The fowl flees; calamity and injury arrive.

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The gray sky outside his apartment mirrored Jizi's mood. There was some new snow on the ground and the general feel of Deer Terrace was of sunless repetition. He had been spending nearly all of his time decorating wooden bowls; less and less of him was seen at court. Ironically, as he avoided the daily strife of government and issued increasing numbers of decorated items, rather than becoming less conspicuous, his fame rose even higher. Many who came to admire or learn from Jizi's art were added to those who came to learn from his intellect.

"The community of good ministers at the palace continues to shrink," he said looking into the eyes of his cousin, Qi, hoping to discern from the Prince of Wei his convictions. "Shang Rong retired nearly a decade ago; and his top assistant, Zuyi, returned to his homeland a few years after that."

"Who has been elevated to those offices?" asked Qi.

"Zuyi was replaced by Feilian, who I consider as corrupt as Feizong though not as clever. By far the most dangerous change at the court in a generation is the replacement of Provost Minister Jiaoli by Feizong's incompetent son Elai. How Jiaoli could be blamed for the Zhou victories in the South is a mystery to me. I openly opposed Elai's appointment, a stand that will, no doubt, bring some as yet undefined misery upon me. I patiently await the day of my demise at the hands of villains or the day of Zhou's conquest whichever comes first. I have even refrained from visiting friends and family in Choage because of the social deterioration I must endure passing through its ever more disorderly streets."

After a period of awkward silence, Jizi continued. "Cousin, you are the most respected leader of the Shang people. You must somehow appeal to Di Xin to repent and cease committing atrocities against the people or surely Zhou, with Heaven's help, will depose him."

"Unfortunately, it may be too late for that already. Zhou has occupied the north shore of the river across from Mengjin for more than a year now, a clear infringement on the Emperor's lands."

"True, cousin," he said. "Zhou holds much too much sway among the princes; yet at his military review at Mengjin he could claim the loyalty of less than half of them. Ji Fa is not his father."

"He has gained the support of several more since then," argued Qi.

"For two years now Di Xin has restrained his baser appetites. We must continue to persuade him toward righteousness and the people toward him. I see no other course."

Jizi rose, putting his lacquer painting brush and the bowl aside. "If you so desire, we may continue our deliberations later. Forgive me. I must join Junior Tutor Bigan at the great hall." His bowed head was a respectful dismissal of the Emperor's half brother.

Qi left graciously; and Jizi proceeded toward the hall where Prime Minister Feizong and, perhaps, the Emperor would consider the punishments to be meted out to certain offenders. His heart sickened as he approached, secretly fighting the urge to not attend. Instances of official corruption had become all too common, and leniency encouraged more.

Scribes and attendants were in their proper places. Jizi looked at Feizong but did not need to articulate the question. "His Majesty has instructed me to conduct

the inquiry," assured Feizong. "Let us begin." He signaled to attendants by the door who rather roughly ushered in a small group of the accused.

For generations it was the Senior Tutor's duty at hearings to stand near the sovereign offering counsel; but with Prime Minister Feizong sitting in judgment in Di Xin's place, a new pattern had evolved. Jizi had gradually become more engaged in the proceedings, often as defender. With Feizong as judge, his assistant Feilian conducted prosecutions. Where once Jizi welcomed criminal hearings because they engaged the Emperor in valuable and reasonable governance, now with Feizong dispensing justice according to his own distorted value system, Jizi had come to loathe the process.

The accused and accusers all stood before the throne bowing to the ministers upon it. Feilian began by questioning an old man, one Lu Wei, on the facts of the case. "I am the caretaker of the she altar," explained the old man. "Before the winter solstice ceremony I was tending to the gathering of sacrificial animals: shell covered creatures and swine, six of each. If you wish to know the whereabouts of these animals, ask them." The old man pointed at the two young brigands who had been arraigned with him. When Feilian asked the youths what they had done with the tortoises and pigs, they denied their involvement vehemently.

Jizi studied their faces intently. They seemed to him sincere and genuinely fearful, while the old man seemed oddly confident and his testimony rehearsed. "Did you see," he asked, "the animals in their possession?"

Feilian interrupted before the old man could respond. "These two are well known thieves. They have both received the first punishment in the past." Feilian stepped down from the dais and pushed the hair of one youth back to reveal a felon's brand on his forehead.

"What did they do with the animals?" Jizi asked of Feilian. After a few seconds of no response, he turned to Feizong. "There have been, Prime Minister, suggestions that Lu Wei himself took the animals."

"Enough!" cried Feizong. "The young thieves shall receive the second punishment. Take them away." Guards seized the two youths. As they were being propelled out of the hall, Feizong continued. "Lu Wei, you are to exercise greater diligence in your duty to the Emperor. You shall forfeit any remuneration for your services for a period of six months." Feizong rose and left the hall, adjourning the meeting.

Ostensibly organizing their bamboo strips of written material, Jizi and Bigan lingered as court scribes, guards, and other functionaries went on to other duties. As the years had gone by, Jizi's circle of influence had shrunk. He could no longer speak his mind openly, but waited for the hall to be cleared of all save Bigan.

"The young men will lose their noses for a crime they did not commit," sighed Jizi. "It saddens me to see our system of justice dismantled before our eyes."

"If it be any consolation," comforted Bigan, "the young men have been escaping needed punishments for some time."

"I believe Lu Wei sold the animals with the help of others. The vines of corruption grow quietly more pervasive on the walls of this capitol." This melancholy discourse on elements of official larceny continued to no good purpose for several more minutes. At the end of it, the two Tutors simply lapsed into silence and left the hall. Outside on the ridge giving Deer Terrace most of its

height, the two could look out over the roof tops of Choage, Bigan's home city. Tiny people bustled through the streets below.

"I have become ashamed of my town," muttered Bigan. "There is entirely too much wine being drunk and not much else going on. I remember the reaction of Emperor Yu the Great when he was given a taste of the first wine. He predicted that future princes would lose their states for indulgence in it."

"You should not feel ashamed of these people, Bigan. How can they not look up from their humble houses to us here on the ridge in all our glory and power and not imitate what they see? I am ashamed of what Deer Terrace has become, not Choage."

"The Prince of Wei has departed for Yin and expects us to join him there for an assembly," said Bigan, abruptly turning the conversation from the philosophical rumination it had become to the problems of the moment. "His summons is unequivocal. Some action must be taken soon, and he and several other Princes seek our advice."

On the opposite side of Deer Terrace from the Great Hall was Pure Creek, a natural artesian spring which fed the ponds around the palace and provided the clean water needed to populate the ridge. The stream separated the main quarters of the Emperor and his officers from the royal housekeepers and attendants. During warm weather, a single footbridge was used by all passing back and forth; however, during the coldest months of winter, its surface was often frozen thick enough to support the weight of those seeking shortcuts or those in haste.

So it was that, as Jizi and Bigan walked near the stream toward their apartments, servants and other workers crossed at several points. One of them, an old man Jizi failed to recognize, carried a large pottery jar toward the cooking house. Whether he knew it or not, the extra weight of the jar would not be supported by the ice; yet he fearlessly crossed, his legs poking holes in the frozen surface. Many were amused when he emerged on the opposite bank thoroughly wet from the thighs down.

Suddenly, armed guards appeared. Jizi and Bigan stood on the footbridge like two helpless owls watching the old man being propelled into Di Xin's chambers. Horror replaced surprise as they listened to the old man's agonizing screams inside. Bigan started to rush toward the Emperor's suite, but Jizi's hand on his shoulder held him still.

"Do you not recognize him, Jizi?" pleaded Bigan. "He is my cousin, the potter who lives in the town." Bigan's face was grim, his eyes and lips thin slits of discomfort.

Jizi then remembered the potter with whom he had lodged many years before during the construction of Deer Terrace. He also remembered the potter's two daughters with their cheerful smiles and whimsical pottery designs. It took all of his strength to not weep as the old man's cries wafted out into the gardens around the palace.

Soon there was a welcome silence, but the sight of guards removing a dead man from the Emperor's suite sent a chill through the already cold onlookers. Jizi watched as, one by one, they all turned away, reabsorbed themselves in their duties silently, and purposefully dismissed the atrocity they had just witnessed.

Knowing that his Junior Tutor was sometimes impetuous and emotional, Jizi emphatically instructed him to return to his apartment." Prepare for the trip to Yin. I will discover the reason for the old man's death," he assured.

As he approached Di Xin's suite, he could see Daji and other concubines lounging around the hearth inside. The fire was blazing, for few of the company around Di Xin were clothed warmly.

Feizong, in his usual capacity as access coordinator, met Jizi on the threshold. "His Majesty rests, Senior Tutor Jizi. May I assist you?"

"I wish to know what crime the old potter committed," answered Jizi harshly.

"None. His Majesty and the consort Daji observed the old man wading in the cold stream. They wished to know how he could have done so with so little discomfort. They wished to examine his shanks to discover of what he was made to accomplish so bold a feat."

The cold, matter-of-fact tone adopted by Feizong assaulted Jizi's sense of humanity. They were discussing the death by mutilation of a perfectly ordinary man for no reason other than some twisted anatomical curiosity. Feizong looked into Jizi's eyes as if waiting for some reaction, as if expecting some violent outburst by the Senior Tutor. Instead, Jizi simply turned as the palace workers had done and silently walked away leaving the Prime Minister to cope with Di Xin's vile desires as he wished. Jizi's senses had so often been pummeled by horrors that he feared he was becoming callous.

Having returned to the ministers' apartment wing, he found Bigan directing several servants who were preparing his and Bigan's effects for the trip to Yin. He asked with sad and silent eyes what Jizi had learned.

"It was as you guessed, Junior Tutor. The consort Daji and the Emperor had no good reason to execute your cousin. It was sport."

The two men ordered their effects loaded onto pack horses. At length the small caravan, with the tutors in chariots, began to leave Deer Terrace. Relieved to temporarily escape the palace's wickedness, the tutors had the palace gate in sight, a vision of blessed relief for their tired souls, when yet another sad event occurred. His coach was stopped by a young grounds keeper.

"Senior Tutor," he wailed from the path before Jizi, "what should I do? The Emperor has put my wife and child to death." The man was pathetic, totally helpless in the face of Di Xin's absolute power and cruelty.

Jizi's heart ached for him, but also for himself. To be the servant of a monster like Di Xin was a dismal fate. He had striven to be the Yi Yin of his age, but where was the virtuous Tang for him to serve?" Go back to your homeland," he advised. "Rejoin your father's house for your own is now empty and will be no more than sorrow to you."

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The countryside between Choage and Yin was peaceful for, while these roads during summer were burdened with traders and these fields with crops and livestock, winter offered the world its time of rest. The caravan of Jizi and Bigan was the largest disturbance for many months. Often, the rural population came out to greet the famed Senior Tutor. One would occasionally ask his advice, while most just wished to glimpse his person. Thus, their progress was extremely slow.



Nevertheless, within a few days they reached Yin, bustling and noisy as the world's capitol should be in spite of the season and the Emperor's seclusion at Deer Terrace. The two ministers disembarked at the royal compound, Jizi having sent word to Qi of their arrival.

That evening the Prince of Wei came to them. "Ministers, couriers I have received over the past few days confirm this: the Prince of Zhou now commands the loyalty of more than half the Empire." Qi stood with his back to the glowing hearth causing an orange corona to radiate around him. Bigan wished, as he so often had, for Qi's strength to lead the royal house. "Wine and decadence," continued Qi, "have destroyed the legacy of our illustrious ancestors and former Emperors." His tone was desperate.

"Oh, son of former Emperor Yi," replied Jizi. "It is Heaven which sends calamity upon the House of Shang." Jizi sat close to the wall of his suite as if, thought Bigan, to distance himself from events at the hearth. "Di Xin fears no calamity as you do, and he treats wise elders and former ministers spitefully. Meanwhile, the common people labor under many burdens and oppressions. Taxes and extortions rain on them as if they were enemies."

"The entire Central Nation," added Qi, "is so replete with larceny and assaults from both high and low that many escape punishment."

"Sadly, the common people have come to find wickedness a comfort, continued Jizi. They defile the places of veneration and steal sacrificial animals with the connivance of high officials. From the highest places in the world come poor examples."

"The elderly of our family have gone to the farthest extremes of the Empire to escape the impending ruin of our house." Qi wrung his hands and grimaced. "I am nearly insane, Senior Tutor, Junior Tutor. Why do you not offer me some solution?"

Jizi's voice hardened. "There is no solution save bending to Heaven's will. I formerly advised you to work diligently among the people of Yin so that disaster might be averted. Now I concede that you should join the elders far away instead so that our house will not perish in the coming catastrophe." He looked at the face of his loyal colleague. "Each of us must do now what is best for us. For me, I will not go into hiding, yet neither shall I serve another ruling house." All knew that Jizi's declaration would result in his death in due course.

After some moments of silence, Bigan and Qi departed Jizi's apartment, Qi more uncertain than ever, Bigan more resolute. He had lost patience with the Senior Tutor's passivity. The Empire would be protected and the House of Shang preserved, he was certain, by the actions of one man, Di Xin. In the morning he would return to Deer Terrace and convince him, no matter the cost, to reform himself. Somehow he must show Di Xin the proper course. "I am a Tutor to the Son of Heaven," he muttered to himself as he walked toward his quarters. "I will reveal the Emperor's errors to him."

It was late the following day before Jizi learned that his close associate and companion had returned to Choage. He was instantly anxious knowing the dangerous extremes of Di Xin's whimsy. He went about his tasks anxiously for several days anticipating bad news. When the messenger finally arrived, he quizzed the boy tersely. "Tell me all of it," he insisted.

A hush fell in the apartment as Jizi's family turned from their chores to listen. The courier, though reluctant conveyed his message, "The Junior Tutor was killed in the presence of His Majesty."

Jizi felt compelled to do something with his hands, so he picked up a three stringed harp and began to strum softly." Please continue," he said.

"Prime Minister Feizong conveyed his remains to our family in Choage. All of Choage, each and every citizen, was present for his burial. The street before his house was flooded with flowers. They brought the flowers that he loved so well and filled the street with them.

Jizi sat near the wall of his apartment strumming the three string harp, a blank expression on his face. His family had all ceased their domestic activities and sat like an audience watching a melodrama." Go on," he told the messenger while he strummed quietly.

"For three days Tutor Bigan lectured the Emperor. He neither ate nor slept nor indulged in the slightest humanly pleasure. He remonstrated for hours on end. When the Emperor refused to allow him inside the royal chambers, he paced up and down outside, still remonstrating the crimes and indignities committed by Di Xin. When the Emperor was conveyed around the grounds of Deer Terrace, Bigan trailed behind his Majesty's train still arguing for virtuous action, still criticizing the Emperor's deeds."

"Didn't anyone try to stop him?"

"Many came to listen, instead. He told us he would not stop until he changed Di Xin or until he was killed. He said there was no other course for him."

Jizi moaned inaudibly at the thought of his old friend being painfully executed." Please finish your narrative," he urged at another pause, still strumming weakly on the harp.

"The Emperor remarked that he had been told a sage's heart had more apertures than an ordinary man's. He called Bigan into his presence and inquired whether his heart had seven apertures." Jizi's eyes widened as he looked up. "Then he told a guard to remove Bigan's heart so he could count them."

Jizi could no longer contain his grief. The messenger slipped quietly away as the Tutor wept openly, strumming sorrowful chords on his harp. It was a strange and mournful song with few words save the name of his old friend and those to name his assailant and his fate. It was not one of the familiar tunes that emanated from Jizi's veneration ceremonies. Indeed, no ceremony was taking place. It was a spontaneous expression of profound grief. The wailing song of Jizi rang out over the palace compound, interrupting the work of many.

## **Chapter 24**

### **The Hen Does Not Announce the Morning Spring, 1049 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 49**

**GO.**  
**Lake above Fire**

*Revolution.* Not believed before achieved; righteous determination brings sublime success; regret ceases.

*Fire rising from a marsh.* The Superior Man controls the passing of days.

9 for the bottom place. Golden strands of leather offer needed strength.

6 for the second place. Great fortune results from forceful action on the appointed day; no error.

9 for the third place. To revolt before three discussions will result in misfortune and trouble.

9 for the fourth place. Regret ceases, confidence prevails; revolution brings good fortune.

9 for the fifth place. The great man transforms with a tiger's confidence; no divination is needed.

6 for the top place. The Superior Man transforms with a leopard's grace; commoners follow him.

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"The sky is clearing this morning, Prince Fa. Shall I begin the construction of barges?" Officer Mimou was kneeling as had become the standard position for addressing Ji Fa, though he had never asked for this deference.

"Why are so many kowtowing to me lately?" His voice was impatient and Mimou shuddered fearing he had insulted Ji Fa.

"My royal nephew forgets," said Lord Shih, "that he has inherited the Mandate of Heaven. The people believe you to be Emperor Zoo's successor."

Ji Fa rose and went to Mimou's side. Grasping him by the arm, he tugged the engineer to his feet. "And Heaven has selected Mimou to be the world's architect. He should not kneel to me." Looking into Mimou's eyes, Ji Fa questioned him. "What say you, Mimou? Are the signs right for the crossing? Is this to be the day the world changes its robe—casts off the white of Shang for the red of Zhou?"

"Yes, Prince Ji Fa," answered Mimou. "All the world trembles in anticipation."

"Am I really the Son of Heaven, Mimou, or just the audacious son of Ji Chang?"

His question was actually directed at his own conscience, but the mild mannered engineer took it to be a direct inquiry for him to answer. "I do not know the will of the Lord Above, Prince Ji Fa; but the people must have one to regulate the passing of days. Examples of righteous behavior must come from on high so that the five felicities will flow to the people."

"Ahh, Mimou," Ji Fa phrased rhetorically, "the five felicities: health, wealth, longevity, love of virtue, and a crowning death." Ji Fa paced around the hearth in the center of Mengjin's prime house. Around its periphery the collected leadership and inspiration of Zhou stood or sat: Ji Dan, Lu Shang, Lord Shih, his cousins Lords Bi and Rong, and a number of others including his younger brothers. "Will I bring them to the people? Perhaps only the last will flow to them by my actions, perhaps only death."

"The people trust in you," assured Mimou. "We are prepared to follow you wherever you lead us."

"Do you advise me to cross now into the Central Nation, Mimou?"

"I cannot advise you on that. You have many wise advisors, and I am not one of them."

"So I have, Officer Mimou. I have at least nine advisors who can put chaos in order."

"Ten!" The word came from a shadowy corner. Many eyes turned to find the dour face of Ji Fa's wife, Yijiang. Chuckles were emitted and grins appeared here and there among the assembled men.

Ji Fa corrected himself. "Yes, my lovely. You are first among my most eloquent councilors." Ji Fa sat. "Very well then, let them advise me if this be the day to clip the wing of Shang."

Ji Dan came forward out of the group. "Zhou has committed violent atrocities. The Empire is ruled by venal ministers and petty despots. Heaven's Mandate has descended upon you without your having desired it. If these were the only reasons to urge you forward, I would do so; but there is more." Ji Fa turned to include the others in his oration. "For twenty generations since Houji the destiny of the House of Zhou has been coming to this point: the 'Abandoned One' who was once cast out will now return home, the descendant of the oldest son of Emperor Ku by his principal wife Jingyuan will now sit upon the Throne at last."

Cries of energy, defiance, and determination rose from the group.

Ji Fa knew that an army of Zhou had once already crossed the Great River at Mengjin into territory recognized as Imperial lands. In fact, one could see the fortifications in a clearing across the river. A battalion still manned the outpost to observe and report any military movement in the Central Shang domain.

Ji Fa turned back to Mimou and said in a quiet voice, "Go now, Mimou, and prepare barges for the crossing." Mimou bowed and stalked out determinedly. .

Outside the gray sky was turning blue and the wispy fog was boiling rapidly away in the rising sun. Mimou's eyes squinted and fought to adjust when he emerged from the shadowy inside of the temporary house. He scanned most of the 360 degrees around him, his gaze falling on one nation's banner after another, the combined forces of the entire western and southern nations to the world's end, hundreds of nations sending nearly 80,000 men under arms.

Mimou's visual survey stopped on the blazing red banners of Zhou directly east of the city and closest to the Great River's southern bank. All of them, each and every one of Zhou's 50,000 men, wore scarlet. Streaming from their helmets, halberds, and lances were red pennants. Draped across their armored shoulders was red bunting. Chariot coaches, harnesses, and shields had red on them. It was as if a lake of blood had flooded into Mengjin's valley. Mimou marched purposefully toward the Zhou ranks where a hundred minor officers awaited orders.

When Lu Shang emerged from the house, attendants scampered up to him, then fanned out in the direction of the myriad of assembled nations. Within moments, the princes and lords of the South and West assembled. All of them kneeled when Ji Fa emerged.

"Arise, my friends," he commanded. "Heaven has provided us with a clear day so that we can see the far side of the Great River. Severe trials and discomforts will meet those who cross; but signs were given by the Lord Above previously: the black of Xia replaced by the white of Shang to be followed by the red of Zhou." Ji Fa paused as he glanced across the field at Mimou instructing the officers. "I have ordered my officers to begin the crossing. Who will follow me?"

A chant of "Xibo, Xibo!" began among the princes close to him and, like a swelling, vocal tidal wave, rolled across the sea of soldiers as Ji Fa and his train of senior officers marched toward the river.

The crossing exercise conducted two years earlier had produced an efficiency dividend because Zhou's methods had been widely discussed and imitated. The crossing was complete before sundown, and camp was struck on the north bank.

As night fell, camp fires illuminated the landscape as if mirroring the star spangled sky. Ji Fa and Lu Shang felt that an impromptu inspection tour could help them assess the army's capabilities. They were impressed with its new river fording skills, though its combat readiness could not be easily assessed without true engagement. As the pair wandered through the camps of nation after nation, a train of lords and princes accumulated behind them.

Ji Fa chatted with many of the nobles and, indeed, many of the common soldiers as the fluid assembly swelled and shrunk, advanced and loitered through the vast encampment. Each time he emerged into the fire light, relaxing soldiers would display their submission; and each time he would discourage them from exhibiting excessive humility. 'You are the army of the South and West,' he would berate, 'so stand with your head high and facing the tyrant in Yin. '

There was a certain melancholy in his demeanor as he exhibited time and again during the tour a genuine concern for the fates of the soldiers. Occasionally he would examine a battalion's compliment of chariot horses or a soldier's weaponry. The shield of one soldier had weak arm straps, so he reinforced them with straps from his own armor. At one point a large contingent of impatient officers resulted in an accidental forum for the discussion of Emperor Zoo.

"Xibo, tell us of your plans for the defeat of Zoo," implored one from the crowd.

"We shall use our chariots to great advantage," responded Ji Fa, "and the courage of our convictions."

"Will we not be badly outnumbered?" ventured another.

"While Zoo may have myriads of men, I will have but 80,000; while Zoo may have myriads of officers, I will have but 3,000. Nevertheless," Ji Fa explained, "I will triumph, for Zoo's officers and men have myriads of minds, while we are all of one mind."

"Why has Heaven abandoned the House of Shang, Xibo?"

"Because Zoo has abandoned virtue."

"Explain virtue to us, Xibo."

"A ruler must exhibit loyalty toward the people and sincerity in dealing with the spirits. The ancients have said, 'He who is devoted to us is our sovereign. He who is cruel to us is our enemy. What then is Zoo to us?' he asked.

Their answer was unequivocal. The word 'enemy' coursed through the mass as blood through a man.

At dawn Ji Fa rose from a somewhat troubled sleep. He took nourishment quickly, all the while dispensing mobilization orders. The march to Yin would begin just after a general assembly around the north bank knoll that he used as his temporary headquarters a second time. He emerged from the house and went silently to an exposed altar where he could address prayers to his ancestors and other spirits.

Unlike the night before, he was in full battle dress, sumptuous and theatrical, redder than the red dawn sky, inspiring awe even as he humbled himself before the altar. After several acts of obeisance, he rose and turned to address the multitude. A huge gong sounded an unnecessary call to attention.

"Heaven created sovereigns and sages to serve the people below," he declared, "but only in so far as they are Heaven's instrument to bring peace and prosperity to the nations. To be the foremost ruler in all the world is to be father and mother to the people. This has been so since the Sage Kings of old." He paused. "There is a man in Yin," he bellowed pointing toward the northeast, "who pretends to be such! He pretends to have an army of 700,000 men. He pretends to nourish virtue and protect the people. He pretends to hold the Mandate of Heaven, yet it is not so."

"The parents of all the world's creatures are Heaven and Earth. Among all creatures, men are the most intelligent; and, among men, one who is especially endowed may become the foremost ruler, the sovereign." Ji Fa paused to allow his listeners to absorb his points, then from nearby he retrieved a tall lance. On its end was Shun's white yak tails. The association of the divine, ancient monarch with Ji Fa was unmistakable. "Heaven hears as the people hear and sees as the people see," he continued brandishing the yak tails high above him. "There is a man in Yin who pretends to be father and mother to the people. What should be done about him?"

The roar of a hundred thousand angry voices reverberated through the valley of the Great River. Wildlife and gentle peasants for miles heard the voice of Ji Fa's horde determined to rid the world of the despot, Zoo. Ji Fa bounded into his chariot coach and struck out for Yin. In the deafening noise, his verbal commands could not be heard, but all knew what they were. This time, they would not return across the river but would advance into the Central Nation.

With Lord Li and the Bolting Tiger vanguard force in the lead, the train of soldiers tramped toward the capitol, the terrain becoming rapidly more erratic as they left the valley toward the Taihang mountains. Ji Fa watched the countryside pass him as Hongyao skillfully handled the team.

"My father should be the one riding before this army," he muttered.

"Your father rides before this army whether you see him or not. He is with you just as our beloved Duke Ji and the Ancient Duke are. Taisi and Jiangian are with you as is our divine Houji. They are responsible for what you have become."

Suddenly Ji Fa felt a great fear rising in him. He didn't know whether these esteemed ancestors were with him or not. He had never been able to divine the will of the spirits. It had always been his father and Ji Dan who could somehow fathom the thoughts from Heaven. If he could not claim a knowledge of Heaven's will, how could he claim to speak to the nations as Heaven's Son? His was a practical, earthly mind, intent on the solutions to real problems and deaf to the whispers from beyond the world.

Then he thought back to his dieing father's last words. "Hold fast to your brother, Ji Dan, my son. He will guide you in righteousness." As he recalled his father's last words, his troubled breast relaxed and he began to regain his composure.

"At that moment a message bearer ran up to Ji Fa from the extreme front of the column. "There is an envoy from the Emperor, Xibo", he said bowing.

"Lead him to me." Ji Fa stepped out of his chariot coach and stood silently beside it as the messenger retreated then returned with the Emperor's representative.

Though bowing low, the envoy's voice was confident." The Emperor Di Xin has sent me to enquire of you, Xibo. Where are you headed?"

Ji Fa responded matter-of-factly, "I am heading for Yin."

"I must report back to the Emperor, Xibo. When do you expect to get there?"

"On the day of hard-wood-rat."

The envoy looked as if he had been slapped." But Xibo," he pleaded, "that is only six days from now; and Yin is 125 miles from here on the east side of the Taihang range. If I convey that message to Di Xin and you do not arrive on the sixth day, I will be killed for giving a falsehood to His Majesty."

"I will be in Yin on the day of hard-wood-rat," insisted Ji Fa, his voice rising. "No harm will come to you by my actions." Ji Fa then climbed back into his coach as the messenger was escorted away to be released toward his superiors.

Before the first day of the march ended, clouds had begun to accumulate. During the night it began to rain making the valley's ground soft and the roads slippery as water and earth blended together, a brief romance between the elements.

At one point several princes from smaller states requested a rest period for the tired troops. "We must arrive in five days to save the life of an innocent man!" he cried out to them. "Would you sacrifice a man's life for a brief rest?" There were no further requests for repose and the column arrived at Shepherd's Wild a day early.

Ji Fa summoned Lu Shang and Ji Dan as he surveyed the terrain carefully. A short distance ahead was the town of Choage. On a foothill to its north, barely visible through the vigorous rain, was Deer Terrace, the tallest of Di Xin's numerous pleasure palaces, overlooking the city. Pure Creek, which originated on the hill, meandered southward through Choage then to the southwest toward the Great River. Between Ji Fa and the city was the meadow upon which the townspeople grazed their cattle and sheep.

"A man's palm is not flatter than this field," declared Lu Shang. "Here is the place to meet Emperor Zoo."

"We will bivouac here," commanded Ji Fa. "We will await Zoo and his host." They expected Yin's ministers to conscript every able bodied man in the Central Nation. These would be joined by the princes still loyal to him who were near enough to reach Choage in time. At best, this Yin mass would be led by abominable and witless ministers resulting in a wholly ineffectual force. At worst, the alarm sounding through the Central Nation would summon a horde of innocents who would stand like a human wall between Ji Fa's army and the Throne.

At dawn word reached Ji Fa of Yin regiments beginning to amass on the opposite end of Shepherd's Wild. He had the drums sound the call to assembly and emerged into the breaking day, the rising sun purposefully reversing the previous few days' maceration.

With the bronze halberd in one hand and Shun's yak tails in the other, Ji Fa was propelled in his chariot coach before his vast legion. He waited for the rhythmic rumble of thousands shouting his title to subside before he spoke to them one last time as Xibo. After this day he would address them as Emperor or he would never address them again. There would be Emperor Ji Fa or no Ji Fa at all; there was no third alternative. The day of hard-wood-rat would be the first day of a new dynasty or the last day of the House of Zhou. His line would be glorious or forgotten.

"We have come a long way together," he bellowed, "you men of the Westland. You princes of states close to our hearts and you new tribes from the far south, listen to me. 'The hen does not announce the morning,' is an ancient proverb. For a hen to crow would be to reveal the decadence of the family. Now the ruler of the House of Shang has become a slave to the whore Daji. He refuses to offer sacrifices to the spirits and bestows on the people, not the blessings of Heaven, but the curses of his ancestors. He has abandoned his kin and appointed to high office the riffraff of the Empire who mistreat and wound the people as a matter of course. Now the day has come when I, Ji Fa, will execute the punishment on Zoo which has been decreed by the Lord Above."

Ji Fa paused while the import of his words penetrated each man's consciousness." Here are your final instructions from Xibo. The entire citizenry of Yin will be driven to the front before you. They will be helpless victims in the jaws of tigers. Have compassion on those who offer submission and invite them to serve our West. As we advance on Yin, strike no more than seven blows, then halt to adjust your ranks. Be confident and assured," he cried, louder in emphasis, "but do not advance by more than seven blows without adjusting ranks."

Ji Fa turned and pointed his halberd and scepter toward Choage. "Let us exert ourselves with righteousness!" he screamed. "Let us act for the work of Heaven!"

Drums rumbled like thunder across Shepherd's Wild and the multitude of soldiers lined themselves along the meadow's western edge. The line was a mile wide, a hundred yards deep, and so dense that it appeared from afar as a solid, mostly scarlet mass— a blood red slice across the field as if Heaven's knife had wounded the earth. This is the sight that greeted the citizenry and army of Yin as they rushed out to defend themselves on the morning of hard-wood-rat.

Ji Fa, Lu Shang, and several of Ji Fa's top advisors stood together on a hill at Zhou's left flank watching the Yin defenders hastily forming a defensive front.

"The Imperial troops are there," observed Lu Shang pointing to a segment of the line about a third of the distance from their left flank."

"Our chariot thrust will necessarily be diagonally," commented Ji Dan." Should we not reposition them more to the left?"

"It will not matter," asserted Lu Shang.

Ji Fa studied their relative positions intently. The Yin officers had stationed themselves in the rear, a clear sign they lacked confidence. He could see the command post of Di Xin, the many white banners and his brilliantly attired



personal guard. He should be before his troops, thought Ji Fa, to give them strength. In this as in so many other things, the ruler must be the example for the multitude.

The Yin line began slowly to advance toward them as they had anticipated. It was a standard tactic to use suspense to weaken an enemy's resolve. Their planned response was two fold: to have Ji Fa reposition himself in front of the Zhou line and to accelerate the conflict.

Ji Fa leaped into his chariot and galloped in a cloud of dust laterally along the Zhou line in the clear sight of all, enemy and friend, drawing up his team at the center point of the entire field. Behind him were the 40,000 red clad Zhou soldiers, prepared to take the brunt of any Yin assault or to lead the charge, as commanded. A noticeable lurch of indecision rippled through the enemy's ranks.

He was magnificent in gold and red. He held aloft a golden halberd and a flashing long-knife. The red banner of Zhou and Shun's yak tails waved from a stationary lance on the coach. There, facing the greatest power Di Xin could summon, it became plain to all, including Ji Fa, who was the world's rightful sovereign. It was not the petty tyrant to the rear of the battle, but he who was here with his life at stake and his principles exposed. It was Ji Fa of Zhou.

The time had come, and Ji Fa waved a prearranged signal. Drums rumbled as if the earth were clearing its throat. A breach formed in the Zhou ranks through which three-hundred and fifty chariots thundered forward launching arrows. They raced diagonally between the two opposing lines directly at the strength of the enemy, Zoo's white clad Imperial troops.

After a second bone rattling rumble of drums, Zhou's 50,000 man red clad legion began a slow and deliberate march forward, led by Ji Fa himself.

At the third rumbling signal from the drums, the general advance of the armies of the South and West commenced, striking terror into the hearts of Yin's conscripted citizenry. The defense crumbled and simply began to melt away toward the rear. Lord Bi's Bolting Tigers lunged toward and then through the Imperial lines as Zoo's soldiers stumbled aside. Three-hundred and fifty enemy chariots galloping at will behind their lines and a general advance by a tightly ranked army of a hundred and fifty thousand turned a retreating army into a panic stricken mob.

Following the wholesale stampede of the frightened multitude toward the rear, Zhou's forces slowed their advance according to instructions, adjusting their ranks frequently; however, the many regiments from the various allied states, especially the southern tribes, were much more enthused over killing. Between Shepherd's Wild and Choage the field was strewn with blood soaked corpses.

For the mile or so through the Wild and on through the town of Choage, the Yin populace scattered, pursued relentlessly, the hindmost falling to the knife, the slowest trampled under the running feet of their own cohorts. Fire engulfed the city, especially Di Xin's palace on the ridge, its smoke obscuring the noonday sun like a Heavenly frown.

Ji Fa in his chariot raced toward the foremost point of advance, which was then beyond Choage and nearly within sight of Yin itself. He had no thought of where his associates were at that moment or of the specific course of the battle in various

places. He was intent on one purpose: to stop the slaughter before the retreating people reached Yin.

"Halt!" he yelled at the Mao horsemen as his team galloped toward them." I command you to cease these atrocities!" he shouted at the fierce horsemen of the Peng tribe who had pounced on some Yin conscripts fighting desperately but in vain for their lives. In a wild gallop, Ji Fa finally reached the foremost point of the charging army. The sight of Xibo's chariot wheeling madly toward them was horrifying to the retreating Yin. Hundreds ceased running and fell prostrate on the ground wailing for mercy even as Zhou's advancing engine of assault was nearly upon them. Their fear of Xibo's person was greater than their fear of Xibo's troops.

Ji Fa drew up between those fleeing and the force pursuing them. As if they were sacrificial meat in a ceremonial bowl, no barrier on earth could protect the helpless Yin citizens save divine protection itself. Only the manifestation of Heaven's power, the world's sovereign, could halt the carnage.

"I, Ji Fa, the conqueror of Yin command you all," he shouted. "Lay down your arms you men of the South." He then called over the prostrate Yin people, "Fear not, you men of Yin. I come not to inflict punishments upon you. Arise and return to your homes."

Other chariots had begun to gather near Ji Fa's once his could slow. The officers of Zhou's force streaked back and forth before the advancing infantrymen ordering a general halt. Gradually, both pursuer and pursued ceased their bloody engagement; gradually the boiling and seething of battle subsided. Yin soldiers dropped their weapons and drifted toward the city, the field of conflict quieting like a dying storm.

Several hours passed as Ji Fa and his chief lieutenants reimposed order on the Zhou host, and then the triumphal procession into the city began. By then it was late afternoon, the reddening sun intensifying in the minds of Yin's citizens that their world would henceforth wear a new hue: the scarlet of Zhou. The arrival of their new monarch was announced by the thundering of marching drums gaining volume with each passing moment as the column neared the city. Crowds of the curious began to congeal between the houses and especially near the city's gateway where the road led through Shepherd's Wild and toward the Empire's mysterious western frontiers.

A despondent Shang Rong, once Prime Minister of the Empire, looked upon the advancing Zhou procession and the milling population. He perceived a mixture of anxiety and hope in their expressions. Here they stood like a bride's family awaiting the arrival of the groom's party, prepared to ransom her, not according to the bride's worth, but according to the groom's.

At the approach of the first dignitary's chariot, Lord Bi leading his Bolting Tigers, several people inquired of Shang Rong if the man was their new Emperor. "His bearing is stern, guarded, and impatient," he replied. "He must be the Captain of the Vanguard."

The column of soldiers continued to stream past. At the approach of a second dignitary, Lu Shang, onlookers asked if he was their new Emperor. "He displays the confidence of a tiger and the vigor of an eagle," responded Shang Rong. "He must be the Commanding General."

A third dignitary, Ji Dan, approached within the stream of the procession and the people asked Shang Rong if he was their new sovereign. "He is contemplative and tolerant," concluded Shang Rong from his observations of the man." He is not the monarch; he must be the principal minister."

In the stream of flowing soldiers, the fourth chariot carried Ji Fa. Shang Rong did not wait for someone to ask him, for, though the chariot itself was indistinguishable from the others, this one displayed something Shang Rong recognized as unmistakably belonging to the Prince of Zhou: Shun's yak tails. To the people around him who looked into their respected minister's face for guidance, he nodded. "His gaze penetrates the world around him, yet we cannot determine his mood. Yes, our new monarch has arrived."

Beginning with the group of observers near the main gateway, every man, woman, and child in the city of Yin fell prostrate, burying their faces in their hands and pressing their foreheads to the ground. In return, Ji Fa covered his face with his hands." May Heaven protect us!" he wailed; and the multitude groaned an echo which washed across the city of Yin as a wave of personal sorrow surges over a person's heart, "May Heaven protect us all."

## Chapter 25

### No Need to Wring Its Neck Spring, 1049 BCE

#### Hexagram 47 KUN.

#### Still Water over Rushing Water

*Adversity leads to success thanks to righteous persistence.* Spoken words will not inspire confidence.

*The swamp is dried up.* The Superior man risks his life to satisfy his will.

6 for the bottom place. He walks alone for three years in a gloomy valley fighting entangling weeds.

9 for the second place. Gluttony brings difficulties. A nobleman is available to participate in a sacrifice.

6 for the third place. Rock barriers with nothing but thistles for help, he cannot find his wife in his house.

9 for the fourth place. A slow arrival. Trouble in the company of nobility

9 for the fifth place. Conflict with a nobleman costs him his feet and nose. Sacrifices are called for.

6 for the top place. Entangled with vines, he repents, which brings good fortune in time.

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With the moon hiding behind thick layers of cloud, the night was especially dark and foreboding. Ji Fa's mood was not as he would have expected it, his having just defeated the army of the world's sovereign. Ji Fa stood near the entrance to his temporary quarters watching the ebb and flow of an army in camp. To the east was the city of Yin, greatest and most populace of all metropolises, seat of Heaven's Son, source of the world's leadership. To the west was Deer Terrace above the city of Choage casting its very shadow on Youli prison where Ji Fa's father, Ji Chang, spent so many torturous years in captivity.

Ji Fa's thoughts drifted back across the years to the times before Ji Chang's death and the stories he told of that captivity. Ji Chang had described in minute detail Emperor Zoo and his disgusting entourage of whores and extortionists; but he had also told of his good friend Jizi, the Senior Tutor, and of several others who were virtuous, though loyal to the throne: Junior Tutor Bigan now dead, former Prime Minister Shang Rong now in retirement, and Qi the Prince of Wei still in hiding after many months.

"It is fitting," said Ji Dan, "that all should be resolved between Zhou and Yin here in the shadow of Deer Terrace. Father may have slaved in this very field, on this very spot."

Ji Fa glanced at his younger brother fondly. He was creative and philosophical, the world's best possible advisor, but needed a bit more practicality. "Have my counselors reached agreement yet?"

By the noise coming from inside, both knew that consensus had definitely not been reached. "Your leadership is needed brother," replied Ji Dan.

Ji Dan followed Ji Fa into the noisy conference, which fell immediately silent. Unlike his father, Ji Fa disliked policy debates that raged on endlessly. Ji Fa turned to Lu Shang and challenged, "Teacher Shang, what is your position?"

The old warrior bowed but spoke forcefully. "There is a saying of my homeland that, if one loves one's home, even the bothersome birds on it are loved; but if one despises a particular man, even the man's village is despicable. There are many among us who despised Zoo."

"Including yourself?"

"Yes, my Prince."

Ji Fa turned to his father's half brother. "Uncle Shih, you are the fairest minded in the land. What is your position?"

"Heed the words of Emperor Tang, founder of the dynasty we have just vanquished, that only those who have done wrong should be punished. Sieve the bad from among the good and punish them only."

"With a Yin population so numerous, do you believe that it can be done?"

"Yes, my Prince."

"And how about you, Ji Dan? What is your advice to your brother?"

Ji Dan had found an obscure seat on the far side of the tent. He rose but spoke softly. "When our great-grand father, the ancient Duke, was insulted by the Xunyu tribe, he did not seek to punish them. When our beloved grand father, Duke Ji, incurred the Emperor's disdain, he did not seek to harm the people of Yin who came to join Zhou. Following these examples, brother, I urge you to live by your father's words: 'A ruler's goal is humanity.' Therefore, my brother, conqueror of Zoo, you have clipped the wing of Shang, so there is no need to wring its neck."

Chuckles and murmurs through the group indicated some appreciating his wit as well as a majority being in agreement.

Ji Fa drifted idly about the tent but concentrated intently on these responses. "Do you suggest no action at all?"

"Proclaim peace throughout the world. Declare your intent to associate with the virtuous only. Let all know that their past associations will not be judged, only their behavior toward each other and their Sovereign. Let every one know the safety of their own abodes and the rewards of their own industry and virtue." There were mumbles and nods of agreement in the assembly, but also some expressions of doubt.

Through the night they discussed and adopted the policies and acts which would be taken. Ji Fa would conduct a series of sacrifices: to his own ancestors, to Tang at his temple, and to Heaven at Yin's *shi* altar. He would seek out the virtuous among the Shang people to elevate them to high office, particularly any known descendants of the ancient sage Kings. And he would stage a massive hunt, commanding the attendance of every nation's Prince. Agreement was quickly reached on these points; but, as to the nature of Ji Fa's governmental system, debate continued.

From his seat at the tent wall, Ji Dan had been observing closely his countrymen's and relatives' intellectual wrestling when his attention was caught by a small point of light. It was the twilight of the coming dawn peeking through a small hole in the tent's side. Ji Dan suddenly felt the urge to bath himself in the light and escape the noise inside. He removed himself nearly unnoticed. Outside he breathed deeply and drifted far enough away from the tent so that the babbling voices inside could not be understood and barely even heard.

Ji Dan had begun to tire of this military campaign almost before it had begun, notwithstanding the fact that it sought to topple the Son of Heaven. He was surprised at himself when he realized his own passivity. Yet his brother was embarked on a mission he knew was endowed by the Lord Above, so he could not refuse to contribute his utmost, mentally and physically.

As he strolled about in the early dawn light he let the soft impressions of a spring meadow massage his weary heart: lively insects, nervous birds, and sanguine wild flowers. In spite of the massive numbers of human feet that had so recently thundered across this little meadow, the field was literally blanketed with reddish flowers. As he lingered about in the dawn, a peculiar association sprung up in his mind between the ruddy little blossoms and the human carnage that had just occurred in the Wild, still another manifestation of Heaven's will. Refreshed, he returned to the labor under the gloomy tent.

"The strength of Yin," asserted Nangong Kuo, "came from its size and population, just as the cooking pot is stronger than the drinking cup." The assembly chuckled at his weak metaphor. "By keeping all other nations small in comparison to Yin, Yin assured its dominance."

"But we all know," interjected Taidian, "that Yin could not prevent the rise of hegemony by decree alone. Biebo of the north and our own beloved Ji Chang are cases in point."

"I have observed carefully," said San Yisheng, "in visits to the capitol how Yin's ministers controlled every aspect of the Central Nation's life in spite of its great

size and population. It is such an intricate system of commands and reports, which we should build."

"Such a system," countered Taidian, "requires the leadership of a Tang, a Wuding, or our own Ji Fa. Will future sons of Ji Fa have those capabilities? Such a system is only as strong as its leader, as has been proven by the weakness of Yin under Emperor Zoo."

"We should shape a system," declared Shih, "which will function for the benefit of all even if there is a weak monarch." Alluding to Nangong Kuo's poor metaphor, he added with a slight grin, "One can drink wine from a cooking pot, but one cannot cook for the family in a cup." Laughter burst from the group.

Nangong Kuo's face showed no embarrassment for he obviously failed to comprehend Shih's wit. "By making the West more powerful, Zhou shall exert its will over the Nations."

Hongyao rose to speak for the first time, his voice projecting a strength not visible on his frail form. "To project the will of Zhou from the West will perpetuate a state of continual war. The mothers of Zhou do not wish for their husbands and sons to become a nomadic horde roaming through the world." There was anger in his tone.

Cries of agreement rose from the assembly, subsiding when Ji Dan rose to speak. "Since times of old the Son of Heaven has bestowed lands and surnames," he began. "Bestow them now, brother, on faithful servants, brave soldiers and officers, trusted kinsmen, and even upon the good men of Yin. Create new Nations scattered about and among the old, the way wild flowers in Shepherd's Wild spring up among the grasses already here. Help them grow prosperous and strong so that they may become screens and fences for Zhou."

The good sense of Ji Dan's design was readily apparent, but all remained silent watching Ji Fa. Ji Fa stroked his chin for few a moments, then stood. He walked to the door of the tent and threw back the flap. The morning sun burst into the murky tent causing the entire assembly to squint. "As the sun rises, my officers and friends, the House of Zhou does also. You have advised me well; the course of our acts will be well received by the spirits and the people." He addressed Taidian. "We shall make Zhou stronger and the people prosperous to aid us wherever we are."

Turning to San Yisheng, he continued, "We shall create a system whereby ministers near the throne will be constantly apprised of conditions throughout the Nations; but, "he directed at Taidian and Shih, "the capitol will exert its will by example... by elevating those with integrity, not influence. We shall do that, which will benefit the people always," he concluded. "The Mandate of Heaven shall not be neglected!"

For the first time in many months, Ji Fa's face exhibited a certain radiance, a certain confidence, and joy. "Come all!" he cried. "Let us conduct the appropriate sacrifices."

Multitudes of soldiers were milling aimlessly about in Shepherd's Wild meadow. As soon as they became aware of Ji Fa's emergence from the tent, they all stilled and paid careful attention. As Ji Fa was organizing a procession toward Yin's *shi* altar, a messenger sped up and dismounted. Groveling, he addressed Ji Fa as 'Your Majesty.' It was the first incidence of it, and Ji Fa was a little stunned. He

had always associated the term with something sinister and venal. Now it was his own title, one he would honor or disgrace according to his own strength of character.

"Rise soldier," he commanded. "One who carries out his martial duties faithfully need not grovel before me." The man looked up at Ji Fa in awe. "Show your respect for me by integrity." It was important to Ji Fa to establish a reasonable protocol.

The man stood bowing at the waist. "Your Majesty, Zhengdou reports that the body of Zoo has been found in the ashes and rubble of Deer Terrace. He covered himself in jade and pearls before having his chamber set afire by the servants."

"What of the whore, Daji?"

"She and another woman were found hanged."

Ji Fa considered carefully for a moment the disposal of Zoo's remains. "Conscript whichever citizen is not vitally engaged to dig a large communal tomb. Remove any remaining identifying garments and bury Zoo and Daji among the fallen soldiers of Yin who are not retrieved by their families. Let any who seek to commune with his spirit also commune with the spirits of those who died by his hand."

As the messenger departed, the royal procession snaked toward the shi altar. Compared to the usual practices of Shang royalty, the column was unpretentious. Ji Fa was on foot, preceded by a color guard with red banners and, of course, Shun's yak tails and followed by a few dozen attendants, officers, and enfeebled princes. In the Yin suburbs a clearing, surrounded by centuries old cypress trees contained the altar to which twelve generations of Heaven's Sons came to pray and do obeisance to the Lord Above. Only Ji Fa and Ji Dan approached. The procession fanned out around the edge of the field. Already civilians from the surrounding metropolis had begun to gather in the vicinity, attracted by the column of black smoke from the bonfire. They came to gaze upon their new sovereign.

As he mounted the place of raised earth, Ji Fa felt his knees weaken, though he refused to stumble and gripped Ji Dan's shoulder to steady himself. The hill's summit was no more than a few feet above ground level, yet the air felt as thin as on the peak of mount Qishan. Ji Fa stood before the stone altar, stained with the blood of countless sacrificial animals, momentarily unable to continue. The full force of his new responsibilities rushed in on him. It was as if he felt the Lord's breath.

Ji Dan's voice rang out across the clearing. "Emperor Zoo was the last in the line of the House of Shang," he wailed, "descended from the Divine Progenitor Emperor Ku. But Zoo abandoned the glorious virtues of his fathers. He tyrannized the people and offended the spirits."

Ji Dan turned to face Ji Fa now kneeling. Quietly he muttered, "Kowtow, Ji Fa, son of Ji Chang, First Emperor of the House of Zhou. Bow to Heaven in the name of your people." Ji Dan continued bellowing across the field, "The Lord Above has rendered his judgment on Zoo."

Ji Fa covered his face with his palms, kneeled and touched his forehead to the floor, raised it, and touched the floor again. The harsh and gritty surface burned the skin of his forearms and forehead as if he had been touched by the Lord Above. "The judgment of the Lord Above having been rendered," chanted Ji Fa, "I

have overturned the House of Shang and hold Heaven's Appointment reverentially." He kowtowed twice more. I have accomplished the mission assigned by the Lord above."

"Now," said Ji Dan, "you are the Son of Heaven. Rise and face your people."

By this time a huge gathering of Yin's citizens had filled the clearing and all available spaces among the cypress trees when Ji Fa stood turning from the stone altar." Hence forward," he cried from the mound, "I shall be known as Emperor Wu, the Triumphant Emperor. My father shall be known as Emperor Wen, the Cultured Emperor. My grandfather shall be known as Emperor Ji, the Culminating Emperor. Lastly, my great-grandfather shall be known as Emperor Tai, the Preeminent Emperor."

Ji Fa drifted in a circle around the stone altar as he continued. "These things shall be done on this, the first, decree of Emperor Wu. The calendar of Zhou shall be adopted throughout the world; but in matters of cultivation the traditional times of planting and harvesting shall not be interfered with. The color red shall be displayed at formal occasions such as sacrifices, burials, and in all functions concerning nuptials by officials, lords, and princes in every nation. She altars in every national capitol shall be planted with chestnut trees, and solemn ceremonies shall be held only at sunrise. Princes of the myriad realms shall follow these principles to exhibit their loyalty to Emperor Wu.

When Ji Fa abruptly turned to step down from the mound, Ji Dan screamed out above his head, "All... bow... to the Son... of Heaven!".

And all did.

Seeming to not notice the acts of obeisance going on all around him, Ji Fa and his entourage of advisors and princes, trailed by several companies of infantry, rode through the suburbs of Yin toward Zoo's palace. Ji Fa had observed the bedraggled states of some of the people, particularly among the old and infirm; so, when he came upon the granaries at Big Bridge, Ji Fa ordered them opened and their contents distributed to the needy.

The procession snaked its way gradually through the usually bustling streets and markets of Yin proper, deserted except for those crowding along the avenues and in doorways who wished to observe the coming of the Conqueror. He saw few faces, however, for all kowtowed at his approach even along side streets a great distance beyond where Ji Fa could see.

On one such side street he saw a veritable mountain of flowers. Curious, he halted the column and, with Ji Dan and San Yisheng, approached the untidy mound.

"What is this curious hill of blossoms?" Ji Dan asked a trembling citizen.

"It is the grave of Junior Tutor Bigan, Minister," came the timid reply. "The people come to honor his memory with flowers because he was famed among the people for his gardening."

Ji Fa recalled the fondness with which his father spoke of Bigan. "Have the body of Bigan exhumed," commanded Ji Fa; and a gasp surged through the many prostrate or bowing people on the street. "The late Xibo, my father, respected the Junior Tutor. Have a new tomb constructed on the palace grounds, one befitting Bigan's stature.



In time they arrived at the principal palace of the House of Shang. Among Ji Fa's advisors, only San Yisheng had visited there, yet all knew by its ornate architecture and elaborate decoration where Zoo spent his time. Several servants spilled out at Ji Fa's approach. Among them was only one of prominence, Zuyi, an important former minister. The rest had sacrificed themselves at Shepherd's Wild or had retired to their villages. Zuyi stood before the servants, bowing low as if to shield them.

"Do you not fear me, Minister?" inquired Ji Fa when he arrived before Zuyi.

"Beyond all others, Majesty; yet these little people have asked me to seek your clemency."

Ji Fa was astonished at his bravery. "What offenses have they committed against the throne or the people of Yin?"

Zuyi's answer was slow in coming. He knew if he were not absolutely honest, many would die. "They have lived lavishly at the expense of others," he said.

Ji Fa was impressed by the minister's straight forward answer. "Then let them perform reparations to the poor. All but the garments they wear shall be given away, then they shall return to their duties here. As long as they are employed by the royal house, they shall receive only sufficient compensation to support their families, no more, no less."

"Thank you, Majesty," said Zuyi.

Ji Fa waved toward the palace. "Come," he grunted at Zuyi; and the procession continued toward its entrance. Its rich gardens were aflame with blossoms and Ji Fa marveled at the intricacy and polish of its structures. His father had not exaggerated its beauty and refinement. Glancing back at officer Mimou, he was not surprised to see fascination in the builder's eyes as his gaze swept from object to object.

Entering the main doorway, he encountered a veritable crowd of young women, prostrate and silent. He asked Zuyi what their status was at the court and where they had come from.

"Some were taken by Zoo on his travels through the states, some were the tribute of princes," he explained.

"Have them all returned to their families," Ji Fa snarled.

In room after room Ji Fa gazed upon silk and other precious objects, particularly jade. "Jade here, jade there; I have never encountered so much jade," complained Ji Fa. "Mimou, what can be done with it that is useful?"

"Nothing, Majesty. It can only serve as a decoration; yet many appreciate its great beauty."

Ji Fa addressed Minister Zuyi. "Where did it all come from?"

"From the princes of many nations, Majesty."

"Have it all returned to them."

After he had toured the palace grounds thoroughly, Ji Fa entered the Great Hall itself, seat of eleven Shang Emperors including Pangeng, the indomitable Wuding, and the virtuous Zujia. Yet it was also the seat of the disgusting Wuyi and, of course, the bloodthirsty Di Xin. Ji Fa gazed about the hall at the symbols and artifacts of twenty generations of Shang rule. More important, however, were the objects left by those ancient, divine rulers, particularly the "nine tripods" of Yu. Ji

Fa went from one to the other studying the images and symbols on them, marveling at the detail with which the nine regions were depicted.

In the presence of the tripods it was as if he had arrived on his own doorstep having completed a difficult journey. Ji Fa made his way slowly to the Imperial dais as his entourage streamed into the hall jostling for positions of viewing advantage. With his back to his companions, Ji Fa slid his fingers along the delicate carvings on the Throne of Heaven. His eyes rose to the large white rooster, the banner of Shang, draped above it. He suddenly spun around and abruptly sat down on the throne, grinning widely at the crowd. A great cheer boiled out uncontrollably from them.

## Chapter 26

### All the Great Turmoil Summer, 1048 BCE

#### Hexagram 63 JI JI. Water above Fire

*After completion.* Small successes, large defeats; righteous persistence is rewarded.

*Water above fire.* The Superior Man braces for trouble with well considered preparations.

9 for the bottom place. Braking his chariot, he wets the coach box; no blame or error in it.

6 for the second place. The Lady's curtain was lost for seven days; a search was unnecessary.

9 for the third place. Emperor Wuding defeated the Guifang nomads after three arduous years.

6 for the fourth place. Among fine silks there are always modest garments; caution is warranted.

9 for the fifth place. Easterners gained little sacrificing oxen, westerners gained all sacrificing lambs.

6 for the top place. His head gets wet, temporary trouble.

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Jizi prepared himself as best he could to be in the presence of the new Zhou emperor. Months before, when he was sent to Youli prison by Di Xin, his family had fled far to the northeast in fear; so he had only the clothes in which he arrived and a few modest garments given to him by sympathetic commoners. Mustering as much dignity as he could wearing a mixture of finery and rags, Jizi marched out of his cell. He paused for a moment before the cell occupied many years before by his

friend Ji Chang, recalling his gentleness and wisdom; then he strode out into the summer shower. After his stifling prison cell, the cool mist was exhilarating.

"Are you Counselor Jizi?"

Jizi squinted up into the stern face of a red clad soldier flanked by a team of four horses. "I am."

"Follow me," he barked, mounting the chariot coach.

At breakneck speed, Jizi was propelled through and beyond Choage toward the camp of Emperor Wu in Shepherd's Wild. Never before had the world whizzed past him so rapidly. He was dizzied by his vain attempt to see the quickly passing objects of the city while holding on to the chariot box with all his strength. He could not understand his weak physical condition and inability to comprehend his surroundings. Fear and confusion seemed to have crippled his intelligence.

In Shepherd's Wild, the red trappings of the Zhou army fairly coated the entire field. When the chariot stopped abruptly before a rather typical military tent, Jizi was left disoriented until he spied unmistakable signs. Above this common soldier's tent waved Shun's yak tails on the left and the image of Taotei on the right. As the chariot sped away as swiftly as it had arrived, Jizi stood in the slight rain, his head and feet wet, before the Throne of Heaven. Strangely, he did not know what to do.

Voices approaching from behind caused him to turn around and step aside. For an hour or more he stood at the side of the entrance as officers and ministers came and went conducting the business of an occupation force. No doubt Jizi's modest dress disguised his stature as Junior Tutor of the former Emperor.

"Why do you not enter the tent?" asked a small boy from under a nearby tree.

Jizi was momentarily startled. "I do not know the proper manner," he replied, "of requesting an audience with his Majesty."

"You approach him," instructed the boy, "and bow. Then you speak."

Jizi was enchanted with this boy's haughty disposition and smiled. "What then?"

"You ask him for whatever it is you want."

"Do you always get what you ask for?"

"I do," he asserted. "He is my father. I don't know about you."

"Will you accompany me into your father's presence? I have been told to come here but need the advice of a wise man to guide my actions."

"Of course," he assured as he came forward. Taking Jizi's hand he led the way into the tent. Jizi's eyes took a moment to adjust to the relative darkness. As the splendid figure and face of his beloved Ji Chang materialized out of the gloom, it took Jizi's breath away. He kneeled with his face in his palms on the verge of tears.

"Who is that with you, faithful son?" asked Ji Fa.

"I do not know, father. He has been standing outside in the rain."

"He is Senior Tutor Jizi," interjected San Yisheng. "You called for him from Youli prison."

Ji Fa mistook Jizi's reaction as terror rather than shock. He was not conscious of his resemblance to his father and could not know of Jizi's attachment to him. "Do not cower in fear before me, counselor. My father has spoken of you so often I

feel we are friends. You will receive only respect and gratitude from all Zhou's people for befriending my father during his captivity in Yin."

Jizi had heard from others that Ji Fa had reburied Bigan on the palace grounds in a tomb suitable for a monarch. He knew of the monument before the door of Shang Rong that Ji Fa ordered to honor the retired Prime Minister and other small acts of virtue. Nevertheless, Ji Fa had usurped the throne of his lawful sovereign. He could not serve the conqueror and was prepared for whatever punishment, including death, Ji Fa might impose. He rose and stood silently with his head bowed.

"Come sit here with us, Counselor. I have a number of questions to ask of you concerning how the empire should be governed. My advisors are sagacious and erudite, yet you have the benefit of experience near the throne."

Jizi obeyed, sitting among Ji Fa's ministers on the tent floor.

"We have been discussing the fate of the population of your capitol, Yin. If I disperse them, as some advise, will I not be unfairly punishing many obedient subjects? And if I do not disperse them, will I not be creating the opportunity for future unrest? What do you advise, Counselor?"

"Great doubts are ever in a ruler's mind, just as great successes and great failures come from a ruler's actions. Consult your ministers, your own heart, the common people, and, most importantly, the shi stalks.

"My ministers are divided on the subject. Which answer I get from the common people depends on which common people I ask. The stalks urge caution, while most of my advisors urge forceful action."

"If the results of divination contradict the views of men, it would be advisable to be still."

Ji Fa could feel Jizi's cool disposition. His answers were evasive and general when given specific questions of policy or practice. "Suppose I were to build a glorious new capitol city, a place fitting for Heaven to have its abode. Would not the citizens of Yin be anxious to reside there?"

"Men wish five blessings: longevity, health, wealth, devotion to virtue, and a peaceful death in old age. They will reside where these things are promised to them."

Ji Fa attempted one more time to break the counselor's shell. "A new capitol city in a new land offers many risks. How might I assure them they will receive such blessings there?"

"The world is made of the five elements. If a ruler maintains the proper balance among them, calamities will be avoided and blessings will accumulate among men."

Ji Fa had become both irritated and frustrated, prompting Ji Dan to interrupt. "A new capitol at Luo offers many advantages, brother. Send the Nine Tripods there by a convoy of Yin workers who will return with reports of its beauty and promise." Several heads shook in support of the idea.

Ji Xian, who had been quiet, offered a new suggestion. "A small fief about the city of Yin proper could be created, supervised by one or more of your choosing. Thus you could keep your promise to the people, brother, and not inflict punishments on the obedient while preventing future intransigence." Murmurs of assent surged through the assembly.

"Since the Yin custom has always been for brother to succeed brother," posited Zhengdou, "perhaps the fief should be granted to Emperor Zoo's brother, the Prince of Wei. He has much respect from the people of Shang and did not commit troops against us in the battle of Shepherd's Wild." Several protested the suggestion.

"Since our customs should now prevail," countered Ji Xian, "Zoo's son Wugeng should be the choice."

Others of the group urged otherwise, fearing the opportunity for rebellion.

"You have invested fourteen principalities, brother," added Ji Du. "Ji Xian's Guan, my own Kai, and Ji Chu's Huo are closest to Yin. Who could better serve as supervisors during a period of trial?"

"Very well," concluded Ji Fa. He glanced at his retinue of ministers and scribes. "Compose a document investing Wugeng as Lord of Yin, his territory comprised only of the city founded by Emperor Pangeng when he brought the Shang people here from their former territories. My good brothers shall be responsible for its general supervision." The three brothers grinned at each other and at the company. It was a rare case of their having prevailed over the other advisors.

The discussion was interrupted by Ji Dan who had just had some message whispered to him. "Brother, the emissary from Wu has arrived."

"Good," responded Ji Fa. "Bring him inside, immediately."

Word had been received earlier that a state by the name of Wu had sent an envoy to offer allegiance. Wu, they were told, lay in the extreme southeast, beyond the lands of the Renfang and Yufang tribes, on the sea coast. None had ever heard of them before and Ji Fa was curious to learn of their peculiarities. More than that, he was curious to learn how they had come to master Zhou language; the message he received was written in typical Zhou idiom.

All stood aside as a pair of envoys entered, crudely attired in mostly black cloth but refined of manner. "The state of Wu honors its own as the Son of Heaven," chanted one of them from a prostrate position. He then pushed forward a basket containing bronze vessels of the traditional Zhou design. "We offer these to prove our respect and admiration."

"A virtuous man only accepts gifts from a friend; a virtuous ruler only accepts tribute from a subject. We have neither protected nor befriended Wu; so how do you come to offer gifts to a stranger?"

"The descendants of Gugong Danfu here greet each other."

The room was dead silent as everyone considered what had just been revealed. The sons of Gugong Danfu were Taibo, Zhongong, and Ji Li. Ji Li, the third son of the Ancient Duke, was Ji Fa's grandfather. Neither Taibo nor Zhongong had any known descendants, for they were the sons who gave up the throne of Zhou while still young to make way for Ji Chang who ultimately became Xibo.

"How can this be?" asked Ji Fa. "Taibo and Zhongong went to the wilderness. Are you saying that your state of Wu grew from Taibo and Zhongong?"

"Only Zhongong, Majesty. To prove he loved his other brother equally to Ji Li, Taibo refused to marry and produce heirs to his state. Wu was founded and first governed by Zhongong, my grandfather."

There were rumbles and expressions of joy through the group as all realized that this crudely dressed and otherwise typical provincial from the far southeast

was Emperor Wu's cousin. He was the grandson of one of their most revered ancestors: the selfless Zhongong who had voluntarily exiled himself out of filial piety. Each year for decades the people of Zhou had been conducting the "Salute and give" ceremony in honor of Taibo and Zhongong. To learn their fates, favorable fates at that, was a joyous revelation.

Ji Fa approached the man, coaxing him to his feet for an embrace. "Look upon your cousin, gentlemen of Wu." Scanning the audience, he added, "I hereby invest him as Prince of Wu." Ji Fa paused scratching his forehead, then continued. "I wish to do more," suggesting a marriage to secure a firm bond between the two states.

"I have been married for many years, Majesty." He had anticipated the offer.

His objection to a marriage on those grounds confirmed what many in the room would have guessed for a culture based on the leadership of Zhongong: the state of Wu did not practice polygamy.

"Do you have a younger brother?"

"Yes, Majesty. He is married also."

"There is a small territory near Pot's Mouth on the north side of the Great River. The people there do not have a ruler since he was killed in the conquest. I want your younger brother to become their Lord so that our cousins will never again be lost to us." He then embraced his new found cousin earnestly. Cheers filled the chamber.

After expressions of loyalty and gratitude, the Wu emissaries departed. Jizi sat sorrowfully listening to these strangers—strangers whom he generally considered to be his inferiors, verbally carve up his civilization as if it were pork at a feast.

Ji Fa obviously had no desire to resume the previous, pointless conversation with him. "I can see, Counselor Jizi, that you and I will not have the fond relationship as that between yourself and my late father. In that case, in what capacity should you be employed?"

His insides quacked as he replied. "I am prepared for exile or death at your command." His tone was much firmer than his inner resolve.

Ji Fa studied the elderly man with a mixture of admiration and choler. "Since the conquest the Son of Heaven's sway extends far beyond what is shown on the Nine Tripods. How can I exile you when the empire spans the limits of the world?"

"There is a place, Majesty, far to the northeast."

"Go on."

"South of Sushen on the far side of the Yalu River there is a place called Zhaoxian."

Ji Fa considered this voluntary exile carefully. It must not seem as if Jizi were being forced away, for many commoners from Zhou and elsewhere would object. "Very well," he said after a long thoughtful pause. "I will provide you with a regiment of soldiers for the journey. You may invite as many from Yin as you wish to join you. Lord Rong will see to it." He glanced at Rong as he spoke.

Bowing very low, Jizi backed out of the tent, followed by Ji Fa's half brother and, he realized once outside, tiny crown prince Ji Song. "Do you always come and go so stealthily?" he asked the boy, amused.

"I go anywhere within sight of my father's banners. Did you get what you asked for?"

"I asked to be allowed to go beyond your father's banners. He granted me permission to do so but only if I would never return."

The boy pondered the consequences of such a condition on his own circumstances. "I think I shall not ask to do the same," he said at length; then he dashed back into the tent.

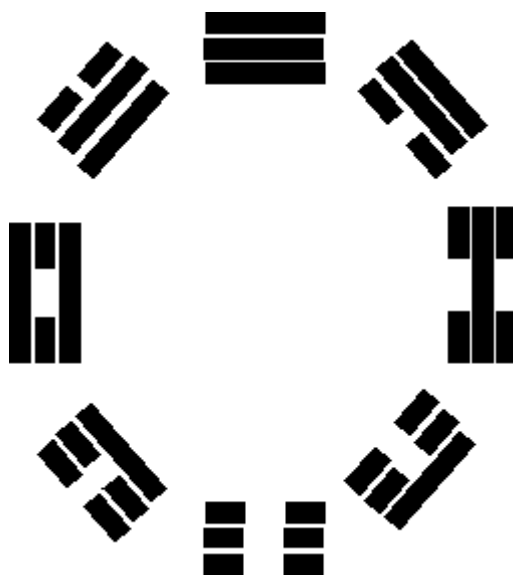
The drizzling rain had all but stopped. Jizi followed Lord Rong a few paces away from Emperor Wu's tent, but both halted at the indication of a small disturbance. Jizi stood silently watching the approach of Qi, the Prince of Wei, who had been hiding since before the conquest. An attendant trailed carrying an arm load of sacrificial bowls. Qi was stripped to the waist, his wrists bound with hemp rope. He held humble marsh grass in one hand and a sacrificial lamb in the other. He was wailing over and over as he approached, "I am here, Emperor Wu, to be the sacrifice of my people!"

Jizi hurried away behind Lord Rong unable to watch the drama unfold. Ji Fa would be magnanimous, he knew. Qi's passivity and lack of resolve would be an asset to the House of Zhou as it had been a liability to the House of Shang.

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After a few days of preparations, the radiant summer morning Jizi was to leave Yin arrived. The regiment of Lord Rong's soldiers was assembled outside Jizi's apartment in the former royal compound. Jizi emerged to face a throng large enough to populate a small city. Some were relatives, though most were simply citizens of Yin wishing not to remain a conquered people.

He had hastily prepared a banner to display on the trek across the eastern states. He could not hoist the banner of Zhou, of course, nor the shamed rooster of Shang; so he chose the symbols most closely associated in the minds of commoners with himself and learning: the mysterious trigrams. In dark colored embroidery on a light background, the trigrams were arranged in a circular pattern as pairs of opposites. This pattern was the way divine Fuxi first laid them out for the world to see many generations before. No one in the Central Nation was more closely associated with them and what they meant than Senior Tutor Jizi.



From a distance it appeared to be a simple circle, intriguing enough by itself; but the intricacy and significance of the patterns of short and long, weak and strong, lines could be discerned only upon closer inspection. It was the perfect symbol for him and his new state in the far northeastern wilderness. Many would drop their tools and toil and join him as he and his train crossed the northeastern quarter of the Empire.

Without fanfare, Jizi mounted the two-horse chariot coach provided to him by Lord Rong; and the procession began its inexorable snake toward the far northeast. For some time the city was largely paralyzed as the people stopped to watch the famed Senior Tutor and his train striking out toward the frontier. In the near countryside, Jizi was surprised to see that most of the farmers had healthy crops maturing in their fields. The dry roads occasionally intersected irrigation ditches which muddied his feet and coach in the crossing and which Jizi for the first time realized outnumbered the roads by many to one. All the great turmoil that had been occurring seemed to have hardly interrupted the keepers of the land. 'It was as it should be,' he thought.

A sad melody sprung into his head from somewhere and he hummed it to himself for some distance, his eyes wandering from object to object in the farmlands. It was not long before his fertile mind put words to the melody:

*Lush grow the wheat stalks.  
Oily grows the millet grass.  
All would be well in Yin,  
But for that royal imp, Di Xin.*

The little houses scattered about among the herds of livestock, the cool shadowy orchards, and the undulating grain fields projected a tranquility Jizi suddenly began to desire desperately. As the distance between himself and the capitol grew, he felt lighter and lighter as if some bulky and unnecessary garments were being stripped from him one by one.

## **Chapter 27**

### **Can Words Alone Inspire Confidence? Winter 1044 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 8**

#### **PI.**

#### **Water above Earth**

*Unity & Coordination.* Long consultations with the shi stalks bring valuable omens; the troubled assemble for mutual relief.

*Water lying upon the land.* Ancient kings nurtured the nations and their princes.



6 for the bottom place. Confidence bolsters the work of consolidation; good fortune ensues.

6 for the second place. Unity should radiate from within our own clique; good fortune.

6 for the third place. He who joins an evil group suffers greatly for it.

6 for the fourth place. Alliances with the people's leaders earn loyalty; righteous persistence is rewarded.

9 for the fifth place. Only those whom go wrong are pursued by the King; righteous persistence is rewarded.

6 for the top place. Attempts at consensus without leadership bring calamity.

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"The Regent approaches, Lord Shih," said Minister San Yisheng. He was a little winded from his haste to report.

"Suspend the work immediately and prepare to receive him."

San Yisheng dispatched assistants with orders to have the people assemble near the partially completed prime house of the new city of Luo.

Citizens of the now obliterated city of Yin had been marched here under duress, guarded by a battalion of Zhou soldiers and guided by the Grand Guardian, Lord Shih. He chose the site primarily because it is close to the long abandoned city of Bo, founded by Shang progenitor Tang. In effect, the Yin obdurate had been deported to their original homeland.

All were prostrate before the Regent as he was carried into their company on his well known four horse powered chariot, Hong Yao at the reigns. After appropriate greetings between nephew and uncle, Lord Shih and his assistants accompanied Ji Dan as he viewed the plans and facilities.

"I think this location will serve us well, Regent," said Shih. The stream here will separate the Yin people from the Zhou, yet their close proximity to each other will lend itself to close observation early and assimilation over time. Divinations I made six days ago were very positive about it."

"Where is Officer Mimou?" Asked Ji Dan. "I have some concern about the lowland areas close to the running spring."

"I am here, Regent." he called out from among the assembled dignitaries and assistants.

"How do you assess the situation, Mimou?"

"Sire, I have surveyed the length and breadth of the land, determined the different levels of the high and low places, calculated the thickness or thinness of structures, measured the depths of ditches and moats, computed the quantities and earth needed for the construction of the rampart around the Zhou half, considered the distances from wherever these could be brought forth, estimated the time and the number of men required for each piece of work, deliberated on their expenses and the amounts of provisions necessary for their sustenance, and thus assessed the services expected from each of the working groups." He gestured toward a workbench upon which were heaped bound volumes of documents. "We are all ready to begin," he said bowing and smiling.

"You are surely Heaven sent, Mimou," said Ji Dan. "Very well, then. Distribute the workbooks and let us begin the construction of this city!" after which he and Ministers Nangong Kuo, San Yisheng, and Hongyao crossed the Chan stream to set up camp near the numerous tents and lean-tos of the Zhou soldiers.

On the third day of his inspection tour and satisfied that the settlement would be successful, servants were sent to the planned northern and southern suburbs. The Duke of Zhou would consecrate the land there with sacrifices to the local spirits and to Heaven above. Accompanied by musicians with drums, gongs, and flutes, Ji Dan sacrificed three bulls, a ram, and a boar.

The next day Lord Shih and military escort greeted the gathered leaders of nearby tribes and Shang princes to collect tribute for the Emperor back in Feng. Just before sundown he returned to camp laden with gifts, some precious, some simply interesting depending upon the wealth and sophistication of their originators. "With my hands to my head and my head to the ground," said Shih, "I present these to his Majesty and your Grace." Lastly, in preparation for the next day's grand dedication, the call went out near and far to Yin and Zhou alike to assemble on the morrow.

In the full light of the morning sun, standing at a portal of the partially completed prime house overlooking the assembled mass, Lord Shih read from prepared texts. "Examining the great leaders and sages of the past," he read, "Heaven chose Yu to found the Xia dynasty; it protected and guided his descendants for fourteen generations. Then Heaven's favor fell to Tang, who founded the Shang dynasty, which maintained the confidence of Heaven for fifteen generations until Emperor Di Xin let Heaven's Mandate fall to the ground through iniquity and corruption.

"Di Xin kept the wise in obscurity and the vicious in office. The poor people moaned and cried to Heaven for relief. Carrying their children and leading their wives, they fled but were even apprehended again! Heaven at long last had compassion for the people, and its "favoring decree" lighted on Zhou's earnest founders.

"Our Emperor Cheng has received that appointment. Though he is young, he is the vicegerent of the Lord Above and is called to undertake the duties of government here in this new city. Let him first of all subdue to himself to those who were the "managers of affairs" under Yin, associating them with the managers of affairs of our Zhou. This will regulate their natures, and they will daily advance.

"He should also survey the dynasties of Xia and Yin and seek to inherit the virtues of their meritorious sovereigns especially at the commencement of his duties. Heaven may have decreed wisdom to him; it may have decreed good fortune or bad; it may have decreed a long tenure for him on the throne. We only know that now is the commencement of his duties; and, if he is devoted to virtue, he may pray for a long-abiding decree in his favor.

"In the position of Emperor, let him not generally rule by the infliction of death, for when the people are regulated gently, the merit of government is seen by all. In that position the people will imitate him throughout the kingdom, and he will be considered illustrious."

Shih then did obeisance with hands to forehead and forehead to ground, saying, "I, an insignificant minister, along with the heretofore hostile people of Yin and

with his loyal friendly people from the Westlands, presume to obey his Majesty's dread command and imitate his excellent virtue. I only bring these offerings to present to his majesty to be used in his prayers to Heaven for its long abiding decree."

After many days of discussions and toil Ji Dan and Shih agreed it was time to return to Hao. "I have one more thing to accomplish, Lord Shih," said Ji Dan, "before we leave this work to Mimou. At our departure tomorrow morning, Shang Gao, arrange for an assembly of the many officers of Yin."

Ji Dan's sleep that night was particularly sound and he awoke rested and anxious to get the caravan under way. When he emerged from his tent, he was faced with a great host of commoners on the south side of the Chan creek and a waiting convoy of horse drawn wagons and chariots on the north. He stationed himself in a conspicuous location facing the Yin multitude across the stream from him.

"You numerous officers of Yin," he called out. "These are the commands of your sovereign." Ruin came down on Yin from a displeased Lord Above. It was not our small state that dared to seek the appointment. It was Di Xin's misrule that brought Heaven's favoring decree from Yin to Zhou. As with Xia and Shang before now and, indeed, with regard to the overthrow of all states, glorious or modest, in every case reasons can be given for their punishment.

"We have no ulterior motives; and you of the royal House of Yin must now simply follow us. As it is now, so it was when Shang inherited the mandate from Xia and numerous officers of Xia were expected to follow Emperor Tang. You are expected to follow Officer Minou and minister Nan Gong Kuo to make this city glorious before the arrival of your Emperor."

"I have refrained from putting you all to death. Instead, we have built together a city worthy of Heaven's mandate. Here you can all learn the ways of Zhou, and ministers of Zhou can learn from the wise sages of Shang. You have a fitting place to dwell in your houses and perpetuate your families; but, if you do not reverently obey, I will carry to the utmost Heaven's inflictions on your persons."

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Even though he spent most of his time traveling among the nations of the empire instituting Emperor Wu's policies and had a prime-house of his own in his fief of Lu, Ji Dan had had a comfortable house constructed for his private use when in Hao. Ji Dan went there now, weary and tired more from carrying the weight of responsibility than from his recent journey to and from Luo. Servants bustled about assuring his comfort, strangers many of them, now attached to the royal household. Ji Dan knew that change was inevitable, the course of events propelled forward by enormous, universal forces originating with the Lord Above; yet he resented intimacy with strangers. Without realizing it, his sour mood had frightened his attendants who were cowering near his entrance. With a wave of his arm and a scowl he dismissed them all. As he saw to his own needs alone, treating the inevitable bruises and scratches of arduous journeys, the familiar face of his the foremost advisor to the House of Zhou, Shang Gao, appeared at his door. "I am surprised at my most astute trainee's impetuosity," he remarked with a smile. "The Prince of Lu should not strike such terror in his servants' hearts."

Ji Dan was embarrassed at his behavior toward the servants and was aggravated further knowing that his wise old tutor had observed him; but he did not respond.

"Do not let the weight of your convictions prevent you from reaching a worthy goal when there is one to be reached," advised Shang Gao, "or you may end up as Boyi and Shuqi."

Ji Dan had traversed the breath of the nations more than once since the fall of Yin. There were many small incidents which escaped his notice, a fact that irritated him. Just as his desire for a quiet, reflective life grew, so did the size of his responsibilities. "How have the eccentric brothers ended up?" he asked.

"Eccentricity led them to isolation; extremism led them to starvation. Only a brief melody remains of them."

"I was not aware they were poetically inclined. Please sing it for me so I may revere their memory."

Shang Gao recited, since there were no musical instruments handy.

*Clinging to Shouyang Mountain's side,  
Only wild ferns for our sustenance,  
Which path is right on this mountain wide  
When violence begets violence?*

*Woe to we climbers who cling to peace.  
Sad was the day we left the fields.  
Whom can we embrace— entwine  
Without a Shun or Yu divine?.*

"Do you believe that their rejection of us is justified?" asked Ji Dan. Are we the extremists? Should we have tolerated Emperor Zoo's iniquity? Should we have refused the Mandate Heaven has given the House of Zhou?" Again Ji Dan's ire was raised. He felt the reclusive poets' judgments harsh, and he in turn judged them. "As for their melody," he concluded, "of what use are men who can compose verses if they are helpless when called to govern."

Shang Gao left Ji Dan to endure his own bad temper through the night alone. He returned at first light with hopeful news conveyed in a smiling face. "Wake up, Prince Dan," he urged. "His Majesty has summoned you to the palace."

Ji Dan rapidly prepared himself, reluctantly accepting help from servants in his haste, and rushed to join Ji Fa with renewed vigor and optimism, his sorrow, fear, and (especially noticeable) anger dissipated like the morning fog in the warming day. When he arrived, the royal chamber was throbbing with activity. The business of governing the nine regions had resumed in earnest.

## **Chapter 28**

**Only Wild Ferns for Sustenance  
Spring, 1044 BCE**

**Hexagram 43**  
**GUAY.**  
**Lake above Heaven**

*Resolution.* Truthful royal proclamations threaten; arms worn at assemblies reveal distrust; having a goal is propitious.

*A lake drawn toward Heaven.* The Superior Man concedes his compensation to those below.

9 for the bottom place. To advance grandly but without success is shameful.

9 for the second place. While night cries are foreboding, being well armed comforts.

9 for the third place. While the muddy road is irksome, a clenched jaw precipitates misfortune.

9 for the fourth place. His thighs flayed, he stumbles shamefully but will not be herded by those he distrusts.

9 for the fifth place. He clings to virtue and moderation as a cabbage clings to the earth.

6 for the top place. Misfortune will come in the end without warning.

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Ji Dan dismissed the work detail with a hand raw from the raising of the three earthen mounds. Here in the forest near the Great River, far from the prying eyes of courtly intriguers, Ji Dan could commune in private with the deities of the land and water and with his revered ancestors. Grasping three wooden tablets and a silk cloth, he carefully buffed their smooth surfaces.

The small brush felt like an extension of his own mind as he swiftly transcribed the symbols of his father, grandfather, and great-grand father upon the tablets. Other symbols flowed from his brush, symbols of reverence and respect, recalling characteristics of each that Ji Dan admired most: his father's all absorbing memory for the heritage of their house, his grandfather's indomitable spirit and courage, his great-grand father's unsurpassed generosity. He carefully stood a host-tablet on each mound.

Kneeling on the mound before the tablet of his father, he sacrificed one of the doves he had brought for the ritual. "Help us convince the Lord Above, father, not to end your son's Holy Mandate so recently granted," he prayed as he laid the dead bird bleeding in the sacrificial bowl. "More than any other, he strives to follow your example, to continue the legacy of the great Xibo."

Moving to the center mound where the tablet of his grandfather stood, he knelt with his back to the camp and facing the Great River. "As the fearless Duke Ji smote the nomadic hordes throughout the West," he chanted, "Ji Fa smote the House of Shang. Go to the Lord Above, grandfather Ji, and secure Heaven's continued favor." He killed a second dove and deposited it in a ceremonial bowl.

On the third mound stood the tablet of his great-grand father. He knelt there praying, "Your dream, ancient Duke, was to clip the wing of Shang for the

indignities it constantly rained upon our state. Your great-grand son, Ji Fa, completed the work you began. Implore the Lord Above to your descendent's favor." At that Ji Dan sacrificed the third bird leaving it in the bowl before the tablet of Gugong Danfu.

Descending to ground level, Ji Dan withdrew a short distance to where he could see all three altars and kneel before them. "It is your principal descendent, Ji Fa, who has received Heaven's Holy Mandate and who is looked upon with reverent awe by the whole world. Help him to carry the standard so that you may rest in its perpetuation.

"Have I not been filially pious? Am I not suited by talent and temperament to serve spiritual beings well? My older brother is not so well suited; therefore, I beg you to intervene with the Lord Above to spare him and to let his illness fall upon me instead."

As Ji Dan rose after a number of kowtows, he realized his words had been heard by several attendants and his personal company of soldiers. Several had alarmed expressions, for one should not pray lightly for Heaven to take one's life." Was my prayer ill advised, Shang Gao? Do you think I have unnecessarily disturbed my ancestors?"

"The possibility of your brother's death obviously disturbs you," replied Shang Gao. "Your ancestors will be sympathetic."

Ji Dan scanned the small assembly. "Every man here is sworn to silence!" he commanded forcefully. Turning back to Shang Gao, he continued, "Let us consult the tortoise to see Heaven's answer."

Three times he and Shang Gao heated the rod and cracked a turtle shell, studying the tiny fissures intently; and three times they were comforted. Ji Dan carefully repacked his implements for the remainder of the trip to Hao.

"Every man here is sworn to silence." he said again.

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The roads between the eastern and western states had never in history been so well traveled. Tremendous migrations of people pulsed through the land like blood through a living body. Ji Fa had created over twenty new fiefs in the two years since the conquest with more planned. Many of them were old states loyal to Di Xin with redrawn boundaries. Others were taken from former, oversized nations. Some were carved out of the ungoverned areas between former Shang states. Commoners could be expected to flow about like river currents in such upheavals, and the roads' endurance was taxed by their mass movements. Amid numerous inconveniences to Ji Dan's detachment, eventually the capitol appeared in a valley ahead. All spirits were lifted, and Ji Dan's column quickened its pace.

The sight of armed regiments marching in and out of Hao had become so commonplace, the people hardly noticed any more. Even the famous brother of Emperor Wu drew only momentary notice. Ji Fa founded Hao for one reason; governing the conquered world from remote Qishan would have been nearly impossible. Yet it was already well accepted by the majority of Ji Fa's advisors that Hao was still too far west for efficient administration. A new eastern location farther east near Mengjin was already being discussed.

Hao's population had burgeoned and its new structures were substantial, yet compared to the luxurious and decadent lifestyle at the court of Di Xin, the new capitol was austere, reflecting the piety and practicality of the royal house. At first Ji Dan had trouble distinguishing Hao's Prime House from the many new structures which had crowded around it since he had last visited.

Through the gauntlet of advisors, family members, and visiting dignitaries, Ji Dan finally reached the bedside of his beloved older brother. "Rise, Ji Dan," commanded Ji Cheng in a mumble. "The greatest mind of the world, which happens to reside in my brother, should not humiliate himself before a sick and weary old man."

"This weary old man is the Son of Heaven," Ji Dan responded. "If the Superior Man does not recognize the majesty of Emperor Wu, how can the mean be expected to?"

"Where is my son?" muttered Ji Fa. The eight year old crown prince, Ji Song, emerged from the forest of adults in the room. Ji Fa gripped the wiry boy's arm rather brusquely when in reach. "Look at this man, Ji Song," he insisted, referring to Ji Dan. "I trust him beyond all others to guide me in the ways of virtue. We have come this far together as if we were of a single mind, thinking the same thoughts, seeking the same goals."

"I will be among our ancestors very soon, my son. Three times the Lord Above has sent me messages in my dreams to forewarn me. When I go to dwell among the spirits, cling to your uncle Ji Dan as the vine clings to the tree." Ji Song's eyes were wide with fear and wonder.

Ji Dan's gentle hand on Ji Song's shoulder and his compassionate smile were immediate comfort to the boy. "Our ancestors are not yet ready to receive your father, Ji Song. I have consulted the tortoise shells three times and three times the omens have confirmed our Emperor Wu will be among us long. These messengers in your father's dreams are mistaken."

"Come close to me, brother Ji Dan. I wish to discuss a matter in private." As Ji Dan knelt close, Attendants ushered Ji Song to a far wall. Respecting the request for privacy without being told, all others withdrew, some beyond the chamber's portal.

"The past two years," Ji Fa began, "we have received tribute from as far away in the northeast as Sushen on the banks of the Songhua River, from as far south as Chao on the banks of the Yangtze, from as far away in the northwest as the Lu tribes, and from as far away in the southeast as Wu on the shores of the great sea. How can a child rule such a vast empire?" He paused, resting, then resumed. "How is it that for sixty years Emperor Zoo ruled over the empire even though Heaven had turned away from him and would not receive sacrifices from Yin?"

"Because he had many virtuous ministers?" ventured Ji Dan.

"One for every day of the year. But it was also because of the strong Central Nation built up by Tang and augmented by Wuding. Without such a strong imperial domain, I fear my young son will not be able to meet the expectations of Heaven and men and all we have accomplished will crumble. I have made a decision that yesterday I thought I would never have to make."

After another rest, Ji Fa continued weakly, obviously enduring intense pain somewhere in the recesses of his body. "A child on the Throne of Heaven will be

like a target at the communal archery ceremony. He will draw the arrows of countless enemies. I will not have him lose his life because I have failed to protect him into adulthood.

Ji Dan assured him earnestly. "I will see to his safety as of my own children, brother. "You have my vow on it."

Ji Fa reached up and touched his brother's face lightly. "I fear for him greatly and know what must be done," continued Ji Fa.

Always fearful of hasty decisions, Ji Dan urged slow consideration. "Let me consult the *shi* stalks on it, brother. Prepare your question carefully."

"I do not need to consult with the *shi* stalks or the tortoise on this subject. The necessary course is plain. You must succeed me on the throne."

Ji Dan was struck dumb. For many moments there was silence between them as Ji Fa gathered strength to continue and Ji Dan struggled to apply an analytic detachment to his circumstances. He was buffeted by emotions: sorrow at his brother's debilitation, fearful of the consequences if their fledgling empire were to founder, frustration over his lack of control over these events, and anger, he finally recognized— anger though he did not know why he was angry. Ji Dan wept silently as his brother drifted into a heavy sleep.

Ji Dan paced about the sleeping Emperor's private chambers for hours. At length he gathered his senses, glancing about the chamber at the crowd of relatives and advisors, among them the innocent young. Following a pattern set by earlier Zhou princes, Ji Fa had ten close aides, principle among whom were himself and Lu Shang. The adults seemed strangely detached: Ji Fa's wife Yijiang worried yet weary; several of his younger brothers just weary. Ji Dan had always felt that his older brother, being such a forceful personality, could not be loved as their father was— that somehow, at Ji Fa's death, many would both mourn and feel release.

Ji Dan suddenly realized that two of the "Three Supervisors" were not at their brother's sickbed. A wave of anxiety swept over him. Ji Xian, younger brother to Ji Fa but older than Ji Dan, had never before behaved without the utmost filial piety or loyalty to his older brother, now Emperor.

"Where is the Prince of Guan," inquired Ji Dan. "Is there some grave emergency in his fief?" He noticed the expressions of alarm that appeared on many faces and decided to let the matter drop, drifting quietly out of the chamber.

## **Chapter 29**

### **A Small Promise Summer, 1041 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 61 ZHUNG FU. Wind above Lake**



*Omens of good fortune appear.* Righteous persistence is rewarded; it is time to cross the Great River.

*Wind blowing across a marsh.* The Superior Man considers carefully, withholding condemnation.

9 for the bottom place. The solitary game warden signifies good luck; others nearby raise anxieties.

9 for the second place. As the mother heron shares her song with her young, I will share my cup with you.

6 for the third place. Intermittent merriment with song and drum; an enemy is made.

6 for the fourth place. A chariot team wanders in the light of a 3/4 moon, no error is apparent.

9 for the fifth place. Confidence propels him on a certain course, no error is apparent.

9 for the top place. Crowing cocks chorus through the land, persistence now presages turmoil.

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Twelve year-old Ji Song stood with his tearful mother Yijiang, his younger brother Jin, and several of his uncles. Ji Dan, the Prince of Lu, and Shih, uncle of the late Emperor Wu Wang would conduct the burial ceremony dressed in the coarsest and most uncomfortable clothes available.

As was the Zhou custom, a "weight-post" had been staked before Emperor Wu's prime-house in Hao. On the post was a banner bearing the name of the deceased so that Ji Fa's spirit could attach itself to the spot and not drift into oblivion. Later the weight post accompanied Ji Fa's remains back to the territory of his ancestors, now considered the principality of Bi. Thus both the body and spirit of Ji Fa were carried home to Mount Qishan to rest beside his father, his father's father, and his grand-father's father.

Shortly after Ji Fa's death, proclamations radiated from the provisional capitol at Hao like ripples on a calm pond:

*-Emperor Wu (Wu Wang) is dead. All come to Bi for his interment.*

*-Crown Prince Ji Song shall be known as Emperor Triumphant (Cheng Wang).*

*-Lord Shih, uncle of Wu Wang, shall be Grand Guardian during Cheng Wang's minority.*

*-General of the Army Lu Shang shall be authorized to launch punitive expeditions in the East.*

*-Ji Dan, Prince of Lu and third son of Wen Wang, shall be Regent of the Empire during Cheng Wang's minority.*

*-Emperor Cheng shall have his 'capping'. Members of the royal House may attend.*

In response to the call for Ji Fa's funeral, hundreds of people streamed into the province of Bi from states across the nine regions, their shuffling feet disturbing the very repose of earth. Ji Dan was both heartened and dismayed by their response, for many endured great discomforts to reach there. He was also fearful, for while the vast majority of the ruling princes had come to honor either the dead or living Emperor or both, three of his brothers and several powerful personages were conspicuously absent.

The final words of his beloved older brother ruminated through Ji Dan's mind, 'You must regard all things as less important than to make the throne safe for Ji Song.' Over and over these words echoed in his mind synchronously with the whistling flutes, rattling drums and gonging bells of the funerary ritual.

Five years earlier, Ji Fa considered naming Ji Dan his successor, brother succeeding brother in the manner of the vanquished Shang. Ji Dan refused, urging Ji Fa to keep these musings secret for fear of turmoil in the palace. "While we may forever resist the urge to imitate the mistakes of the Shang before us," Ji Dan counseled, "we must forever apply lessons learned from them." He cited the stresses caused by Emperor Yi, second to the last Shang ruler, as he toyed with the prospect of having a favored younger son, succeed him. He knew well also the succession of their own grandfather, the third son of the Ancient Duke and the turmoil caused by the self imposed exile of Ji Li's older brothers.

Intensified music signaled to all present the emergence of Ji Fa's funeral procession from inside the prime-house. A dozen close kin and friends carried Ji Fa on their shoulders. They had become a many legged platform for him, the corpse wrapped in finest silk and covered with fragrant blossoms and herbs. The human dais inched across the hard Bi ground and descended slowly into the burial pit. The weight-post handlers lingered at the threshold of the grave where Ji Dan held aloft an elaborately decorated wooden host-tablet, its most prominent feature being the same characters as upon the post, the name Ji Fa.

"The spirit of Wu Wang will remain with us," shouted Ji Dan, "as long as we revere him in our hearts. As long as we pursue virtue and piety, he will assist us." Ji Dan had rehearsed these lines so many times he could recite them nearly without thought. Though weeks had passed since Ji Fa's death, grief began to boil up from deep within him.

"While we mourn the loss of his company," Ji Dan continued, his voice wavering slightly, "we welcome his entrance into the spirit world where he may commune with the Lord Above and our divine ancestors. We pray that we will continue on earth to deserve blessings and ask Wu Wang to intervene on our behalf."

On this cue, attendants carried the weight-post quickly down into the burial pit. Ji Dan waited for all to emerge from the pit, then he and Shih descended into it, Ji Dan carrying a small pig and Shih carrying a sacrificial bowl. Prayers and chants issued from the sepulcher as Ji Dan and Shih deposited with their beloved kinsman and sovereign a first sacrifice, then emerged with only the host-tablet. Left behind with Ji Fa in the subterranean chamber were the sacrificial vessels, the long-knife, and the slain pig. Finally, a small army of workers filled the pit. In the end, only a small, impermanent mound of soft earth revealed the presence of an important personage. The spirit of Wu Wang no longer needed either the weight-post or the human body known as Ji Fa.

Ji Dan and Shih carried the host-tablet of Wu Wang back into the prime-house and to the altar in it where he would reside prominently among the hosts of their revered ancestors. Upon their emergence, obviously a prearranged signal to the court, tiny Ji Song was escorted to the grand portal. Standing before the crowd of hundreds, Ji Song was serene and confident as the Son of Heaven should be at all times. How so young a child could remain at peace as he assumed the Throne of Heaven was a marvel to the multitudes gathered. It was a sign of the correctness of the actions taken by Prince Ji Dan and Shih, yet Ji Song did not stand alone. To his right and slightly behind him stood Wu Wang's prime minister Ji Dan, the Prince of Lu, since the conquest, the empire's most powerful minister; and just to the right and slightly behind Ji Dan stood Lu Shang, conqueror of Yin and other states, the most respected military strategist in all the world.

Shih's booming voice belied his great age and frailty. "People of Zhou and the states of the Nine Regions, hear my words. I am the only living brother of the great and feared Xibo and stood beside Emperor Wu, his son, when he carried out the Mandate of Heaven to vanquish Di Xin, the bloodthirsty Emperor." Shih instantly retrieved from within the prime-house a staff upon which hung the yak tails of Shun. "Here is the symbol of ancient Zhou, Divine Houji's gift from Shun who returned from the wilderness unconfused. "Handing that staff to Ji Song, Shih retrieved a second staff from the shadows within the house upon which waved the image of Taotei. "Here is the symbol of recent Zhou, the fearsome beast which devours the unrighteous—the power and respect of the great Xibo who inherited the Holy Mandate." He again gave the staff to Ji Song.

"These two together in the person of Ji Song give him dominion over the world, over all under Heaven," bellowed Shih. "All bow... to the Son... of Heaven!" All bowed, but not necessarily to the boy.

For many of both the prominent or the common houses, it was their first sighting of the child monarch; yet he was but another in an endless line of monarchs, his arrival an event of only passing interest to most. In general the power of the Throne, not its occupant, was the matter of import to those distant in space, in time, or in genealogy. The closer a subject was to the monarch, the more valued his features and character; the further away, the more valued his power.

Ji Song and his entourage had disappeared into the prime-house, but Ji Dan lingered outside. As he watched the huge crowds drifting away toward their various mundane affairs, feelings of abandonment and loneliness swept over him. 'I am at the center of the world,' he thought. 'All of these people and countless others under Heaven will now look to me for example and guidance. Failure in any small measure of activity will lead to catastrophe. There is no mountain on earth to find a safe haven upon, as Ji Fa was for me. There is no calm lake on earth near which to linger quietly as Ji Chang was for me. I am alone and charged by Heaven with the whole task of preserving the Mandate and the "little son" of Ji Fa. I am but a chariot horse wandering in the night without reigns to steer me'.

Fear and sorrow overwhelmed him, and his legs crumpled below him as if they had suddenly become dry leaves. Attendants leapt to the falling Regent's aid and swept him into the prime-house so quickly the flowing masses could not have noticed the incident. Inside he was stretched out on a bed of furs and silks where he gradually regained his senses.

Ernest and worried faces hovered around him as Ji Dan fought against unconsciousness. Embarrassment was added to the wave of emotions he already felt, while those around him were drenched with emotional swells of their own: concern for Ji Dan, of course, but predominantly a penetrating fear should the Regent be incapacitated.

Already there were rumors of rebellion, only weeks after Wu Wang's death, in certain eastern areas, rumors encouraged by the son of the deposed despot. All knew that General Lu Shang had been conducting punitive campaigns in the East and had already subdued one tribe of unruly nomads. The armies of Zhou rumbled back and forth across the land as a migrating herd.

Closest to Ji Dan among the swirling objects in his momentarily confused world was the tender face of his nephew, Ji Song. For a moment Ji Dan forgot that he was sovereign of the world, his young face so much like the young Ji Fa that Ji Dan had known as friend all his life.

"Is my uncle about to leave us to be with my father among the spirits?" Ji Song's sweet immaturity and honest fright was just the antidote Ji Dan needed. He felt his resolve stiffening, his surroundings stabilizing. "When the time comes for me to join your father, sweet nephew, I will rush toward him joyously." Ji Dan labored to sit upright with the help of several attendants. "But that time has not yet come. For now I shall hold to a small promise." As he rose to his feet, all could see that the Regent was again in command of his senses. "Let us make ready for the capping ceremony."

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The senior royalty of Emperor Wu's court gathered in their father's and grand father's personal quarters. It was the first time any had been there since before the conquest seven years before. Though craftsmen had been sent ahead to repair and clean, the signs of abandonment and disuse were evident. Absent, most noticeably, was the looming presence of the great Xibo, Ji Chang.

The two youngest of Ji Chang's sons, Ji Feng of Kang and Ji Zia of Dan, now middle aged were least affected by their surroundings and most affected by the death of their oldest brother. They plunged into the task of changing attire purposefully, replacing grief as best they could with single-mindedness. Zhongdou of Cao and Ji Wu of Cheng, the middle brothers, were as much affected by the ambiance of the ancient prime-house as by the funeral. Their lack of concentration made them seem ill at ease and detached from the tasks at hand. Lord Shih was systematic and inscrutable, his octogenarian face statuesque as he cast aside the rough funerary outer garments and donned the cheerful clothes of Ji Song's capping. Shih plodded through all of life's changes as methodically as the shadow of mount Qishan inched across the plain below.

Ji Dan, looking out from the prime-house over the roof tops of Qishan to the spacious fields beyond, felt an unrelenting progression of events as inexorable and mysterious as the moving mountain shadow. Memories of his younger years here in Ji Chang's house struck like lightning in his mind as his eye fell on familiar objects. So intent was his mental activity that he was surprised when he suddenly realized the attendants had completed their work and had withdrawn. He was fully costumed for the capping and was standing idly by the terrace.

Lord Li was just behind him, curious at the Regent's concentration. "When you were Captain of the Vanguard, Lord Li," inquired Ji Dan, "did your strategic actions always consider the welfare of your regiment?"

"Yes, Regent; however, sometimes my duty to superiors or to principle was contrary to the interests of the whole. Sometimes there were necessary sacrifices." Lord Li's face betrayed his discomfort.

"Were there particular soldiers to whom you felt compelled to give special attention, special protection?" Ji Dan did not turn, but spoke toward the horizon. The others were silent, listening.

"Yes, Regent. Your own son, for instance, served in the Bolting Tigers regiment during the conquest. It was necessary on several occasions to take actions detrimental to the whole in order to prevent his being harmed." He was becoming despondent as it seemed the Regent would torment him for some past misdeed.

"In the case of the Three Supervisors, Lord Li, I seem to be in a like circumstance." The Lord was visibly relieved to know the Regent was not discussing a failure of his but was seeking counsel from the group. "Failure to attend the funeral of their oldest brother, Wu Wang, is offensive to the cherished ways of our house," he said; "yet to rise in wrath against them would plunge the Empire into civil war while elements of the last one still linger on in the East."

Everyone in the group had agonized for days when it became apparent the three brothers had elected to boycott the funeral and capping ceremony. There had been some murmurings among a few of them, but a general discussion and consensus had not been attained.

"The honor of our house is violated by younger brothers not at their oldest brother's funeral," bemoaned Ji Feng. "Such defiance can result in fratricide."

"I would sooner die myself than face my older brother in combat," declared Zhengdou.

"Our brother's son is Emperor Cheng," added Ji Zai. "It is despicable of them not to attend his capping ceremony."

"We carry out the wishes of our father," implored Ji Feng. "Xian, Du, and Chu cannot be excused from that."

"Ji Xian has opposed Ji Dan's regency from the start," asserted Ji Wu. His intransigence at a funeral is of little concern however insulted we might feel. It is the regency he protests."

"Their actions reveal their intentions," insisted Ji Zai. "It is not the regency they protest, but the succession. Xian wishes to possess the throne himself as the oldest brother after Ji Fa."

Cries of protest and agreement rose in the room. Brothers faced angrily at each other, faces reddening and fists grasping knife hilts. It was proof of the explosive situation Ji Dan faced.

Shih, in his perennial role as arbiter of disputes moved to diffuse the situation. He strode into the center of the room holding a bronze bowl before him. "The junior brothers of a house must support its senior branch," he bellowed to impose order, "just as its three legs support this vessel! Do you not think that I had disagreements with both your father and your grand-father during their reigns? Had I not supported them, how could our house have attained the Holy Mandate?"

The room quieted and Shih's voice diminished to a normal volume as he continued. "There are five brothers here at Ji Song's capping. Each of you now are founders and heads of your own houses and principalities. The capping will be observed by a hundred princes from lands far and wide. Let them return to their states with assurances, nephews, that your brother Ji Dan has assumed the Regency out of necessity and at your father's command. Let them assure the myriad nations that the little son of Ji Fa is well and will be safe unto his coronation.

"The seething empire must be stilled; too much rushing water must be changed into still water. Who could be trusted to do this better than Ji Dan who was beloved by both his father and older brother? Who's integrity could be depended upon to not crumble under the temptations of absolute power in the world so that Ji Fa's little son could take his rightful place on the Throne? The impetuous Ji Xian? The thick headed Ji Du? The naive Ji Chu? Still, until that moment comes, power must gravitate unflinchingly toward the Regent. We must concentrate ever more of that which Ji Dan must eventually relinquish— we must channel the rushing waters of power into his hands even as we fear what he might do with it."

Shih went to Ji Dan's side facing the group bravely. "Let all under Heaven," he pleaded loudly, "see that you are the pious younger brothers of Emperor Wu and support his son, one and all, at any cost, as legs lift a bowl or as calyxes hold aloft the precious flower!"

Ji Dan walked to each now silent brother one at a time, gazing into their eyes as if attempting to read the thoughts behind them. To a greater or lesser degree, all embraced him, silently pledging, one by one, solidarity with the senior house. "Let us go now," urged Ji Dan, "to the capping of Ji Fa's little son, saddened at the loss of our three beloved brothers, yet resolved to uphold the senior house as is our duty. All that we do is watched by the Lord Above and by those who have come before us; and Heaven sees as the people see. I will one day seek to join my brother, Ji Chang, and my nephew, Ji Fa, among the spirits. I will not greet them ashamed of my actions in the world." The group was silenced by the Grand Guardian's appeal.

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Waiting in an ante-chamber, young Ji Song was wide eyed with anticipation. "What does the capping signify, mother?" asked the boy. It was often hard for a young noble to tell the difference between actions for practical reasons and symbolic actions, between rite and practical requirement.

"When a young man reaches the age of twelve," she replied, "he must be presented to the family far and wide and the ancestors."

"I am very tired of such long lasting rituals," Ji Song complained to Ji Dan, "and your endurance is likewise tested. Can we delay this additional ceremony to another day?"

Ji Dan recognized the powerful political implications of this particular capping ceremony even beyond the normal cultural ones. "Our house has conducted capping ceremonies from ancient times, nephew Song," he explained. It lies at the foundation of our safety and prosperity. When the bodily carriage is well arranged, the countenance harmoniously adjusted, and speech naturally ordered, the

meaning of the ceremonial functions becomes complete and serves to render correct the relation between ruler and subject, father and son, and seniors and juniors. Once the ritual is understood, harmony is preserved throughout the realm."

"Well, what do I do, then?"

Ji Dan nodded at Yijiang to continue the boy's education. "The Capping ceremony takes place at the top of the eastern steps and will involve the toasting, saluting, and gifting of the guests and the donning of various garments, most importantly three caps."

"At the same time?"

"Consecutively, of course, with the first cap being rather modest, the second more ornate, and the third splendid. This symbolizes your progression to maturity and virtue."

"What are they for, mother?"

"Each one represents different duties incumbent on a grown man." Anticipating his next question, Yijiang pointed to a table supporting ceremonial paraphernalia and continued. "One is the helmet of a soldier, for every man must serve to protect his people. The second is the cap worn by the head of a household, for every man must enrich his family with worldly goods as well as spiritually. The third cap is that of the dutiful son, worn at the funerals of his parents, for each man must revere his forebears and perpetuate the honor of his house."

The senior officials left the room to take their places for the ceremony as Yijian continued her instruction and as personal attendants replaced the coarse, somber garb of the funeral with the silky, cheerful raiment of the capping ritual. "Thus, when the discharge of filial and fraternal duties, of loyal service, and of deferential submission is established," continued Yijian, "you can indeed be regarded as a full-grown man. Only when regarded as a man can you be employed to govern other men."

"When you are summoned by Tiadian, there, you must leave this room and approach the assembly at the eastern steps." She then left Ji Song alone.

At the appointed moment the bells, drums, chimes, and flutes raised a captivating serenade over the large assembly of Zhou family and friends spread out in the eastern grounds around the prime house. Ji Dan was seated at the top of the eastern steps. Ordinarily, he would be seated among the cousins and brothers of this honoree, but all had earlier this day witnessed Ji Fa's burial, and only the Regent could substitute for the sovereign at this ceremony.

Wearing the dark-colored cap and the dark-colored, square cut robes, Ji Song stood facing his family: his younger brother and mother, five of his eight living uncles, his great-uncle Shih, and a number of cousins and in-laws. Behind them on the altar of the house were a dozen host-tablets bearing the names of his distinguished forefathers. For the youth it seemed that history was a tangible thing, not an abstract idea. Spirits and ancestors had as much immediacy as a summer gust of wind hissing in the trees. For the length of human history, it seemed to him, the House of Zhou had shape and form, names and personalities, purpose and fraternity from the dawn of creation to the present. Like wild flowers across the plains, the tablets of his ancestors stood proudly proclaiming the

rightness of things, the inexorable progression toward some culmination, some conclusion not yet clear to him. They left no room for doubt.

As instructed Ji Song exchanged courtesies, exhibiting proper protocol, with his mother, his brothers, and his cousins in that order, all of them seated in a group near the steps. He then presented himself to the Regent, placing "a gift of introduction" at his feet. His uncle's face was stiff as he approached, but his eyes betrayed a certain joy. This was not a solemn ceremony; and as Shih began the liturgy, Ji Song relaxed. "We pray that Heaven will grant you a long life, Ji Song, but one close to your family. We pray that Heaven will bless you with great prosperity, but that you will share your blessings with your kin. We pray that Heaven will provide you only with wise and virtuous assistants whom you will recognize and heed."

From behind Ji Song, an attendant had placed and removed the three caps on his head successively. Shih continued. "Today you have worn the garments of maturity. From this day forward you must pursue your Imperial duties leaving behind youthful idleness. You must become the embodiment of virtue to serve as a model for men throughout the world. You must cherish the Mandate of Heaven, Ji Song, and bring glory to the House of Zhou forever."

Next, he presented suitable gifts to all of the high ministers and great officers of the realm and the old gentlemen of Qishan.

It was a simple ceremony, yet one replete with meaning. For Ji Song, it was a call to duty. For Ji Dan it signified, if a bit prematurely, that he had fulfilled his "small promise" to his older brother. To the Empire at large it was proof of Ji Dan's integrity, for the little son of Emperor Wu was safe. He, Ji Dan the ritual said, had no sinister designs on the youth.

At the sounding of drums and bells, the ceremony was over. Attendants rushed into the room with wine and food. Exuberance gushed out of the assembled relatives as cheers and laughter. For many it would be the last time they could commune intimately with their cousin, nephew, or in-law, as the case was; and they relished the opportunity, crowding near him and his mother. Food and spirits made from fermented grain, but most of all fellowship, warmed the already sultry prime-house even as the cooling dusk engulfed it.

## **Chapter 30**

### **Seeds of Renewal Fall, 1040 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 59 HUAN. Wind above Water**

*Diffusion.* The Sovereign is close to the temple; crossing the Great River presages success; righteous persistence is rewarded.



*Wind blowing across rivers.* Ancient sage Sovereigns sacrificed in temples to the Lord Above.

6 for the bottom place. Rewards come from aiding others with a workhorse's strength.

9 for the second place. Help comes from the altar when disintegration is a threat.

6 for the third place. Dispersing thoughts of the self is not regrettable.

6 for the fourth place. Though most fail to grasp, accumulation results from the scattering of friends.

9 for the fifth place. The Sovereign distributes his wealth among the people; anxiety is dispersed by royal fiat.

9 for the top place. Scattered blood; evil is kept away.

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Ji Dan's skilled fingers fluttered so quickly they became a blur. The yarrow stalks, each the length of a man's forearm and straight as beams of sunlight, separated and rejoined in the mysterious mathematics of divination. Then, as unexpectedly as they had begun, his fingers stilled. There was a moment of frozen thought after which Ji Dan wrote furiously on his bamboo slat.

Jun Chen was forever both awed and frustrated by his father, the famed right hand of the legendary Xibo, chief advisor to Emperor Wu during the conquest, and now Regent of the Empire during Emperor Cheng's minority. He knew as everyone else did that, child Emperor or no child Emperor, the effective sovereign of all under Heaven was Ji Dan. How could a man of such great offices spend so much time recording the murmurs of spirits?.

Though a descendant of Ji Chang and hence familiar with the rites of divination, his practical streak prevented him from feeling enthused about intense study. "What is the value of the hexagrams, father?" To him, the hexagrams and their meanings were but a curiosity.

Ji Dan answered without looking up. "There are five values between Heaven and Earth among the trigrams, Jun Chen, and three times that many among the hexagrams. Each one has a value separate and apart from the whole. A young man like yourself has a value separate from the whole community and from the family; yet, as a part of those groups you also have different values. Knowing that, my son, how do you assess your own value?"

Jun Chen was often exasperated at his father's circuitous and enigmatic answers to simple questions. "My regiments are arrayed for your verification, father."

Ji Dan set his bamboo slats and his ink brush aside and rose before his older son. Boqin, was bright and cultured but also somewhat contentious. His younger son, Jun Chen, was not very quick of wit but very companionable. Ji Dan suspected that he might miss sociable Jun Chen more than his argumentative oldest, yet he couldn't deny his older son's leadership qualities. "It is with both pride and sorrow that I send you away," he sighed.

"Perhaps the reports from Lu exaggerate the strength of our uncultured foes," suggested Jun Chen.

"You must make haste with your regiments, Boqin. The most recent messages describe the Huaiyi and Xurong tribes as now united in their mobilization. I believe the Prince of Yan is arming them in secret."

The younger assented with a resigned nod.

The two of them emerged from the tent into the brilliant fall sunlight. The land was aflame with fall colors. Even the Great River in the distance appeared red as if some far off land through which it flowed was bleeding. The scarlet banners and paraphernalia of the soldiers further intensified the fiery atmosphere. As he and his son inspected the formation, the Regent studied the soldiers' faces for signs of fatigue. He knew the many campaigns and marches since the conquest must be taking a toll on Zhou's citizenry as it was on him.

As Boqin's column of troops trailed off to the east toward Lu, Jun Chen refocused his attention on the documents being composed by his father. Ji Dan, on the other hand, drifted idly toward the south bank of the Great River. Shang Gao and other attendants followed as always, but at a comfortable distance. This was the place of the "crossing" where eight years earlier Ji Fa entered the Central Shang as Prince of Zhou and returned as sovereign of the world, the Son of Heaven. There were many new trees along the shore which had sprung up among the broad stumps of mature trees cut for the rafts used in the crossing. 'Earth and the spirits of this valley,' thought Ji Dan, 'are reclaiming what the armies of Ji Fa had abused, their seeds of renewal dispersing across the land faster than the peace I so ardently desire.'

"If I had known the years of sorrow and turmoil that would be endured, Shang Gao, I would have urged my older brother to remain the Prince of Zhou and resist the Holy Mandate."

"You could not have done otherwise than you have done," replied Shang Gao. "One horse cannot change the direction of a chariot team, only he who holds the reins."

"My father dead from a battle wound, my brothers scattered across the earth like wind blown leaves, now my two sons battling nomads in the far East— I wonder which of the six extremities will befall me each day. Will it be illness, weakness, poverty, evil, worry, or premature death. One after another, day after day, they pummel me like raindrops."

"The scattering of your blood kin protects the throne from harm. The many small engagements of your loyal subjects prevents the larger battle that would sorely try the new order." Shang Gao waved his arm across the meadow made by Emperor Wu's armies during the crossing. "If the stumps here had been only slender saplings eight years ago, would they have been felled to make rafts? No. It was the power and solidity of the towering trunks that was their downfall."

Ji Dan had discussed this policy with his close advisors many times. His wise uncle Shih and most others opposed the dispersion, preferring instead a powerful force dispatched from a coherent and invincible central Zhou state, in short, a Shang model. Ji Fa, Ji Dan, Shang Gao, and Lu Shang were of one mind on the issue. This age called for dispersion, severalty, and diffusion of power; the Shang had cohered far too much.

"Ji Fa created over seventy fiefs after the conquest in addition to those already loyal to Zhou. But these saplings are weak and flexible," Shang Gao, "one need not

have great enterprise or purpose to shave them down. My brothers and trusted friends, scattered through the nine regions, must struggle alone against enemies and the allure of evil. Even now, at this moment, three of my brothers rumor monger and carp over the Regency. How many reports of their growing wickedness have we received since their appointments as Three Supervisors?"

"The austere life of a young man in provincial Zhou is likely to render him unprepared for the many varieties of iniquity available in Yin."

"So tell me, Shang Gao, if I cannot steer my own brothers toward virtue, how can I guide the nations to it. Our policies will result in the disintegration of the Empire from my own inability to influence my own brothers."

"Indeed, Ji Xian is your older brother who will be guided only by his own sense of propriety however flawed."

"Then it is inevitable. The House of Zhou will fall to fratricide; the Empire to chaos; the Mandate of Heaven lost." Ji Dan became so despondent he sat on the nearest log too weak to continue walking.

"You will receive aid against such calamities at the altar of your ancestors as long as you pursue righteousness." Shang Gao sat beside Ji Dan.

The toosat quietly watching the sweeping waters of the Great River for many minutes before being interrupted by a rushing courier. Shang Gao intercepted him, listened to his message, and reseated himself next to Ji Dan. He was reluctant to convey its content, but after a few moments stated flatly, "Emperor Cheng is ill."

It was as if a monstrous gong were being struck as thoughts of the terrible consequences rolled through Ji Dan's mind. If "the little son" were to die, Ji Dan would have failed to keep his "small promise" to his beloved brother. The ugliest accusations would be accepted as true. Despite his life long devotion to virtue, he would be decried throughout the world as a despicable villain.

More tragic than his own misery would be the disintegration of the empire. If Song were to die without an heir, Ji Xian would become the rightful yet incapable heir to Heaven's Throne. Forever thereafter, the Shang mode of succession, brother succeeding brother, would be legitimized. Civil war would engulf the world for a generation or more, and the House of Zhou would be disgraced for all time for calling down such calamities from the Lord Above.

Just as he felt he could no longer endure life, Shang Gao's reminder to seek help at the altar came back to him. But the host-tablets of his revered forefathers were enshrined at Hao, too far away to hear his pleas. "I must return to Hao at once," he muttered. As he attempted to rise from the log, he slipped on the eroding river bank, and his foot plunged into the water. Shang Gao and the messenger went to his aid, alarmed at the aging Regent's proximity to the swift current.

It was as if the river had reached out to grasp him, and Ji Dan realized that he need not be in Hao to find succor. He was by the Great River, and the River Deity was one of the most revered spirits under Heaven. Instead of allowing the two men to help him out of the muddy water, he faced the rushing channel and knelt. In that position the water level reached his waist.

"Record this prayer for me Shang Goa," he barked. "There is nothing the innocent little son of Fa could have done to incur the wrath of the Lord Above, so I beg the Spirit of the Great River. Swallow me up this instant! It must be I who

have given offense. Take the one man, Ji Dan, and let the innocent little son continue in the tasks of life."

Shang Gao and the courier were wide eyed. They scanned the water's surface for some gruesome jaws that might leap upon them any second. Ji Dan had not prepared for a sacrifice-- he had no small animal to give up. Quickly grasping his long knife, he reached behind his head and sliced off his graying but still luxurious locks and threw them into the water. One by one he half ripped, half sliced off each fingernail. On some fingers the knife seems to draw blood of its own accord. "Take these parts of me as my sacrifice," he pleaded. "Go to the Lord Above on my behalf."

Shang Gao and the courier stood on the bank of the Great River watching the most powerful man on earth kneeling in the mud, head drooping forward, hair shaggy, fingers bloody, sobbing uncontrollably.

## Chapter 31

### Completions Are a Different Thing Spring, 1040 BCE

#### Hexagram 64 WAI ZHI. Fire above Water

*Before completion.* The Yak's tail is wetted in the river crossing; high ambitions must be curbed.

*Fire blazing above the water.* The superior man makes careful distinctions as he sorts objects.

6 for the bottom place. A wet tail indicates missed opportunities and disgrace.

9 for the fifth place. He is determined to slow his chariot and not tumble from the right path.

6 for the fourth place. The crossing of the Great River is incomplete; to advance aggressively is disadvantageous.

9 for the third place. Wuding's three year campaign against Guifang brought honor and riches to his Generals.

6 for the second place. The Superior Man's splendor inspires confidence.

9 for the top place. Feasting lavishly and bathing in wine forfeits the Nation's trust.

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From that moment at his brother's sick bed six years earlier, Ji Dan had probed his mind again and again for the source of his anger. Never before had he both grieved and raged at the same time— silently and internally. Likewise, his self examination was also silent and internal. Truly, he thought, the wise teachers and

sages of Zhou often urged such self scrutiny; but he had never before invested such energy in the process. His failure gave rise to frustration, adding to the emotional stew simmering below his calm exterior.

“Your mood has recently become invidious, Regent,” admonished Shang Gao. The old advisor to both Ji Dan and Emperor Wu stated the case flatly and without evident fear of Ji Dan’s imminence.

Ji Dan stood by the door to his house watching the people of Hao stream among the city’s structures like brook water among its rocks. The noises of carts, animals, and people— an incessant babble— had been assaulting him all day. “Hao has become too noisy,” he grumbled. “It disturbs my work. ”

“It appears that the people would commend you for the choice of this new settlement,” Shang Gao said. “It’s population is ever more energetic.”

This newer, more easterly capitol of the recently triumphant Zhou nation had already proven to be a mistake. The site was a compromise, encouraged by Ji Dan, between those who wished to keep the royal presence at home in the Westlands and those who recognized the realities of governing the vast new Zhou Empire spread across the eastern lands as far as the Great Eastern Sea. Meanwhile, commerce in Hao had flourished to the Regent’s discomfort and everyone else’s profit. Only Ji Dan’s reluctance to admit his error in judgment on the issue delayed its inevitable relocation further east.

“Do you remember the ramparts around Chong, Shang Gao?” asked Ji Dan.

“Of course, Regent. The battle for Chong took the lives of far too many of our Zhou brothers because of that rampart. The families of our fallen kinsmen still mourn.”

“And I had such ramparts built around the north shore part of Luo.”

“Yes, and by it the Yin obdurates in Luo are continuously reminded of Zhou’s dominion over them as it should be.”

“I would like to construct a wall like that around this compound to keep out the noise.”

“How will the citizenry react to your act of unsociability, Regent?” Shang Gao was not seriously questioning. He was subtly reminding Ji Dan of long held Zhou principles. The ramparts of Chong were often held up by Zhou commoners as the antithesis of community values.

Ignoring Shang Gao’s reminder, Ji Dan shouted for his chief architect. “Mimou!” The royal engineer was, of necessity, not lingering about the Regent’s dwelling, but was supervising the many public works projects the building of an empire demanded.

Ji Dan governed as the Empire’s Regent from his own dwelling, not the Prime House of the departed conqueror, Ji Fa. This was a calculated decision not supported by all of his lieutenants. While he fully understood the value of grandeur to the function of rulership, he worried that his occupancy of Emperor Wu’s house would incite the rebellion he feared most. Thus he built his compound on the extreme opposite end of Hao. There the mundane business of the empire was conducted, while grand ceremonies and receptions took place across town in The Royal House occupied by the child emperor, Cheng Wang.

“Mimou!” Ji Dan shouted again.

“He is on the other side of Hao,” said Shang Gao. “I will send for him.”

Ji Dan turned from the doorway and paced slowly over to the hearth nearby, its warmth repelling the brisk early spring air pushing rudely in through the open door. Sparks from the raging fire danced upward relentlessly as if agility and energy alone could defy the earth's downward pull; but in fact it was the swift spring wind sucking the heat up toward the heavens. Shang Gao's nearly unnoticeable hand wave summoned a young messenger into the Regent's house. He was instructed to locate the Empire's chief engineer, and he quickly disappeared into the bustling town.

In a continuous flow through the day, officials and ministers approached Ji Dan with matters for his disposal. The locations of major works and structures needed his approval. Nomads united with remnants of the Shang army threatened the state of Bi. Several petty disputes among the Princes and Lords of the southern provinces needed his jurisprudence. During quiet moments, his mind rushed uncontrollably to his greatest worry: the intransigent Three Supervisors and the witless holdover from the defeated Shang empire, Wugeng.

"The time has not yet arrived for the fulfillment of your desires' was advice he often heard from Shang Gao and other advisors. His anxieties had recently spilled over into his dealings with his younger son, Jun Chen, when he had scolded him unnecessarily. Ji Dan had resolved to salve his son's bruises; so, when he entered the room, Ji Dan embraced him.

"Is my father writing yet another treatise?" teased Jun Chen. "It will take a thousand years for readers to grasp them all. What is this one about?" he asked craning his neck around Ji Dan to see the slats of bamboo covered with esoteric scribbles.

"Instructions for my wayward son for after I have gone to join the ancestors," replied Ji Dan facetiously.

"Give me your instructions now, father before I depart for Lu. I doubt I will have the time or strength to read your volumes once there." They both knew that after a full year of fighting, rebellious factions still infested the Regent's own state of Lu. Progress had been made by his industrious sons, but their resources had been sorely taxed. Jun Chen would bring new soldiers and arms from Hao's foundries for Boqin's best effort at subjugation.

"Mind the ceremonies you have been taught by Zhou's sage kings of old," said Ji Dan. "In time you will receive explicit and detailed instructions from Cheng Wang's palace. For now, remember that persistence in a righteous cause will always be rewarded. "

"My father," remarked Jun Chen, "has begun to repeat himself in his old age."

"It is a father's duty to scold his brats constructively," replied Ji Dan. "It is a son's duty to respect his father. " His tone was slightly harsh.

Jun Chen interjected conveniently, "The soldiers await, father. It is their duty to march on our enemies. Let us not hinder them from their duty while we discuss ours." Ji Dan was humbled by his son's perceptiveness.

After quick embraces, Jun Chen mounted a fidgety steed. Ji Dan watched for a few moments through the door as the new force rumbled away toward the far east; then he returned to the table strewn with bamboo documents. Shang Gao was in the process of refilling the tripod lamps with oil, so Ji Dan hesitated by his side.

“What new dereliction has witless Wugeng created to plague us today, Shang Gao?” grumbled Ji Dan.

“He has not proclaimed an open rebellion, Regent; but he continues to observe the Shang calendar and addresses prayers directly to the Lord Above in violation of Imperial decree. ”.

“He tries the patience of holy men.” Ji Dan was reminded of his rambunctious younger brothers many years earlier debating whether the smaller house of Zhou should rise against the vast empire of the Shang. “Does he ignore instructions from the Crown, or are the instructions not getting to him?”.

“I believe he ignores the ones he gets, and the Three Supervisors only pass on those he is most likely to ignore.”

“Of what use to them is a rebellious Lord of Yin? “Has he convinced my brothers that the Shang royal succession, brother succeeding brother, is in his interest?.

“He probably believes he will become Emperor after all with their help,” said Shang Gao.

“Not so lofty a goal, I think, sighed Ji Dan, “My brothers have succumbed to Wugeng’s wife and the allure of Yin depravity. It will lead to civil war, I fear, and fratricide— not brother succeeding brother, but brother killing brother. ”

“Your love for your three unrighteous brothers is heart-felt, father, but not a product of the world’s most acclaimed intellect.” Jun Chen’s youthful vigor propelled his open disdain for the three supervisors and, no doubt, his lack of awe for his father’s stature. “Is there no crime a brother can commit that is worthy of punishment?”.

“Long before my esteemed Uncle Shih became the Grand Guardian, he proposed the proper image for describing the duty of a brother to his senior house.” Ji Dan shuffled through the pile of bamboo slats he had been writing on for many months. “I have recorded what he composed so that his words will not be forgotten.” With obvious appreciation he read a few lines from the lyric by his uncle:

*Brothers are unique in all the world.  
As calyxes support the flower,  
so brothers must support their house;  
though squabbling when behind its walls,  
meeting every challenge from without.*

“My second son’s impetuosity is not healthy. Harmony and propriety are the hallmarks of superior administration.” Young Jun Chen knew, of course, he was in the company of the primary government administrator of the world. Taking this proximity for granted was Jun Chen’s most obvious fault, though a fault which is generally understandable to all sons standing in the shadows of prominent fathers. “Someday you may be called to a leadership role by your sovereign, Jun Chen,” he scolded. “You will know then that punishments alone will not suffice.”

In spite of himself, Jun Chen couldn’t resist his father’s chronicles of Zhou history and culture. “You have often said father, that your principles of harmony and propriety are as old as the nations themselves, that you are only expanding on what has been long believed by superior men. Where did it come from, father?”

“Let me show you the tablets of Yao.” Ji Dan instructed an aid to retrieve a metal box from the subterranean storage pit from which, after some rummaging, he removed a book of bamboo slats laced together with strips of leather. He continued, “These tablets have come to us from divine Houji. They have been guarded and protected by our ancestors over many generations.”

Jun Chen looked at the markings on the slats closely. “They are not entirely strange, yet not entirely familiar either.”

“Since the time Yao wrote these, the characters men normally use have become more complex and diverse. It is the nature of things to do so. That is why it is said that to blend disparate things brings harmony.”

“What do they mean, father?”

“Yao was one of the foremost Emperors of antiquity,” he explained. “He was Houji’s half-brother, the great grandson of the Yellow Emperor. These are the accounts of how Yao selected his successor.”

“Were these rulers not simply the oldest sons of their predecessors?”

“The principle of primogeniture has been adhered to tenaciously by our people; however, at the time of Yao, the process of succession was...” he paused to acquire the precise word, “controversial.” Heaven had not yet seen fit to establish a uniform principle.”

“Read the inscriptions, for me father.”

Ji Dan respectfully spread the linked bamboo pages out on the table and read:

*The four mountains again offered a recommendation.  
They recommended Shun.*

“Who were the four mountains?”

“At the time, sovereigns consulted four very learned advisors who resided outside of the court.” He continued reading:

*“What kind of man is he?” inquired Yao  
“His father is stupid, his step-mother is abusive, and his  
half-brother conceited, yet he has succeeded in keeping  
the family living together in harmony.”  
Yao said, “Well then, I will test him.”*

Ji Dan put the slats down carefully. He didn’t need to read further, for he knew what occurred. “Yao gave Shun five trials. He married his two disputatious daughters to Shun to observe how he would control them. Later he appointed Shun to several high offices to test his ability to govern. For the last test, Yao had Shun transported like a fugitive to the far western plains and deposited there alone.”

“I have heard it said that Shun acquired the Yak tails in the far western desert.”

“Which he later gave to Houji the progenitor of our nation. Shun survived the ordeal and returned unconfused. Yao then made him his primary minister, relinquishing all the reigns of government to Shun. After thirty more years, Yao died.”

“So when Yao died, Shun ascended to the throne,” interjected Jun Chen.



“At first Shun withdrew to allow Yao’s son Zhu to become emperor. For three years, the ceremonial musical instruments were silent as all the people mourned. Shun then ruled from Heaven’s throne another twenty years.”

“Our Houji served as an important minister in Shun’s government.” Jun Chen recited some of Zhou’s cultural common knowledge.

Ji Dan rummaged carefully in the metal box, retrieving another bound set of bamboo slats. “This document is called Yiji,” he said. He unrolled the laced slats. The inscriptions were faint and he held the slats as close to the burning oil lamp as possible to read from them:

*While I dug new canals and deepened  
existing channels to remove the flood waters,  
Houji instructed the people in the proper  
methods of toil in the fields.*

Ji Dan looked up from the slats to explain. “Shun had sent his distant cousin Yu to fight the great flood with the help of Houji.”

“How is it that Houji himself did not become emperor? Yao was the son of his father by a concubine, was he not?”

“At the time of his father’s death, Qi was an infant. So the elders and ministers of Ku’s family gave the throne to Zhi, the oldest son by Di Ku and another concubine; however, Zhi was not capable of his charge so they transferred the throne to the next oldest son, who was Yao. ”

“So from all this turmoil,” speculated Jun Chen, “we have come to believe in monogamy and primogeniture,” Jun Chen concluded.

“Turmoil and sorrow is the inevitable result of our failure to discern Heaven’s will. ”

“But how does one learn of Heaven’s will, father, when only a select few have been taught the secrets of the Hexagrams?”

“To hear the voice of the Lord above, replied Ji Dan, one must first silence one’s own.”

## **Chapter 32**

### **Three Embarking at Once Attract Suspicion Summer, 1039 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 41 SUN.**

#### **Mountain above Still Water**

*Loss; Reduction.* Loss accompanied by confidence brings good fortune. Two small bowls will suffice for the sacrifice.

*Still waters at the base of the mountain.* Superior men subdue anger and moderate desires.

9 for the bottom place. A hasty departure, authorized or not, may spoil the work already done.

9 for the second place. Righteous persistence brings reward, though only in due time.

6 for the third place. Three setting out now will attract suspicion, though a lone traveler will find company.

6 for the fourth place. He reduced the ills afflicting him, a cause for happiness.

6 for the fifth place. A fortune in tortoise shells received signifies good fortune.

9 for the top place. He acquires followers, but not domestic bliss.

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The late afternoon sun fell on a despondent and frustrated Ji Dan. After the evening meal, he strolled from the main structure in his compound, where the Empire's business takes place, to his private quarters. Solitude was especially welcome to him at that time. He would pray at his private altar and consult the shi stalks for comfort and guidance, for the Grand Guardian had sent word that he and the Regent were to meet in the morning. Shih's tone had been somber, which further worried Ji Dan who considered Shih's guardianship crucial to continued harmony in the realm.

The stanchions and rafters of the Regent's house were colorfully adorned with splendid fabrics. Fine pottery and painted wooden bowls were all about its two chambers in useful places. Its wooden walls were ablaze inside and out with murals depicting the glories of Zhou culture and history, especially images of the conquest. Zhou reds competed with the setting sun itself for dominance in Ji Dan's compound.

His altar did not support the host tablets of his older brother, the Conqueror, nor of his father, the great Xibo. These were, of course, on the altar of his nephew, for the principle of primogeniture applied not only to royal successions, but also to worship. Ji Dan's modest altar contained a single tablet, the tablet of his long dead oldest brother Boyikao. 'I remember the last day you spent with me on earth, older brother,' he thought as he kneeled before the tablet. 'What did your hunger for the hunt bring you but death for yourself and sorrow for the House of Zhou.' He thought of his wailing mother and sisters as Boyikao's crumpled body was brought home from the forest by his father and the older men of the party. It was as if Boyikao was a gruesome trophy— a horrible new game animal. A long, soundless chorus of grief followed, for while the exploits of a successful hunt are often lauded in melody, this hunt was thereafter commemorated with silence. Memories of Boyikao's exuberant and boisterous nature streamed through his mind as if injected there by his brother's spirit: Boyikao galloping across the meadow, Boyikao launching arrows precisely at the Salute and Give Ceremony, Boyikao hurling the javelin, Boyikao brandishing his latest trophy from the forest, a long feathered pheasant or a rough skinned dragon— these were the pictures flowing through Ji Dan's mind.

His commune with Boyikao had acted as a welcome sedative. The morning sun woke him refreshed. Servants brought him fresh milk and fruit as soon as they heard him moving about. He consumed his breakfast briskly knowing that the business of governing waited impatiently in the building just across the courtyard of the compound. He dressed in an elaborate, bright red, kimono-like robe. Embroidered on the front of it was the famous white rooster with its one clipped wing, symbolizing the conquest of the Shang. On the back was the black image of the fearsome monster Taotei, the emblem of Zhou most associated with the great Xibo. Attendants had knotted Ji Dan's hair at his crown, but its long braid swept back and forth across his back like the tail of a tiger as he moved his head. His polished fingernails, each an inch or more in length, flashed like tiny swords in the light. His face was hairless.

Leaving his private house, he crossed the compound purposefully and entered its largest building. He emerged suddenly into the reception chamber when attendants threw back a drapery. In contrast to the Regent's, the much plainer tones of the assembled dignitaries were in stark contrast, an impoverishment of color. Yet, Ji Dan was not draped in precious stones or metals. Compared to the lavish attire of the former Shang ministers, his wardrobe was somber.

The messengers, diplomats, and attendants who had been waiting in the chamber all kowtowed upon seeing Ji Dan. No command was necessary. Shang Gao, Jun Chen, Lord Bi, and Officer Mimou, the Regent's primary advisors, were among them.

"Rise," he barked. It was well known that the Regent did not like such displays of obeisance, but he had never been able to curtail them. "Let us get to the business of the day."

He went quickly to the modest bench which functioned as a throne for him, though it was not elevated. Looming high above him on a broad, red drapery were the signs and symbols of the Zhou nation, now the Empire.

"A messenger has just informed me of the approach of your uncle Shih," whispered Shang Gao.

Ji Dan nodded and rose. "The Grand Guardian approaches," he said. Petitioners and dignitaries retreated to the extremes of the chamber as if they expected the Grand Guardian to somehow explode into the room. Instead, the Regent and his host filed out of the main doorway swiftly. Ji Dan led a growing procession through his compound. A small army of citizens and soldiers was already gathering as the scarlet banners of the approaching Grand Guardian fluttered bird-like in the breeze. As the two trains met, the six muscular men carrying Shih's enclosed sedan halted and deposited the Grand Guardian carefully on the ground. With the help of several servants, Shih emerged clumsily and struggled forward to embrace his nephew.

"Greetings Uncle," said Ji Dan behind a genuine smile. "You look well."

"I look as well as a very old man can," he answered. "You, on the other hand, look weathered for such a youth." Ji Dan was, to be sure, no youth; but Shih was taking notice of Ji Dan's stressful situation governing the vast empire. The weight of his responsibilities had definitely affected him. "I am told that you cannot even wash your hair without enduring interruption by some aggrieved widow or petitioning householder."

"I am in constant fear, Uncle, that I may miss the wise counsel of some good man or overlook the suffering of a good citizen."

"Zhou is no longer an isolated province," reminded Shih. "You are now administering the affairs of a vast Empire. Let some of these duties fall to a trustworthy minister, like your worthy son here, Jun Chen or Lord Bi over there." Ji Dan's son and Lord Bi both bowed their heads, accepting the Grand Guardian's compliment gracefully.

The two men walked toward Ji Dan's house exchanging items of family news. For the past two years since the death of Emperor Wu, Ji Dan had kept a careful distance between himself and his nephew, his brother's heir. Undoubtedly there were many informants about reporting on Ji Dan's every move to his brothers the Princes of Guan, Cai, and Hou. On the other hand, the goings-on in the Prime House, though only on the other side of the city, were as distant to the Regent as if he were in the far Western provinces of the Empire. "I may as well be in my own fief, Uncle" he said.

"How fares little Emperor Cheng?" he asked pleasantly.

"Increasingly affected by innuendo and rumor from abroad," replied Shih. Ji Dan knew the reference was to the defiant rumblings of his younger brothers, the Three Supervisors.

"Has he not received you at Court as is appropriate to your stature?" Ji Dan appeared annoyed.

"I will be honored by a state dinner later this day."

As the pair entered Ji Dan's reception hall, Shih abruptly halted and turned to face his nephew. "I have resolved to retire," he said. Ji Dan was immediately despondent. He went to his bench and sat silently as if resting from some great exertion.

Ji Dan's attendants, anticipating his desire for privacy in this consultation with the Grand Guardian had barred the entrance of all in the crowd save Shang Gao and Jun Chen. They remained at a respectful distance. From their vantage point, these two most powerful men in the world simply sat having a pleasant chat. Ji Dan, however, knew that Shih's seeming innocuous five words could shatter the empire into fragments and lead to internecine warfare and the slaughter of thousands.

'If Shih has lost faith in me,' Ji Dan thought, 'there is no hope for peace among my brothers. All that my older brother has accomplished will come to sorrow and blood. All that my father, the great Xibo, has built will come to nought. After an entire generation of struggles, the Mandate of Heaven will be lost and the House of Zhou will fall into disgrace.'

While the Shang Gao and Jun Chen stood mute nearby, Ji Dan stared at his uncle, the Grand Guardian, in shock. The silence in the Regent's reception chamber seemed to amplify the crackling fire in the hearth. If Shih were to resign, Ji Dan's three scheming brothers and the reprobate Lord of Yin would rampage through the Eastlands fomenting rebellion. Shih was enlisted as Grand Guardian of the child Emperor because all knew he would protect with his life the child's right to the throne. Shih alone stood between stability and chaos in the empire.

At length the Regent rose to his feet from the modest bench which was the functioning seat of Zhou power. "Shang Gao," he barked, "fetch a scribe at once! For the sake of the House of Zhou, my words must be recorded precisely. "

Shang Gao went to the door and, with the snap of his fingers, summoned a recorder who went immediately to the writing table strewn with bamboo slats and ink brushes. The three legged oil lamps flickered wildly from the sweeping through the room of these imperious men, at times seeming to disconnect themselves from the oil pools in their bowls.

The only likely reasons for Shih's sudden retirement, speculated Ji Dan, were weariness or mistrust. The weariness he understood fully, for he felt it himself frequently. Indeed, buried under his fear at Shih's departure and his constantly recurring anger at his intransigent brothers, was a measure of envy. He longed himself for release from the burdens he carried. Yet he would endure whatever burden was necessary in order to consolidate the rule of Zhou.

Shih was, after all, nearly ninety years old and may have been simply exhausted. On the other hand, he may have begun to doubt Ji Dan's integrity, fearing the Regent might simply continue to occupy the throne in practice, eventually, at some opportune moment, quietly eliminating little Ji Song. Believing that, and being unable to stop it, Shih would have to choose: support an illegitimate Emperor or retire as far from the seat of power as he could. Ji Dan had no doubt what his choice would be.

With the arrival of the recorder, Ji Dan began his response, choosing his words carefully. "Lord Shih," he said, "it is not out of compassion that the Lord Above has given us this burden. The Mandate has fallen on our shoulders while ruin fell on Yin. Many times I have felt the same weariness as you feel; but we must not retreat from the responsibilities given to us. Good or bad fortune may be in store for us; how can we predict which?"

Memories of Ji Dan's youth being taught the methods of divination flashed through Shih's mind. He was a ravenous student. "Have you now given up on the shi stalks as you before gave up on reading the fissures in the shells?" asked Shih.

"I believe Heaven favors the righteous and, if we persist in honorable intentions, that Heaven will reward us. As you have said many times, it depends on us. "Ji Dan paced and spoke slowly, mindful also of Heaven's terrors. "I have striven tirelessly to lead the people in righteousness. This is not true of several of our family. Some of Xibo's descendants refuse to revere the Lord Above them and the people below them. They shame the honor of our forebears even while they bask in our forebears' glory. These things are well known to you. " Ji Dan was suggesting that by his resignation, Shih would be giving tacit approval to the reprobate Three Supervisors. He knew that aiding and abetting traitors was not in Shih's character.

"The virtues of our father won the Mandate; only our own virtues can hold it for his descendants. " In a very subtle way, Ji Dan accused his uncle of failing to meet his obligations, something Shih would be loathe to do. "I want only to extend the glory of our House," he pleaded. "I want only for our young sovereign to reside in Heaven's favor. As Heaven has given, so it may withdraw. All we can do is persist in righteousness so that Heaven will have no cause to withdraw it's favor. "

The Grand Guardian studied Ji Dan's every move, his eyes following the Regent like the eyes in an oil painting.

"You may recall, Lord Shih, that Tang the Successful, founder of the Shang dynasty, had a most faithful minister, Yi Yin. Yi Yin was the foremost sage of his time who helped Tang live in accord with Heaven's will. After Tang joined the ancestors, Yi Yin honorably served several of Tang's successors. Five generations later, Emperor Taiwu restored the House of Shang from decline with the aid of Yi Zhi, Wu Xian, and Chen Hu. Three generations later still, Emperor Zuyi restored the dynasty from a terrible decline with the help of Wu Xianr. Lastly, after about seven more generations, the powerful Shang Emperor Wuding rescued the Central Nation from ruin by the defeat of the northwestern nomads. His minister, Gan Pan, was so important to him he called him Teacher Pan. "

These references to revered Shang personages were not meant to convince Shih. He and Shih both knew they were designed to appeal to the Shang people. If Ji Dan had the support of the little people of the Nations, the treacherous hands of traitors would be stayed. Meanwhile, Shih would feel the Regent's sincerity behind his words.

Ji Dan approached more closely to Shih who sat stone silent and expressionless. "Lord Shih, the House of Shang held the Mandate for over twenty generations only because of such faithful and sagacious ministers. When the Mandate was withdrawn from them and given to Ji Chang, your brother, it was not only because of Xibo's considerable abilities, but also because he had such able advisors as Guoshu, Hongyao, San Yisheng, Taidian, and Nangong Kuo." Here Ji Dan was appealing subtly to his uncle's pride. Ji Dan knew that Shih's name should be at the head of this list of eminent Zhou personages.

"Without them, the people of our nation would not be blessed by Xibo's virtues. Each of these ministers acted in accord with Heaven's will, maintained virtuous lives, and thus, after Xibo, helped Emperor Wu defeat all enemies. Now the people of the empire all acknowledge Ji Fa's greatness. Was it not Ji Fa himself who requested your service as guardian of his son?"

Shih stirred like a statue come to life, rising to his feet with surprising strength for his age and frailty. "I have only your word that it is so. There were no scribes or ministers present to record my nephew's words."

Ji Dan realized then the nature of his uncle's doubts. He feared he might be the victim of clever manipulations— that Ji Dan might be using him to placate critics while ruling the empire as emperor in fact, if not in title. As Grand Guardian, Shih actually administered little beyond the Royal household. Ji Dan knew what should be done immediately: give him a large territory to administer. He would then have the means to defend the young sovereign if the Regent should somehow pose a threat.

"Lord Shih," he continued, "Emperor Wu called me to his side in his hour of death to request that you and I serve his young son intelligently, energetically, virtuously, and mutually trusting. He urged us to follow the example of Xibo, our exalted father, who never turned his back on his duties as leader of his people."

Ji Dan then sat down as Shih began to move about the room nervously. "Looking at what happened to Yin," Ji Dan continued, "knowing the punishment that Heaven can rain down on us at any time, do you think I could be deceitful?"

Repeat for me as you have expressed in the past. Agree now with me that it all depends on us two."

Shih's posture then seemed less rigid, perhaps as his resolve weakened. "If our age or strength gives out," Ji Dan added, "you can locate and nominate some of the younger generation to take our places anytime. Ji Dan was suggesting that they both could resign together if suitable replacements could be found. This, he knew, his uncle would find unsatisfactory. "You need not fear that virtue has been compromised. I can say no more."

Shih looked at his nephew with fading suspicions. "When my brother Ji Chang began the conquest years ago, I was fearful and resistant, as you know. Many hardships and sorrows resulted from his quest for supreme glory, including his own death. Nevertheless, my brother's son, Ji Fa, was entitled to become Zhou's leader and, as Heaven decided, to sit on Heaven's throne. In turn, the little son of Ji Fa must also repose there. "

Ji Dan listened patiently at his dear old uncle's familiar exposition. "Ever since the dawn of Zhou history, when the son of divine Houji was kept from his rightful inheritance by Taikang, the people of Zhou have clung fast to the principle of primogeniture. This is my charge even at the cost of my life. " The finality of Shih's position was punctuated by long moments of silence.

Ji Dan rose slowly in deep thought. Of course, his uncle was the younger brother of Ji Chang. If the Shang model of succession were emulated, he and not Ji Chang's son would have assumed the title of Emperor. But it was Ji Fa, Ji Chang's son, who completed what the great Xibo had begun, inheriting the Mandate, while Shih dissented. Heaven's reward of success to Ji Fa proved once again the rightness of primogeniture. The virtuous Shih could not help but know it, so his anxieties about Ji Dan's intentions were based on deeply held convictions. Even more compelling, he could never bear to be seen as a rightful heir who denied his duty. In what Ji Fa had done was honor and truth. For Shih to see it otherwise meant Shih himself would represent the contrary: error and disgrace.

Ji Dan realized finally that one source of Shih's anxiety was the fear of being compared unfavorably to his brother's son. He decided that the best argument he could use would be to verbally elevate his uncle, with the help of the scribe, within earshot of the entire world. "Lord Shih," he said after a long pause, "many can bring about a beginning as your brother's son has done; but completions are a different thing. In the situation before us, only the two of us together can reach a satisfactory conclusion. We can look upon it as a burden or an opportunity. Let us be energetic, laboring as one person to glorify our house further so that, when we are done, there is no one in the world not obedient to Zhou's rule."

As Ji Dan finished his appeal, Shih stood for long silent moments with his head bowed as if weighted down by guilt. "Very well, Regent," he muttered. "I shall not desert my obligations until completion has come."

Ji Dan approached and spoke in a comforting tone. "So that you may carry out your task with greater comfort, I will relinquish all ties with principalities and provinces in the West and South. " Shih and the others all stared at Ji Dan in surprise. "Yes. All the lands that professed allegiance to Xibo before his death shall be under your administration exclusively, and you may have whichever

ministers, advisors, or regiments you desire to aid you in it. ”Ji Dan went to the east facing doorway and squinted into the midmorning sun. “I shall move my offices to the East and North to exercise more vigorous control over our obdurate subjects there. ”

Shih’s eyes betrayed a sense of relief as if a great weight of anxiety were being lifted from him. “Your faith in me is gratifying,” he said.

“Also, the city of Yin and the Three Supervisors shall be in my care. ” Ji Dan spun to look directly at Shih. “You will never be forced to discipline, if it comes to that, your brother’s sons.” The resolve on Ji Dan’s face was unmistakable, though he could never completely eliminate the inkling of doubt he felt. Nevertheless, Shih recognized the wisdom of Ji Dan’s solution.

Shih’s return to the Prime House on the other side of Hao left Ji Dan in a room nearly as empty as his heart. What he had just proposed was to divide the Empire into two segments and to sever himself from the familiar life he had always known. He would exile himself from his homeland, sentencing himself to a ceaseless journey through the lands conquered by his House. He who had all his life sought to bring stability to the roaming primitives, had doomed himself to a life of wandering, perhaps not permanently, but at least until Ji Song reached the age of majority.

“Jun Chen,” he called to his companionable, second son still standing at a respectful distance with the other attendants and advisors, “we must prepare for a very long journey.” He did not declare aloud the rest of the sentence which he thought just the same: ‘And we do not know our final destination.’

## Chapter 33

### Assailed by the Tempest Fall, 1038 BCE

#### Hexagram 3 ZHUN. Water above Thunder

*Difficulty.* Persist righteously for success follows tribulations; consolidate gains rather than seek new goals.

*Lightning erupts from the clouds.* The Superior Man orders his life carefully in trying times.

9 for the bottom place. Consolidate steadfastly, for difficulty prevents forceful action.

6 for the second place. His riding helter-skelter is due to an amorous relationship deferred.

6 for the third place. The hunter is lost when pursuing deer without guides; the Superior Man stays put.



6 for the fourth place. A man running helter-skelter seeks his consort; prosperity results at last.

9 for the fifth place. He cannot force fertility; only in small matters comes success.

6 for the top place. A man running helter-skelter scatters blood and tears.

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"I do not wish to be disturbed!" barked Emperor Cheng from within his private chamber. Attendants scampered back out into the larger assembly room where the Son of Heaven's throne seemed somehow majestic even though empty. Officers of the Court stood or sat about impatiently. Outside there were Lords and envoys from various states waiting for an audience. One of them was Shang Gao bearing messages from the Regent. The Regent's devotion to his elderly advisor was well known, and the teen-age Emperor's inconsiderate behavior toward the octogenarian caused considerable nervousness about the palace.

All were visibly relieved when the Grand Guardian arrived finally, his presence having been requested more than an hour earlier. Shih immediately approached the young monarch in his chamber.

"How is the Son of Heaven feeling this morning?" he asked in a tone verging on sarcasm.

Ji Song grumbled something about not sleeping well. "Why must I be disturbed," he whined.

"What do you think would happen if the sun refused to rise one day? Would the common people know what to do? Would they know to milk the goats or plow the fields? The sovereign must be the people's example."

Ji Song began to stir. "I don't wish to be their example."

"Just as your grandfather, the mighty Xibo, was chosen by Heaven to receive the Holy Mandate, just as your father Emperor Wu was chosen by Heaven to smite Yin, you have been appointed to carry forward the Mandate. It cannot be denied, Ji Song."

The boy rose from his pallet reluctantly and allowed himself to be dressed by attendants. He needed no special encouragement when food arrived and devoured the plums and berries with boyish energy. "Who is first to call on me today?"

"Shang Gao, your uncle's chief advisor and minister."

"Is it another request for still another regiment of soldiers?" Ji Song's petulance was particularly intense. "By now every able bodied man from the West must be marching with his army." Shih's irritated look silenced the boy sovereign who realized he had unfairly distorted the circumstances.

"The Regent has maintained a difficult peace among the states for two years at great discomfort to himself. We continuously receive reports of his movements and engagements. They say that never a meal of his is completed without interruption, that not a night's sleep of his is enjoyed unawakened, and that never more than a month goes by before he must relocate his abode. He has lived as an uncultured nomad to build up the defenses for your security and for tranquility in the world."

"Some say he builds up the defenses in preparation for crushing his critics—that he will one day turn his marching regiments against the capitol."

"Who has given you such counsel?" demanded Shih. "Let him accuse the Prince of Lu openly." Shih's forcefully verbal assurance was not matched by inner certainty, yet Shih would bear his doubts in secret.

"The Regent's own brothers so accuse him. What am I to think of it?"

Shih paced about the chamber in heavy thought. Even while he composed sensible arguments in his mind, shadows of doubt could not be dispelled. "Your father's faith and trust in his brother Ji Dan were unshakable. Your grandfather heeded his advice more than all others save perhaps Lu Shang. If these great men put such store in him, how can we not?"

Shih knew only too well that his nephew's self-imposed, year-long exile to the East, the division of the Empire between himself and Ji Dan during Ji Song's minority, and Ji Song's perpetual doubts and estrangement were all caused by the constant carping of the Three Supervisors and various discontented factions within the former Yin population. The troublesome factions had come to be known as "obdurates." Behind them all, manipulating and encouraging disaffection was the Prince of Yan who, though diminished since the conquest, ruled the most powerful and wealthy of the former Shang states.

"Come now, Royal nephew, let me bring Ji Dan's envoy to you. You can question him as to the Regent's motives and movements." The nod from Ji Song was nearly imperceptible. Shih left and returned quickly. Shang Gao knelt just inside the chamber threshold mumbling apologies and approbations.

A month or so earlier his uncle had conveyed to Ji Song a rather long and complex poem. "I have been studying 'Seventh Moon'," he began. "I do not understand some of the references. What does it mean to 'fill up the chinks'?" Ji Song's hand was simultaneously instructing the old man to rise.

"A commoner's house," answered Shang Gao, "has adobe walls which crack in the summer heat. The chinks must be sealed before winter cold comes and uses them to pester the household. A powerful force like the seasons or a powerful prince can use tiny fissures and imperfections in the Empire to pester the head of any house."

"Like the Prince of Yan pestering the House of Zhou?"

"Assuredly, Majesty."

"And the chinks in our walls are my disloyal uncles in Yin?"

"An astute interpretation, Majesty. So it would seem to be suggested."

"Why does he say 'we take our toes to the fields' instead of just 'we work in the fields'?"

"Commoners often do not have adequate foot coverings, Majesty, sometimes none at all. If they work in the grain fields, their toes are frequently injured and abraded. If they work in the rice paddies, there is often mud between their toes. It is a reference to their common discomforts."

"And my good uncle Ji Dan is laboring in the fields?"

"He seeks a bountiful harvest of peace and prosperity in the Empire."

"Who does he mean when he describes the 'son of the prince'?"

"It is a description of yourself, Majesty. It is a way of describing loyalty to a rightful ruler."

"It is good of the Regent to share his lyrics with us," opined Ji Song diplomatically, "but I find them exceedingly hard to understand sometimes. Why are they so indirect?"

"They edify and instruct. For a tiny moment one may see through his eyes or feel what is in his heart."

Ji Song considered the old man's explanations silently for several minutes. "I suppose he has sent me yet another lyric to be perplexed by."

"It is called 'Owl', Majesty."

"Owl? Such a vicious bird." Ji Song thought of his lessons. He remembered that owls were widely despised for devouring young chicks in the nests of other species. "Read it to me," he commanded.

Shang Gao's assistant produced the bamboo slats containing the words of Ji Dan, four tablets about two inches wide and two feet long neatly laced together along their sides with leather strips. The care with which the elderly minister handled the tablets as he read clearly exhibited his respect for things beautiful, things carefully crafted, things intellectual, or perhaps just things written down.

*Oh, owl who murdered my issue  
which I have toiled to perfect.  
Do not ravage my home also,  
which I have toiled to erect.*

*Before the looming wind storm  
I lash down this fragile nest  
tightly with a mulberry's roots.  
Who below is not impressed?*

*With talon I scratch through the rushes,  
my sore beak so harshly caressed;  
yet I dare not release for repose,  
for its safety is still unpossessed.*

*Assailed by the perilous tempest,  
dismembered and rent asunder,  
I can but wail in the torrent,  
unheard in the deafening thunder.*

In the silence that followed Shang Gao's recitation, the boy Emperor fidgeted, then asked, "Why does he write about birds, minister? Does he suggest that one should be instructed by the actions of fowl?"

"No, Majesty. The Regent here describes how he suffers at the hands of those who would dismember him or the Empire."

"You mean, again, the three supervisors."

"Yes, and the Prince of Yan through Wugeng and the Yin obdurates."

"Why does he not just say so? I do not see why he must talk of birds when he means to talk of people."

"He describes what cannot be described— what is in his heart— by describing what can be seen by everyone— the hurtful actions of a vicious owl." Shih interjected his own thoughts. "The Regent describes himself, great nephew: in the last few lines where he wails unheard in the storm."

As an expression of understanding came over his face, Ji Song turned back to Shang Gao. "Yes. I see. And the nest which the owl attacks is the House of Zhou itself." Rather than appreciate Ji Dan's lyrics as literary expression, Ji Song treated them a riddles. Now that this one had been deciphered, he instantly dismissed it. "What news of the East do you bring, minister?"

Shang Gao immediately handed the tablets to his aid and turned his attention to the business at hand. "The Regent's son Boqin has defeated the Huaiyi and Xurong tribes." There was no elaboration; none was needed. All knew the two nomadic tribes of the far eastern frontier were formidable and numerous.

"Was it a costly victory?"

"No, Majesty. Messengers reported the loss of only a company."

"Which is?"

"About fifty men."

All knew it must have been a magnificent campaign and a decisive victory. Boqin had served during the conquest under Right Officer Li, Captain of the Bolting Tigers vanguard regiment and under Lu Shang himself. If Boqin could defeat the ferocious eastern tribes with only a few regiments, the entire world, friend and foe alike, could not but marvel at the power of her arms.

Outwardly, Ji Song betrayed neither anxiety nor joy. His face was as immutable as bronze; yet, at each small gain of the Regent, fear grew inside him. He had heard or read innumerable entreaties from his other uncles that once Ji Dan's power was completely consolidated in the East he would return to Hao. He would march his vast armies into the West and strike all down who opposed him. In fact, they argued, it was only themselves who prevented the fratricidal civil war.

Ji Song idled through the day allowing the Grand Guardian to conduct the mundane affairs of governing the West as usual from his own quarters. Shang Gao had been dismissed and was allowed to proceed to the hamlet of his family. His health had begun to fail and he was ordered home by the Regent. These were not times for the frail and contemplative.

In mid afternoon the sky bruised, the temperature dipped, and winds became aggressive, jostling the trees rudely. Thunder and lightning announced the arrival of a great storm at dusk, its winds cracking tree trunks and its rains pummeling the earth mercilessly.

"We must kneel at the altar of our forefathers," urged Shih through the door of Ji Song's private chamber. His voice strained to surpass the volume of the roaring tempest outside. "Such a storm as this punishes the people harshly."

The youthful monarch, Shih, and a number of attendants hastened through the wind and rain to the prominent structure nearby within which resided the host-tablets of their deceased forbears. Torches had already been lit, for the storm's darkness penetrated everywhere.

"It is I, Ji Song," he began, kneeling directly before the tablet of his father. Go to the Lord Above, father, and urge him to calm the skies." Turning slightly, he addressed the host-tablet of his grandfather, Ji Chang. "You are the wondrous and

powerful Xibo, my grandfather. Surely if you ask him, the Lord Above will send this torrent away from our people." One after another Ji Song pleaded with his esteemed forebears, but there was no sign the fury had abated even slightly.

"We must consult the tortoise shell," advised Shih. "They will tell us what has caused Heaven's disaffection."

As attendants went to the hearth to stoke and fan the coals, Ji Song followed Shih to the subterranean cavity and with the help of another attendant retrieved to the surface the trunk within which were stored the shells, bones, and tablets—holy paraphernalia—of previous divinations and observances. Shih seized a shell and joined the others at the hearth which was radiating heat and belching smoke.

Ji Song's eye was caught by a small tablet upon which he saw the character which represented the name Ji Dan. Surprised to discover a prayer of the Regent's in the royal coffer, he held it up to the light of a tripod oil lamp and read its words. 'There is nothing the innocent little son of Fa could have done to incur the wrath of the Lord Above, it said. It is I who have given offense, so I ask the spirit of the Great River. Swallow me up this instant.'

Stunned, Ji Song turned to the divination party at the hearth. "Explain this to me," he barked holding the tablet in front of him. An attendant quickly relayed the tablet to Shih.

Shih fairly glanced at it, knowing full well it was Ji Dan's prayer to the river deity. The incident had been described to him by Shang Gao and the tablet deposited in the metal banded coffer nearly two years earlier. He briefly summarized, "The Regent prayed to the spirit during your illness two years ago. Witnesses say that he knelt in the river mud and gave up his hair and fingernails as sacrifice."

"Why have I not been told of this happening?"

"The Regent's humility is well known. There are few things that incur his anger, but discussing openly his prayers and divinations will surely raise his ire."

Ji Song then began sorting through the trunk. "How do the tablets of the Regent's divinations come to be stored here?"

"Shang Gao preserves them."

Ji Song came to a second tablet with the unmistakable character for Ji Dan on it and read:

*It is your principal descendant Ji Fa who has received the Holy Mandate and who is looked upon with reverent awe by the whole world. Help him carry the standard so that you may rest easy in its perpetuation.*

At a glance from Ji Song, Shih explained. "That one is a prayer the Regent conducted some eight years ago. Your father was gravely ill."

Ji Song read further:

*Have I not been filially pious? Am I not suited by talent and temperament to serve spiritual beings well? My older brother, having received and maintained the Holy Mandate is well suited to governing and not so well suited to servitude; therefore, I beg you to intervene with the Lord Above to let his illness fall upon me instead.*

Ji Song returned the tablet to the trunk carefully and paced about the chamber deep in thought. The fury outside receded from his consciousness as if the world's tumult were subdued by command of the Lord Above.

"Of course," he said, thinking out loud, "the Regent would demand reticence, for to do otherwise would invite criticism from the cynical and suspicious. Of course Shang Gao would deposit the tell-tale tablets in the palace coffer, for not to do so would violate generations of proper protocol. Unless ordered by the Emperor himself, none would venture to reveal the incidents when ordered to silence by the Regent. So for eight years Ji Dan's prayer to save Emperor Wu lay in the dark unnoticed. For two years Ji Dan's prayer to the river deity to protect me from harm lay inconspicuously among dozens of others." His voice went up in pitch and volume." And all the while those miserable carping brothers and manipulating Yin princes were corrupting my sensibilities, fomenting distrust for my devoted uncle." His fist landed loudly on a table.

As he stood looking at the cluttered altar of his distinguished ancestors, their various host-tablets standing in mute judgment of his youthful stupidity, his eyes began to tear.

"Summon Shang Gao back to me!" he moaned. "I have been remiss in my treatment of him. He is the loyal advisor of my devoted uncle. Send a messenger to the Regent. I, the little son of Ji Fa, request— no beg— for his urgent return."

## Chapter 34

### The Third Choice Spring, 1037 BCE

#### Hexagram 40 SHEI. Thunder above Water

*Release.* West and South are favorable; he with little to gain should retire, he with much should hurry.

*Thunder and Rain bring release from toil.* The Superior Man is magnanimous toward offenders.

6 for the bottom place. Failure to take forceful action does not signify error.

9 for the second place. Three foxes fall in the field from his single yellow arrow; righteous persistence is rewarded.

6 for the third place. Pretentious caravans invite pillagers.

9 for the fourth place. His thumb lets go clumsily so he trusts companions who come to his aid.

6 for the fifth place. The Superior Man has confidence in those less capable and withdraws.

6 for the top place. The prince's arrow pierced the hawk and he was freed from perverse men.

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Ji Dan and Lu Shang stood on a plateau overlooking the former Shang dynasty capitol of Yin in the valley of the Great River near the tributary known as the Huang. Behind them was arrayed a force of arms counting into the thousands.

"Where are the enemy forces, Lu Shang," asked Ji Dan? "We know Wugeng has enlisted no less than fifteen principalities and several tribes of savages. Yet the field appears deserted."

"The puny force of Wu Geng is cowering in the shadows of the city, I suspect, Regent. They will be loathe to take us on in the open." He pointed to the dense forests along the river bank. "The rest will be scattered in pockets here and there with their backs to the water."

"Have you and your senior officers devised an effective approach?" Ji Dan glanced at his older son, armed and ready nearby.

"We have, Regent. All is ready for your command to commence." Lu Shang was well aware of Ji Dan's preference for a peaceful approach to settling the conflict.

"Very well. May Heaven protect us."

Ji Dan acquired from an assistant standing near him a document entitled "The Great Announcement" which had been issued by courier to the princes and lords of all enfeoffed states some months before. While it was issued by the young emperor, Ji Song, he had in fact written it himself. Fratricide within the Royal House deserves more justification than when smiting a wild tribe or two. Walking out to a point visible to all the assembled soldiers, he began to read it:

*Emperor Cheng declares as follows:*

*Hear me all you Princes of many states and officers of the government: Heaven is sending calamities down on our heads. I am preoccupied with worry that I, so very young, have inherited this massive patrimony. I, just a child, must go through deep water. Like my father, I must seek a place to cross a great river of tribulation.*

*The people of Yin and some of my own house refuse to be still, and tranquility is out of reach for the good people of both the west and east. Reduced as Yin is, its prince dares to take in hand its severed line and desires to make Zhou a frontier territory again.*

*That will not happen. While some of my advisors have urged restraint, others urge aggressive action. I have obtained divine guidance from the chi stalks and will go forward to punish the obdurates. Do not be distressed; we shall prevail as our cause is just; and Heaven assists me.*

*When a deceased father has begun to build the family home, how much more important is it for the son to complete its construction. If a father has plowed the family's field, how much more important is for the son to plant and harvest the crop. The decree of Heaven is not to be changed.*

*On these accounts I embark on this expedition in the east.*

Zhou's senior officers sprang into action following Lu Shang's instructions. Drums rumbled, horses and chariots fanned out into the valley, and foot soldiers

marched in unison toward the city. Lu Shang's approach was as effective as it was simple. Chariots and horsemen would attack from the far left and right, while infantry would advance toward the center. If other forces appeared from the wooded areas close to the river, a third battalion, held in reserve, would reinforce at that location.

Unlike the city of Chong, Yin had no ramparts. Several thousand foot soldiers simply walked into the city wreaking havoc on both property and populace. In the fields and forests for miles around, Heaven's wrath descended upon the intransigent and uncooperative Yin royals and commoners alike.

During the intense, three day battle Ji Dan had not recognized the devastation which literally wiped the metropolis of Yin completely from the earth. As he stood overlooking the vast plains on both sides of the Huan River, smoke columns from the blazing city billowed high into the heavens, then were abruptly swept eastward as if by the breath of the Lord Above himself. As he looked upward at the billowing smoke, he noticed a hawk in a nearby treetop, quiet, watching him suspiciously. His penetrating gaze was riveted on Ji Dan. Suddenly he felt as if the fierce little birds eyes were the eyes of his father and other ancestors staring out at him from beyond the earth. He became uneasy at how his ancestors might judge his actions.

Messengers on foot or in chariots were rushing to and from the hill as Ji Dan and Lu Shang deftly pulled the strings of military might. There was no joy in Ji Dan's heart as he repeatedly gave the order to attack and maul the various assembled forces of the obdurate Yin citizens, some bearing the white banners of Shang, others the various colors of Eastern states, still others the Prince of Yan's mixture of white and gray. This time there was no central battle ground, but scattered skirmishes; no single concentrated Yin army to defeat, but numerous wandering regiments rampaging more or less haphazardly through the countryside. Now and then ox drawn wagons lumbered through the area collecting the dead. This time, the Zhou forces took no prisoners. There was no command to spare those who requested mercy. The blood bath went on for hours.

As the turmoil persisted, Ji Dan's resolve weakened but was continuously buttressed by Lu Shang who had never been known to waiver in resolve. "There will be no more city of Yin, Regent," observed Lu Shang; "therefore, the people must be moved elsewhere. Are they to join the officers and royalty in Luo?"

"They shall be marched to principalities on the southern and northern frontiers," said Shang Gao.

"What of those too old to travel that far or of children orphaned by this war?"

Shang Gao ventured a solution. "They may persevere under the fief of a trusted ally, perhaps your younger brother Ji Feng who has ruled the province of Kang so well since the conquest."

Lu Shang added, "Those who need not remain here because of age or health may be sent to the new eastern capitol. Also, some may have talents or knowledge which should be utilized.

While he had listened carefully, Ji Dan had been motionless with his back to the bustling headquarters. "Very well," he agreed. "The obdurate Shang citizens will be given a third choice. Those who are not needed in Luo or are too frail to be moved there will become the subjects of a new fief, Wei, to be ruled by my brother, Ji Feng. Others will remove to the original homeland of the Shang. It will be the fief



of Qi, the former Prince of Wei and brother of Zoo." Further, the territory around where the city of Yin was prominent will become the fief of Lu Shang. He is best suited of all to deal with obdurate Shang fighters who survive this battle and emerge later from hiding places in the wilds."

All realized the wisdom of the proposal. While Qi sided with Zhou consistently during the transfer of power to the new dynasty, many of the obdurate Yin still respected Qi and would submit to his rule on the frontier.

Scanning the plains, Ji Dan noticed a large detachment of chariots galloping toward them. "Shang Gao," he cried more or less over his shoulder. "Let us prepare to receive Zhou royalty."

Within minutes the Grand Guardian and ministers Nangong Kuo and Tiadian were dismounting their horses. Emperor Cheng was assisted by other assistants as he climbed down from his carriage and was hustled into the large tent serving as Lu Shang's military headquarters. With the fighting still going on about the valley, it would not be wise for the boy ruler to be paraded around in the open. Inside the large tent a myriad of officials and senior army officers bowed low to the young monarch.

"Please rise, officers of Zhou," he said with a smile. "I have waited for this day for a very long time." He turned toward the Regent. "Are the obdurate Shang all vanquished?"

"We are preparing for a final assault, Majesty, answered Lu Shang. "We require your leadership for the march through this valley to rout the last remaining fighters tomorrow."

"Splendid," said Ji Song, in a pleased tone of voice.

"Meanwhile, we have some very sad duties," said Shang Gao. "Two of the Three Supervisors, your uncles Du and Chu, were captured alive last night. The Regent is about to preside over their disposition."

"Actually," said Ji Cheng, "I am relieved that I'll not be called upon to render such judgements."

"Please be comfortable over here," said Shang Gao pointing to a bench at the side of the tent. Attendants prepared the similar small bench upon which the Regent would sit in judgment of two traitorous brothers.

Though he was inwardly a chorus of emotions and recollections, outwardly Ji Dan was stone silent as his younger brothers, Ji Du and Ji Chu, were ushered rather roughly before him. Images of their childhood escapades and brotherly competitions flickered continuously in Ji Dan's mental background. Ji Du was not the treasonous Prince of Cai, but little brother Du, only eighteen months younger but smallest of his nine siblings, Du the impetuous and mischievous whom Ji Dan and Ji Fa had rescued from countless youthful mishaps. Ji Chu was not the Prince of Huo, but little brother Chu, a dozen years younger and fragile as a dandelion puff in Ji Dan's memory.

Ji Dan had tried desperately for days to prepare himself for the task of punishing them, consulting with the shi stalks and the tortoise shells and praying, yet his resolve weakened as he looked down upon their kneeling forms.

The continuing silence proved too much for the younger Chu. Prostrate on the floor, he began groveling. "Please spare the lives of my family, brother Ji Dan. Their only offense has been obedience to my will."

"Your will has dishonored our House and disgraced our father and older brother."

"I have been ignorant and took the advice of unrighteous men."

Ji Dan looked sadly upon his pitiful brother for several minutes. Here was not the cause of the turmoil, only the same pliable little brother he had always known— not evil, simply dumb and easily led onto unhealthy paths. "You have caused great sorrow and pain to countless numbers of the little people, so it is fitting that you understand what they have endured. The Emperor Zujia ruled for over thirty years and was among the most revered by the people of Yin. He lived the life of a commoner for three years so that he might learn of their needs and discomforts and is considered among the wisest of sovereigns because of it. So also was divine Yu who was born a commoner. It is fitting that you pursue the same wisdom as Yu and Zujia; therefore, little brother you shall live the life of a commoner for at least three years. You must find your own sustenance without title, family, or wealth. At the end of your three year exile from the court, you may petition Emperor Cheng for restoration of your rank."

With a glance at the soldiers who were escorting him, he commanded, "Hold him in the stockade until the fighting subsides, then deposit him on the north side of Yin without honor or rank." After just a flick of the Regent's wrist, guards seized Ji Chu and removed him. Emperor Chang, Ji Dan, and the rest all watched silently as he was stripped of his royal garments and manhandled swiftly out of sight, completely naked.

Ji Du had remained silent and unmoved, prostrate. With Chu out of sight, Ji Dan turned his attention to the brother closest in age to himself— energetic and impulsive, often a bit impudent. His impudence had apparently evolved into treason. "Once, brother, we discussed the principles of life which contribute to prosperity and peace for all under Heaven: the Five Virtues. Now it seems you have embraced the exact opposites of the virtues. You prefer belligerence to benevolence, arrogance to propriety, ignorance to wisdom, treachery to good faith, and evil to righteousness. How can this be, my brother? Have we not been better schooled by our father and by the heritage of Zhou?"

Ji Du spoke without looking up. "After I am gone to be with our father by your murderous hand, I will observe my brother's actions toward Ji Song. All shall know then who subscribes to the virtues and who pretends to." He apparently did not even notice the young Emperor's presence in the tent.

"There is nothing in the world more important to me than to prove you wrong, brother. Our nephew will assume his rightful place on our older brother's throne, the Throne of Heaven, given to him by the Lord Above." Ji Dan stroked his chin considering. "In order to make sure you will see this, your sentence will not be death. When the gongs sound for Ji Song's coronation, you will hear them. When the gongs sound for Ji Song's wedding and for the capping ceremonies of his sons, you will hear them also. You will receive the utmost care to assure your health for the rest of your life, prolonged as much as the Lord Above will allow, so that you may hear these things and grieve over the pain and sorrow you have brought into the world by your impudence and suspicions." His emotional intensity revealed itself as Ji Dan pronounced the sentence; his anger came through his torment. "You will never be beyond hearing of the drums and gongs of the palace of

Emperor Cheng or his successors. You will be imprisoned just outside but within earshot of the palace until your natural death." At another flick of Ji Dan's wrist, soldiers seized their prisoner and he soon disappeared on the back of a speeding chariot, standing with his arms shackled and his head bowed.

"How much suffering have I caused by my weakness?" moaned Ji Dan. "How many have died because I have been too timid to confront my own disloyal kin?"

Shang Goa had come close behind him. "A message has arrived from Lord Li, Regent," he said. "He is about to engage Wugeng on the other side of the ridge not far from Shepherd's Wild."

Anger boiled up in Ji Dan immediately at hearing the name of Emperor Zoo's son, Wugeng. "We have made a few mistakes during the conquest," grumbled Ji Dan. "Allowing that profligate to continue in a position of authority was by far our worst." He felt both anger and sorrow that he had not argued forcefully against the decision at the time.

Emperor Cheng, Ji Dan, and a host of other Zhou leaders mounted their steeds or chariot coaches and rushed to join Right Officer Li at the battlefield. Li's regiments were poised to strike the somewhat shabby and enervated Yin force. Before the Yin enfilade, simultaneously valiant and pitiful, was Wugeng, son of emperor Zoo. The white rooster of Shang once again proudly aloft, if only for a brief moment of renewed glory before a final humiliation.

The royal platoon paused on a hill overlooking the battlefield. Emperor Cheng stood with Ji Dan, Lu Shang and Lord Shih. Watching Right Officer Li's and his personal guard approaching them rapidly.

"What shall I do?" asked Ji Song.

Lu Shang addressed Ji Song and his charioteer at the same time. "When Officer Li and a second chariot gets here, you should position your chariot directly to his right. The three of you will descend to positions at the fore of the Zhou force and pause there. When the drums roll, you strike out toward the Shang in front of him and the rest of Zhou's army. Everyone except the blind and stupid will know who you are."

At that, his charioteer and archer unfurled the royal Zhou banners and accoutrements: the embroidered image of Taotei in black on a large red banner and Shun's Yak tail. From the hill, the valley below was ablaze in the red banners of Zhou.

"Please explain to me, Teacher Uncle Shang, what Wugeng's tactic is?" asked Ji Cheng.

Wugeng's strategy was obvious to the skilled tactician, Officer Li, and to Ji Dan. "Wugeng will head an 'ordinary' column, a strong force, intended to penetrate my array. He hopes my array will either disperse or collapse inward toward the piercing column after which other Yin forces in reserve, an 'extra-ordinary' force, will then assault from without.

"How do we counter that?" he asked. His face showed near glee at his participation in the battle.

The correct response is well known also, to those schooled by the indomitable Lu Shang. "His tactic calls for a single extraordinary flanking maneuver," answered Officer Li, "on the side opposite the Yin reserve."

"All is ready, General," said Officer Li. At Lu Shang's head nod, the three chariots bolted down the hill toward the Zhou front line. Thousands of Zhou soldiers raised a grand chorus as their emperor joined in the fray. The front line parted in its middle so the three chariots could halt in front of the armored host facing the enemy, then closed again. A minute later, at Li's command, the drums rolled and the Zhou lines beside and behind Emperor Cheng moved forward in unison.

Officer Li had already ordered the flanking movement to begin. Dust clouds billowed up as chariots streaked in a wide circle followed by a disciplined infantry.

Li had been commander of the famed Bolting Tiger regiment in the conquest, so Ji Dan should not have been surprised by his capability. Yet he watched in fascination as Li added his own wrinkle to Lu Shang's tactic. The chariots did not attack the ordinary flank with the footmen. Instead, they continued their wide sweep to attack the Yin reserve separately. In little more than a few minutes those of Wugeng's reserve troops who were not being cut down like wheat were scattering in many directions. Then, with chariots attacking from their rear and foot soldiers assaulting them from the front and sides, it was an instant rout.

Ji Dan strained to discern the fate of Wugeng. He had last seen the waving white rooster at the battle's center. The banner was most certainly not aloft. Ji Dan had no doubt Wugeng was slain.

'It is as I believed,' he thought. 'For the Shang, brother must succeed brother; therefore, Ji Fa's placement of Wugeng at the head of the House of Shang has failed.' It was somehow unnatural, contrary to Heaven's will, though he could not fathom why. "My brother should have installed Zoo's brother Qi at Yin," he mumbled.

Shang Gao was hurrying to join Ji Dan and Lu Shang on the hill, his aged body was strained under the exertion, buffeted on a racing chariot. His clothes were in disarray, and he struggled to hide his fatigue as he pulled up beside the Regent. Ji Dan was immediately apologetic. "My old friend and advisor is far too loyal and sacrificing. I do not deserve you."

Catching his breath, Shang Gao's facial expression changed from one of physical discomfort to inner pain. "I have sad news of Ji Xian, Regent." He paused as Ji Dan turned away but continued. "His modest regiments of Yin conscripts were ineffectual, dissolving away in their first engagement."

"Who was his opponent," asked Ji Dan. He feared that one of the brothers would be scarred from having to slay an older sibling.

"It was the Lord of Chen."

For that, at least, Ji Dan was grateful, for the Lord of Chen was Yu Yufu, a commoner who rose to prominence as Xibo's potter but who possessed excellent leadership abilities. "Was his death swift?" asked Ji Dan painfully. He suddenly realized he was weak kneed and a little dizzy. He dismounted his horse and rested on a fallen tree.

"Yu Yufu reports he hanged himself after his soldiers fled but before his capture."

Ji Dan was only half surprised at his reaction: numbness, for he had been preparing himself, it seemed, for a lifetime in anticipation of the day he would order his brother's execution. By taking his own life, Ji Xian had spared Ji Dan

that most onerous of duties. Did he do so out of fear, shame, or love for Ji Dan? Ji Dan knew he would be haunted by that question for the rest of his life.

Still sitting on the fallen tree, Ji Dan heard the piercing cry of the hawk he had seen earlier and turned to watch the skillful hunter plunge from on high toward a scampering rodent, its talons, like divine wrath, seizing the helpless rat and spiriting it into a nearby shadowy grove. The mouse had been quick enough to evade the dashing fox which had been relentlessly pursuing it. Neither rat nor fox even saw the swift hawk before the bird had seized its prey. The fox stood bewildered as his meal disappeared into the leafy boughs.

'It is a sign from the Lord Above,' he thought. 'I am the relentless fox pursuing the revolting rat. Just as Officer Li can achieve new wonders on the field of battle, so can my nephew surpass previous records as Emperor Cheng. I gave the obdurate three choices and Officer Li also had a third choice in the battle with Wugeng. While I have wrestled with two choices, to challenge or not to challenge my three contentious brothers, I have ignored the third choice.'

He resolved then and there to relinquish the reins of power and, like the fox, to calmly watch another seize a sovereign's prerogatives. A strange feeling of repose overcame him. Some inner tension was relaxed; some inner anxiety was calmed.

Ji Dan turned toward his old advisor and spoke calmly. "Call for the 'little son of Ji Fa', Shang Gao, and for the Grand Guardian. The rebellion is done. We will proceed to Luo where Emperor Cheng will have his coronation. I will carry the burden of Heaven's Mandate no longer."

## Chapter 35

### No More a Younger Brother Can Do Winter, 1034 BCE

#### Hexagram 11

#### TAI.

#### Earth above Heaven

*Peace.* The mean decline while the good approach; great fortune and success.

*Heaven and Earth in communion.* A mighty ruler, exercising virtue puts Heaven and earth in harmony for the benefit of the people.

9 for the bottom place. When weeds are uprooted, much of value comes up with it.

9 for the second place. Supporting the primitive, crossing rivers without boats, advancing despite great distances, maintaining faithfulness with comrades, thus the virtuous follow the clear course to success.

9 for the third place. Returns follow every going forth, slopes follow every plain; persistence under difficulty will not lead to error, for even an eclipse is sometimes a blessing.

6 for the fourth place. Harried by obligations and kept estranged from riches, he keeps the faith.

6 for the fifth place. Giving his daughter in marriage, the Emperor maintains objectivity and thereby gains felicity in the realm.

6 for the top place. When the wall tumbles into the moat, resist the urge to fight and maintain order in the village instead. Blame is unavoidable.

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The nondescript ambassador from some nondescript state on the fringe of the Empire presented another exotic gift as his entourage did obeisance to the Son of Heaven. Ji Song as usual received the emissaries from the doorway of his modest dwelling, built in the traditional austerity of Zhou: adobe plastered or plain wood founded on stamped earth under a thatched roof. At Ji Song's threshold there was enough elevation to project a weak semblance of height.

All the while his assistants orchestrated the event, Ji Song and the Grand Guardian discussed in whispers various other concerns. "Why can I not have a large hall built," complained Ji Song, "to receive homage? I should project a royal dignity."

Shih's refusal to allow the boy's arrogance to irritate him was his greatest strength as Grand Guardian. "Respect is not gained from grand architecture but from integrity, not from an elevated opinion of one's self but from the practice of elevated virtue."

Just as accepting tribute had become the most routine of all ceremonies, discussions of the Regent had become so as well. "Why has my uncle been so taciturn of late?" Ji Song's voice betrayed a certain childishness. "The rumors of his having sinister motives have begun to circulate again."

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Shih had provided the same assurances many times. "The Regent not only prepares the new capitol for you, but also has important scholarly pursuits."

"I do not wish a new capitol. I have lived all my life in Hao. What scholarly pursuits?"

The three of them had discussed the wisdom of relocating the capitol from the remote West to a site near Mengjin at the crux of the vast Empire. In fact, Shih knew well that only construction of Chengzhou City kept his efficacious nephew out of retirement. "The Regent records on tablets ancient knowledge and the arts of divination. He also has been composing odes and music."

"I am familiar with his odes, altogether mysterious to anyone but him." It was an unfair assessment, of course. "I will be twenty years old in just two months. He has assured us many times that he will conduct my coronation before then."

"Do not be persuaded once again by pernicious rumors. I have the utmost faith Ji Dan will complete the palace in Luo, now renamed Chengzhou, as planned. The Nine Tripods of Yu already reside in your new Hall of Concord. It is the proper seat for Heaven's Throne."

As the days had gone by, Emperor Cheng bathed in a stream of tribute: hounds from a land beyond the western frontier, white pheasants from Yuechang beyond the southern frontier, even an exceedingly rare dragon from the southeastern

lowlands. Some came directly to Ji Song, while most had approached the Regent who would always dismiss them politely and send them to Hao.

As the latest emissary from far away was greeted and withdrew, an armed detachment of soldiers entered escorting the second son and close assistant of the Regent. "Majesty," he said dropping to his knees, head bowed. "The Regent has completed Chengzhou. He wishes your consent to call a general assembly of the princes there."

Ji Song's face brightened. It was the message he had been waiting for.

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On the day Ji Song departed for the new capitol, the snowfall was heavy but gentle. The grand guardian escorted him only to the edge of Hao, for the little son of Ji Fa was nearly twenty and about to ascend to Heaven's Throne while Shih was approaching 100. Even the means of his escort revealed the changing times, for while young Ji Song stood proudly in a swift war chariot, Shih lurked in the shadow of a shouldered sedan. As he watched Ji Song's extravagant caravan disappear in the distance, he felt the great weight of responsibility lift from his aged back.

"I served your son faithfully through the conquest as if he were yourself," he prayed aloud to an invisible presence. "I have devoted many years to guardianship of your grandson Ji Song. There is no more a younger brother can do than I have done, brother Chang."

Turning to the Captain of his escort, he commanded calmly, "Take me to the house of my family. We will prepare for the journey home. I have not seen Shao in so long, I don't know if I will know when I am there."

"As you wish, Lord Shih."

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Snow fell relentlessly on Ji Song's train until the last day of his trip. Right Officer Li (now a Lord by Imperial decree) followed the southern bank of the Great River, knowing if he failed to sight the new city, he would reach the Luo tributary where he would turn southward to reach Chan Creek which served the city. His precaution was unnecessary, for near noon on the sixth day they crested a hill and found themselves within a few miles of a very visible Chengzhou.

The city stood in the Tiubi heights overlooking the junction of the Great River and the River Luo to its northwest. Mount Santu stood majestic in the south. Due north was the City of Mengjin on the bank of the Great River; and beyond, on the northern horizon, was the Taihang mountain range. On Jiaru, the tallest hill of the ridge, the new palace was plainly visible throughout the valley below, its most striking feature being a fifty foot high rampart enclosing some three square miles and a palace with a blue roof.

The entire caravan came to a halt, awe struck at the power and majesty it projected. When Lord Li brought his chariot abreast of Ji Song, the youth asked, "Why is its roof blue? What kind of straw is blue?"

"It is not straw, Majesty. I have heard the Regent discuss the matter with Officer Mimou. The roof is made from clay tiles."

"The ramparts are much higher than I envisioned," added Ji Song.

"They are only a bit higher than the walls of Chong, but they encompass a very large area. Hundreds could live and work indefinitely within them. Your palace was designed to withstand a prolonged assault. No enemy in the world is strong enough to bring down the house of Zhou."

The area around Chengzhou, being near the popular river crossing of Mengjin, was heavily populated with farmers and herders who emerged from their modest houses to do obeisance to the passing boy Emperor. As the procession neared the city, crowds began to gather, for none had seen the son of the Conqueror but princes of the various states and a few commoners very near the western capitol of Hao.

Many of these people were of the House of Shang; all had been loyal subjects to the Emperor in Yin, making Ji Song particularly nervous. He had been sheltered from any crowds throughout his youth, even the adoring ones of the West. He was grateful to be surrounded by a large contingent of soldiers commanded by the famed Captain of the Bolting Tiger vanguard regiment and more grateful to finally arrive within the walls of the new Imperial Palace.

As Ji Song dismounted from his chariot coach, the Regent emerged from within the blue topped structure. "I am so happy to be in your company, nephew."

Ji Dan's familiarity was at one time a great source of comfort to the youth; but, now that he was grown, he carefully hid his irritation. "I am completely taken by surprise, uncle, at the stateliness of your achievement here."

"It is Heaven's will that is manifest here, nephew, not my own or yours."

What impressed Ji Song the most was the vast horde of ministers on the grounds. They had all stopped to bow humbly at his arrival; but upon the appearance of Ji Dan, quickly returned to their duties. From atop Jiaru Hill he could see huge military forces scattered along the two creeks, Zhien and Chan. On the opposite side of the Chan from the Imperial Palace, a small metropolis had sprung up to support the many enterprises which were the inevitable result of a sovereign's presence.

Ji Song was uncomfortably humbled, for he realized that here in Chengzhou with the Regent was the center of the Empire, not in Hao where various princes and messengers paraded in and out giving homage. Here was where the strings of government were being pulled. Not only here, he realized further, but over the past seven years, wherever the Regent happened to be.

True, he had seen Ji Dan presiding over a great assemblage at Hao just a year before and had wondered at his ability to command such respect. Yet in his heart there had been a secret jealousy and an irrational confidence. It became painfully clear to him that standing proudly accepting gifts and adoration were skills easily acquired. The skills needed to build such a great city and to properly lead this enormous empire were not so effortlessly obtained.

"I must confess to you, uncle, that I often resented your authority over me. I see now that I have felt a false pride. Heaven provided me with the Regent I needed, just as It provided my father and grandfather the sagacious advisors they needed."

"I must confess to you also, nephew, that I have on occasion felt unjustified anger at you for being young and naive and that I have tired of these heavy burdens."



Ji Song's first necessary act was a sacrifice to Heaven above his ancestors. Anxious to impress his uncle with a sovereign's capability and attentiveness to duty, Ji Song had an altar constructed in the palace where he placed the host-tablets of his father and grandfather. He deftly conducted the sacrifice of two red oxen. After the ceremony at the new altar, he orchestrated a rapid ceremony to the deities of the valleys and rivers near Chengzhou in a grove of cypress trees nearby. Lastly, he returned to Jiaru Hill inside the walls and sacrificed a lamb to the Lord Above. He asked not for wealth, power, or protection, as Ji Dan would have expected, but for wisdom and strength. Ji Dan knew at that moment that Heaven was ready at last to accept Emperor Successful on its throne.

Princes and lords from nearly two thousand states poured into Chengzhou for many days. Their fiery camps, wandering animals, and marching soldiers coated the valleys so completely that the snow was melted clean away and a formerly white countryside seemed somehow to have become early spring, wet and soft.

The Regent had had a large pavilion constructed which he named Bright Hall. It had a conical clay tile roof supported by hefty columns but no walls. Elaborately decorated, the red of Zhou was accented with rare black feathers. Exquisite carvings of geese, the symbol which replaced the white rooster of Shang since Ji Fa's conquest, stared with frozen dignity at surprising places about the structure. Under the roof was a royal dais supporting an impressively carved bench in the shape of a goose profile before a silk screen embroidered with the fearsome beast Taotei. Draped over the bench was a multicolored silk tapestry, an artifact of Zhou antiquity not displayed in public for a generation. Embroidered on the tapestry was a white rooster with one of its wings clipped yet trying vainly to fly. Its one visible eye was dark and sightless, and mysterious images seemed to be revolving senselessly around the bewildered bird. High above at the peak of the pavilion were Shun's yak tails. Bright Hall itself and its environs were a symphony in Red Zhou ribbons and bunting.

On the day of mountain-earth-dragon, the rumbling of drums and gongs sounded for the coronation. The huge gates of the Imperial City were swung open and noblemen from across the world began to stream in. One by one they marched between the south portals of the royal pavilion to present their insignia of office to the monarch on the dais. This time the monarch on the dais was not the familiar aging Regent, but a wide eyed and nervous youth. The man on Heaven's Throne was Ji Song, son of the Conqueror, now known as Emperor Cheng.

After presenting their badges and bowing humbly according to their ranks, they all took their appropriate seats in or near or some distance from the pavilion. The uncles and brothers of Emperor Cheng were closest. While the Grand Guardian was conspicuously absent, the Emperor's mother Yijiang had a place of honor on the dais but at its western extremity. There were two seats directly in front of the throne which remained unoccupied until the last princes of the Empire slowly approached. All eyes were turned on them in absolute amazement. They were Ji Dan, Prince of Lu and Lu Shang, Prince of Qi.

The two most powerful and feared men in all the world paced rhythmically from the gate across the compound into the pavilion and up to the dais. There they kowtowed before Ji Song, offering up their insignias for verification as if Ji Song would not know them, the two men perhaps most responsible for the conquest.

They did intense obeisance, gazing up to the Son of Heaven in awe and fear even as did the humblest among the vast assembly.

"Rise, Lu Shang, and take your seat among the prominent in the Empire," commanded Ji Song. "You are foremost advisor in the world, guide to my grandfather who received Heaven's Mandate, to my father who conquered Yin, and to my esteemed uncle during the Regency. Hence forward you shall be known across the entire world as Taigong, Foremost Counselor of the Court." Lu Shang rose weakly to a stoop and took one of the two most prominent seats.

"Rise also, my beloved uncle Ji Dan and do not humble yourself before me. You are the foremost scholar and minister under Heaven, the faithful son of Wen Wang, the great Xibo, and the truest brother of the Conqueror. You have protected me, the little son of Ji Fa, and hence have greatly protected the Mandate. Because you embody the essence of Zhou, its whole culture and history, you shall be known throughout the world as the Duke of Zhou itself, Zhougong. None other shall ever entertain such titles as these.

At that moment the drums and gongs again sounded a tremendous crescendo and a court attendant stepped forward bellowing, "All... bow... to the Son... of Heaven!"

And all did.

## **Epilogue**

### **None Will Ever Doubt Summer, 1031 BCE**

#### **Hexagram 33 DUN.**

#### **Heaven above Mountain**

*Withdrawal.* Advantage is gained from persistence in trivial pursuits.

*Mountain beneath the sky.* Disengagement from inferiors preserves the Superior Man's integrity.

6 for the bottom place. Utmost withdrawal brings misfortune, no goals are reachable there.

6 for the second place. Having bound the tablets with ox hide, its secrets were withheld.

9 for the third place. A yielding compelled is unfortunate for all but those supporting inordinate households.

9 for the fourth place. A strategic withdrawal has good results for Superior Men while commoners suffer.

9 for the fifth place. Withdrawal well executed has good results; righteous persistence is rewarded.

9 for the top place. Retirement, silky smooth.

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Even the funeral of the great Xibo had not drawn so many mourners. Nobles and commoners from hundreds of states from the far extremes of the Nine Regions were pouring into Feng, a rather nondescript little hamlet about halfway between Chenzhou and Hao. The buildings of Feng from a distance became tiny flecks in an ocean of tents and huts as those devoted to Zhougong flooded the valley.

It had been a little close to three years since Ji Dan had relinquished power on the twentieth birthday of his nephew. After the Regency, the young emperor wisely insisted Ji Dan continue administration of the eastern half as something of a super-prime minister. "Have you not often counseled the wisdom of finding the most virtuous and capable," challenged Emperor Cheng, "to act as my ministers and advisors? Who among us is wiser or more capable than Zhougong?" Ji Dan had argued that his advanced age prevented him from governing well, but this argument was not credible. He was but sixty-seven, while Lu Shang and Shih had served their sovereigns well into their nineties.

During these years it seemed that the deferred troubles of a lifetime pummeled the aging advisor. Shih, his uncle and lifelong friend, died soon after Ji Song's coronation. He lived barely long enough to receive the title Shaogong from Emperor Cheng. Lu Shang expired shortly after returning to his own fief of Qi. Shang Gao, whom Ji Dan had come to appreciate so much late in life, also died after a long illness. Lastly, his imprisoned older brother, Ji Xian succumbed to the hardships of incarceration in less than five years. With these deaths, Ji Dan had become the only close associate of the famed Xibo still alive.

He was lucid and vibrant to the very end, rushing to record on tablets the essence of Zhou culture. There were more instructions and knowledge to impart to the young monarch on techniques of governance than the youth could grasp in a lifetime. There were more lyrics, songs, and histories of Zhou communal memory than time to recite them. There was also a lifetime of accumulated natural observations with few interested in sharing them. Lastly, there was the guidance from the spirits revealed during divination with the yarrow-stalks which others yet to come should value. Ji Dan rushed to record it all in writing not knowing if any of it would be preserved or utilized. It was a phenomenal leap of faith to put so much of his energy and the last years of his life into the act of writing books.

Sorrow and grief so pervaded the land it seemed that Heaven itself wept as Zhougong lay on his deathbed. Seven sons, several daughters, four younger brothers, and the most prominent of the Empire crowded as closely to him as propriety allowed.

"Where is my sovereign?" he muttered at one point. "I must do obeisance to him before I join our ancestors."

"Emperor Cheng has been notified and is said to have set out for Feng from Hao several days ago," replied minister Tiadian.

"Officer Mimou," he murmured.

"I am here, Zhougong," he said tearfully. He and Mimou had developed a close friendship during the years they constructed the new capitol of Chenzhou. It was a magnificent feat of architecture, incorporating new techniques of making

stamped earth foundations and, most revolutionary, installing roofs of clay shingles instead of thatch.

"Mimou," he said softly, "continue the work after I have joined the spirits, my friend. Show them how to build glorious new cities."

"I will devote my life to it, Zhougong, as if you were here to guide me."

"Where is Boqin?" he mumbled.

"Here, father."

"You must... make the state of Lu strong enough... to defend Heaven's Son..." his voice trailed off as he drifted into unconsciousness.

With patience and humility, many of the mourners endured last, intermittent lectures from their beloved Duke: admonishments and fragments of familiar discourses to all of them. Then there were long hours of silence as he slept. The winds outside brushed across the multitudes with sighs in seeming rhythm with Ji Dan's labored breathing. To the perceptive, his struggle to function normally was his most eloquent lesson.

As the sky reddened toward the night of Zhougong's last day, word came of the Emperor's approach. The news was being whispered about the chamber when Ji Dan came suddenly awake. "Do not bury me here at Feng," he heaved painfully. "Bury me at the capitol of Chengzhou. I want the world to have no doubt I am the subject of my sovereign."

Another moment of lucidity brought the name of the Conqueror. "I have kept my promise, brother Ji Fa," he cried with surprising strength and clarity. "I have protected your little son unto his coronation." It was as if the last several years of his life had been forgotten. Another time he whispered several times the name of his oldest brother Boyikao as if the long dead sibling were nearby and might respond or as if attempting to call him back from the dead.

After another particularly long period of quiet, he suddenly moaned, "Forgive me father for the death of your son." The last word on his lips was the name Ji Xian.

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When Emperor Cheng arrived at dusk, he and his elaborate entourage had to navigate a veritable sea of mourners, many prostrate before the Regent's house, others sitting on the ground hugging themselves or others in visible grief. Even before Ji Song's grand sedan reached the house, he knew that Zhougong had died, for word coursed through the crowd like the rumble of a summer storm. Mourners had begun wailing and a shadow of sorrow was cast over the multitude. Thousands lay prostrate as Ji Song, in brilliant scarlet silks, wove through the host, his last fifty yards on foot, toward the bedside of his illustrious uncle. Perhaps it was respect and just a little fear; but as Ji Song approached the bedside, somewhere deep inside a wellspring of sadness gushed forth.

Arriving at last at Ji Dan's bedside, Ji Song was suddenly at a complete loss as to what he should do. The many lessons he had received from his uncle never included a practice exercise in mourning for his Regent. He reached out and took the hand that had guided him and the entire population of the world. Song looked into the eyes of his close relatives about the room as if they were there to advise him. All he saw was sorrow.

"He has requested to be buried in the capitol, Majesty," exclaimed Zhongdou, "so that he might prove to all his undying loyalty to the Son of Heaven."

With moistening eyes, Ji Song looked down upon Ji Dan. "It will not be necessary, beloved uncle, for none will ever doubt your loyalty. You shall lie with your father, the great Xibo and with my father Emperor Wu, the Conqueror of Yin. You shall be buried at Qishan with our most beloved ancestors to prove that I, the little son of Ji Fa, have never... ever... considered you to be a subject."

