

THE MISSING YEAR

by

Will Coxon MA

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The Missing Year

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The moon, dodging in and out of silver lined clouds, draws the eye away from the great banners of the Mongolian hoard lining the banks of The Grand Canal. The two Imperial barges displaying the banners of The Song Dynasty glide towards the eastern bank as thunder rolls in the distance. The four figures – two men and two women – stand immobile on deck. They are transfixed by the sight before them. Burning torches on tall poles aligned with the bank move with surprising speed as their bearers form two columns leading to an enormous tent some fifty metres from where the barges come to rest.

Two figures stand at the entrance to the tent, they wear outer garments of bear skins which increases their size to super human proportions.

The four figures disembark from the barge and make their way slowly between the columns. The men in front with the women behind. The robes of the men flash purple in the mixed light of moon and torch. The white of the women's robes shimmer red and silver.

The silent hoard either side look more animal than men. Their pungent smell of animal fat only increasing the impression of wild creatures having come to dine.

The silky elegance of the envoys presents a stark contrast to their host's brutish presence. They make a simple bow to the horizontal.

Their hosts stand to either side and show them in.

Civilization surrounded by barbarians; was there ever a more apt metaphor than this Image.

Chapter 1

Revolution (21)

The Song Dynasty

1241 C.E.

7th Day of the 1st Moon

Midnight

== ==
===== Lake
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== == Fire
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THE IMAGE

Fire in the Lake:

The Image of REVOLUTION.

The old order resists the necessary change.

As such the moment has arrived where violent conflict is inevitable.

*

“What Heaven to man is called human nature. To follow our nature is called the Way. Cultivating the Way is called education. The Way cannot be separated from us for a moment. What can be separated from us is not the Way. Therefore the superior man is cautious over what he does not see and apprehensive over what he does not hear. There is nothing more visible than what is hidden and nothing more manifest than what is subtle. Therefore the superior man is watchful over himself when he is alone.

Before the feelings of pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy are aroused it is called equilibrium. When these feelings are aroused and each and all attain due measure and degree, it is called harmony. Equilibrium is the great foundation of the world, and harmony its universal path. When equilibrium and harmony are realized to the highest degree, Heaven and Earth will attain their proper order and all things will flourish.”

From the Doctrine of the Mean. Section 1.

*

Kublai Khan at the age of 26 is a man at his physical peak. He stands next to Kadai Khan his 36 year old cousin and ruler of the Eastern Province of Northern China. They watch, unseen, the Chinese Envoy through hanging drapes that divide up the tent.

Kadai with a humorous twist to his words. ‘Like lambs to the slaughter. They behave in all innocence as if they were at a family reunion. Yet, dear cousin, we have before us the very best that the Song have to offer.’

‘The men look like women and the women look like ... Goddesses from some divine Heaven.’ Kublai wonders his thoughts aloud.

‘We must not be taken in by appearances.’ Kadai changes tone to something far more serious. ‘The tall one is Zhen Shi, a former Governor of Yunnan Province and a man who repulsed all incursions by our Tibetan brothers through the mountains that separate those regions. His chubby associate is Shao Bao a favourite of Lizong and supposedly a creative genius. He is a direct descendant of Shao Yong one of the philosophers of Daoxue, which is now state orthodoxy in regard to their Confucian beliefs. They may not look like men in our eyes but it would be foolish to underestimate their potential.’

‘Their potential for making mischief?’

‘Precisely.’ Kadai answers, pleased at his cousin’s recognition of the situation. ‘They are trouble whichever way

you look at it. However, they are not expecting the news you have brought. That should put an axel through their spokes.'

The two men look at each other and smile before Kublai states.

'Shall we greet our noble Envoy before ruining their supper?'

'Then we shall see which way the fox will run.'

They laugh before entering.

'Welcome.' Kadai exclaims with some force.

The envoy and his colleagues raise as one and bow.

'Come, let us not stand on ceremony. First let me introduce my cousin and grandson of the Great Khan himself. This is Kublai.'

The envoy and his colleagues bow once more.

'Sit, sit.' He offers his hand as direction before turning and clapping his hands together to summon the servants.

Once all are seated, Shi breaks what could have become an awkward silence. 'I trust the Great Khan, Ogedei, is well?' He addresses this to Kublai.

Kublai bursts out laughing. 'As well as can be expected ... for a man who is dead.'

Kadai can see the confusion on Shi's face. 'Excuse my cousin, Zhen Shi, he has only just arrived after a long journey and has his emotions mixed.' He can see this explanation is not sufficient and continues. 'Ogedei is indeed dead. So I am afraid your journey has been wasted. Your request for a meeting to normalize the relationship between our two great Empires must now be abandoned until a new Great Khan is elected.'

Shi is taken aback but does not let it show. 'I offer the condolences of the Emperor Lizong. Which I know he would expect me to offer. I would also like to offer mine and my colleagues condolences at this unhappy news.'

Kublai, now in a more sober frame of mind, raises his cup. 'To my uncle, Ogedei.'

They all follow Kublai's action as he stands and drains his cup. 'He was the best of men, aye, and the worst. Let the grass grow long over his homeland.'

Kadai adds. 'And let his memory long remain with us.'

The envoy and his colleagues are lost for words. Draining their silver cups and following the Mongolians as they retake their seats they share a silent moment with each other.

Four men enter carrying on their shoulders, a silver plate a metre and a half across on. The mountain of food on the plate consists of rice as a means of separating the various vegetables and meats that protrude from the sides. Ducks, partridge, pheasants and legs of lamb each cooked in distinctive ways are delivered as one dish consisting of many.

Kadai and Kublai get stuck in by literally sticking their arms into the mountain up to their elbows. The slow cooked mutton is the prize at the mountain's centre that they search for. Retrieving fist full lumps they pass these to their honoured guests.

Amongst the Chinese only Bao takes these disintegrating chunks of flesh with relish. Stuffing his mouth full and allowing the fatty juice to run down his cheeks he imitates the two Mongolians who seem to take pride in allowing their shirts to become saturated.

'What a delicious combination of flavours.' Bao exclaims through a half filled mouth. Several shreds of flesh fall down his purple robes bringing smiles from his Mongolian hosts.

'Perhaps you were a Mongolian in a previous life.' Jokes Kublai.

'It would explain a lot.' Says Tai with a slightly sarcastic tone. In contrast she delicately strips segments before dropping them into her mouth with an up turned head.

'Are you all Buddhists?' Kadai addresses Shi.

'Confucians with Buddhist leanings.' He replies.

'And my sister and I are Buddhists with Confucian leanings.' Says Ling-Ling with just a little too much force. This brings an embarrassed smile to Shi's face but smiles of pleasure from the Mongolians.

'And what are you?' Asks Tai with sincerity.

Kadai looks to Kublai for him to answer.

Kublai takes his time before he answers. 'Buddhist, Moslem and even Confucian. It is all the same to us.'

'We have our own traditions guided by shamans.' Adds Kadai.

'And a Mongolian Heaven, if my studies are correct.' Bao looks to Kublai for confirmation.

'A Mongolian Heaven that has ordained that we Mongolians should bring the peoples of the world into one family.'

'A noble aspiration.' Bao comes back. 'It would end warfare for ever and bring in an age of peace.' Bao says with what sounds like sincerity. He continues in the same vein while stuffing his mouth full. 'A great metaphor for this would have to be the "ridge-pole shield". That one single device holds together the support poles at just the right angle to enable the tent to stay upright.'

Kublai and Kadai look up to the "ridge-pole shield" at the apex of the tent. They are soon followed by Shi, Ling-Ling and Tai but not Bao who is enjoying his slow cooked mutton with a ravenous display of greed. He continues as if giving a lecture, albeit one that is filled with the soft tones of a mouth coated with mutton fat. 'The one you are looking at is typical of the four support pole tent. As you can see it is in the shape of a cross and that is because it is made from a tree with two large branches that has been split down the middle. The rounded outside of the tree and its branches has been smoothed to perfection so that the inner lining of the tent doesn't snag. Once this is in place the outer water proof covering of animal skins can be pulled over with ease. A quite brilliant construction and one that is totally dependent on the "ridge-pole shield". It is therefore an excellent metaphor for Genghis Khan's desire for a unified world under the tutelage of Mongolia. Don't you think?'

Bao who hasn't looked up from his mutton now has all eyes on him.

Kublai is thinking: how do you know this? But says. 'It is an excellent observation.'

Kadai is thinking: Kublai has been given an excellent lesson in just how clever these Chinese can be. But says. 'A metaphor worthy of Mencius.'

'I'm sorry cousin but I don't know who Mencius is?'

'Perhaps Zhen Shi can help me here?' Says Kadai with the certainty of inevitability.

'Mencius was the greatest exponent of Confucianism. He lived sixteen hundred years ago during the warring states period of Chinese history. Much of what we Chinese call *this culture of*

ours is down to him. A great man and a great philosopher in his own right.'

Kublai who suffers the arrogance of youth delivers the Mongolian philosophy with brashness. 'Might is always right. That is the only philosophy we Mongolians need.'

Bao chokes and spits out. 'I think I have a piece of gristle stuck in my throat.'

Tai slaps him on the back with some force until he brings out an entire mouthful of mutton. 'If you weren't such a pig you wouldn't suffer so much when you eat.' She says this as if chiding a child.

'Thank you, my moonbeam of domestic bliss.'

They all laugh, including Kublai.

Shi grabs the moment. 'We had hoped, after conducting our envoy's duties, to ask a personal favour. The North of China has long been out of bounds to us Confucians and it would be a great privilege if we could visit the birth place of the great sage and perhaps some of the places he made famous by his teachings.'

'Quiu in Shantung Province?' Asks Kadai as a means of clarification.

'Indeed.'

Kadai looks to Kublai who raises his eyebrows. 'We would have to discuss this before giving our permission.'

'Of course.'

'The route to the northeast goes through bandit country. So you would need protection.' Says Kadai.

'And we would be more than willing to pay for such protection from a force of your men.' Shi comes straight back.

'Let us leave this till tomorrow. I'm sure you must be tired after your journey and will seek your beds tonight with some gratitude.'

'Indeed.' Says Shi with finality.

Thanks and gratitude are dispensed with in large proportions and the envoy and his entourage are soon walking between the torches back down to their barge.

Kublai and Kadai watch their progress from the entrance to the tent.

'So what do you think now of our envoy and his family of friends?' Asks Kadai with a smile on his face.

'The Librarian has excellent observational skills and has obviously studied our Mongolian ways. One would expect that Zhen Shi is also well informed in these matters. As for their women, they are far less subservient than I was led to believe.'

'And what of their request to visit Shantung Province?'

Kublai places a hand on Kadai's neck and squeezes it with affection. 'A pilgrimage of sorts or a chance to make mischief?'

'I'd wager a chance to make mischief.'

'Then it is settled. We must allow them their pilgrimage so we can best understand their subterfuge.' Says Kublai with a smile. 'And, dear cousin, I will accompany them so that they won't get lost.'

'An excellent idea. You will, of course take your own bodyguard, and I will provide you with a further one hundred men. The bandits in the region are daring and very mobile.'

'This visit has turned out to be more enjoyable than I could have possibly have imagined.'

'Let's hope it remains that way.' Says Kadai with a sense of foreboding.

The cousins share a moment.

*

The envoy and his entourage arrive in the central reception room of the barge. It is narrow through circumstance; the long seats that face each other across a low table are barely three metres from each other providing an intimate space.

Shi and Ling-Ling sit on one side with Bao and Tai on the other. They sit for a moment in silence until Ling-Ling cannot hold it in any longer, bursting out into uncontrolled laughter. This sets off the rest. If not with such body shaking contortion but at least with the same amount of enthusiasm.

'The ridge pole shield. Under Heaven and Earth where did you get that nonsense from?' Asks Ling-Ling once she has recovered somewhat.

'It is amazing what you can find in the Imperial Library.'

Answers Bao in good humour.

'I do believe it has turned the trick. The young Kublai could not take his eyes off Bao after that. I wager we will have a bodyguard led by the grandson of the Great Khan himself.' Says Shi with obvious delight.

'We should be careful for what we wish for.' Says Tai with just the right amount of seriousness to reduce the laughter to more reasonable proportions. 'If our mission goes wrong I fear he could be extremely vindictive.'

'His arrogance and self-importance would see to that.' Bao echoes Tai's sentiment exactly in tone.

The laughter subsides altogether.

'Wine.' Shouts Bao, then in reduced tones. 'Let us remove the taste of the barbarian from our mouths.'

A servant enters and delivers four cups of the finest rice wine. These are consumed in one and refilled from a large highly decorated ceramic wine flask. The servant retreats before they start talking again.

'This is the last opportunity for our good wives to change their minds about accompanying us on what could easily be a journey into darkness.' Shi says with a strong compulsion in the direction of Tai. 'You have two wonderful children. Would it not be wrong to deprive them of both parents?'

'If our parents were less capable you might have a point. But as our parents would bring them up as they have brought us up then we have little to fear for their future.' Says Tai while looking at Bao.

'Indulged to the point of stupidity. Did you know that Tai's father would warm his daughter's shoes before he would let her put them on? And that in the height of summer.' Jokes Bao.

'A small indulgence to assert his love for his daughter. Just like any man should do.' She stops for a moment before continuing with a more confrontational tone. 'And would you listen to whom speaks. A man who was not just indulged by his parents but by three dotting sisters. What say you Ling-Ling?'

'It is true that my dear brother was brought up in smothering love. Yet it all found its way to me via him. How could I be the way I am if it was not so.' Says Ling-Ling with affection before turning to Shi. 'You have your answer, for neither Tai nor myself, would miss this adventure even if it brings reincarnation ahead of its time.'

'Then it is settled. We will ride out together and face our destiny.' Says Shi in coherence with the others.

*

Tai slides the window just a fraction so that she can see out. What she can make out in the pre-dawn light is Shi engaged in conversation with Kublai and Kadai.

Shi speaks in the authoritative tones of his position as envoy. 'Lizong, our noble Emperor, wanted to assure the Great Khan of our sincerity by offering these gifts. If you will follow me to the second barge I will present them to you now.'

The three walk off in the direction of the other barge and Tai closes the window.

She looks down at Bao, fast asleep, and then shouts in his ear. 'You are neglecting your duty, assistant envoy.'

Bao groans then slowly lifts an arm and makes a waving motion with his hand. 'Shi takes care of all the ceremony. He'd rather I wasn't there as it needs the official touch that he's so good at and which I am not. So go back to sleep.'

Tai thinks for a moment. 'So what are your duties as assistant envoy?'

'Thinking.'

'Thinking?'

'Thinking.'

'And, by all under Heaven, how is it possible for you to think when you are asleep?'

Tai has engaged his brain and sleep heads out over the horizon of consciousness like a misty dragon. He rolls over to face his tormentor who is kneeling next to him on the bed. 'Golden orb of my life, you are without doubt, a perfect duplicate of my dear sister Ling-Ling, who, due to her extravagant nature, was a permanent annoyance in regard to my sleep.'

'Ling-Ling has already informed me of your deep affection for sloth.'

'Sloth?'

'Have you now gone deaf? Or are you impersonating me in the same manner those jungle birds have such a gift for?'

Bao runs his hand up Tai's body, only for her to slap it away. 'We both know what that leads to.'

'Precisely. An early morning tumble will prepare us both perfectly for another visit to the land of forgetfulness.'

'Bao, you know how thin the walls are on these barges. Do you want the barbarians listening to our love making?'

'Perhaps we can educate our Mongolian friends in the fine art of the pillow.' He changes tone as he changes tack. 'Besides, these walls are not that thin.' He tries to pull her down on top of him but her superior resolve defeats him.

'Listen. You can hear Shi's voice in the next barge.'

They stop to listen.

*

Shi is standing a third of the way down the main room of the barge. It has been laid out with hip high tables on both sides, each covered with the finest silk and gold brocade. On top of these stand all of the gifts Lizong had sent to, Ogedei, as the Great Khan; unfortunately now beyond receiving them.

The two Mongolians are impressed. Not by the monetary value of the gifts; these were men who had taken their share of wealth from many conquests. This was an impression made from the fine workmanship and artistry of the gifts. Down one side are jewellery in gold and silver set with precious stones cut to perfection. Down the other side and even more impressive are ceramics of the finest quality.

It is to these that both Kadai and Kublai turn their attention.

Kadai picks one out of its protective box and holds it up for Kublai to admire. 'Look at this glaze. See how the glaze is cracked uniformly all over except on these panels in the overlaid pattern. Here the glaze is un-cracked. Yet it is the same glaze.' He turns to Shi. 'How was this effect achieved?'

'How indeed. The artists keep their skills secret, leaving us all to wonder at their great art.'

'Can you not force them to divulge their secrets?' Says Kublai with a tone of incomprehension.

'If we were to do that, why would they bother to spend years experimenting with new techniques?' Says Shi in mystification.

'Why indeed.' Says Kadai in full comprehension.

*

'All I can hear is mumbling.' Says Bao.

'I can even pick out individual words.' Says Tai with annoyance. 'That's how thin these walls are.'

Bao slips out of bed then slips out of his night attire and dresses at speed. 'I will pick up my brush and record these events for the benefit of our Emperor.' He says, just a little miffed.

He is as good as his word, and by the time Tai has seen to her toilet and dressed, she finds him hard at work writing in a blank-paged book. She undoes his topknot and combs out his hair, re-knotting it with practiced skill, while he carries on regardless.

The voices can now be heard getting louder as they get nearer. A knock on the door has Tai open it and bowing. Shi, Kadai and Kublai enter.

Bao rises and bows. 'Forgive me. I promised the Son of Heaven that I would record our journey for his delectation.' He shows them the seats opposite. Soon all three are sitting opposite from where Bao works with his wife sitting next to him.

'May I record here, that you have acquiesced to our request for a pilgrimage to the Confucian heartland?' Asks Bao in hope.

'Indeed. And what is more, Kublai has agreed to accompany you.' Says Kadai with pleasure.

'Excellent.' Says Bao with just a touch too much emphasis.

'Will your good wives accompany us?' Says Kublai while looking on Tai's beauty.

'He would be lost without me.' She jokes. They laugh.

'Will you need carriages?'

'We ride as men do. A good horse is all I ask for.'

'Of these we have many. You may have your pick.'

'Then when shall we leave?'

'Tomorrow at dawn.'

'So be it.' Says Kadai. 'I wish I had time to join you.'

'Surely you can join us at some stage?' Asks Shi with genuine enthusiasm.

Kadai thinks for only a moment. 'Perhaps I will.'

There is now much good humour in this small party of enemies.

*

Kadai sits on his horse atop the embankment looking down at the column below. Kublai's ten man bodyguard heads up the column in twos. Behind them comes Shi and Bao and behind them Ling-Ling and Tai. The full one hundred man squadron in fours comes next and bringing up the rear forty pack animals laden with everything required to make this an independent unit if need be.

Kublai and the Captain of his bodyguard, Keshik, join Kadai. They are carrying furs.

'Moon-bear skins for the men and silver fox for their wives, I thought was appropriate. How say you?' Kublai holds them up for Kadai to see.

'An excellent choice. That they did not come prepared for the cold of the north east perhaps means they were not expecting for us to give permission for this pilgrimage.'

'Perhaps. Or perhaps they are not as soft as we have thought.'

'Keep me informed of your progress and stay well to the west of the Liagqu hills which are filled with bandit groups. My Captain, Asutai, will show you the best route to follow. He is an excellent warrior and a man you can depend upon in exceptional circumstances.'

'Till we meet again, may the great sky of the Mongolian homelands reach out to protect you, dear cousin.' Says Kublai with strength.

'And with you, Kublai.'

Kublai and Keshik descend to where the envoy and his entourage sit waiting. 'Take these for the journey. Kadai insists.' They deliver the skins then ride up to the front of the column.

Asutai rides from the baggage train along the columns of fours and then turns up to join Kadai. 'Have you any further orders Kadai?'

'Guard Kublai's back. He must be your number one priority throughout this expedition. One day he will be the Great Khan and we must make sure that is his destiny. He has the vision of his grandfather, Genghis, and the genius to bring the vision to life. For those of us that are true believers there is only one man that can bring it about and that man is Kublai.' He changes tone to something far more dark. 'These Han Chinese are dangerous. Kublai suspects it but I can feel it in my bones.'

'They are surrounded by our men and have little in the way of weapons. And even if they had, I doubt they would know how to use them. They remind me of children. Filled with delight to be on a great journey.'

'A good observation. Of fear they have none. Not even anxiety. Put yourself in their position. Would you not be nervous?'

After a while looking down to where the Han Envoy and his entourage are sharing a joke about their new attire, Asutai turns back to Kadai. 'Perhaps they know something we don't.'

'Find out what it is and I will promote you to general.'

A big smile covers Asutai's face. 'Let it be so.'

He turns his horse and rides down to join his men.

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

The time is not yet right for Revolution.

The superior man prepares himself for the coming struggle.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

In times of Revolution

The superior man gives guidelines

That are easily recognizable by the people.

These accord with The Mandate of Heaven bringing

Great success.

Changing Line at the top means:

Even a successful revolution cannot achieve everything at once.

The people must be satisfied with what is attainable

And not with what is desirable.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

The Wanderer (32)

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== == **Fire**

=====

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== == **Mountain**

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THE IMAGE

Fire rises from the Mountain:

The Image of THE WANDERER.

Fire here represents the infinite spirit

On its journey to the finite perfect forms of

The myriad things.

Chapter 2

The Ting (15)

The Song Dynasty

1059 C.E.

1st Day of the 8th Moon

Midmorning

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=====
==  ==  Fire
=====
=====
=====  Wind
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THE IMAGE

Fire over Wood/Wind:

The Image of THE TING.

Thus the superior man chooses the path of the sage.

Who can doubt, that with perseverance,

What follows can only be

Supreme success.

*

“Confucius said, ‘Shen the Sage-Emperor’, was indeed a man of great wisdom! He loved to question others and examine their words, however ordinary. He concealed what was bad in them and displayed what was good. He took hold of their two extremes, took the mean between them, and applied it in his dealings with the people. This was how he became Shen the Sage-Emperor.”

From the Doctrine of the Mean. Section 6.

*

She stands in the doorway looking at her husband, Shao Yong, who is writing with firm concentration. A mixture of love and pride and concern and annoyance sparring for control of her thoughts. Until, finally, a winner of sorts. ‘The servants are away attending a funeral. I can’t leave the house because of the children, and that leaves you.’

‘A moment to finish this column.’ He says in all reasonableness.

She quietly fumes.

He finishes and washes his brush in a large ceramic bowl with a silver rim that sits on the table next to his manuscript. He twists on the large bench he is sitting on cross-legged and faces her. It is not a pleasant sight to his eye. The face is pleasant enough, its expression is not. He knows this expression well, it demands acquiescence. But for what purpose. He gets up and approaches her placing his hands on her shoulders. ‘Mistress Nameless I am at your disposal.’

She recognizes the smile. The smile of the dutiful husband. The smile of reasonableness. The smile that annoys her, for it gives her little reason to exercise her anger. ‘You will away into Loyang and collect the fabrics from Master Feng, so that I can make myself presentable to your friends.’

‘Our friends.’ He corrects.

‘Your friends. Would they visit me if you were not my husband?’

'I think what you meant to say was: would they visit my home if you were not my wife.'

'Same thing.'

'Actually, I got that wrong, it should have been: would they visit my home if you were not my husband.'

'I do not care! Will you go to Master Feng and collect the fabric?' She loses control by raising her voice.

'I will away this very moment. Would you like me to bring you back something to sweeten your temper?' He smiles benevolently.

The eyes narrow to slits. The fists clench. Then she says through clenched teeth. 'Poison. Bring me back poison.'

'Rats in the kitchen?' Yong exclaims with fake surprise.

'Rats? Rats?' She shakes with rage and then breaks down in tears. 'Rats.'

He pulls her towards him and holds her till she stops struggling and her weeping subsides.

'There, there. We must not let those naughty rats get us down.'

She breaks out into manic laughter. 'Will you please just go.'

He kisses her on the forehead. 'Mistress Nameless, I will.' And with that he is gone.

*

Outside, he leaves the courtyard and takes the track towards town. He smiles at the thought of his wife. A woman that he has become very fond of over the years and thinking of his recent bad behaviour towards her, he resolves to make amends by buying her a present.

He is still engaged in wondering what kind of present would be suitable for a long suffering wife, who, is not part of his scholarly world, and who, is therefore, often a stranger in her own home, when he comes across farmer, Ham Pi, eyeing up his cart that has just shed a wheel.

He joins the farmer. They stare at the cart. They stare at the wheel. They stare at the hemp sacks filled with wheat.

'It will have to be unloaded before the wheel can be replaced.' Says the farmer in a matter of fact manner.

'Indeed.' Says Yong in the same manner. 'I will give you a hand.'

Farmer Pi looks to the sky. Yong looks to the sky. The sky is filled with a heavy blanket of folding grey shades.

'Do you see that barn over there?' Pi points to a farm building some one hundred and fifty metres away.

'Indeed.'

'Will you help me get these sacks of wheat to the safety of its eves before the coming rain ruins the lot?'

'We should hurry. I can already feel bird spit on my skin.' Says Yong with some concern.

Pi lifts a sack spilt from the cart onto Yong's back then takes one from the cart onto his own back, and they set off across the field. It is tiresome work where frequent rests must be taken. It is well past midday before they have finished. And just in time as the threatening rain comes down in sheets.

Shao Yong smiles at a job well done. 'What good fortune.'

'Indeed, Master Shao.' Says farmer Pi with gratitude lacing his tone. 'You must be thirsty after all that work. Let me get you some refreshment.'

Pi wanders across to where there are several vats of wheat beer in various stages of fermentation. Using a wooden ladle he scoops out wine from one vat and pours it into two wooden cups. Handing one to Yong he downs the other in one.

Yong follows suit giving an involuntary shiver on completion. 'It is a little green for my taste, farmer Pi.'

'Indeed. But it quenches the thirst far better than a more mature brew. Let us now try a fully aged brew.' Pi wanders back to the vats and repeats the exercise.

They drain their cups in one bringing smiles to both their faces.

'Now try this one.' Says farmer Pi with just a touch of pride lacing his tone.

The third vat proves to be a good deal smoother and after downing their cups in one, from the other vats, from this one they sip and savour, making noises of satisfaction as they proceed.

'I have something special, that you really must try.' Pi says with a distinctly conspiratorial tone.

Having had his cup refilled he sips in great anticipation. 'Ah well, that is indeed the finest of them all, smooth and strong too.' Says Yong with pleasure. 'You must let me buy some. If you have enough to spare.'

'Do not be so hasty. I have something very special that you must try.' Says Pi with a strange light in his eye.

Yong's eyebrows visit his hairline. 'A long aged brew?'

'Indeed, and one that is made from a rare variety of cereal. I have laid down a few fields so that I can have a large quantity for sale. All in the fullness of time, you understand.'

'What a man you are, farmer Pi.' Says Yong with admiration.

'As you are my neighbour, and I trust, my friend, I will tell you how I came by this good fortune. Now give me your cup so that you can savour its delights as I recount the story.'

Yong drains the last and hands his cup to Pi. The farmer disappears into the adjacent room and returns with filled cups.

Yong sips this latest brew and is immediately captivated. 'Where does such a cereal come from that produces such a wonder?'

Farmer Pi settles himself on one of the sacks they have just rescued from the rain. 'I had cause to visit the riverside market at Mengjin, where I met a Tibetan selling rare herbs from his homeland. I asked him if he had a concoction that would act to reduce my fatigue; it is a long journey from Loyang to Mengjin, as I'm sure you know. He was most obliging and gave me a small round ball of compressed herbs. Because I had nothing to wash it down with, he handed me a small leather flask for just such a purpose. It was this very wine that we now partake of.'

'Fortune and chance are such good bedfellows.' Says Yong with certainty.

'Indeed. But he would not let me buy the contents of the flask as it was all he had left. Instead he said to me: Buy this small sack of grain for the same price and you can brew your own. Now he had a kindly face. Well-worn from the harsh climate of that country he came from but there was strength in

its features. Had he been unkind then those features would have revelled in portraying a mean disposition. There was none of it. Instead, the kindness shone through like the sun sometimes does in a thunder storm.'

'The kindness of faces.' Muses Yong with not a little satisfaction.

'Indeed. And so it was that I bought that sack that was filled with a cereal of what he called, sampa. Whatever that is.' Says Pi with mystification. 'I was a little perturbed when it finally gave way to seed because there were so few seeds on each stalk. However, I had not needed to worry as it produced the very brew that you now drink.'

'Chance and the kindness of faces leads to good fortune. There is a principle in that combination of facts and a general principle at that.' Says Yong with insight.

'I would not know, not having your great mind Master Shao.' He gets up and bows to Yong and Yong gets up and bows in return.

'Let me refill your cup.' Says farmer Pi with pleasure.

'You will not refill his cup nor your own. Not, at least, until you have brought horse and cart into the stable.' The stern voice emanates from a woman standing in the doorway.

Pi groans. 'We have an honoured guest dear wife. Is this not our neighbour, the great scholar, Shao Yong? Friend of the old Prime Minister, Ssu-ma Kuang, and also of the Mayor of Loyang.'

Pi's wife turns ashen as the blood drains from her face. But she soon recovers. 'Are you trying to disgrace us? You would have Master Shao act like a common man, humping sacks of grain like a pack animal.'

'It is I who should be thanking farmer Pi.' Says Yong. 'My wife is always telling me that I should take more exercise for the benefit of my health. And what has your good husband provided me with, but exercise for my body, and still more, exercise for my mind. And all of this washed down with a remarkable wine of the very best quality.'

She doesn't know what to say and so bows. Then flees.

Farmer Pi and Yong laugh in great measure.

'She's a good woman in her heart. It is not an easy life being a farmer's wife and so I indulge her lack of respect.'

'You and I both. My wife has to suffer the scholar's life and all his scholar friends as well. It is hard for a woman of little education.'

'Let me fill that cup.'

And the cup was filled and refilled until the light drained from the sky. Then they parted company.

*

Yong enters his courtyard deep in thought. The kindness of faces and chance and the good fortune they bring still playing in his mind.

'Where is my fabric?' Comes the voice from Mistress Nameless standing in the door way. It is a voice in pain.

Yong is wakened as if from a dream. He rushes across to her but she pushes him away backing into the house.

'Oh good wife. It was circumstance. Farmer Pi ...'

She cuts him off. 'I can smell the circumstance on your breath. Wicked man.'

He goes to hold her but trips and they both end up on the floor. 'If you would just let me explain.'

She struggles in fury and it is all he can do to hold her.

'You leave me little alternative. I will be leaving in three days' time.'

The struggling stops. She looks deep into his eyes. 'Leaving. Why are you leaving?'

'I have been planning this journey for some time. And knowing how upset you would be I have delayed telling you until ... well ... until now.'

She knows her husband well and can tell he is speaking the truth. 'I am not a bad wife Yong. Please don't leave me. And what of our children?'

'I will be returning. Fear not, good wife. Perhaps the journey will take a year, perhaps a little more. I will leave you well provisioned and I have asked my friends to look out for you while I am gone.'

'But where do you go?'

'In the west a little further than Ch'ang and in the east as far as the East China sea. '

'There are robbers and bandits and ... and barbarians that will surely kill you.'

'They will not. For I will tell them: Mistress Nameless, is my wife and she will skin you alive if you do.'

'You would joke about your own death?' She looks on him with a combination of pity and horror.

'What else can I do, when you are so unreasonable.' He says, more in hope than expectation.

He is right. For now she attacks him with her fists and he has to take several blows before he restrains those mean instruments of pain. In the middle of this violent confrontation the servants come back from the funeral and at first stand around gawping with confusion. Until, Mistress Nameless turns her fury on them. 'I will beat you and beat you until you bleed to death. Can't you see that I am busy discussing things with your Master?'

The servants flee having felt the sting of her hand on more than one occasion. The fury passes and she collapses back into sorrow. 'Am I such a bad wife that I deserve such a fate?' Her tears drip from her chin and soak into her garment. 'Do I not beat the servants when they need beating? Do I not tend to your friends with civility? Do I not love and protect your children? Do I not love you and obey your every command?'

'You are the very best a man can expect from a wife.' Says Yong with as much sincerity as he can muster. He raises her face and dries it with his sleeve. He looks on the face and is glad to find, even through its contorted features, that he can define kindness in its make-up. His heart melts and he kisses her full on the mouth.

*

Three days pass in oscillation between misery and anger. She stands with her children attached to her robes in stoic acceptance. The servants weep for her. The household has all turned out to see their Master go to his death in far off lands. Where villains cast straws to see who will get the pleasure of killing this fool.

He walks out of the courtyard carrying only a single bag slung over his shoulder and a short staff. He doesn't look back but strides out with purpose.

He avoids Loyang and skirts its confines heading north to Mengjin. Slowly the misery his wife has recently inflicted upon him begins to lift. The early summer air has new scents brought to him on a fresh breeze. Long before he reaches the river he can smell its potent aroma. This he recognizes from his memories as a student. The first glimpse of the Yellow River sets his heart free and he increases his pace as if he did not hurry he would miss its departure.

He is not too old. He tells himself that at forty eight he is still a man. A man easily capable of making such a journey. Had he not made many journeys of this nature when searching out teachers for his education? Those memories now come back uninvited but well received.

His father, Shao Ku, had been his teacher up until he was seventeen. His father, Yong came to best described him, as an independent Confucian philosopher with Taoist leanings, had taught the village students the classics and made just enough to make a living for his family. When possible he retreated to the mountains to commune with nature in solitude; an essential part of any Taoist's life.

Yong followed in his father and grandfather's tradition of scholarly independence. Yong had been taught to read and write from an early age and as a consequence it had become part of his own nature. A blessing.

Once Yong could marshal his own thoughts on paper and had learned all his father could offer in terms of knowledge, he was encouraged to seek out teachers in areas of knowledge that appealed to his young mind.

So it was that he had took to the wanderer's life. Searching for knowledge from whom ever was willing to give it. His sincerity in this regard stood him well. None had ever turned him away even though he had little money to offer. After ten years he was already known for his pursuit of knowledge and increasingly for knowledge itself.

Having taken the advice, The Great I, had to offer on the Wanderer, that is: Fire does not linger in one place but travels on to new fuel. His spirit consumed whatever knowledge he came across before moving on to fresh ideas and new interpretations. This movement he created in the world by spirit's desire for knowledge was mirrored in his actual bodily movement through time and space.

He felt this now. A thirst unquenched. The closer he came to the river the more certain he was that his course of action was right.

He rushes through the town to the quay side and sees a ferry loading passengers. What fortune, for it makes for Ch'ang, the first stage of his journey to his first destination. Even better, this a ferry that plies its trade for the benefit of its human cargo. It carries little in the way of commercial goods and has a double crew of rowers, each alternating with the other, so little time is lost in resting the crew.

Anxiety creeps upon him like a shadow in the night. Will they come and drag him back from his great quest. Once he is on the river there can be little chance of being apprehended. Who are these people that would drag him back and for what reason? He cannot tell, as it is the fear of having his journey curtailed that feeds the anxiety.

Once on-board this strange condition lessens and disappears altogether once the ferry pulls out into mid-stream.

Yong finds a position on the roof near the front and lays down his blanket to claim his place. Sheltered from the river breeze by coiled ropes, he knows from old it will be a good place unless it rains.

He stares out at the mighty river and stares out until the light fades. The bell rings for the evening meal now being served below. He waits until the first rush is over before descending below. Palm leaved packages hot with their content sell for a little more than at the market. Returning to his place on the roof-deck, he opens the package and crams his mouth with little thought for convention, using his hands like a true traveller. The rice with vegetables and a tangy pork sauce brings back more memories.

Memories long forgotten. Memories from a distant world. The passage of time like the Yellow River slips behind him with so much ease he has to look at his own hands to make sure he is not the young student setting out to see a possible sage.

In all his years as a wandering student he had not met one.

All the teachers he encountered had something to offer but sometimes he learned more from the journey. On the path you will find the Way, his Inner Truth reminds him. He was on the path once more. The Way will arrive in its own time. A time not in harmony with the mundane world. Yet now it is possible for it to arrive. Why had he not done this before?

He cleans his hands on the leaves before throwing them into the river. He cleans them in the barrel provided before returning to his place. Settling down he is soon asleep

Yong awakens with a start. His neighbours are already on their feet shouting insults and searching for missiles they can launch. He gets to his feet and climbs onto the ropes.

The other ferry fast approaches with the current driving it on, it approaches at ramming speed. At the last moment the oars are shipped by both ferries and a furious exchange of missiles takes place at close quarters.

Yong sees it in time with the help of a glint of light from the half moon. The pig's thigh bone twists in his hand but he does not drop it but hurls it back towards the other ferry where it lands on another less observant. A great cry goes up from those on his ferry. Only a singular cry of pain from the other ferry from the man felled by the bone. Someone from the other ferry picks up the bone and tries hurling it back. Only for it to fall far short.

Another cry goes up from Yong's ferry, and then a chant. 'Master Nameless, Master Nameless, Master Nameless ...'

Yong stands in a heroic pose his arms raised in time honoured tradition. The Captain's boy pushes his way through the chanting crowd and approaches him. 'What is your name sir?'

Yong replies with exaggerated authority in time honoured tradition. 'My name is Master Nameless.'

'Then the Captain says: This is for you.' The boy hands Yong a string of copper cash.

Cheers and cries then chants from those gathered. 'Nameless, Nameless, Nameless ... Nameless ...'

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line in the second place means:

There is food in the Ting;

Offerings to the divine.

Thus the superior man begs favour of the sage;

To help him on his path to find The Way.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

A false Ting is used with disastrous results.

Grave misfortune.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

The gold-handled Ting finally arrives.

It nourishes all.

It praises Heaven and Earth;

Heaven and Earth bless all.

Supreme success.

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These Changing Lines Deliver:

Development (33)

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Wind

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Mountain

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THE IMAGE

The penetrating power of Wind and Wood

Changes even the Mountain:

The Image of DEVELOPMENT.

Thus the ruler lays plans

To last a thousand years.

Only extraordinary perseverance can bring

Success.

Chapter 3

The Clinging Fire (20)

The Song Dynasty

1241 C.E.

9th Day of the 1st Moon

Midmorning

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==  ==  Fire
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==  ==  Fire
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THE IMAGE

Fire clinging Fire:

The Image of THE CLINGING FIRE.

Thus the superior man develops the brightness of his spirit,

So he can illuminate the principles of the unseen world.

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“It is due to our nature that enlightenment results from sincerity. It is due to education that sincerity results from enlightenment. Given sincerity, there will be enlightenment, and given enlightenment there will be sincerity.”

From the Doctrine of the Mean. Section 21.

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The column comes to a halt as Keshik pulls off to one side and signals to Asutai who is at the rear organizing the baggage train.

Asutai soon joins Kublai and Keshik in conversation.

‘The track here separates. I assume the one to the left which moves north-west is the one that avoids the bandit filled hills, and the one to the right and moves north by north-east through bandit country?’ Ask Kublai of Asutai.

‘Indeed, Kublai.’ Answers Asutai. ‘This route to the right is the one that Kadai recommended that we should avoid.’

‘Because it is bandit country?’

‘Indeed.’

‘Surely this is a perfect opportunity to find if all these bandit groups are but one?’ Kublai asks in a straight forward manner.

‘If you mean by that, if we were to take this route through bandit country flying the banners of Genghis Khan’s grandson, small bandit groups would flee, while a large group of several hundred may be tempted to capture your noble self, then I would agree.’ Says Asutai with a barbed smile. ‘The only problem is that a group of several hundred may provide a stern trial for our column of one hundred and twenty.’

‘Indeed. A good trial. You would still wager that our battle hardened soldiers would be more than a match for these bandits?’

‘Indeed. My men are of the highest quality with much experience from the war against the Jürgen. Even a thousand

bandits would have little hope against my squadron.' Says Asutai with pride.

'Indeed. Yet Kadai recommends caution.' Says Kublai in the form of a statement which is really a question.

'Our honourable companions.' He nods in the direction of the Envoy. 'And a desire to protect you from any misfortune, would be the reason for that.'

'Let us put aside my cousin's concerns for my safety. He is like a mother hen protecting her chicks when it comes to me; noble but pointless. That only leaves the Envoy and his entourage. These are Han Chinese and by rights, our enemy. It would be a good way to find out the metal of these, our enemies. Do you not think?'

'Indeed.' Says Asutai with a smile that has turned into a grin. 'And of course you would be doing Kadai a favour by enticing these bandits to show their true nature.'

'Excellent.' Says Kublai with satisfaction.

'So let us have some fun and asks our honoured companions for their opinion of the matter.' Kublai doesn't wait for an answer but wheels his horse around and drives it to where Shi sits on his horse talking to Bao.

'I have thought it necessary to consult you, Envoy, in the matter of direction.' Says Kublai in seriousness.

'We are in your hands, Kublai. Whatever you decide on our direction will be satisfactory with me.'

'Even if that means going through bandit country?'

'Even if it means visiting the seven Buddhist Hells.'

'Well said.' Says Kublai with sincerity. 'And what about you, Master Librarian?'

Bao thinks for a moment. 'Didn't Kadai recommend we avoid bandit country and skirt the hills staying on the great northern plain?'

'Indeed he did. However, we could do him a great service by flushing out these bandits and seeing exactly how many they are.'

'Noble Khan, I have been a coward all of my life. This war faring is for brave men such as yourself. And you can't expect a coward such as me to suddenly change into a great warrior.'

'Have you ever been in battle?' Asks Kublai.

'Never.'

'Then how can you tell that you are a coward? The fear of battle all men know. Only when the moment arrives can one tell if you have the courage to overcome the fear. Only then can you say that you are a coward when you would rather run from the battle field than fight. The right is not yours to claim cowardice until you face that fear.' Kublai points at Bao. 'I would wager that you are not a coward, for it takes a brave man to admit to cowardice in front of so many.'

Bao sighs and looks at Tai who keeps a straight face while looking him in the eye. He turns back to Kublai. 'If I am to be tested in this way then surely I should have a weapon.'

'Indeed.' Kublai smiles in triumph. He rides alongside Bao and takes out his great battle-axe and presents it to Bao. 'Take this. It was given to me by my grandfather, Genghis. I will loan it to you for the duration.'

Bao take hold of it by one hand but the weight drags it down and he has to grab it with the other as well. In so doing he draws blood from the sharp bite of the blade. This brings a murmur from the Mongolians watching.

'You have blooded the blade. It will remain true in your hands.' With this Kublai turns away and leads the column into the hills.

*

The further they press into the hills the tighter the hills are pressed together. The farmers in the valley bottom fields stop to watch as the column passes. Over small passes they pass in silence.

At first they fall in individual solitude, large and soft these snowflakes are the heralds of a winter storm. With little wind the silence is complete as snowflakes make a noise only a mouse can hear. Thicker they now fall and the visibility is soon gone. Soon the horses tread through snow that covers their fetlocks but these Mongolian steeds are as sure footed as any mountain goat.

Dropping down into yet another valley they arrive in a village before they have recognized it as such in the failing light; in the fast falling snow. Asutai's outriders come to greet the column and direct the main body to a place by the river.

Asutai leads the way to a tea house set into the hillside. A large two storied wooden building, it has already been commissioned for the use of Kublai, the Envoy and his Han entourage.

The large open fire set in the stone chimney is a welcome sight. Hot tea is served in large warmed bowls by the tea house keeper and his daughter. The smell mixing with the aroma of drying fur and wood smoke has a soporific effect on the gathered company.

'Would you show us to our sleeping quarters?' Says Shi while looking at Ling-Ling's half closed eyes.

Soon, only Bao and Kublai are the only ones left. As Bao examines the detail on the battle-axe, Kublai opens a double door to a veranda, and walks outside.

The snow has stopped. The world transformed.

Bao joins him twirling the battle-axe between the fingers of his left hand around its pointed head and the hand of his right arm around the shaft below the double blade.

Raising his head Bao looks across at the forested hill opposite, not more than two hundred metres away. After a while staring in silence he shoulders the axe diagonally across his back by its leather strap. Then placing his hands as cups behind and alongside his ears he uses his bat's ears to listen.

Kublai watches Bao with curiosity. 'What are ...'

'Listen, listen.'

Kublai looks back across the valley and listens with total concentration but he can hear nothing.

A worried look overcomes Bao's face. He drops his hands and backs away. 'Come inside, Kublai. Quickly, come inside.' Bao can see that Kublai is not coming inside quickly so grabs him by the arm and drags him in.

'What are you doing Master Librarian?'

Such familiarity by a Han Chinese disturbs Kublai and he is about to give Bao a reprimand when seven arrows strike the floor either on the veranda or just inside the door.

Kublai is shocked. 'Jürgen arrows. Look at their flight feathers. Jürgen arrows.' Kublai is now angry but quickly

follows Bao's lead and takes cover behind the door on the opposite side to Bao.

Bao is all awareness. 'Where is the tea-house keeper? And more to the point where is his daughter.' A young girl who had never left the room since they had arrived.

Bao sees movement through the door to the kitchen. He signals to Kublai. Kublai can see the movement and he and Bao take up positions either side of the door. Bao takes off the battle-axe and is just in time to swing it at knee height as the first Jürgen comes through the door. Kublai cuts his head off as the neck is presented to him and then in a single movement strikes the next man straight through the chest. He doesn't wait but throws himself over the bodies to gain access to the kitchen where others have arrived.

Bao swings around to see a giant of a man coming at him with a two handed sword. He is just in time to place the battle-axe in a defensive position and capture the blade as slices down the axe's point. The blow is so severe it is all he can do hang on to it then reposition it for the next blow. This is even heavier than the first with the battle-axe handle bouncing off the floor. The giant is about to swing one more time when he is distracted by Tai hurling a metal jug from the doorway and Kublai coming back. Bao takes his chance and drives the point of the battle-axe under his ribcage and into his heart. Kublai does the rest by removing his head with a single blow.

Kublai shouts orders. 'To me my bodyguard, to me.'

Bao runs to the stairs and shouts. 'Shi, Ling-Ling get down here now, we are under attack.'

Tai leads the way with Ling-Ling right behind her and Shi following her. Shi picks up the double handed sword and all four follow Kublai out onto the veranda.

Men can now be seen running across the valley floor from the woods on the opposite side of the valley.

Kublai runs along the veranda and down some steps at the end, just in time for a column of Mongolian riders to appear. They are shooting their arrows in both directions with great accuracy. They have brought five horses and soon the Han and Kublai are mounted and on their way. The Mongolian column splits in two, one either side of Kublai, and in this formation they gallop up the valley. Another Mongolian column

with Asutai at its head traveling even faster over takes them and crashes through a defensive line drawn up by the bandits. The accuracy of the Mongolian arches is remarkable even from speeding horses they never seem to miss their targets.

Asutai leads the charge up the valley then suddenly veers off up a small stream. Both columns merge as they ascend the forested hill. Four Mongolian soldiers remain behind to provide cover for the others.

The stream eventually peters-out and they ply their way through thick undergrowth until they reach the ridge where they fan out and dismount. Taking up firing positions, they wait for the others.

They soon arrive followed by what once was part of the Jürgen cavalry. The first twenty are shot down with ease and these bandits finally retreat.

Asutai approaches Kublai. 'It is time for us to go. I am the only one who knows his way out of these hills so I must lead the way. The rest of our men will hold up the enemies' advance.'

'What happened to the rest of your men?' Asks Kublai.

'Once they realized it was a trap, they swept up the valley behind us and then turned to the confusion of the enemy. Their purpose was to lead them as far away as possible and so they have returned the way we came. Although I expect heavy casualties most should make it. We have lost the pack animals but it is of little consequence.'

'Mount up. The horses have had enough rest.' Shouts Asutai.

'If Asutai is to lead you out then I will stay with four of your bodyguard to give you a longer start.' Says Keshik.

'Excellent.' Says Kublai. 'I have little doubt you would like some sport. Shoot a few for me.' He grasps Keshik around the shoulder before they part.

They plunge down the hill until they meet another ridge then follow a track along its top. Half the night is gone before they stop to rest.

A rocket explodes high in the star filled sky.

Bao and the rest of the Han contingent jump to their feet to the laughter of the Mongolians.

'Was it not you Han Chinese that invented gunpowder? It is our men on the ridge letting us know they are setting off.' Says Asutai.

'Will we wait for them?' Asks Shi.

'They will separate and find their own way back. It is standard tactics.' Answers Kublai. 'But we should not be telling you the secrets of our success.' He jokes.

Once the horses have rested Asutai leads them out of the hills. It is midmorning before they reach the north China plain but they do not stop. Heading out on snowless ground they put several kilometres between themselves and the hills.

Finding a farm they soon acquisition it. Locking the farming family up in a barn, and with guards set at some distance, the rest set to making a meal of chickens and eggs and a young pig with vegetables. A meal they all agree is the best they have ever had.

They all sleep together. And sleep like the dead.

*

Tai wakes Bao. 'Come Master Librarian. We are nearly ready to move out.'

'Just a few moments more, gilded lady of playfulness.'

'Is it a bath you wish? There is a bucket and a well and my playful hands to wield the hogs-hair brush.' She laughs.

He is soon up and out and on his horse.

They set off into the sunset.

Walking, riding and at a canter, they keep up a steady pace until, at last, they see smoke rising in front of them in the early dawn's light.

Riders approach from both sides until they can recognise Asutai and then one patrol takes up the rear and the other heads up the front. One rider is sent galloping off to alert the encampment.

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The tented encampment is surrounded by pointed poles pointed out at an angle to prevent attack by horsemen. There is only a rudimentary gate which is drawn back to allow Kublai and his company to enter.

They are shown to a large ridge-pole shield tent similar to the one that the Chinese were first greeted in, in what now seems a life time away.

Berke, a Captain of the guard, enters the tent to find Kublai and his companions enjoying a meal around a large round table. He bows after giving a heart, head and Heaven salute to Kublai. 'General Salkai has taken most of the garrison into the hills to the east to hunt down bandits that have been attacking the surrounding region. I will offer you whatever assistance that I can under the circumstances.' He cannot take his eyes off the Han Chinese.

Kublai, in a good mood, asks a pertinent question. 'Is General Salkai pressing this engagement in coordination with the Regional Commander, Kadai?'

'Indeed. It was Kadai's idea.'

'Of course it was. My dear cousin merely forgot to tell me.'

The Captain is uncertain what this comment means and keeps looking at the Han Chinese.

'This is an Envoy from the Song who have been given permission to visit the Confucian temple at Quiu the supposed birthplace of the old Master of the Lu Analects.'

Berke is none the wiser but nods his head anyway.

'They are my guests and under my protection. How many men can you afford to give me without depleting the garrison to the point of danger?' Asks Kublai.

'Very few, perhaps ten.'

'We will rest up today and set off tomorrow. Have your men ready at dawn. And send a message to my dear cousin Kadai informing him of my destination. And, informing him that he faces Jürgen cavalry in the hills to the south-west. You had better send a message to General Salkai informing him of the same.'

Berke leaves in a hurry.

Kublai turns to his companions. 'So Master Librarian, have you told your friends how you saved my life?'

All eyes move from Kublai to Bao. Bao raises his shoulders in a shrug. 'It was nothing. He was rather large and he wielded the two handed sword that Shi now possesses. Kublai had dispatched several Jürgen soldiers at the rear while I kept

this giant busy. He made the mistake of losing concentration at the wrong moment and with a lucky strike I prepared him for Kublai to remove his head. Beginners luck, you might say.'

'Beginners luck?' Kublai questions not expecting a reply. 'It was not the giant that I was referring to.' Kublai cups his hands behind his ears. Then turns to Shi. 'Here is a man who can hear enemy bowman at two hundred metres stringing their bows.' He turns back to Bao, still with his hands cupped behind his ears. 'And where did you learn this trick? In the Imperial Library?'

'Indeed.' Bao grins to all.

'What could you possibly hunt in the Imperial Library?'

'The enemy within.' Says Bao in all seriousness.

'The enemy within?'

'Mice. You would not believe the damage these little furry rascals can create. Not only do they eat the paper of our manuscripts but they have a nasty habit of making nests both of and inside their covers.' Says Bao with just a little too much gravitas.

'Mice?' Says Kublai as if he cannot believe what he is hearing. He drops his hands.

'Mice make tiny squeaks but it is hard to locate the direction from which they come.' Here Bao places his cupped hands behind his ears and slowly turns his head back and forward. 'I learned this fascinating technique from a book: The Capture and Extermination of Small Furry Creatures, by that giant of animal behaviour, Cat-chi Mao-tze.'

Tai has a coughing fit and Bao has to slap her back until she begs him to stop. Then Bao returns to his subject in all seriousness. 'The sound of a mouse squeaking bears a remarkable resemblance to the squeaky noise that shoe leather makes as it presses down on fresh snow.'

'And you were able to hear this at two hundred metre?'

'Indeed.' Then on reflection. 'Of course it does take practice.'

'Of course.' Says Kublai not believing a word of it.

Turning to the others Kublai says. 'Had your friend not heard these squeaking noises made by enemy arches some two hundred metres away, and had he not then dragged me back inside from

the veranda, I would have been killed, as several arrows fell in the very place that I had been.'

'Well done, Bao.' Says Shi and the others join in with sincerity.

'It was nothing. Not even a footnote in history.' Says Bao trying to sound modest.

'And of your cowardice in battle? I saw none.'

'True.' Bao thinks allowed. 'But then I had not time to think about it. As it all happened so quickly.'

'I will be forever in your debt, Master Librarian, and that of, Cat-chi Mao-tze.' He stands and gives Bao a low bow, Chinese style. 'Now, I think it is time for us all to rest. We have a long journey in front of us tomorrow.'

The Han stand and bow as Kublai leaves the tent.

★

Bao and Tai are snuggled up together in a small tent of their own. Deep under furs and furs deep under them, they are close to sleep. Tai kisses him on the cheek which brings a smile to his face and movement to his hands.

Tai enters his mind and implants her thoughts: Stop before you begin. I will not provide entertainment for this Mongolian horde. Tents provide little privacy in this regard. Now tell me about Cat-chi Mao-tze.

Bao loves this ability they share for sharing their consciousness and it is so very easy when Tai initiates these moments: It was all I could come up with at that moment. I was scanning the consciousness of the area after picking up a sensation of malice. I could hardly tell Kublai of our ability in this regard. So bat's ears and Cat-chi Mao-tze it was.

: Your ability grows stronger the more you practice.

: How far can you stretch your consciousness?

: Several kilometres. But as you know I have foresworn to use this ability for mundane purposes. Unless we are in dire danger.

: Yet you invade my mind all of the time.

: We have always had this ability ever since we first met. Not as now but a melding nevertheless.

: True.

: You are falling asleep. Let me follow.

: We are one.

Outside, Kublai can hear nothing, then the breathing of sleep. Breath entwined in synchronicity.

: What can it mean? He wonders.

*

Riding, walking with the occasional canter is the rhythm of the day. The weather has improved with a weak winter sun swimming out of the mists.

Bao and Tai walk together brushing shoulders. Tai checks to make sure that they cannot be overheard. 'When we arrive in Quiu will Shi try to make contact with the Han bureaucracy?'

'Only if the situation arises in a natural way and only if we are free from our Mongolian friends. Kublai is suspicious. He and Kadai are as one on this. They suspect we are up to something - which of course we are - but this was a price we had to pay to get them to allow us to make this journey in the first place.'

'Their curiosity will be their downfall.' Tai says with some satisfaction.

'Eventually.'

Tai sees Kublai passing and changes the subject. 'What will we do when we arrive in Quiu?'

'I will ask Kublai.' Bao turns to Kublai. 'What will be the plan once we arrive in Quiu?'

Kublai thinks for a moment. 'I was hoping you would tell me.'

They all laugh.

Their laughter makes Ling-Ling and Shi turn their heads. Ling-Ling jokes with her husband. 'Perhaps they laugh at the great sword you carry across your back, dear husband.'

'I carry this burden in defence of you, dear wife.' He matches her tone perfectly.

'Can you wield such a weapon?'

'I have had training in sword play. Although not with a double-handed sword. Still, there can be little difference.'

One has greater reach of course and consequently can stay out of harm's way more easily.'

'Important for a married man.' Says Ling-Ling with more than just a little satisfaction.

'Indeed.'

'Perhaps we can practice together. Me with my short staff guarding your back, while you cut a swath through the enemy.'

'You forget dear heart, you are supposed to be a gentle lady of the Imperial court. Rather than a homicidal maniac whose martial skills would frighten many a brave soldier.'

'I miss not practicing on a daily bases. I fear I grow languid.'

'Nonsense.' He reassures her. 'When you are as young as yourself it is hard to lose fitness. While, for old men such as myself, it is a continuing problem.'

'That will teach me to marry an old man. Soon they will have to carry you around in a sedan chair while I run alongside fanning your brow.'

'You would do that for me?'

'Hardly. I think I would rather join a Buddhist nunnery.'

'What a cruel Buddhist you make.' He says with a pained expression.

'Then you had better keep yourself fit.'

'I will endeavour to do so.'

'Then let us begin now. I will ride and you can run alongside me.' She laughs.

She goes to mount but sees in the distance coming from the direction they have just come, a group of horsemen travelling at speed. 'We have company.' She says loudly while pointing out the direction.

Asutai takes two soldiers out to meet the quickly arriving group while the others mount up as a precaution.

Without stopping Asutai joins up with the incoming group relieving what tension there had been engendered.

A wounded Keshik, with five of the men left at the ridge, also with various wounds, pull up in front of Kublai.

Heart, head and Heaven Keshik gives to Kublai. 'There may be more survivors but they are scattered over a large area.'

'Do not worry about them. We must see to your wound and that of these men. Asutai, lead us on.' Says Kublai kicking his horse into a gallop.

*

Quiu is a small temple town. There are many tea-houses, mostly two storied of late Tang dynasty construction, built in happier times for the pilgrim trade.

While Kublai takes Keshik and the other wounded to find medical help, Asutai takes the Han to find suitable accommodation. He soon persuades the guests of, The Golden Lu, tea-house to vacate.

The Golden Lu, is set in an overgrown garden of some charm. With stables off to one side and the stone walls of the Confucian temple taking up a third side, the final side is situated on the main road that passes right through the town.

The tea-house, Madam, is not pleased with having her establishment commandeered by the Mongolians but puts a brave face on it.

The top floor rooms are allocated to the Han Chinese and to Kublai while Asutai and his men bivouac in the garden next to the stables. Guards are posted at Asutai's instruction and instruction is given to the Madam. Only then does Asutai go in search of Kublai.

Left to their own devices, the Han request a meal for their entire company including the Mongolian soldiers. It is midnight by the time they are ready to eat.

Gathered around a large full height table with full height chairs, Shi and Ling-Ling sit opposite Bao and Tai. A large cooking range sits at one side with steamed dumplings of various kinds kept warm on its top.

'What is to be done?' Says Shi. 'It doesn't seem to be right that we should start without the others.'

'Perhaps one of us should go and tell them that refreshment is ready.' Says Ling-Ling.

'I doubt the Mongolian soldiers will let us out of their sight.' Says Shi. 'However, we can send one of them.' Shi

leaves the table. Outside he instructs one of the Mongolians, who refuses as it is against his orders.

Shi thinks, but only for a moment, about slipping away. It would be too difficult and if he was caught would raise suspicions; suspicions he could not afford to raise.

Across the street a man peers out from the shadows of an alley. He checks the position of the guard that Shi has just talked to, and seeing that he has his back to both himself and Shi he moves silently out of the shadows.

Shi sees the man and watches as the man points to the Confucian temple behind the tea-house. The sound of horses arriving on the street has the man return to the shadows as quickly as he arrived. Just in time as the Mongolian guard turns to see who it is arriving at such a time.

Shi also looks to see and doesn't have to wait long to find out that it is Kublai and a number of his men.

'Welcome great Khan, a meal is prepared and ready to eat.' Says Shi with a bow.

'Excellent.' Says Kublai and turns to the others. 'Come, all of you. If there is anyone that deserves nourishment it is you. What say you Envoy Zhen?'

'Indeed. We owe our lives to these brave men and nothing should be spared for their comfort.' Shi acts as doorman for the small host that has arrived.

On seeing them arrive and ascertaining there are not enough seats, Bao, Tai and Ling-Ling search out enough seating to accommodate all. Then acting as servants Tai and Ling-Ling bring the dumplings to the table and follow this with the other dishes from the cooking range.

Kublai addresses his men. 'When, if ever, have we been so fortunate to be served by such grand ladies of the Song court?'

'It is our privilege to serve those who have served us so well.' Says Ling-Ling with a bow to the now seated men.

'Your injuries, Keshik, I trust are not too serious?' Asks Tai as she serves him with a small mountain of dumplings.

'My wounds are superficial. However we have had to leave a number of our men with the doctors of the Taoist temple. They have great knowledge of healing as I am sure you know.'

'Indeed. Their nature craft has the benefit of thousands of years of experience.' Says Tai in certitude.

'Come Ladies, take your places. We are not yet incapable of helping ourselves.' Says Kublai with good grace.

Ling-Ling and Tai return to their seats but wait until everyone else has filled their plates before helping themselves.

'We shall rest up here until you are all ready to travel.' Kublai addresses this to his men then turns to Shi. 'What say you, Envoy Zhen?'

'We are at your disposal great Khan. Without your generosity we would not be here at all.' Says Shi with sincerity.

'What say you, Master Librarian?' Asks Kublai

'I will reflect Zhen Shi's words and add, we would not be here at all, in the physical sense, if it was not for these brave men. I will raise my cup to their bravery and to my survival, coward though I am.' Sincerity drips off the words like honey from an overfull spoon.

Kublai turns to his men. 'Take little notice of our Master Librarian, for having fought alongside him I know him not to be the coward he would wish us to think.' He turns to Bao. 'Will you have further need of my grandfather's battle-axe?'

Bao gets up and taking the battle-axe from his back he presents it to Kublai with a bow. 'It has served me well. But now that we are removed from danger I will return it to its rightful owner and to the one man who has the right to claim it as his own.' Bao bows once more and this time to the horizontal.

Kublai takes the battle-axe and looks at it as Bao returns to his place. It is not lost on him what Bao meant; that it is he who should be Great Khan. It is not lost on the others gathered around the table either.

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Just as a Fire brings brightness into life.

Only by such brightness can the situation be clarified.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

Fire can illuminate the darkest of places.

In the same way understanding can illuminate the darkness

Of our ignorance.

Thus the superior man throws the light of knowledge

Onto every situation.

Changing Line at the top means:

The flame is gone, the Fire is dead.

Only the sage knows that this is also an illusion.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Attraction (34)

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==  ==
===== Lake
=====
=====
==  == Mountain
==  ==

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THE IMAGE

The joyous Lake and the still Mountain:

The Image of natural ATTRACTION.

When the Lake rises over the Mountain in the form of mist,

Beauty abounds.

Thus the superior man is stimulated by Attraction and

Asks for ideas that are alien to him.

Chapter 4

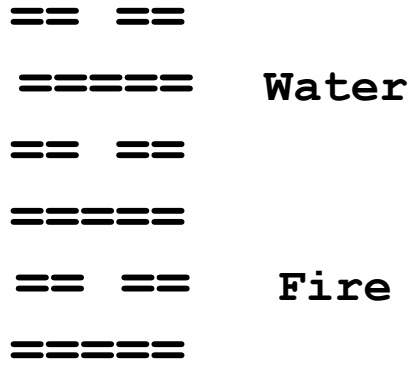
Climax (25)

The Song Dynasty

1240 C.E.

14rd Day of the 6th Moon

Midday



THE IMAGE

Water over Fire:

The Image of CLIMAX.

Boiling water soon evaporates

Leaving an empty vessel.

Beware.

*

“Sincerity means the completion of the self, and the Way is self-directing. Sincerity is the beginning and end of things. Without sincerity there would be nothing. Therefore, the superior man values sincerity. Sincerity is not only the completion of one’s own self, it is that by which all things are completed. The completion of the self means humanity. The completion of all things means wisdom. These are the characteristics of nature, and they are the Way in which the internal and the external are united. Therefore, whenever it is employed, everything done is right.”

From the Doctrine of the Mean. Section 25.

★

Shao Tai and Shao Ling-Ling are both wearing their Buddhist sparring togs, with wrists, ankles and waists bound with cord. They face off against each other with short iron wood staffs. Their play is more like an elaborate dance than the practice of a lethal martial art. Their play is also being watched by the excited eyes of three of Wedding Island’s farm children, Mol, Lol and Gol, aged nine, eight and seven respectively.

Arriving to watch the spectacle comes Bao carrying his two children, Po-wen aged three and a half, a boisterous boy of wilful intent, and Mai, aged ten months a graceful girl of a curious nature.

Bao addresses his children as if making a commentary to a crowd watching a cock fight; a popular custom in certain parts of Kinsai. ‘The tangled haired monster is fast and furious, while her enemy, the Lotus of Kinsai is cunning and deadly. Notice how they look with vicious intent at each other wishing to beat each other’s brains out with their great spurs.’ He looks up into the sky and directs the children’s eyes by nods of the head in that direction. ‘See how the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas watch this great play by betting their enlightenment on the outcome.’

The children look to the sky, Mol, Lol and Gol look to the sky, but of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas none can they see.

‘Such is their commitment to the eight fold path that they will not go quietly into the cold night of oblivion.’ He says these last words with such gravitas that Tai and Ling-ling stop their play and look at him with a great annoyance.

'Oh, by all under Heaven, they turn their great wrath on the innocent. Let us flee before they beat us and beat us with their great sticks.' He turns and runs. 'Let us flee and cry out in torment ... ahaaag.' He cries.

The children cry. 'Ahaaag.'

Mol, Lol and Gol also flee, though it has to be said: more in play than in fear.

Tai and Ling-ling return to their play with renewed vigour.

*

The evening light is fading fast. Po-wen is in the crook of Bao's arm against the back of a large seat that doubles as a bed. His daughter is lying part on his chest and part on his stomach, slowly rising with each breath he takes.

Tai and Ling-ling arrive from the kitchen carrying metal cooking pots with lids. Placing them on the table they come and stand over the sleeping three.

'It is a shame to wake them.' Says Ling-ling.

Tai bends down and places her hand on Mai's back. 'We will not wake them for they are far gone into sleep.' She lifts her daughter. 'Bring Po-wen for me will you?'

As Ling-ling raises Po-wen, Bao raises his eyelids a little but then lets them close again.

Gol, the seven year old farmer's son, can be heard shouting outside. 'Master Bao, Master Bao there's a grand man arriving by boat.' He runs in through the open door. 'He wears a big hat and purple robes and a stern face.'

The man enters the room and Gol dodges behind him and out of the door.

Bao struggles to his feet trying to make out who it is, which is not easy as the fading light is behind the arriving man. Ling-ling and Tai re-enter the room and are faced with the same problem of recognition until Ling-ling makes out the gaunt features of her betrothed. 'Shi?' She runs into his arms in tears. 'What has befallen you?'

'Am I so changed?'

Tai follows Ling-ling into an outstretched arm.

Bao, a smile returning to his face, gives a full bow with outstretched arms. 'Welcome, Governor Zhen, to my simple home.'

Your great exploits in Yunnan Province go before you, just like in stories of the great Heroes of old. Welcome indeed.'

'Enough of the formal greetings even if they are laced with sarcasm.' Returns Shi. 'Let me sit down as I fear this great emotion that I feel will sweep me off my feet.'

'The place of honour at the top of the table.' Says Bao with concern in his tone. For he can now see the gaunt features of his old friend. 'What ails you Zhen Shi?'

Shi sits down with relief as Ling-ling clings onto him with the tenacity of a leech. 'You must tell me what ails you, my betrothed.'

Shi bursts into tears but these are the tears of joy of one returned home. 'Forgive me.' He strokes Ling-ling's hair as she kneels beside him. 'Of physical illness there is none. Only the worry of a life time condensed into three and a half years.'

'I hope the Emperor has not assigned you a new post.' Asks Bao.

'I think Lizong was as shocked as you at my appearance. He has ordered me to see to my new estate that he has gifted me for my endeavours in Yunnan, and not to return until I am wed and returned to my former self.'

'Was it so terribly bad?' Asks Bao.

'Worse.' He sighs with relief.

'Enough of this.' Says Tai. 'You have arrived as we were about to eat. Let me serve fresh rabbit from the market and fresh fish from the lake and lots of green vegetable from the island's farm.' She is as good as her word and piles up his plate until he has to stop her.

'Tai, my appetite is much reduced, you have given me too much.'

'Nonsense. You will not leave this table until you have eaten it all.' A stern mother has little room for argument with those in her charge.

'How I have missed you all.' He sobs in great gulps. Then recovering a little. 'There were times that I even missed you, Bao. How I could have done with you by my side to remind me not to take it all so seriously.'

Bao is about to say something but is cut off. 'Eat first and talk later.' Says mother.

★

Shi, with Ling-ling in his arms is falling asleep fast. Tai creeps back into the kitchen where Bao is washing dishes. 'How is he?' Asks Bao.

'Almost asleep. So where is he to sleep?'

'He must have our bed as the honoured guest. And we will sleep on the veranda under the stars.' He says with romantic overtones.

'And Ling-ling?'

'What does it matter? They are to be wed as soon as our parents make the arrangements.'

'It does matter.' Says Tai remembering both her and Ling-ling's Buddhist vow to stay celibate until marriage.

'But only, if you are aware of it.' Bao says with good sense.

Tai thinks for a moment. 'I will be deaf. I will be blind. I will put away my concerns and you will distract me.' Tai puts away the dishes as she dries.

'I will take you fishing on the lake. A half-moon should be distracting enough.' Says the wily Librarian.

'Perhaps we could swim a little.' She says this flat.

Bao smiles but says with exaggerated solemnity. 'Has our bed been changed? We cannot offer his nobleness a bed already slept in.'

Tai pulls a face of annoyance behind Bao's back before leaving the room in a hurry.

★

Three days of four big meals a day with unscheduled sleeps and with long sleeps at night - undisturbed, unknown - soon has Shi more like his old self. The worries and cares that had driven deep lines into his face were already fading; the responsibility of governing the most difficult province in all of China was fading fast.

Ling-ling was a major factor in this recuperation of her betrothed. Her constant attention to depriving Shi of any excuse for returning to worrying ways was remarkable, in that,

she could tell when his mind-set was returning to the mind-set of the Governor of Yunnan Province. Then she would distract him in many and various ways.

Tai and Bao played their part in returning Shi to normality by involving him in the routine of the farm, in fishing and in conversation where there was never a mention of the bureaucracy in any of its many guises.

Stripped of his official robes and wearing farming attire he now sported a tangled haired head to almost equal that of Ling-ling. Together in the market towns they visited they could easily pass for locals. Shi's restoration to his normal well balanced self was well under way.

Until, that is, the return of the wandering monk, Kung-sun K'un. Shi was captivated by his life style. If ever there was a man who was the polar opposite of Shi it would have to be him. But they did have remarkable similarities as well.

K'un was invited for dinner. He arrived bearing armfuls of wild flowers and a bottle of rice wine he had acquired on his wanderings. 'Mistress Shao these are for you.' He hands Tai the wild flowers. 'Their beauty is only a compliment to yours. And for you, Master Shao, this rare bottle of jasmine flavoured rice wine, all the way from the kingdom of Siam. I'm afraid I have nothing for your honoured guests as I have returned with empty pockets.'

Shi was recovered enough to use his polite diplomatic skills. 'You have promised us a recounting of your wanderings. Including, I recall, a strange coincidence. That will more than suffice.'

The men settle down around the table on the veranda. Sitting cross legged on the low seats. Tai takes the bottle to the kitchen to remove the wax from its neck, returning with three bowls for the men. She returns to the kitchen to prepare the meal with the help of Ling-ling.

The men sit tasting the wine that they all agree has a better smell than a taste.

'So K'un, where did your wanderings take you this time?' Shi enquires.

'Having saved a little money I indulged myself by taking a cargo boat up the Yangzi as far as the western mountains. And from there travelled north on foot until I eventually reached the ancient capital of Loyang.' He changes tone. 'I was

inspired to visit this city by Bao's stories of his ancient ancestor. And as we shall see it was provident in the extreme.'

'Were you not accosted by the Mongolian hoards that now hold sway in those regions' Asks Shi with genuine curiosity.

'I wear my old monk's robes that betray my status as a wandering Buddhist. I barely register a second glance from anyone, nor, forthwith, by the Mongolian barbarian.' He returns to his story, directing it in Bao's direction.

'Loyang, unfortunately, was a disappointment. Part of it was in ruins from some battle or other and the people cowed by the presence of Tibetans who disgraced their Buddhist sentiments. Accepting alms from these vile creatures was a necessity. Had I refused they would have suspected me of being a fraud and possibly a spy. I was forced to recite various sutras and do it with good grace. I couldn't wait to get out.' He takes an apologetic tone and position. 'Forgive me Bao but I was unable to seek out Shao Yong's old estate. And therefore I am not able to recount any information on that tragic land.'

Bao sighs. 'None of this is of your making, K'un. Therefore there is nothing to apologise for. It saddens me to think of Loyang in such a state. My ancient ancestor described its beauty and the surrounding hills in many of his poems. I will have trouble keeping my Inner Truth sullied from thoughts of revenge. A weakness that afflicts me even as we speak.'

K'un and Shi sympathize with his honesty.

'Please continue.'

'My first thought was to return to the mountains and thus make my way home to this small island paradise. The money that I had made from the Tibetans weighed heavy in my pocket. So, on a whim, and being close to the Yellow River, I embarked on a ferry that would deliver me into the Wei valley. A place of renowned beauty and great historical significance.'

'A great adventure, indeed.' Says Shi with admiration.

'Not such a great adventure when you consider that I was able to acquire strings of copper cash for reciting a few sutras to the Tibetan invaders. Blood money it was, as it had been acquired by the sword. Blood money it remained until I had spent it all. Now where was I?' He enquires of Bao.

'The Wei valley.'

'That's correct. The Wei valley. I had been warned by other travellers to stay away from that most ancient of capitals, Ch'ang-an. The barbarians, both Mongolian and Tibetan, had made rivers of blood of its once proud streets. I therefore made my escape on the very next boat that arrived. A boat that would take me far up the Wei Valley to a place I had never heard of, P'eng-chou,'

'P'eng-chou?' Bao enquires with some force.

'Is it famous?' Enquires K'un as a reply.

'This name surfaces in Shao Yong's notes.' Then as a means of explanation. 'I have been cataloguing his notes for the Emperor as part of my duties as an Imperial Librarian.'

K'un goes to say something but is over-ridden by Shi. 'The Emperor indulges you like the spoilt child you are.' Chides Shi playfully.

'Now that's the old Shi.' Says Bao with good humour and thankful tone.

K'un appreciates the sentiment between the old friends but says. 'P'eng-chou proved to be a revelation. Not only was the town devoid of barbarians, that is, those of the invading kind. For it has to be said that they are part barbarian themselves in those parts.

The town though small was beautifully located high on the side of the valley. It was intact. The people friendly, even to a wandering monk such as myself. I was offered accommodation by a merchant who wanted nothing but a simple blessing for the Buddhist alter he had in his home; a task soon fulfilled.

The next day I set off for a place recommended by the merchant that was famous for having a fine view. And that was known locally as: The Last Stand of Confucius. When I enquired why it was thus named, he said with a laugh, that I would understand when I arrived.

It was atop an outcrop of rock that looked from a distance like a little finger standing out from a fist. To make the ascent easier, steps had been cut into the rock and a platform constructed near the pinnacle. It was indeed a fine view. But then I noticed something most odd; characters cut into the pinnacle itself; characters that read: Confucius stood here.'

There is a moment of silence followed by uproarious laughter from both Bao and Shi. This, to the utmost consternation of K'un.

Seeing his distress Shi says. 'Dear friend you must not take this as a slight against your character, or your story. It is just the Image that I have of this great sage chiselling out the statement: Confucius stood here.'

Bao and Shi lapse into further laughter. Finally, Bao has to lean across to K'un and shake him by the neck to shake him from the foolishness he is feeling. 'It is just a funny Image for us Confucians, to think that the great sage would indulge in such play.'

K'un goes to say something but is again over-ridden. 'It is the play of children who have learned their characters.' Says Ling-ling with certitude as she arrives with various dishes for the table. 'When I was eleven or perhaps twelve we would visit a certain lime tree on our way home from school. There we would carve the names of various monks, and sometimes nuns, into the bark, saying things like: Tan loves Meng. We thought it most daring and rebellious.'

'There we have it. A child's rebellious play.' Says Shi.

Again K'un goes to say something and again he is over-ridden. 'P'eng-chou.' Says Bao from deep in thought. 'If I remember correctly, P'eng-chou, was the furthest west my noble ancestor went on his missing year.'

'What missing year?' Asks Shi with curiosity.

'During 1058 and 1059 he would seem to have embarked on some great journey. Because so little is known about it I have simply termed it: The Missing Year. His son, who was his biographer, makes little reference to it. His friends, including the Cheng brothers and their uncle, Chang Tsai and indeed, Ssu-ma Kuang, the old Prime Minister, who all have written extensively about Shao Yong, make little mention of it. A mystery that needs further research.'

'While I administer to an entire province this is how the noble Librarian, Shao Bao, passes his time. Little wonder then that he is fatter than a sacrificial pig and I am as thin as willow wand.' Says Shi but in good humour.

'We will soon have you as fat as a sacrificial pig, dear heart.' Says Ling-ling placing a sweetmeat in his mouth.

'Please let me finish my story, for it is not yet finished. And it possibly has a significance far greater for your good self, than it will ever have for me.' K'un pleads this to Bao who picks up on the seriousness of his tone.

'Proceed K'un, your tale has already brought much joy to our gathering.

'These silly characters: Confucius stood here. Were not the only characters hewn into the rock? Indeed, there were many names and messages covering the rock. But there was one, and one written immediately below: Confucius stood here. That had the most profound effect on my mind. For it said: Master Nameless never stood here.'

K'un waits for Bao to express his reaction, which when it eventually arrives is one of profound shock.

'Did you not tell me, Bao, that your illustrious ancestor had called a biography he had written by that name: Master Nameless? And that biography contained Shao Yong's own material?'

Bao is too shocked to answer and sits with open mouth.

Tai arrives with more dishes for the table and having witnessed this last exchange, and Bao's reaction, and K'un's pleading look, she bends down and places her hand on K'un's forehead. Then she stands and looks at Bao whose eyes raise with her. She blows him a silent whistle with raised eyebrows before leaving for the kitchen. She pulls his topknot on her way out making sure he has the Image from K'un's mind of the rock inscription: Master Nameless never stood here.

'Please Bao you must believe me. I would never lie to you.' He says with faltering speech.

Bao suddenly realizes that K'un is in some distress and sets about reassuring him. 'My dear K'un, I do believe you. It is the shock of such knowledge that has rendered me almost speechless.' He says with as much kindness as he can cram into cold words.

K'un relaxes. 'I know it is a strange coincidence but it is one that I can do little about, because these are the facts that I recount.'

'There is not one coincidence here, but two.' Says Shi. 'The first is that you should be in that place to read words that

has a special meaning for Bao. And second, the coincidence of these two inscriptions appearing together.'

Bao sits back to take in Shi's words. After some considerable time Bao finally speaks but these are words still forming in his mind. 'I agree that K'un's presence at a distant place where there is a message in the form of an inscription that has meaning only for me, is a coincidence. But I do not agree that these two inscriptions appearing together are a coincidence.'

'Then what is it, if it is not a coincidence?' Says Shi. 'It is obvious that the great sage did not write: Confucius stood here. So any significance the first inscription has with the second can only be a coincidence.' He reasons with some success.

'Unless it is a clue.' Says Bao.

'A clue to what?' Comes back Shi.

'I don't know.' Says Bao, then after a while. 'Surely there can only be one person who could have made that inscription using the name of Master Nameless and that would have to be Master Nameless himself, Shao Yong.' Says Bao, also reasoning with some success.

'So' says Shi with derision 'your noble ancestor left a message for your good friend K'un to find nearly two hundred years after he inscribed it, for the sole purpose that he can pass it on to you.'

'Precisely.' Says Bao. 'He has left a clue, if not for me personally, but for anyone that finds meaning in the inscription.'

'A clue to what?' Says Shi in exasperation.

'Obviously something of great importance.'

'Obvious to you, maybe. It is not obvious to me.' Says Shi.

'That inscription by Master Nameless was a reaction to the one about Confucius. What is it about Confucius and this place, P'eng-chou?' He turns to Shi. 'Of all people you should know.'

Shi searches his memory. 'It was a place he visited. That is all I can remember.'

'So, Confucius was there.' Says Bao with excitement. 'I charge you with finding out the significance of P'eng-chou to Confucius.' He instructs Shi.

'Would you listen to the man.' Shi appeals to K'un. 'He would make slaves of us all.'

'I will have a word with Zhao Yun to free you to work on our great quest.' Says Bao.

'Oh will you indeed.' Says Shi with annoyance. 'You will have a word with your good friend the Son of Heaven to have me assigned to your good offices. Is that correct?'

Bao smiles a sickly smile full of cunning and guile. 'That about sums it up.'

'My father has warned me that Lizong has come under your malign influence. Tell me Bao, have you suggested to Lizong what kind of position that would best suit me?'

'Of course.'

'And what would that be, if I can make so bold.' Says Shi sarcastically.

'Diplomat.' Says Bao with satisfaction. 'You are the most diplomatic person I have ever met. You would make a great Ambassador.'

'Oh, that would be wonderful.' Says Ling-ling. 'I would love to meet the King of Siam. A genuine Buddhist king. Can you ask Lizong if he can make you Ambassador to Siam?'

Shi is stunned, he appeals to K'un. 'Not one, but now two rogues I have to contend with. And one soon to be my wife.'

Ling-ling appeals to Bao. 'Could you have a quiet conversation with Lizong on this matter, dear brother?'

Bao enjoys pulling Shi's tail. 'Of course, dear sister. I will tell him that as Shi has a Buddhist wife that he would be the perfect Ambassador to the court of Siam.' Bao can't control the heaving laughter grinding its way out from his throat.

'Help me out here K'un for I am outnumbered.' Shi says in desperation.

K'un can see the great play now being pressed forward and joins in. 'Perhaps not two but three members of the noble clan of Shao. Perhaps one that rises from the grave, a one long dead.' K'un is surprised by the reaction of both Shi and Bao who have suddenly assumed the countenance of seriousness.

'I am sorry. I did not mean to offend.' Says K'un.

'Enough.' Tai demands with not a little anger. 'We have agreed to leave these affairs of state behind so Shi can bring peace to his Inner Truth.' She delivers the last dishes to the table and they eat in silence.

★

The great grey cat lies immobile. The movement of its green eyes barely registers. Their focus fixed on the two mice half way down an aisle in the Confucian section of the Imperial Library. The mice play and gambol in dust of ancient lineage, unaware of the importance that such fine particles once carried when once they were manuscripts. Dust. We are all dust in the end.

The footsteps approaching are known to these small furry beasties. They slink under the shelves in respect of the old Head Librarian, Lai Si. Now he is in the next aisle and they can see his old feet leaving marks in their playground.

'Bang.' Like a firecracker. The book hits the floor and causes a small earthquake. The mice freeze until an ancient hand sweeps down to pick up the dropped book. Then they flee straight into the claws of the great grey cat.

The old man carries the book into the space between the shelves where a large hip-high table is covered by books and piles of loose leaf papers. These are all arranged in rows or columns. At the end of the table stands Lizong. To his left is Shi. To his right is Bao but further down the table arranging some of the paper work.

The old man places the book on the table and leafs through its pages until he comes to the section he is looking for.

'Here it is. The list I was telling you about. This was compiled by Hedro-chou, a first century Han dynasty historian. P'eng-chou was known in those days as Chin-chou, and in this list it was ... well let me read it to you; half the characters are in need of interpretation.

: P'eng-chou - small town in the Wei valley famous for its westward view up the Wei valley. It is also said to be the furthest west that the Master was said to have travelled.

The Master he referred to was, of course, Confucius.'

Bao takes up the story. 'In my noble ancestor's notes that I have catalogued under: References to Confucius (miscellaneous).'

Bao places his hand on a pile of papers.

'Shao Yong has written: There is not a single reference to Confucius having travelled past P'eng-chou. These are from his notes before his missing year.'

Lizong clarifies. 'So, Confucius never travelled further west than P'eng-chou, and, Shao Yong knew this to be the case.'

'Indeed. After K'un related what he had witnessed, as I have previously related to you all, and which Shi was witness to, I began to think that my noble ancestor might have been following in the footsteps of Confucius. I have revisited all of Shao Yong's notes and I found this.' Bao opens the wooden cover of a number of papers and produces a strange diagram. He places the diagram in front of Lizong.

'Tell me what I am seeing?'

'This wavy line in blue ink that runs west to east across the paper is the Yellow River. I know this because I traced out the outline and compared it to part of the Yellow River's course taken from these records' he places his hand on a large pile of documents 'of the change in the Yellow River's course before the Han Dynasty. Then there are these black dots either side of the blue line that are joined by thin lines.' He points these out. Then he picks up a number of square pieces of paper with characters written on them. He places individual squares of paper next to each black dot saying the name as he goes. 'Huayin, Lingbao, Pingli, Guchang, Loyang, Qinyang and Yuanyang. These black spots fit exactly to places on or near the Yellow River as it was in pre-Han times.'

'What is the significance of this?' Lizong asks of Bao.

'There would be none if I had not referenced these places with places that Confucius had visited. He had visited them all. I must thank Lai Si for his help in this regard.' Bao makes a bow to the old Librarian, who returns the acknowledgment.

'Shao Yong would appear to have drawn this diagram without the place names to remind himself of the places that Confucius had visited in this stretch of the Yellow River. This suggests two things. First, he was following in Confucius' footsteps, and second, he didn't want anyone to know.'

'What do you think of this?' Lizong asks of Shi.

'At first I was sceptical but after examining the evidence in detail, I have come to the conclusion that it is a probable explanation rather than a possible one.'

'So what does it mean?' He asks once more of Shi.

'You must judge for yourself. Bao has quite an extraordinary explanation, which if correct, could have innumerable ramifications.' Says Shi directing Lizong by his eyes to Bao.

'In Yong's notes' he searches for the right pile of documents and is directed by Lai Si to those he searches for 'I have found evidence that Shao Yong believed that each place in the world gives a unique experience to mankind. That unique experience, however, is the same for all of mankind, for each individual. It is part of our common humanity.' Bao can see the lack of comprehension on Lizong's face, so takes his explanation back to the fundamentals. 'If you visit a new place you have never been before, you will have a unique experience or sensation of that place. We all experience these unique experiences whenever we visit new places.' He stops to enquire of Lizong. 'Are you following my explanation so far?

'Indeed.'

'What Shao Yong believed was that the experience, though unique, is the same unique experience for everyone. Me, you and farmer Ham. On visiting each new place we all experience a new unique experience but that unique experience is exactly the same for each and every one of us. This is because of our common humanity.' Says Bao with a certain satisfaction.

'Consequently, we know something of each other's minds. If it is exactly the same experience that we all share of a place, then we know something about the mind of everyone who experiences this new place. My noble ancestor would seem to have set off to experience all those places that Confucius experienced and by doing so, he would have the same experiences that Confucius had. He would understand the mind of Confucius, or at least, part of the mind of Confucius. Though dead for fifteen hundred years he would still be able to understand at least part of the mind of the great sage with certitude. And all because of our common humanity.'

Lizong looks to Shi for help.

'It is a radical idea. Indeed, such a radical idea, that Shao Yong was probably not willing to share this with anyone, in case they thought him insane. Which would explain why he was unwilling to tell anyone what he was up to.' Shi looks to Bao to take up the narrative.

'Shi loves the idea that my noble ancestor was insane.' They all laugh for they know it to be true. 'But even he can see that if Yong was right, then it suggests that our common humanity is fundamental in regard to the rest of the universe,

and, as such, then the universe would have to be real in some fundamental sense. And not at all like the Buddhist world view where everything in the world of the senses is an illusion. If all human beings are capable of sharing the same unique experiences of the world of the senses, then this reality we share and experience as the same, is real and not an illusion.'

'Indeed.' Says Lizong with insightful certitude. 'And if true then the metaphysics of Daoxue, Neo-Confucianism, is almost certainly confirmed.'

Those gathered around the table are in full agreement.

'Shi is of the opinion that this alone cannot explain how my noble ancestor was able to have such predictive power.' Bao changes tone. 'It is well known that on his return from his great journey, Shao Yong was a changed man. He wrote: The Book of Supreme World-Ordering Principles, and, he was famous for his predictive power amongst his peers. Such notables as Ssu-ma Kuang, The Cheng brothers, Chang Tsai and several others, remarked on his remarkable ability.' He changes tone once more. 'And, here I have to agree with Shi, not a common occurrence' the others find this as humorous as Bao does himself 'that Shao Yong must have found something else on his journey to allow him such predictive power.'

'But what?' Asks Lizong hoping for a specific answer.

'If the Son of Heaven could move the border some two hundred kilometres to the north, I will go and find out.' Says Bao with not a trace of humour on his face.

'Of course, Master Librarian, would the next full moon be convenient for you?' Says Lizong with a voice as dry as autumn leaves.

They all laugh at the thought.

After a while Lizong returns to the problem at hand by asking Bao. 'Is there anything else?'

'There is. It has been staring me in the eye for many a long year. But it was not until the wandering monk, my dear friend, K'un, told me about the writing on the viewing point at P'eng-chou that my mind began to work in a different way.' He waits for a moment for dramatic effect. 'If, as I suspect, that it was Shao Yong who wrote the words into the living rock: Master Nameless never stood here. Then he was defining, for those who can understand, the limits of his journey. He never stood

beyond that place. Both he and Confucius never travelled further west than P'eng-chou. So the next thought was: if this was the furthest west, where was the furthest east? Bao goes to another pile of papers and picks them up. 'In compiling these papers gathered here, which all have to do with Shao Yong's Missing Year. One of the most important papers was this poem that he wrote just a few months before his death. It is one of the only pieces of writing that deals specifically with the places he visited in his Missing Year.' He holds the pages up for all to see. 'As you can see, this is in Shao Yong's own hand. It is in the form of a four-sectioned linked poem. Shall I read it out?'

Everyone wants to hear the poem, so Bao reads it out:

I suddenly recall my days as a traveller in Southern Ch'in.

Looking back towards the east I am separated from Loyang by the Ch'in River.

The Cloudy Mountains are two thousand li away;

And it has now been nineteen years.

Aren't the willows coloured with new beauty?

The river sounds should be as they were in those days.

Even if my declining body could venture forth again,

How should I cope with the feelings of those days being gone?

I suddenly remember my days as a traveller in Eastern Ch'u.

With a bold heart, I saw the waterways, clouds and towns for the first time.

The habitat of the Eastern Island Tribesmen bordered the wasteland expanse.

At high tide, it would mingle with the sea merchants.

Lying down, I would watch the blue-green waters encircle their great patch of earth.

Sitting up, I would watch the red sun emerge from the mulberry trees in the east.

Emptily living, emptily dying - unlimited are the people of this kind!

The title - a man - is not an easy one with which to reckon.

I suddenly recall my days as a traveller in Eastern Wu.

In that year, my disposition was one of delighting in wandering.

In ascending mountains, I had not yet begun to hesitate or restrict myself.

In drinking wine, I have never been one to stop easily.

Ten thousand stems of lotus scent the outskirts of the state of Ch'u.

One sailboat, urged on by a gentle wind, passes through the city of Yang-chou.

How does chasing after one's memories differ from a futile dream?

Thirty autumns pass me as a short breath.

I suddenly recall my days as a traveller in T'ai-yuan.

Passing the autumn indulging in wine, I had not yet completed my return.

Distant mountains and nearby rivers, all become my regrets.

The tall watch towers and the descending sun were full of my grief.

Owing to youth, I could not help but have flowers catch my eye.

The emotions were so profuse that they all but soaked my clothes.

Now that as an old man, I have come to live in the city of Loyang,

These kinds of sorrows have never surfaced on my brow again.

'It is a poem that deals with time and place and emotions rendered by memories of his Missing Year. Thanks to K'un's coincidence of time and place in finding Shao Yong's mark of his furthest point of his western journey, I suddenly realized that the poem contained his furthest point on his eastern journey. And with an accuracy just as accurate as the one for his western journey. Listen to this:

I suddenly remember my days as a traveller in Eastern Ch'u.

With a bold heart, I saw the waterways, clouds and towns for the first time.

The habitat of the Eastern Island Tribesmen bordered the wasteland expanse.

At high tide, it would mingle with the sea merchants.

Lying down, I would watch the blue-green waters encircle their great patch of earth.

Sitting up, I would watch the red sun emerge from the mulberry trees in the east.

From this we can deduce that he was in Eastern Ch'u on the coast. In a place where the eastern island at high tide mingled with the merchant ships. Then he gives a precise location: Lying down, I would watch the blue-green waters encircle eastern island. Sitting up, I would watch the red sun emerge from the mulberry trees in the east. When he was lying down he could see eastern island. He must have been on the slopes of Laoshan looking south - it is the only place he could have been. If we have here the north-south axis, he then gives the east-west axis - sitting up, I would watch the red sun emerge from the mulberry trees in the east. The lower slopes of Laoshan were in those days covered in Mulberry trees because the entire region was involved in the silk trade and silk worms need mulberry leaves. It is a precise location. I

could go there now and in lying down and sitting up find the precise spot that he was writing about.'

A silence follows before Lizong speaks. 'Now I see your cunning plan. You would have me invade the ancient province of Ch'u, just so you can lie down and sit up on the slopes of Laoshan.'

Even Bao finds this funny. Then he turns more serious. 'I have spent a lot of time on this study of my ancient ancestor's investigation of things and unfortunately it has run into a dead end. I cannot justify, even to myself, carrying on. I would therefore suggest that I employ my talents elsewhere.'

'Not so fast, Master Librarian.' Says Lizong. 'What you have revealed has been revealed by reason and would seem to have merit. Shao Yong's predictive power is recorded fact, and if we could acquire this knowledge, not only might it explain how our universe works but it could provide us with a tool that would be invaluable in our fight against the barbarian. So what I say to you Bao is this. Take some time off and then come back to it afresh. It was Shao Yong who presented the idea of moving observational points. The idea of multiple perspectives. Perhaps by taking a different perspective on your noble ancestor's work, you would be working in the same vein as he, and that might reveal to your mind what was in his.' His smile is filled with benevolence. 'Perhaps you can help Shi with his new estate, and his coming marriage to your sister.' His smile then changes by the influence of cunning and power on his features. 'As for the ancient state of Ch'u ... leave that with me.'

With that he turns and leaves. Those gathered bow to his fast receding form.

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The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Confidence is high when the state is in good order.

Inferior men press on without thought.

The superior man is not deluded by this temporary condition

But may suffer the consequences anyway.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Obstruction (35)

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==  ==
===== Water
==  ==
=====
==  == Mountain
==  ==

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THE IMAGE

Water rains on the Mountain:

The Image of OBSTRUCTION.

Thus the superior man tests himself against obstructions

So that he can learn to solve problems and develop his Inner Truth.

Chapter 5

Conflict (27)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

14th Day of the 1st Moon

Midnight

=====

===== Heaven

=====

== ==

===== Water

== ==

THE IMAGE

The creative Heaven shuns the abysmal Water:

The Image of CONFLICT.

The superior man looks to the beginnings of transactions

For the seeds of conflict.

Coherence of the spirit makes arbitration possible.

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“Great is the Way of the sage! Over flowing, it produces and nourishes all things and rises up to the height of Heaven. How exceedingly great! It encompasses the three hundred rules of ceremonies and the three thousand rules of conduct. It waits for the proper man before it can be put into practice. Therefore it is said, ‘Unless there is perfect virtue, the perfect Way cannot be materialized.’ Therefore the superior man honours the moral nature and follows the path of enquiry and study. He achieves breadth and greatness and pursues the refined and subtle to the limit. He seeks to reach the greatest height and brilliancy and follows the path of the Mean. He goes over the old to find what is new. He is earnest and deep and highly respects all propriety. Therefore, when occupying a high position, he is not proud, and when serving in a low position, he is not insubordinate. When the Way prevails in the country he can rise to official position through his words. When the Way does not prevail in the country, he preserves himself through silence. The Book of Odes says, ‘Intelligent and wise, he protects his person.’ This is the meaning.”

From the Doctrine of the Mean. Section 27.

The whole day had been spent making lanterns. However, Kublai could not be persuaded to join his Han companions in this great Chinese festival; The Feast of Lanterns.

Several times the Envoy and his entourage had visited the markets and shops to seek materials for the construction and decorations of their individual lanterns.

Several times Asutai had his men follow them on what, to the Mongolians, was little more than a child’s game.

The main dining area of The Golden Lu teahouse had been converted into a factory for the production of lanterns and other decorations for the festival. Because the Han Envoy and his entourage were engaged in this ritual of construction, the Madam and her servants, along with the singing girls, felt safe in participating in the festival’s creative manifestations.

Shi, with the honour of his position to protect, had bought one of the large glass lanterns produced in Suzhou. At over a metre in diameter and painted in exquisite detail with a scene depicting the butterfly that dreamt it was Chuang-tse dreaming he was a butterfly, it was an extravagance only an Envoy could afford. It had remained unsold for five years before Shi had finally purchased it to make the shop keeper happy. The rod that it hung from was five metres and some. This had to be decorated with gold leaf in the form of bark and small branches covered in paper flowers before it was ready for display. Shi organized two servants of the Madam to carry its great weight.

Ling-ling had resorted to her childhood construction of a lantern in the shape of a sailing ship made from thin bamboo and paper. Hanging from its masts are miniature lanterns all of which have to be made and carefully hung. Its daring construction has been well tested over many years and is, in spite of its sophistication, a robust lantern that is a great pleasure on the eye. It also needed to be carried by two men on a five metre rod as its one and a half metre height and two metre length made it cumbersome in the extreme, and awkward to handle, even under just a light breeze.

Bao and Tai make one together. Starting with a white jade dragon boat and surrounded below with every kind of feather and painted reed formed into a sea of crashing waves. It takes an age to form these waves, and the rest of The Golden Lu employees marvel at the construction hoping to employ these skills in their own lanterns.

Kublai stands shaking his head in disbelief at the care and attention lavished on these works of art, for they could not, in all honesty, be described as anything less. 'What say you, Asutai, are we not witness to a form of madness?'

'A collective madness. Let us hope it is not catching but I fear it may well be as my own children force this issue.'

Bao can see Kublai and Asutai's interest and waves them across. 'Come friends, come and join in. You will soon find new skills that you never knew existed.'

Kublai waves Bao away with his hand, only for Bao to come right up to him. 'Great Khan, you will deny yourself a great pleasure, and more, you will deny yourself the opportunity to learn great skills.'

'Great skills to build lanterns, do not interest me.' Kublai defends himself.

Bao is not impressed and so continues. 'Great skills that train the mind in new forms of knowledge should be carefully studied. Where these new skills can be employed is of advantage to all human endeavours. And where new knowledge arises, does not the mind sing with joy. My noble ancestor Shao Yong has written: Learning that does not end in delight, cannot be called learning. Here the learning does not only end in delight but has a physical manifestation which is delight incarnate.'

Seeing that the young Khan is doubtful, but also sensing that his interest has been roused, Bao continues. 'Take Shi's great

glass globe. It took the men of Suzhou countless centuries to gather the skills to produce these great glass globes. And it has taken the last two centuries to develop the skills to insert the devices into these globes that so transform the paintings that are rendered on their surface into living lessons. Shi's globe is decorated by a superb artist as it recounts Chuang Tse's famous insight about the nature of reality: Chuang Tze dreamt he was a butterfly dreaming that he was Chuang Tze. This is an endless cycle. Here the lantern artists recounts this by placing a device inside the globe that rotates a large butterfly. As it rotates it stops the light falling on first Chuang Tze then the painted butterfly then again Chuang Tze in an endless cycle. This device inside the globe works off the hot air rising from the small oil lamp that produces the light. The hot air rises to the small hole in the top of the globe. Using the passage of air to act on small sails at the top of the device to turn a wheel at the bottom of the device to turn the butterfly around inside of the globe, thus illuminating the images of Chuang Tze and the butterfly in turn. Can you imagine the knowledge that is gathered together in this one lantern and so brilliantly illuminated?' There is first, the knowledge to produce these huge globes. Then second, there is the knowledge of artists who have learned to paint scenes on these globes so that they illuminate the paintings with an inner light. Third, there is the knowledge of producing a device that activates the cyclic movement of what is the very essence of the cycles of life inherent in Chuang Tse's story. And fourth, as this device cannot be fitted into the globe because it is too big to go in through the hole at the bottom, a new form of knowledge is needed to achieve this. The entire device has to be able to be collapsed in such a manner that the device can be inserted through the hole in the base and then to be opened out inside the globe once in place. An extraordinary skill and, of course, an extraordinary knowledge. It takes four distinct branches of knowledge to construct this lantern; and you say this is for children?'

Kublai is greatly disturbed by what Bao has just said but wishes to hide it. 'Fascinating as it all seems, in the end all you have produced is a lantern. And lanterns are only used to light the way. That this lantern tells a philosophic truth about the nature of reality is neither here nor there. A lantern is a lantern is a lantern.' He turns to Asutai. 'Come Asutai, let us leave these children to their play.' He leaves in bad humour.

Asutai follows with a look of resignation on his face and a backward glance that says: if only I could play like a child.

As soon as they have gone Shi joins Bao who has already re-joined Tai. 'I need to find glass beads to hang from the underside of the globe. A good an excuse as I can find for revisiting the Confucian Temple. Will you cover me while I slip out?'

'If you feel it is necessary.' Says Bao with some concern. 'Tonight being the first night of the Lantern Feast, it should provide ample occasions to slip away in the crowds.'

'Our Mongolian friends will have spies in the crowds half expecting something of that nature to occur. I would rather chance a meeting with this mysterious pointing man when I can check to see if anyone is following me.'

'Then take extra care, Shi. And remember this mysterious pointing man may well be a Mongolian spy.' Says Tai.

'This morning when I saw him in the Confucian Temple he was pointing to a window high up on the wall behind the main statue of Confucius. If I am caught there during the night it could well go badly for me. But during the day I can say I am looking for the head priest to discuss Daoxue. I will take the book that I prepared on this transformation of Confucianism with me so that it will seem normal enough.' Says Shi with confidence.

'What seems normal to us may not seem normal to our Mongolian friends.' Says Bao with justification.

'Indeed. But I need to convince myself that it is true or I would not find the courage to embark on such a course of action.' With that Shi walks out slowly through the throng of people in the room.

Outside, the whole town is busy in decorating the fronts of the buildings, the fronts of the doors and all with banners and strings of fireworks, ready for first night celebrations.

He wanders in a careless way. Gazing about him in wonder. Easily enough done if one wants to confuse eyes that watch. He enters a shop filled with hundreds of strings of glass beads and in the pretence of examining those strung up in the window he examines the crowd outside.

He loads up with thirty strings of glass beads then exits the shop and wanders without hurry further up the street. He

passes the entrance to the Confucian temple, an entrance set back from the street by some fifty metres. Its stone and wood construction making it the tallest building in the town but it is little bigger than a three story building except for the bell tower that stands a further two stories on top of that.

Shi passes the entrance with only a glance at the temple and further on enters another shop and repeats the same exercise as the last.

This time he sees two men talking across the street, one with his back to Shi the other facing him. He had spotted these two from the window of the last shop and here they are again. A coincidence? He thinks not.

Having bought a further fifty strings of glass beads he slowly wanders back the way he has come, stopping to admire the decorations and deep sentiments expressed in the calligraphy around the doorways and hanging from the first floor balconies.

He then re-enters the first shop and repeats the exercise. Sure enough, the two men are there leaving little room for coincidence.

Arriving back at The Golden Lu he finds the others still hard at work. He speaks normally if in reduced strength. 'It is as we thought.' He glances outside to where a Mongolian soldier stands guard, alerting the others to his secret message. 'They are using the doubling method to string the lanterns.'

'A difficult method but one secure in its execution.' Says Bao without looking up.

'Will your lantern be ready for tonight?' Shi asks.

'Unfortunately not, these feathers are bird demons to weave.'

'Neither will mine. We shall have to parade under Ling-ling's sailing ship.' They look to where Ling-ling is attaching the tiny lanterns to the ships masts.

Feeling their eyes upon her. 'As you will not be ready for tonight perhaps you can lend me a hand with mine. I need a good many small lanterns to make this spectacular.'

The children working on other lanterns have been listening and immediately clamour to help. 'Teach us to make small lanterns, please teach us.'

'Oh, all right.' Says Ling-ling with as much contrived bad humour as she can muster. Never enough to convince children nor adults either.

Abandoning the sea of demons Shi, Bao and Tai are soon employed with the children in Ling-ling's quest for glory.

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As tradition dictates the lanterns and their bearers stand outside their houses waiting for everyone to be assembled. Only when everyone is assembled does the Feast of Lanterns set off.

Slowly moving up through the town the procession makes a tour of the various temples in a circular motion so that eventually they will return to their original setting off point.

On route this parade stops several times to pay homage outside the various temples, where refreshments are handed out to those participating.

The town is full of people from the surrounding area. They line the streets and make a great show of their appreciation for all the lanterns on display. It is very noisy and with firecrackers being set off on a continual bases it is the first time that Envoy Zhen and his entourage have time to speak together without fear of being overheard. That is, when they can hear themselves speak.

'We must abandon trying to make contact with the bureaucracy. It is far too risky. It is sufficient to know that they have tried to get in touch with us, for the moment.' Shouts Bao into Shi's ear.

'You are almost certainly right.' Replies Shi in the same manner.

'Let them make contact as they know the situation here.'

'Then we must be vigil as it will take something exceptional to achieve.'

'Indeed.' Shouts Bao, who then points to Kublai and Asutai with a large squad of mounted Mongolians at a crossroads.

'Wave and look happy.' He is forced to repeat himself to Tai and Ling-ling.

'What?' Asks Ling-ling and Bao is forced to repeat himself and point.

All four now wave and smile and curse in the mayhem.

Kublai shakes his head in disbelief at these ridiculous Han Chinese. However, he cannot but be impressed by Ling-ling's sailing-ship lantern with its hundreds of small lanterns hanging from it. He notices what an impression it makes on the local Han Chinese and wonders if it can have any significance other than the obvious. He waves back in good humour not wanting to arouse suspicion.

'He is definitely suspicious or why would he be grinning like a monkey.' Shouts Shi into Bao's ear.

'Oh, he's suspicious all right. And we must keep him that way until we have visited Laoshan. Or, we will never reach Laoshan.'

'Laoshan is a secondary consideration. Contact with the northern bureaucracy must be the first priority.'

'I have a feeling that contact on that account will come of its own accord.' Shouts back Bao.

The parade moves off and they wave again to Kublai and the Mongolians as a farewell.

Only a few paces further on the parade comes to another stop. The crowd parts to one side to reveal a stage in front of which are rows of children waiting for a performance. They have their backs to the parade.

A head comes out from between the curtains and on seeing the sailing ship lantern decked out with hundreds of different sized lantern, the head brings its body through the curtains and onto the stage. Jumping down from the stage he runs up between the rows of children to where Shi stands ready to greet him.

Shouting into Shi's ear. 'You must watch our performance, Master Envoy.'

'Of course we will.' Responds Shi.

'It is the story of the wicked tax collector and the poor widow.' After he has shouted this into Shi's ear he stands back and looks at Shi's purple robes that look black at night. 'You look just like the wicked tax collector in our play. Come and frighten the children.'

Shi follows the man down through the rows of children who now hiss at him. Suddenly he raises himself up to his full height and raises his arms above his head and yells at the startled children, first on one side then the other. The children

scream and scramble to get away. Their parents standing at the side have to comfort the little ones who really do believe that the wicked tax collector has arrived.

Kublai and Asutai on seeing Shi follow the man quickly cut through the parade and arriving at the entrance to the lane where the street theatre is in action are amazed to find Shi dashing about like a mad thing.

With cries of 'Shame on you' from the parents. Shi retreats, but not before a few sudden lunges back towards the children. Having regained his friends he turns to find the curtains withdrawn and the scene set.

Kublai relaxes as he realizes that Shi has been drafted in to this piece of street theatre.

The life size characters are made of lanterns, ones for the arms, one for the head and one for the body. These lanterns have been constructed with fine detail so that one can see the fingers on the hands, and the hairs on the head. The faces have been painted on with extreme delicacy.

The poor widow kneels in abject misery but her words cannot be heard until the parents and those watching call for silence.

She begins again. 'My poor husband has died. A man I loved so well. He died of hard work and worry. What is to become of me and my two children?'

Two lantern children come in from the side weeping and embrace their mother. The weeping of the lantern children on stage is soon joined by the pretend weeping of the parents, and thus encouraged, the children in the audience cry and wail with some authenticity.

The stage darkens then thunder drums roll and flashes of lightning made by giant sparks from jujube and coal. The dark outline of the tax collector passes behind the thin sheet of the backdrop to boos from the parents and soon from the children.

He suddenly enters through the backdrop cackling as he does. 'What have we here, my little dears?' He addresses the children in the audience. This provokes squeals of fright from the children. Then he turns his attention to the poor widow and her two children. 'Where is your husband, woman?'

'Dead sir. Am I not a widow?' She weeps.

'Dead! Dead!! He cannot be dead for he owes me money.'

'There is little money left and that is for food for my children.' She cries.

'The tax collector cares not for such lies. He will take what is owed and if you do not have enough he will take your bed,' here, the audience join in 'and if that is not enough, he will take your clothes, and if that is not enough, he will take your house, and if that is not enough he will take your children.'

The wicked tax collector turns to the children in the audience and points with a crooked finger. 'And if that is not enough he will take you! And You! And You!!' He sweeps his stabbing finger across the gathered children in the audience.

The children squeal and the little ones run to their parents at the side. Much to their parents delight.

He cackles like a mad thing then turns away exiting through the closing curtains with the children, and also the parents, hissing in anger.

Some of the children turn around to see if Shi is still there and on spotting him they hiss anew. Shi is quick to pick up on this change of direction and raising his arms above his head he rushes down between the rows terrifying the children with just his presence and the contorted mad look on his face. He carries on with this mad act until the curtain reopens. The parents quickly get their children back into the rows of seats for the second act.

The scene is now inside the Confucian temple. A very tall lantern depicting Confucius, indeed, modelled on the one inside the Confucian temple just down the street, stands centre stage.

The destitute woman kneels at its feet and appeals to the statue. 'If only you were alive today, you would not let this wicked man take my children and sell them into slavery. What am I to do? Please statue, tell me what am I to do?' She breaks into tears and wails grasping onto his lantern feet with her lantern hands.

A lantern man in white steps forth from the side of the stage. This kindly faced character, perceives the Image of the poor woman at the foot of the statue, by sweeping his lantern arms over it. Then he presents the Image to the audience by stretching his lantern arms out wide. 'What is to be done? When Confucius is dead these fifteen hundred years. If he were here, then surely her children would be safe. But he is not.'

He turns again to the weeping woman and shakes his kindly head. 'Has fate wrought this tragic tale where a poor woman loses her children through little fault of her own?' He appeals to the audience. 'What say you?'

The audience, even the children, respond in the spirit of the time honoured tradition. 'We will never let this happen. In the name of our common humanity, we will never let this happen. *This culture of ours* will never let this happen.'

The curtain closes and the children swing around to see Shi already on his wicked way. More screams more running to parents but then he stops in his tracks because the great sailing ship moves down in amongst the audience and Bao jumps out and chases Shi around the rows of seats and finally out of the play. Great cheers go up as the curtain goes up for the final act.

The lantern woman and her lantern children are gathered together in the centre of the stage. On seeing the shadow of the tax collector on the back drop she drops to her knees and her lantern children grasp onto her, as if to life itself.

The tax collector enters the front of the stage to more hissing from the audience.

'Where is my money? You vile woman. A person who would deprive the Emperor of what is rightfully his.'

The woman rises leaving her children grasping her ankles. 'Is the Emperor so filled with greed that he would have a destitute woman deprived of the only things she has left. Her children. Where is his common humanity?'

A light goes out in the lantern tax collector's body. At the same time the lights on stage dim and the light within the woman increases in strength.

'Is the Emperor so far removed from his people that he cannot see that righteousness is being defiled?'

Another light goes out in the lantern tax collector's body. The lights on stage dim almost to darkness while the light in her body increases in strength.

'Where is his virtue? Where is his benevolence?'

Another two lights goes out in the tax collector's body and he drops to his knees.

'Has the Emperor forgotten that the spirit in him is the same spirit that is in me and that of my children, and indeed of all children?'

The final light goes out in the tax collector's body and he crumples onto the floor.

Her light increases to a brilliant whiteness hard to look at against what is now a completely black stage.

She turns to face the audience. 'Who will help me?' She cries out with strength.

The audience respond. 'We will help you.'

The children, encouraged by their parents, deliver coins to the stage. Tai and Ling-ling deliver coins to the stage and are soon followed by other adults until the stage is covered in money.

'I am saved.' She cries out as she bursts into multi-coloured brilliance. Radiating light across all of those gathered.

The curtain comes down, the lights go up.

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Arriving back at The Golden Lu find the reception area converted into a dining room.

'As you have successfully commandeered the dining area with your lantern construction we have been forced to turn this space into a place to eat. Come, take your places. A fine selection of dishes will soon arrive.' Says Kublai in good humour.

The Han Chinese soon take up their seats around a low table.

'So did you enjoy your Lantern Feast?' Asks Kublai.

'Indeed.' Answers Shi

'And your role in the lantern play, it was a masterly performance.'

'You are too kind.' Shi's smile borders on laughter. 'Perhaps we can find a role for your good self.'

'Any role except the one of the tax collector. I would not wish to deprive you of a role that suits you so well.' Says Kublai with just a hint of sarcasm.

'And how did you like the story?' Asks Ling-ling.

'The tax collector is a made part for a villain, in that the collection of taxes is never enjoyed by any people. That he gets his just deserts is to be expected in a play that is made for children. But, I was surprised that so many adults seemed to believe the sentiments of the story. Perhaps that is why we have found it so difficult to collect the taxes that are due.'

'Try making taxes voluntary. You may be surprised to find that you will get more.' Says Ling-ling with a sickly smile.

'You have a bright plan for financial ruin, Mistress Zhen. I take it that your good husband organizes the finances in your household.'

The food arrives to laughter that is at least partly genuine.

★

The second night of the Feast of Lanterns brings forth Shi's finished lantern. Now regaled with strings of glass beads that hang from the little glass hooks that circle the globe about halfway from the base to the circumference.

Shi, with some help from Bao, had first constructed a design on the flat surface of the table, before hanging them on the globe. Then they had spent some considerable time hanging them from the globe so that light shines on each symbol in turn as the device inside on its circular movement points them up. This needed the addition of more beads added to each string at the hook end of the string.

The symbols used were of unusual design as they were symbols from the Shang Dynasty script of hieroglyphs. It takes little imagination to understand what this said, when deciphered in the secret cipher code that the Head Librarian, Lai Si, had discovered hidden in the book that the Man from the North had brought with him from Qingdao. It simply said: We wish to make contact with the Bureaucracy of the North. Albeit in Shang hieroglyphs in a secret code used during the Northern Song era.

The risk of the Mongolians realizing this was a coded message was considered to be small by Shi and Bao, because the Mongolians had little knowledge of Shang hieroglyphs, and, they paid little attention to the construction of the glass bead fringe hanging from the globe.

It was a daring attempt at contact that, Shi and Bao, thought had little chance of success. They realized that members of the northern bureaucracy that may well have seen the Shang

hieroglyphs were hardly likely to be looking for a message in the glass beads, let alone one that would need to be deciphered from an encoded message in secret code.

The parade of lanterns set off with the usual stops and starts along the way. Ling-ling's thousand lantern sailing ship, a name now given to her extravagant lantern, leading Shi's magnificent glass globe. Envoy Zhen's contribution to the Feast of Lanterns was fast becoming the talk of Quiu.

Arriving in front of the Taoist temple of Nature in Completeness, Bao talks with the Taoist priests. 'What say you to allowing Envoy Zhen to explain the Taoist significance of his lantern to those gathered here?'

The Taoist priests were delighted and soon had the crowds gathered into a large circle around Envoy Zhen and his magnificence glass globe.

Calling for silence Shi waits until he has everyone's attention. 'Chuang Tzu, as I am sure you all know, attained enlightenment through the light of Nature. Alone, he associates with Heaven and Earth and Spirit, without abandoning or despising the things of the world. He never quarrelled over right or wrong and mingled with conventional society. Above, he roams with the Creator, The Great Oneness. Below, he made friends with those who transcend life and death, and beginning and end. In regard to the essential, he was broad and comprehensive, profound and unrestrained. In regard to the fundamental, he may be said to have harmonized all things and penetrated the highest level of understanding. However, in his response to change and his understanding of things, his principle is inexhaustible, traceless, dark and obscure, and even unfathomable. Who amongst us can say they know the mind of Chuang Tzu?'

The murmurings in the crowd are one with the sentiment of the words just spoken.

Shi points to the great glass globe hovering in the air above him. 'Here is captured just one of Chuang Tzu's insights into the Nature of Reality. Who amongst us has not heard these words from the Chuang Tzu: Chuang Tzu dreamt he was a butterfly that was dreaming he was Chuang Tzu.'

The crowd murmur their recognition of these famous words.

He points once more to the glass globe. 'Here depicted in this lantern we see the butterfly then Chuang Tzu then the butterfly then Chuang Tzu each lit up in turn as the device

inside turns. If the device turned forever this cycle of alternatives would also follow each other forever. Was Chuang Tzu not awakening us all to the fact that all states of being follow each other in cycles? Is not life full of cycles? Birth, manhood, old age and death. Days are followed by nights that are always followed by days. Spring is followed by summer, which is followed by autumn that is followed by winter. And is winter not followed by spring? Cycles within cycles. Cycles in nature abound. And cycles within the mind. The mind of the oneness, as well as that of the human mind. This celebration of the Feast of Lanterns is a celebration of the yearly cycle. Soon it will be spring and the beginning of a new cycle. So let us celebrate Chuang Tzu, a sage who made us aware of the cyclic nature of all of reality.'

Shi turns and bows to the Taoist priests who return his bow, much to the approval of the gathered crowd.

During this speech by Shi a man in the crowd makes his way around the globe writing in a book.

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As Kadai, followed by General Salkai, enter The Golden Lu everyone rises except for Kublai. Kadai's fury is hardly suppressed either in tone or content. 'You were told to avoid the hills because of bandits but instead you invited an attack upon yourself that could have been disastrous.'

Kublai ignores his cousin. 'General Salkai let me introduce the Song Envoy, Zhen Shi, his most creative wife, Zhen Ling-ling, the Imperial Librarian and famous coward, Shao Bao, and his beautiful wife, Shao Tai.'

The four Han all bow.

'General Salkai is one of the greatest generals in the entire Mongolian army. A man of few words and a quiet temperament. Virtues that my dear cousin Kadai would do well to emulate.'

Kadai's fury spills over and he storms out.

'So General, was the campaign a success?' Asks Kublai as if asking about the rounding up of goats.

'Indeed. Four hundred dead Jürgen to our seventy killed. Considering they knew the country it was a good success if not a great one.'

'Excellent. Now join us for there is plenty to satisfy your taste.'

As he sits down. 'How was it with you great Khan?' Referring to the battle in the hills.

'Two days of unmitigated pleasure. I have had a master class in lantern making, an education in street theatre and an introduction to the Taoist master, Chuang Tzu.' Says Kublai with an enigmatic smile.

'He is not easy to read and even harder to understand.' Says the General, much to Kublai's amazement. 'However, there is one piece that remains in my mind. Although I am a good Buddhist it remains with me still. Would you like me to hear what I consider to be a living truth?'

'What say you Master Librarian?' He says this without turning around.

'A Mongolian general that quotes Chuang Tzu would be worth hearing in any of the Buddhist Hells.' Says Bao with a cheery twist to his tone.

'General.' Kublai prompts.

'Speech is not merely the blowing of breath. The speaker has something to say, but what he says is not final. Has something been said? Or has something not been said? It may be different from the chirping of chickens. But is there really any difference?' The General looks meaningfully at Kublai.

'The good General refers to my cousin, Kadai. And of course by implication, to me.' Kublai explains to the Han. 'You will excuse me.' Kublai gets up and pats General Salkai on the back as he goes out in search of his cousin.

*

Bao and Tai look up at their dragon boat lantern with pride, as they wait for the parade to set off.

A Mongolian horseman riding alongside the parade drives his horse into the people taking part and scatters them. He quickly dismounts and enters The Golden Lu.

Kublai, Kadai, Asutai and General Salkai are just on their way out as he arrives. He doesn't have time for formal greetings. 'Your mother Sorkaktani has sent me.' He almost shouts at Kublai. 'Things have taken a bad turn as Temuge, Genghis's youngest brother is now claiming the Khanate for himself.'

'But Temuge must be over seventy. How can he hope to unify the Empire?' Says Kublai in disbelief.

'He approached your mother and said if she would support him he would designate you, Kublai, his successor. Sorkaktani said to him that he would have to ask you himself, as she could not give your blessing for such an alliance. Of course, she was playing for time as it is impossible to tell at present who will be next Great Khan. Having sent you here into the very east of China to keep you away from the intrigues back in Mongolia, but she was not able to foretell that Temuge would suggest such an alliance. And worse, he has sent his closest adviser, Gorogene, on a mission to get your support.'

'Is the old man insane? Or is this perhaps Gorogene's doing.' Kublai reflects.

'Gorogene was always ambitious.' Says Kadai.

'And duplicitous.' Joins in General Salkai.

'Your mother said you must avoid making any decision or committing yourself to any form of alliance or support. However, she fears for your life if you refuse Temuge's offer, as Gorogene travels with Assassins.' Says the rider.

Kublai, Kadai and General Salkai fall silent. Finally Kublai speaks. 'I must disappear. At least until Temuge has been brought to his senses.'

'Or until we can find out what is behind this madness.' Says General Salkai.

'If you are to disappear then you must do it soon as Gorogene is less than a half a day's ride behind me. And probably less than that.' The Rider says.

'You must leave straight away.' Says Kadai. 'You must leave now.'

'But what are we to tell them?' Asks the General. 'If we don't have a believable story for your absence who can tell what will happen.'

Just then, Bao walks in through the doorway. 'Great Khans, we are ready for the off. Will you not join us on this the last night of the Feast of Lanterns?'

The three Mongolians burst out laughing much to the consternation of the Rider, and also, Bao.

'Master Librarian, it is not us that will be joining you. But it is you that will be joining us.' Kublai takes out his grandfather's battle-axe from the back of his belt and hands

it to Bao. 'You may well be needing this again.' Kublai laughs at the quizzical expression on Bao's face, which is a mixture of incomprehension and mild amusement.

Once the dilemma had been explained to Envoy Zhen and his Han entourage, the Envoy speaks with sincerity. 'It is only because of your generosity that we have been given access to our heart's desire. So it would be quite simply wrong for us to refuse to come to your assistance in this matter, even though we have little understanding of what it means. We will do what you ask with a glad heart, for we see this as a kindness to those who have been kind to us.'

The Mongolians are pleased with this sentiment and express their pleasure in turn.

It takes little time to gather their things, load up horses, change attire and set off with speedy purpose. They make a great display as they leave, making sure that the northerly direction they take is observed by all in the parade, and indeed, by all watching.

This northerly route takes them to Tai Shan, the Holy Mount Tai, and indeed, they carry on along this route for some 10-12 kilometres, before Asutai, who is still acting as guide, takes them down a farm track heading east then across open countryside.

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The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

While in the incipient stage the situation can be avoided

Before conflict arises.

Avoiding conflict brings

Good fortune.

Changing Line in the second place means:

Avoid conflict with an enemy of superior strength.

Know when to retreat from any situation of unequal force.

Thus the superior man remains free from remorse.

Changing Line in the third place means:

To avoid conflict allow others to claim the success.

How can others rob you of what is rightfully your success?

For that they would have to rob you of your Inner Truth.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

The superior man in a superior position

Avoids conflict that reflects negatively on his Inner Truth;

Integrity before

Success.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

The superior man acts as arbitrator.

Dispensing wisdom in equal measure with detachment.

Good fortune.

Changing Line at the top means:

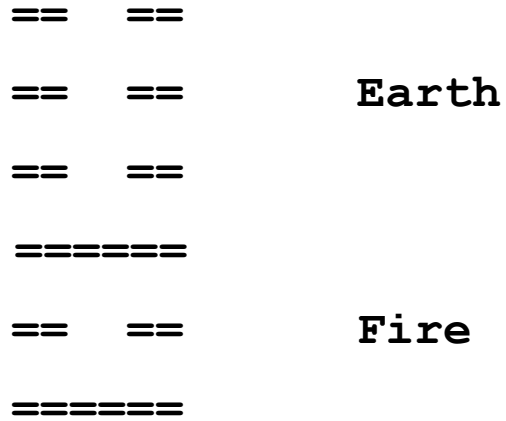
Pursuing conflict to the bitter end,

Even when one is right,

Provides the seeds for further conflict.

Misfortune

**The Changing Lines Deliver
Darkening of the Light (36)**



The Image

Earth subdues the brightness of Fire:

The Image of DARKENING OF THE LIGHT.

Even the superior man is affected

But he clings onto his own light; his Inner Truth.

Hiding it from a severe ruler he avoids confrontation.

Danger.

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Chapter 6

Limitation (31)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

16th Day of the 1st Moon

Midnight

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Water

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Lake

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The Image

Rain pours into the Lake:

The Image of LIMITATION.

Thus the superior man measures all things

And applies limits

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“Confucius said, ‘A good man is not mine to see. If I could see a man of constant virtue I would be content.’ From this we know that what the sage called goodness is not easy to match. It is not simply that we are better than animals that we may be called good. If merely activating the beginning and being better than animals may be called goodness, why is it not evident? That being better than animals is not sufficient to be called goodness is the same as being wiser than plants is not sufficient to be called wisdom. The nature of people is better than that of animals but may not be regarded as good. The term knowledge is derived from sageliness. What the sage ordered is accepted by the world as correct. To correct the course of day and night depends on the polar star, and to correct suspicions and doubts depends on the sage. From the point of view of the sage, the generation without a king and people without training cannot be equal to goodness. Such is the difficulty to match goodness. It is too much to say that the nature of all people can be equal to it. If evaluated in comparison to the nature of animals, the nature of man is of course good. But if evaluated in comparison with the goodness of the Way of man, man’s nature falls short. It is alright to say that human nature is better than that of animals, but it is not alright to say that their nature is what the sage calls goodness. My evaluation of life and nature differs from that of Mencius. Mencius evaluated on the lower level the behaviour of animals and therefore said that man’s nature is good. I evaluate on the higher level what the sage calls goodness, and therefore say that man’s nature is not good to start with. Goodness is higher than human nature, and the sage is higher than goodness. The Spring and Autumn Annals is concerned with the great origin. Therefore it is very careful in the rectification of names. If a name does not come from its proper origin, how can we talk about nature not being good or already being good?”

From the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals by Tung Chung-Shu. Chapter 35.

*

General Salkai rides south west in the direction of his army encampment, knowing he will meet Gorogene, Temuge’s emissary. He is not mistaken.

Gorogene and his forty plus bodyguard, galloping at speed, almost run into the General’s party in the darkness of night. Arms are drawn.

‘Who dares attack General Salkai?’ Cries a member of Salkai’s bodyguard.

‘Fool, we do not attack him, we search for him on the orders of the Kuriltai, the grand assembly.’ Shouts out Gorogene.

‘Name yourself or face the sword.’ General Salkai orders.

‘Gorogene. Emissary of Temuge, brother of the Great Khan Genghis.’

'If you are here on the orders of the Kuriltai show me your authority.'

Gorogene is filled with rage. 'You would question my word?'

'I question the word of any man that will not reveal on whose authority he passes through this land that is under my stewardship.' Says Salkai with authority.

Gorogene is forced to come forward and present the General with the seal of the Kuriltai. The General can now just make out Gorogene's battle-scared face under the gloom of night.

'What possible reason can the Kuriltai have in sending you here?' He passes the seal back.

'Kublai has been summonsed and it is he whom I seek.' Says Gorogene, then adds with contempt. 'Not one of his underlings.'

General Salkai's men draw their swords.

'It is either a brave man or a foolish man that would insult a General in the service of the grandson of Genghis.' Says Salkai in a calm even tone.

'What nonsense is this? You have seen my seal from the Kuriltai, now direct me to Kublai.'

'Kublai has taken the Song Envoy, Zhen Shi, to Tai Shan. So the Envoy and his entourage can visit places sacred to Confucians.' Says the General with just a hint of sarcasm in the tone. His men laugh.

Gorogene does not. 'What Envoy? A Song Envoy?'

'You must have passed a dispatch rider on your way here, informing the Kuriltai of the Envoy's arrival and the gifts he had brought for Ogedei; still thinking he was the Great Khan; not knowing he was dead.'

Gorogene is perplexed by this news and it takes him some time before he replies. 'And Kublai has taken this Envoy to Tai Shan?'

'Indeed. Kublai is of the opinion that this Envoy has other reasons for wishing to visit Tai Shan. Other reasons that may be detrimental to the Mongolian Empire.'

Gorogene can hardly believe what he is hearing. 'Why does he not torture it out of them, then send their heads back to the Song without their bodies.'

'He has not the authority. It is a decision that must be made by the next Great Khan. Would you have Kublai act if he were the Great Khan? Such an insult to the Kuriltai would result in his death.'

Again Gorogene is perplexed. 'So he has taken this Envoy to Tai Shan hoping to find out what it is they seek?'

'Under the circumstance it was the only thing he could do. But tell me, Gorogene, why does the Kuriltai need to have Kublai's presence. Kublai has not expressed any interest in becoming the next Great Khan.' Asks Salkai with as much sincerity as he can fit into the words.

'I cannot say. My words are for Kublai alone.' Says Gorogene.

'Then let us not detain you.' Says General Salkai turning his horse to one side and directing his men to stand aside.

Gorogene waves his men through then turns to the General. 'Your army is in preparation for battle. Are you expecting war?'

'We are indeed. We have just destroyed Jürgen cavalry in the hills south of here. Remnants from the last war. And now we intend moving on the rest in the Tai Shan range and then further east into the Kun Yu Shan range where we know for certain that many Jürgen troops now operate as bandits. Perhaps you would like to join us?' General Salkai says, glad that the dark covers his smile.

Gorogene spurs on his horse to follow his men.

After he's out of hearing, General Salkai turns to his men and says. 'There goes a very dangerous man. Thankfully he has the intelligence of a sheep, or he would be truly dangerous.'

One his men imitates a sheep with a long 'baaa'.

This brings forth laughter and more 'baaas', until the entire troop is bleating like a flock of sheep.

★

Asutai leads the way down farm tracks then across open countryside until they reach a small river as the sun rises. Here they stop to rest the horses and have a light meal.

'What are those mountains in the north?' Asks Bao of Asutai.

'We only know them as the Tai Shan range. The famous mount Tai is on the furthest west of this range.' He points.

'I see.' Says Bao. 'I was totally unaware that the famous Tai Shan was even part of an entire range.'

'Since we conquered northern China I have had to familiarize myself with the entire region. But my knowledge is limited to regions and how best to move between them.'

Bao, thinking of their recent encounter with a detachment of Jürgen cavalry. 'I suppose those mountains could hide a good number of bandits or Jürgen horsemen?'

'Indeed. That is why General Salkai intends making them a focus of his attention, before tackling the major problem of the Kun Yu Shan range. Where it is well known that there are large numbers of Jürgen still hiding out.'

'And they are further east?'

'Indeed. They run as far as the East China Sea.'

'I hope we will not be going to these dangerous places.'

'Fear not Master Librarian.' Asutai laughs. 'Your bravery will not be tested there.'

'So where are we heading?'

'A good question but not one that I can answer. Our immediate destination is a small town, Mengyip. There is a small garrison there which can offer us protection from those that pursue us. And it is there where we will have to decide where to go next.'

'I see.' Says Bao, not seeing at all.

Tai joins them, having been listening to the conversation. 'If we travel further east, surely we will eventually come to Lao Shan?'

'That is true.' Says Asutai.

'It is probably not as famous as Tai Shan as a place that Confucius was associated with, but, he spent a lot of time there teaching his students.'

'A place you would like to visit?' Asks Asutai of Bao.

'A place that is also famous for its beauty: A jewel of a mountain set in a silver sea. Rock formations like the cracks

in a precious stone that dazzle the eye. As the Buddhist poet, Aiwen Po, described it.' Bao says as a means of reply.

'I have not seen it but it seems it will make a good substitute for Tai Shan.' Says Asutai with warmth.

'It will indeed.' Says Tai.

'I will see what can be arranged.' Says Asutai with sincerity.

'It may well be a place to hide out if we can make it that far without running into Gorogene.' Says Kublai while joining them. 'However, as far as going to this town, Mengyip, is concerned. We may have the protection of a garrison to protect us from Gorogene's bloodlust but I would rather not have to answer the proposal of Temuge that he bears. At least not until I hear from my mother concerning this matter. Is there anywhere we can hide out for a few days?' Kublai asks of Asutai.

Asutai looks up stream to the Tai Shan range. 'There is a place in the foothills I found while exploring this region. A strange place that showed signs of use. However, of signs of horses there was none.' Asutai changes tone. 'If you are willing to take the chance of meeting the Jürgen enemy that we know lurk in the mountains then it could be a good place.'

'The Jürgen are concentrated more in the east, General Salkai said.' Kublai asks in the form of a statement.

'This is true but it is not a certainty that they operate only there.' Says Asutai with a hint of concern.

'I will take responsibility, Asutai.' Says Kublai to allay his fears. 'Lead us to this place and then we can decide if it is suitable.'

'Then let us be gone so that we can make the place before night fall.'

They are soon on their way, riding in the river to cover their tracks and to make it difficult for anyone to know which direction they have taken.

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At the junction of the plain and the foothills it is quickly decided that the pack horses and the spare horses should be left to feed on the grass on what were once fields of a farm; a farm deserted since the Mongolian invasion. Half of the bodyguard are left behind to tend to these matters.

Sending two of the bodyguard ahead with Asutai, Kublai and the Han follow on behind, with the rest of the bodyguard bringing up the rear.

They follow a steep twisting track up into the foothills until after three kilometres they arrive onto a natural shelf jutting out from the hillside. It is quite clear of trees, unlike the surrounding area which is covered in dense forest.

The view is magnificent with steep hills and deep valleys plunging down to the plain below either side of their vantage point. The snow begins to fall slowly in large flakes, adding another kind of beauty to the landscape.

Asutai turns his horse back towards the hillside where an overhang of rock has been used as a roof for a stone building. The whole area comprising not more than two hundred square metres, plus the building, which they now explore.

A crude and rickety door soon gives way to reveal a large room with a fireplace and crude stone chimney that opens out beneath the rock overhang.

'There was someone here. Three, perhaps four days ago.' Says Asutai with concern as he examines the remains of a fire on the floor of the fireplace.

Kublai joins him and points out two areas where the general dust on the floor has been disturbed. 'Two people at most; without horses; perhaps locals sheltering from a storm.

Tai senses the surrounding area. 'Or more likely Taoist hermits that these mountains were once famous for.'

Those gathered turn to Tai where she stands soaking up the atmosphere near the door.

'Can you sense their presence?' Asks Bao.

'Just a little.'

Bao turns to the others. 'There is little chance of discovery here. Let us set a fire and make good a meal. For I am as hungry as a tiger with a bad case of worms.'

The others laugh and soon set about bringing his desires into reality.

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She sits on compacted straw on the very edge of the shelf. She sits in meditation oblivious to her immediate surroundings.

The light of night and the lightly falling snow diffuses her outline so that she blends into the vista, into the very air.

Bao, whose love for his wife knows few bounds, wishes to fuse his consciousness with hers but knows it would disturb her expanding consciousness as she reaches out into the surrounding forest, valleys and hills. There are few boundaries between them but it is she that controls them.

Kublai joins Bao at the edge of the overhang. 'What is she doing?'

'She is practising a Buddhist meditation technique that allows her to expand her consciousness beyond her body.' Bao replies.

'We have shamans in Mongolia who lay claim to such feats. Although I have never met any.' Says Kublai with sincerity.

Kublai goes to join Tai but is held back by Bao. 'Let us not disturb her. She will share what knowledge she discovers with us, all in good time.'

Bao takes Kublai back inside. 'Do you not sense a presence in this place?' He asks of Kublai.

Kublai addresses his consciousness for a moment. 'I sense something but do not know what it is.'

'And I too sense something but do not know what it is.' Bao says. 'We are children to Tai's adult. Such skills are beyond my feeble abilities. Still, we do at least register ... something. It is a beginning. If only I had time.' His voice trails off.

'As an Imperial Librarian, what exactly do you do?' Asks Kublai with genuine interest.

This brings a bout of laughter from Bao. 'The Emperor Lizong indulges my passion for the great knowledge of my ancient ancestor, Shao Yong. He does so because he himself has a great interest in this man who was a founding member of Daoxue and who along with Zhou Dun-yi provided the metaphysical bases of, Daoxue, The Learning of the Way.' They sit down on compacted grass cushions that are part of a semi-circle with the fire at its fulcrum. 'Unfortunately, he is a difficult man to understand. I have made progress but not as much as I would have liked. Indeed, I almost gave up but the Son of Heaven would not hear of it.'

'Was it the Emperor that sent you with Envoy Zhen on this mission?'

'Zhen Shi and I have been friends since we were at school together. We understand each other as long-time friends do. However, it was Lizong who suggested that I join Shi on his mission. I think he thought I needed a break from my scholarly work, so that I could come back refreshed and hopefully bring a new perspective to the work of my ancient ancestor.'

'He who only tends goats becomes a goat. Goes an old Mongolian saying.'

'Precisely.' Says Bao with satisfaction.

Tai walks in but stops by the door. She requests Bao joins her by a nod of her head. He excuses himself from Kublai's presence and joins her outside.

'I have been summoned by a Taoist Illuminate that I have met on the plane of consciousness while meditating. Will you walk with me at least part of the way?'

'I will walk with you all of the way, Tai.' Says Bao with concern.

'That will not be necessary.'

They set off down the track that led them to the shelf, with Tai searching for another track off to the side. Eventually she finds it. 'Stay here until I return or you hear me cry for help.' She can see Bao's concern intensify. 'He poses little danger, Bao. It is more in case I lose my way.' She holds out her hands that soon fill with snowflakes. 'This snow storm increases in strength and now with the wind rising I may find it difficult in finding my way back.'

With that she is gone and Bao settles down under a tree for shelter.

The track Tai follows is horizontal, drawing out a line around the contours of the hill. On turning around a tight corner she sees in front of her a man in just a single blue robe. He stands out in colour against the grey and white of the night light. He is free of snow either on him or in front of him.

As she approaches his whole face lights up with a smile. 'Your outer beauty reflects your Inner Truth.' He bows to the horizontal and Tai bows in return.

'It is a pity we have to meet under such circumstances. But then these are strange times. A Man of Destiny travelling with another Man of Destiny, and a woman who travels with them who follows a Buddhist path to find The Way.' His face changes to

something far more serious. 'There is little time, so listen carefully. I understand your dilemma. You cannot use mystical knowledge to solve mundane problems. That is why I have come to free you of this burden. Tell your companions that they are in grave danger. An advance party of twenty lost spirits approach the hermits' retreat from the valley over these hills, where a further two hundred starving Jürgen horsemen plan a raid on the plain below. Tell your companions not to kill all of this advanced party but let some return to their main party. That way this desperate band will retreat to find another way to the plain. Do you understand?'

'Indeed.'

'Then hurry. There is little time to be lost. I will look for you when the time is right.' He waves her away with his hand.

Tai turns away and hurries through the strengthening storm. She can't help but turn at the corner and look back but his presence has gone both physically and consciously.

Bao greets her with relief. 'Did you meet him?'

'Indeed, and now we must hurry as danger pursues us.'

She hurries on with Bao trying to catch up.

Arriving back at the Hermits' Retreat Tai explains what has just happened and this produces an immediate response.

Men are posted around the shelf hidden beneath its edge. Others take up positions on the rock overhang.

The door to the Hermits' Retreat is left full ajar so that Kublai and Asutai can train their bows on the shelf from the cover of darkness that the Retreat provides.

And not too soon, as the advance party of Jürgen renegades arrive on the shelf only moments later.

Kublai, followed by Asutai, let fly their arrows and bring down two of the Jürgen which is the signal for the surrounding Mongolians to let fly their arrows. Which they do with devastating effect.

This battle, more a skirmish, is soon over with a handful of Jürgen escaping the way they have come. The Mongolians despatch the wounded with ruthless efficiency.

It is this Image that Tai will carry with her until her enlightenment: blood red snow and the wild-eyed fear of innocent horses. But of guilt, there is none.

Kublai orders the building of a great pyre with which to burn the bodies. A fire of such intensity to consume even the bones of the dead; a means of purifying the Earth. A fire of such strength to lighten up the surrounding forest.

A fire of such power that it can be seen far out across the plain where Gorogene can only wonder what it means. Even this brute of a man can feel that it bodes ill. As such, he turns his back on it and rides into the east.

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The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

**Understanding the limits imposed by external conditions brings
Good fortune.**

Changing Line in the second place means:

**When the limits of external conditions recede
It is time for action.
Not to do so brings
Misfortune.**

Changing Line in the third place means:

**The inferior man lives in a world without limits.
Eventually this leads to
Misfortune.**

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

**The superior man applies the same limits on himself
As he imposes on others.
Good fortune.**

Changing Line at the top means:

**The situation requires ruthless limitation.
Failure to act brings
Misfortune**

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Mountain (37)

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THE IMAGE

Mountain upon Mountain:

The Image of KEEPING STILL.

The superior man practices

Reflective meditation,

So he can meld his spirit with the spirit of all things.

Chapter 7

The Gentle Wind (14)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

17th Day of the 1st Moon

After Midday

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===== Wind

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===== Wind

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The Image

Wind penetrating Wind:

The Image of THE GENTLE WIND.

Continuous gentle penetration

Achieves what brute force cannot.

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“Heaven is characterized by the power to create and spread things, Earth is characterized by its power to transform, and man is characterized by moral principles. The material force of Heaven is above, that of Earth below, and that of man in between. Spring produces and summer grows, and all things flourish. Autumn destroys and winter stores, and all things are preserved. Therefore there is nothing more refined than material force, richer than Earth, or more spiritual than Heaven. Of the creatures born from the refined essence of Heaven and Earth, none are more noble man. Man receives the Mandate of Heaven and therefore is superior to other creatures. Other creatures suffer troubles and defects and cannot match Heaven and Earth. Man has 360 joints which match the number of Heaven. His body with its bones and flesh matches the thickness of Earth. He has ears and eyes, with their keen sense of hearing and seeing which resembles the sun and the moon. His body has its orifices and veins which resemble rivers and valleys. His heart has feelings of sorrow, joy, pleasure and anger, which are analogous to the spiritual feelings of Heaven. As we look at man’s body how much superior it is to that of other creatures and how similar to Heaven. Other creatures derive their life from the yin and yang of Heaven in a none erect way, but man brilliantly shows his patterns and order. Therefore with respect to the physical form of other creatures they all move about in a none erect way. Man alone stands erect, looks straight forward and assumes a correct posture. Thus those who receive little from Heaven and Earth take the none erect posture, while those receiving much from them take the correct posture. From this we can see that man is distinct from other creatures and forms a trinity with Heaven and Earth.”

From the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals by Tung Chung-shu. Chapter 56.

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Having slept till midday they pack their things and descend to the plain. The midday sun has done its work and has melted most of the freshly fallen snow.

Propelled by duty, Kublai heads south to Mengyip. This is the nearest Mongolian garrison where he can warn of the Jürgen cavalry operating in the Tai Shan range. General Salkai must be informed. He needs to know of their strength and their direction. It is Kublai’s duty to inform the General, and as such, it must take precedent over everything else.

It takes until late evening, riding hard and changing horses, until the lights of the town come into view. Here Kublai pulls off into a copse of mature trees. Setting a guard he allows the horses to graze.

Asutai is sent in to summons the Captain of the garrison. To have just ridden into the garrison, Kublai could easily have run into the one man above all he wishes to avoid; Gorogene.

They build a number of fires shielded from the view from Mengyip. They have a simple meal of dried goat's meat with mare's milk, with or without, fresh blood from their horses.

Asutai soon returns with the Captain and his son, a Lieutenant. They join Kublai and the Han around a fire after the usual heart, head and Heaven greeting. Neither father nor son can take their eyes off the Han.

'Gorogene passed through Mengyip last night. I informed him that I was unaware that you, great Khan, were in this province, let alone, in this region. He was not happy as he could obviously tell that I was telling the truth; which I was.'

'Good fortune, good Captain.' Says Kublai with a sigh. 'Did he return into the west?'

'He did not. After showing me the Kuriltai seal, he changed horses and rode into the east.'

'Was there any mention of where he was heading?'

'Some of my men heard the name Qingdao mentioned amongst Gorogene's men. He never mentioned anything to me.'

'Has Asutai provided you with an account of the situation?'

'He has. And I would like to assure you that our loyalties lie with you and your mother Sorkaktani. And of course with our clan leader, your cousin Kadai.'

'Has Asutai told you of the Jürgen in the mountains to the north?'

'I have already sent a messenger to General Salkai informing him of this and also of your arrival here.'

'Excellent. Now all we have to do is decide where we should go next. Where would you suggest?'

The Captain is taken aback by this question. 'I do not know.'

'Come, my dear Captain, surely you must know where a small group, such as ours, can hide out without fear of discovery?'

The good Captain struggles with the question until his son, Lieutenant Caspintai, comes to his rescue. 'I know of such a place. Not far to the south-east from here, and near to the coast. It is a region that is almost deserted. It was a region that had been given over to silk production. A region of ponds and mulberry trees with centres for the production of silk.'

After the arrival of the Jürgen many of the big families fled south and with our arrival the rest have followed.'

Kublai turns to Asutai. 'What say you?'

'I know of this region, but I do not know it.' Answers Asutai.

All eyes now turn to Lieutenant Caspintai. 'I have explored this region quite extensively. It is a maze of interconnect farm tracks that are indistinguishable from each other. There are few fields, as such, only mulberry groves and ponds. Such that you may wander for days before returning to where you set off from and not even knowing how you arrived. Because the region has been deserted for some time even the main tracks are overgrown. It makes it very difficult to find the houses of the rich families that once used to live there. I have only found two when according to tax records there should be several.'

'It presents itself as perfect for our needs. Would you take us to this place?'

A big smile breaks out on Caspintai's face. 'It would be an honour.'

His smile is so filled with genuine warmth that the entire company take an immediate liking to the young man.

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They had risen early and had past Mengyip undetected well before dawn. By changing horses frequently they had travelled the eighty kilometres to this region of silk production by the evening.

The first sight they had was of a dark green line across the horizon of the landscape that they were passing through; one of mainly deserted farms.

Arriving at a broad track that stretches out in both directions as far as the eye can see, they are confronted by a wall of mulberry trees. Only five to six metres tall and covered in large dark green leaves the interlocking branches come almost to the ground, presenting an impenetrable barrier to horsemen.

Kublai is surprised at the scale and sits on his horse gazing first, in one direction and then the other.

Shi pulls alongside Kublai. 'Is there a problem great Khan?'

'Are there many such places in the Song territories?'

'Indeed. And after talking to Lieutenant Caspintai about its size, this would be considered small. Of course the methods of silk production are different now from when these ancient groves were first established.'

'You say these are ancient groves?' Asks Kublai with genuine interest.

'Probably a thousand years old, and possibly older. This province was the State of Lu in the Zhou dynasty, the dynasty that preceded the Imperial Age. The production of silk was already common in Zhou times. So it is possible they could be much older than a thousand years.'

A combination of what he sees in front of him and the knowledge that Shi has given him, disturbs Kublai. He spurs his horse on across the track and is about to go down the overgrown track leading through the mulberry trees, when Caspintai calls to him. 'Kublai that is a false track. I know because I wasted two days exploring its furthest places and I was unable to find a way through. Follow me.'

He leads them along the broad track going west for a few hundred metres before taking a track barely discernable into the groves of mulberry. It is just about accessible by horse and rider as the branches have grown across. They are often forced to duck when the rider in front pushes a branch across, thus making progress slow.

Eventually they push out onto a broader track in the darkness of night. They have to wait for everyone to assemble on this broad track before moving on and while this is taking place, Caspintai and Asutai scout ahead. Returning, they lead the company down one last track and into a large open space that is suddenly lit up by the moon freeing itself from the clouds.

What is revealed is a three-storied building running for several hundred metres. The sheer size and scale is impressive even though it is in a state of disrepair. If Kublai was disturbed earlier he is now filled with awe. It is the same for all of the Mongolians. The Han, used to such size and scale, are more impressed by the carved wooden pillars which the moonlight turns into twenty metre reliefs every ten metres.

'What is this building?' Asks Kublai of Shi.

'This is where the silk thread is brought to be spun and turned into silk fabric.'

'But why on such a scale?'

'Kublai, where do you think all of the silk comes from? In the Song we have buildings which dwarf this. Of course we have moved on since these times. We have a different method of production but it still uses the same fundamental method.'

'And what is that?'

Shi sighs before he begins because he realizes that Kublai has little idea of silk production and decides he must offer a very basic understanding. 'Silk worms live on mulberry leaves. When they have eaten their fill they spin a cocoon that is made of silk. The cocoons are unwound and made into thread and this is turned into fabric. However, there is more to this process. As the worms eat the leaves so they produce waste. They excrete, just as you and I, excrete what we have eaten. This waste is collected and is used to feed the carp that live in the ponds thus providing the farmers with fresh fish to eat. The fish also produce waste that falls to the bottom of the ponds and every few years this is dredged up and spread on the land around the mulberry trees. This feeds the mulberry trees which then produce a massive new growth of leaves. A virtuous cycle.'

'A virtuous cycle indeed.' Says Kublai more to himself.

'The Song provided a million bolts of silk as part of our tribute to the Jürgen. If the new Great Khan would accept our offer of tribute then we will provide Mongolia with this also.'

Kublai is surprised by this. 'You were able to provide a million bolts of silk fabric and were still able to provide your own people with enough silk fabric for their own use?'

'Indeed.' Shi offers the building and the surrounding mulberry groves by the use of his hands in a slightly theatrical manner. 'And this is where it all started. Is it not a shame that all of the wealth produced here is now lost?'

'Indeed it is.' Answers Kublai with force.

They arrive at the end of the building and before them laid out with exquisite skill is a formal garden in the Tang style. Having been abandoned at the beginning of the Jürgen conquest of 1127 C.E. it is wildly overgrown. Yet the forms and shapes

are still discernable and many of the introduced plants are thriving.

'I wonder if the original garden was as beautiful.' Tai says as she is overcome with the vista now before her.

Her companions agree with her sentiment before turning their attention to the end of the building. Three stories high with verandas on each floor, this was the living quarters of the family that owned it.

As they ride along its front they are amazed to find this part of the giant building in remarkable condition. Dismounting, they mount the stairs to shuttered doors and windows.

Kublai turns to Caspintai. 'Is this how you found it when you first arrived?'

'It was. I had the impression that this part was still occupied until our invasion some eight years ago. Perhaps the thought of another invasion was too much and they left before we arrived.' He soon has the main doors of the family's quarters open. 'Bring torches and fire wood and we will soon bring life back to this magnificent house.'

While Asutai organizes the Mongolian troops, Kublai, Caspintai, and the Han explore the inside. By the time they arrive back at the main entrance, a large fire set in its fire place illuminates the main room. In the other rooms fires are also set. Torches burn in all of the rooms on the ground floor, and in the kitchen, fires have been lit in the stoves.

The covers are quickly removed from the furniture and beside the dust on the floors and walls, who could say that it was not still occupied. Perhaps the lack of paintings and calligraphy and the shortage of ceramics would be a clue but as for the furniture everything is still in place.

'We have an instant home.' States Ling-ling, which echoes the thoughts of her companions.

'Now who is going to play mother?' Asks Bao with his eyes travelling between Ling-ling and Tai.

'Dear brother I would gladly offer but we have only the Mongolian travelling rations, of which I have little knowledge.'

Asutai arrives as if on cue. His men carrying two pigs and a small deer, still with arrows imbedded in their flesh. 'The

grounds are full of animals with little fear of man. Perhaps we can now have a feast to celebrate a remarkable hideout.'

While the cooks engage with the kitchen the others pick rooms on the third floor. The second floor being occupied by their Mongolian bodyguard.

The feasting begins after midnight and it will be dawn before they finish.

Having ventured beyond the boundary of gluttony the company sit around the open fire on low seats with a big low table at the centre that is covered with various dishes.

'Let me ask you a question Envoy Zhen. In the Jürgen records, of which the Han bureaucracy have kept the records for their masters, it is stated that at the end of the 12th century there were seven million families in northern China. And yet, by 1234 C.E. after our conquest there are now only two million families. Has there been a massive arrival of Han Chinese from the north?' Kublai asks after a long deliberation with himself.

'Indeed. Although I doubt that five million families have moved south. It would be closer to two million families. What say you Bao?'

'Less even than that. One and a half million at most.' Answers Bao.

'So what has happened to all of these families that have gone missing?' Asks Kublai.

'War takes a terrible toll on any population. So why would it not take a terrible toll of the north China population.' Answers Shi.

'If what you say is true and five million families have gone missing, then they are most certainly dead.' Says Bao in a matter of fact way. 'However, I seriously doubt those figures.'

'But these figures have been collected by scholar officials of the northern bureaucracy. Are you suggesting they are lying or have they made a mistake? Which is it Master Librarian?'

'I cannot say because I haven't seen these figures or know how they were collected.' Says Bao. 'The disappearance of five million families would seem to be impossible.'

Shi joins in. 'It would not be five million if two million of those missing have moved south. That leaves only three million unaccounted for.'

'Only three million families.' Bao states slightly annoyed. 'Fifteen million individual humans.' He scoffs.

Shi moves to redirect the conversation away from a direct accusation against the Mongolians, which Bao is slowly taking it. 'Many would have fled into the western mountains. Where many would have perished but many would have survived. Perhaps, when we carry out our next census, we will find we have a greater population than we thought, as many of these families will have made their way into the south. Or take what has happened here as an example. Who ever lived here in this silk warehouse, would not have shown up on any census carried out by the northern bureaucracy. Yet they were almost certainly here up until the Mongolian invasion.'

Tai joins in. 'Perhaps the Jürgen conquest forced the family to move south leaving only a single member of that family behind. And they left when you Mongolians arrived frightened of your fearsome reputation.' She directs this to Kublai.

The many voices that fill the house are now joined by a high-pitched voice crying out in Chinese. 'Put me down you brute. I will kill you if only you will let me.'

A Mongolian soldier arrives in the room with a boy of perhaps ten years of age tucked under his arm. 'I have found this boy spying on our position, great Khan. Shall I put him to death?'

'Not till we have tortured him to find out who he is spying for.' Says Kublai, but not without humour. 'Perhaps a woman's touch can solicit this information easier than the red-hot tongs of torture.' He directs this to Tai.

'Put the boy down.' Tai directs to the Mongolian. Then changes to a dialect of Chinese after his feet are on the ground. 'Now listen boy, and listen well, for your life and that of your family may depend upon it. This is the great Khan, Kublai.' She points him out. 'And this is the Envoy from the Song. We are on a secret mission of great importance. Will you not help us Han Chinese by answering our questions?'

'Never!' He yells into her face. 'Never, never, never.'

Screams can now be heard from outside. The screams of a woman in great distress. She is dragged before the company much to the consternation of the boy. On seeing her son she struggles

free from the soldier holding her and grasps the boy to her. 'You wicked boy. Now see what trouble you have brought down upon our heads.' Seeing the company looking at her she realizes the exulted persons they are and prostrates herself on the floor, dragging the boy down with her. 'Forgive us. We are only poor farmers trying to survive in a desperate world.'

'Find out how many farmers there are in these mulberry groves.' Kublai asks of Tai.

'The family that owned this silk warehouse, where are they now?' Asks Tai with as much kindness as she can express.

'Long gone these last eight years.'

'Gone where?'

'They left by ship when the Mongolians took Beijing.'

'Would they not take you with them?'

'There were ten farming families who worked for the Chen. They could not take us all so they did not take any.'

Tai turns to Kublai. 'There are ten farming families in the groves.'

Kublai turns to Asutai. 'Bring them here and find a place to keep them secure.'

Asutai takes the woman, the soldier takes the boy and they leave.

'These ten farming families are the seed corn for a new silk industry, right here, in these mulberry groves.' Says Shi.

'They might also suggest why there are so many missing families. If these ten farming families have remained hidden for the last eight years, why not more, many more.'

'Possibly.' Says Kublai.

'Probably.' Says Tai.

'Should we not look in the warehouse, to see if they have looms that still work?'

Kublai is on his feet and out searching for a way into the warehouse behind the family home. He soon finds a locked door at the rear and just as soon has the door forced. Inside a large room, they find twenty looms still in fairly good condition. The rooms beyond are in a bad state of disrepair; the ceilings are down; the floor covered in rotten wood;

places where the roof has collapsed and the sky can be seen through three collapsed floors.

Ling-ling plays with one of the looms and even gets it working in a kind of way. The rest gather around and watch as she shoves the shuttle across the loom then changes the direction of the warp and weft. As the silk is missing, it is only the mechanism that works. 'It would take little to have this working again.' She says with satisfaction.

At this precise moment half the loom collapses in upon itself, much to the hilarity of those gathered.

The dust and the cold soon drive them back into the family house. Kublai is about to have the door sealed when he changes his mind. 'When the farming families arrive have them secured in there.' He orders his men.

'They will need warmth, Kublai.' Tai pleads.

'Indeed.' He turns to his men. 'Go after Asutai and get the families to fetch their bedding and warm clothes.' The soldiers are gone in a moment.

The company return to their feast around the fire.

'So, Zhen Shi, exactly how many silk warehouses such as this are there in the Song?' Asks Kublai.

'How many?' Asks Shi. 'There would have to be more than twenty regions each with several warehouses and each much bigger than this. And of course there are many smaller regions and smaller warehouses as well. Silk production has increased enormously during the Song dynasty by developing the means of production. I can't tell you exactly how much because this was never my field of study. Shall we say enough to provide the Jürgen with a million bolts of silk as tribute without having a shortage of silk for our domestic use. And that for a population of sixty three million people.'

Kublai finally grasps the full potential and scale of silk production in the Song. 'The organization for silk production alone must be truly on the grand scale. How many scholar officials does it take to organize this?'

'Hardly any.' Says Shi with a smile brought about by Kublai's ignorance of the Song. 'We allow the people to get on and develop whatever they wish. We, the government, only collect the tax. And the tax is collected in bolts of silk. Although,

when the government warehouses are full, payment is taken in copper cash, silver and even in gold.'

'You trust these merchants to be honest?' Asks Kublai in astonishment.

The Han laugh but it is Bao who answers. 'Merchants are very dishonest people. I should know because my father is a pearl merchant and he disgraces himself a lot of the time. However, scholar officials have a very good idea of what wealth is being created and by whom. If merchants get too greedy, and they often do, then it soon comes to the attention of the bureaucracy, and steps are taken.'

'Do you behead them or throw them in jail?'

'Indeed not. We hit them where it hurts. In their wealth.' Laughs Bao. 'My father has been fined three times with such enormous demands that it has made my mother weep. And she is a good Buddhist.'

They all laugh even Kublai.

'What would be the point of killing these rogues, or even putting them in jail? They produce so much wealth the entire Song benefits.' Says Shi. 'We allow them as much freedom as we can, and in that way, ensure that wealth creation is at a maximum.'

'Bao and Ling-ling's father is a very decent man. He simply cannot help himself when it comes to making a good profit. And though their mother has wept at the fines imposed by the bureaucracy, she is still one of the richest women in all of China.'

Kublai falls silent, deep in thought. Soon, the company, overcome by good food and warmth, retire, for what is left of the night.

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Once the ten farming families realize they are not to be executed they set about cleaning the loom-room that is to be their new home for the duration. Each family is allotted a space, which they organize between themselves. Arrangements are made to have wood supplied so they can keep a fire on permanently in the loom-room and access is given to the kitchens so they can prepare food also provided by the Mongolians.

Kublai is impressed at how quickly they adapt to the new situation and takes note of their dynamic nature. Their docility hides this dynamisms and would not have been revealed unless the Han had not intervened on their behalf.

Once the new arrangements have settled in, Kublai calls for a meeting to which the Han, Asutai and Caspintai are summoned.

'Obviously we can't stay here forever, as pleasant and as informative as it has been. Gorogene is not a man to abandon his quest and as I have not heard from my mother on how the Kuriltai to elect the next Great Khan is going, so I am left in a quandary on what to do. I have asked you all here to see if you have any suggestions on what course of action I should take?' Kublai is in a humble frame of mind.

'Lure Gorogene with his men here and slaughter them all.' Says Bao without hesitation. 'Burn their bodies so what little remains can be fed into the ponds. They will have vanished from the very Earth. And so they might if they had run into a sizable force of Jürgen bandits. That way you can say that you never met Gorogene and therefore cannot be expected to know what happened to him.'

'For a coward, Master Librarian, you have a terrible blood lust.' Says Kublai. The rest agree in the same good humour. 'I have thought of this myself. However, killing my fellow Mongolians is not a task I find tasteful.'

'He would kill you without hesitation, great Khan, if he knew that you would not throw yourself behind Temuge.' Says Asutai.

'I agree with Asutai.' Says Caspintai. 'And this is the perfect place for such action. My father would willing give you three hundred of our troops, as he believes that you should be the next Great Khan. You have the vision of your grandfather, Genghis, the rest, at the Kuriltai, do not. They only think of themselves and do not seek to fulfil Genghis' destiny for the Mongolian people, to bring peace to the world under our domination.'

'I thank you both for your support. And I would also thank our Han friend, Shao Bao. And what of you Envoy Zhen?'

'In my official capacity, I cannot speak. But if I was in your place, Kublai, I would agree with our Master Librarian, even if his bloodlust is foreign to me.' Says Shi.

'Then let it be so.' Says Kublai, pleased. 'And will you stand beside me, Master Coward?'

Bao jumps to his feet and swings the great battle-axe of Genghis in the air. 'I will stand beside you and cut the legs off anyone who threatens you.'

Kublai, Asutai and Caspintai laugh, Shi covers his face with his hand in embarrassment, but Tai and Ling-ling look at Bao with disapproval.

Thus is the path of destiny made up of small incidents that have little meaning in themselves. Until this moment Kublai had not realized that Kadai's men were of the same mind as Kadai himself. With such men he just knew he could fulfil his grandfather's great vision. From now on he would bend himself in totality to his destiny.

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The Changing Lines

Changing Line in the third Line means:

Deliberation is essential but decisions must be made.

Repeating deliberation ensures they do not.

Danger.

Changing Line in the fourth place:

When a man in a responsible position has accumulated knowledge,

He needs only to marry it with energetic action to bring

Great success.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

The situation needs improvement not wholesale change.

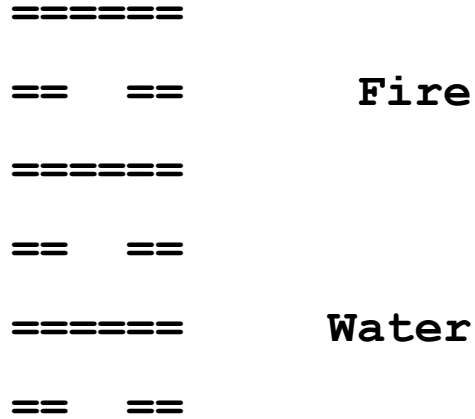
The superior man succeeds by trial and error.

Perseverance with this process brings

Success.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Before Completion (38)



THE IMAGE

Fire over Water:

The Image of BEFORE COMPLETION.

Harmony – separation – transition.

Thus the superior man increases his knowledge

By learning to differentiate.

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Chapter 8

Abundance (24)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

22nd Day of the 1st Moon

After Midday

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== == Thunder

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== == Fire

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The Image

Thunder and Lightning:

The Image of ABUNDANCE.

The superior man celebrates the principles

Which have produced such abundance.

But still he enforces the law

For civilization depends on the rule of law.



“If now water be poured on level ground, it will avoid the dry area and run to the wet area, whereas if two identical pieces of firewood are exposed to fire, the fire will avoid the wet piece and go to the dry one. All things avoid what is different to them and follow what is similar to them. Therefore, similar forces come together and matching tones respond to each other. This is clear from evidence. Suppose the seven stringed and the twenty five stringed lutes are tuned and played. When the note F in the one is struck, the note F on the other will respond to it and when the note G in one is struck, the note G in the other will respond to it. Among the five notes each one that matches will sound of itself. There is nothing supernatural in this. It is their course that they do so. A beautiful thing calls forth things that are beautiful in kind and an ugly thing calls forth things that are ugly in kind, for things of the same kind arise in response to each other. For example, when a horse neighs, it is horses that that will respond. Similarly, when an emperor or a king is about to rise, auspicious omens will first appear, and when he is about to perish, unlucky omens will first appear. Therefore, things of the same kind call forth each other. Because of the dragon, rain is produced, and by the use of the fan, the heat is chased away. Whatever armies are stationed, briars and thorns grow. All beautiful and ugly things have their origins and have their lives accordingly. But none knows where these origins are.”

From the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals by Tung Chung-shu. Chapter 57.



Lieutenant Caspintai had been sent to see his father to organize the entrapment of Gorogene in the mulberry groves. This would entail sending out search parties to bring news to Gorogene of Kublai's whereabouts. A system would then be employed by which Kublai would get advanced notice of Gorogene's arrival.

All of this would take time. Asutai suggested that while they wait they should visit the coast less than half a day's ride from the silk warehouse. A coast that Asutai had explored and one that he wished to explore further.

Kublai and the Han with ten bodyguards were led by Asutai to a place on the coast where a rocky outcrop protruded into the sea. Either side of which, were sand dunes and sandy beaches in the form of bays. They had passed through a deserted countryside and now found deserted fishing villages. It was a strange world with a strange feel to it.

They set up camp on the beach on the north side of the rocky outcrop thus protecting themselves to some degree from the

north-westerly wind that was still capable of delivering snow at night.

The change of landscape was total. From the confines of the groves to this expansive seascape with an unlimited horizon affected everyone. It was as Tai said: the difference between the enclosed finite and the boundless infinite.

Two huge fires were set and two tents erected; one for Kublai and the Han and the other for Asutai and the body guard. Such was the deserted nature of the place that only one guard was posted at the top of the rocky outcrop, not more than one hundred metres above the beach, where an excellent view of both beaches and the surrounding countryside was available.

For Tai and Ling-ling preparing food by use of Mongolian metal tripods was a unique experience and which afforded them much pleasure. The roasted legs of fresh pork hung over the fire gave the pork a smoked flavour that was delicious. Served with fresh vegetables cooked in one pot with duck fat and herbs provided a suitable accompaniment.

The solitude has a quieting effect on the whole company and after the meal Tai wanders off along the beach soon to be followed by Bao.

Coming across the ruins of a large fishing boat they stop and stare at what looks like the carcass of some great sea creature with its ribs poking out from the sand.

This has an unsettling effect on Tai and she looks about her with disquiet. The wind has stopped. She mounts the sand dune and sits on the top where Bao eventually joins her after he has examined what he now assumes to be a ship wreck.

The only sound are the waves crashing on the beach. The only smell, sea salt.

The clouds begin to clear and a clear sky allows the light from a million stars to rain down upon them in icy silence.

'I wonder what they are.' Says Bao in wonder. 'There was a Han dynasty scholar who suggested that they were like our sun but only far, far away. Do you think this is possible?'

'I have reached out with my consciousness to our sun but it is too far for my limited accomplishments. So if these stars are like our sun they must be even further away. Much further.'

'It makes you wonder how big our world is. And how small we are. My mind can't grasp these perceptions and yet the very

act of trying gives me the strangest feeling.' He grasps for a word but can only find. 'Awe.'

'Awe. To be consumed. Overwhelmed by reverential fear of Nature on its grandest scale.' Says Tai experiencing that very awe.

'Is fear the right concept?' Says Bao, more to himself.

'It is the type of fear that is associated with the unknown. It is an excited fear, a fear that excites and prompts our curiosity.'

'Fear warns us to be alert to danger. The unknown may be dangerous. So, I suppose fear in this context may be the right concept. Fear mixed with the joy of curiosity, perhaps?' Tai adds hopefully.

'If it is this fear, the fear of the unknown, then it is a wonder that we are not permanently in a state of fear as we are permanently surrounded by the unknown.' Bao offers Tai the millions of stars by the expansive use of his arms.

'But our attention is not permanently fixed on the stars. It is only when we turn our attention to these unknowns that we feel this fear.' She returns.

'Most of the time our attention is focused on familiar things, this is true.' Bao changes direction. 'Have you ever meditated on this fear of the unknown?'

'In all honesty, Bao, I have not.' Then she laughs, and slides up to him putting an arm through his. 'It may be that I am as cowardly as my husband.'

'What a fine pair we make.'

After a while gazing at the millions of stars Tai states. 'You have him in a state of confusion.'

'Kublai?'

'You have excited his curiosity.'

'It is the only way we can gain his help on our mission.' Bao says with strength.

'Because he suspects we are on a mission.'

'Indeed. He will take us to where we need to be, to find out what it is.'

'This is a dangerous game you play, my love.'

'If there was another, I would gladly play it. But there is not.' Bao says with finality.

Once more they gaze at the stars and Tai meditates on the fear of the unknown this induces. For just a moment the fear and the unknown become one then become one with her. Just for a moment she experiences union with the endless unknown. Bliss.

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Shi and Ling-ling walk the other way and mount the rock protrusion. They stay away from the Mongolian guard at the top and make their way to a place that protrudes out into the bay. The sea crashes all around them in endless cycles of waves.

Sitting down they huddle together for warmth and even exchange a kiss.

'My brother has gone too far this time.' She says wistfully.

'Do you mean his new found lust for blood?'

'Indeed, and when I get the opportunity I will chastise him for it.' She says more in sadness than in anger.

After a while in deep thought Shi intimates his thoughts.

'Your brother is playing a dangerous game. A game that may be essential to the completion of our mission. He needs to engage Kublai's attention in such a manner that Kublai will take us to where we need to be.'

Ling-ling parts from Shi's embrace so that she can look upon his face. 'And where is that?'

'Qingdao. That is where the Man from the North came from. The scholar official that was killed by the artist Cao in self-defence; it is there we hope to find the scholar officials that sent this Man from the North on his dangerous mission.'

'So this sudden bloodlust of my brother is then just an act.' She says with insight.

'Indeed. I only hope he doesn't overplay his hand. Kublai remains suspicious, but then we need him to be suspicious. He suspects, rightly so, that we have a hidden agenda. As such, he wants to know what it is. If that means taking us to where we want to go to find out, then he will. Or so we hope.' Shi doesn't sound too hopeful.

After a while digesting these words of her husband she asks.

'How will we contact these scholar officials when we arrive in Qingdao?'

Shi's laughter has something of the manic about it. 'If I knew that I would know everything. As it is, I do not. We are like blind men in a strange market searching for an object that we cannot ask for. We will be watched continuously, so any attempt to make contact with Qingdao's scholar officials will be observed. It is the price we pay to arrive in Qingdao. This is the game that Bao plays. How we overcome this problem is a mystery to me and I suspect a mystery to Bao as well.'

'It is true that they watch us all of the time. We have not been in a position where we four have been able to have a private conversation. And this is the first time we two have been able to have a conversation without being overheard.' Ling-ling looks about her anxiously. 'Why has Kublai allowed this?'

'Why indeed. Perhaps he has enough common humanity to allow husband and wife some time together. I doubt he would have allowed the four of us such freedom.'

'Kublai is not such a bad man.' Says Ling-ling with just a little surprise at her own words.

'I agree. He is, however, a deluded man if he thinks that Heaven has given him a mandate to rule the world. To bring the world together is a noble idea. To bring the world together under Mongolian rule is not. Only a civilized culture is capable of that.'

'Such as, *this culture of ours.*'

'Perhaps. In time.'

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Kublai is gazing into the fire lost in thought when Asutai joins him. 'You have allowed the Han some time alone?'

Kublai rouses himself. 'We must offer them at least some time alone with their spouses, if not with each other. Besides, you and the others that speak Chinese have heard nothing of any consequence?'

'Nothing.'

'Then let them enjoy their freedom. It will promote trust. And that may encourage them to let down their guard.'

Asutai drops to his hunkers and pokes the fire. 'What could it possibly be? Do you think they scout for a possible place for a sea born landing?'

Kublai stirs himself and joins Asutai on his hunkers next to the fire. 'That would be the obvious choice.'

'And Qingdao the obvious place.'

'I have not seen this place. Is it such an obvious place for an invasion?'

'It has a natural harbour of great size. And a region easy to defend. But that is why your cousin has posted a large force there. That, and the fact that it is a great trading port, with ships coming and going at all times of the day and night.'

'Nanpu is a great port and much nearer to Beijing. If you were going to invade you would want to capture Beijing as soon as possible. Do you not think?' Asks Kublai of Asutai, who just nods his head in agreement. 'I can't see it myself. There has to be something else, or why send a Palace Librarian.' They both laugh at the thought of Bao.

'Come, let us walk on the beach. I need to exercise my body.'

They walk in silence for a while.

'Is there a library in Qingdao?' Asks Kublai.

'I do not know the city that well. But we can certainly find out when we arrive.'

'Of course we are assuming that their professed interest in Lao Shan is a ruse and their real interest is in Qingdao. What if it is not a ruse and that is their real place of interest. It is possible.'

Before Asutai has time to reply, Kublai stops and points along the beach. 'A light. I am sure I have just seen a flickering light further along the beach.'

They stare with intensity into the night until Kublai exclaims. 'There, did you see it?'

'I did. But it is far off. There is a deserted fishing village some five kilometres from here. Perhaps it is not as deserted as I thought. Let us hurry on until we find our Master Librarian, just in case they are trying to make contact.'

They hurry on until they come to the wrecked fishing boat when a voice pulls them up and has them drawing their swords.

'Kublai, is that you?'

Kublai and Asutai can see a figure at the top of the sand dune outlined against the sky.

'It is I, Shao Bao. Where do you go in such a hurry?'

Kublai and Asutai quickly join Bao and Tai. 'We saw a light further along the beach.' Kublai points. 'But it must be a long way off.'

All four now look in that direction until they all see the flickering light.

'We will need to explore there tomorrow. Just to be certain.' Says Kublai.

'If we can see their light then surely they can see ours.' Says Asutai.

All four turn in the direction of the fires on the beach.

'I will take some men and capture whoever it is.' Says Asutai.

'Then light a fire if you have succeeded and tomorrow we will join you.' Says Kublai. And with that Asutai is gone at speed.

'Come, let us return.' Says Kublai to Bao and Tai. 'That way we can rest before the dawn and be on our way.'

They follow Kublai down onto the beach and have a hard time keeping up with him as he sets a fast pace.

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After a quick meal Kublai and the Han make their way along the beach at a cantor.

The fire on the beach has a number of Kublai's bodyguard warming themselves. They point to a building on a wooden pier that juts out into the ocean. The pier starts high up the beach and is surrounded by wooden buildings that are in a state of disrepair.

Leaving their horses in the village they walk down to where Asutai waits for them outside of the last building on the pier; the rest of the pier is open and goes out a long way into the ocean with a wide T-shape at its end.

Asutai ushers them into a large room where all of the windows have been freed from their shutters. Near one of the windows is a family: father, mother and three older children. He introduces them as the Pong family.

'My name is Zhen Shi and I am Envoy of the Song.'

The family bow to the horizontal.

'Why are you still living here?' Shi asks with curiosity.

'The fishermen would not take us when they left because I and my now dead father were merchants.'

At this point Asutai starts translating for Kublai's benefit.

'What sort of merchants?' Asks Shi.

'We provided the fishermen with all the goods they needed in their normal lives. I organized the goods to be brought to this village from Qingdao on the ship that collected the fish that was sold in the market in Qingdao. The fishermen were always resentful, complaining that our prices were too high. Leaving us here was a sort of revenge. And yet our prices were not so high. By the time I went into Qingdao and bought the goods and paid for their transportation there was little profit. But of course they did not believe that.' Says Master Pong the merchant in a pleading voice.

'Unfortunately for you merchants are known to be lying scoundrels of the very worst kind. So it has been since ancient times.' Says Shi with a cutting edge. 'So why did the fishermen leave?'

'Once it became certain that the Mongolians were defeating the Jürgen the fishermen said they had, had enough. We all had a very bad time under the Jürgen and the Mongolians,' he looks at Kublai and Asutai with trepidation 'were said to be even worse. Once the Jürgen fled north the fishermen packed up everything they owned on their fishing boats and left. There were thousands of boats from all along this part of the coast.'

'And where did they go?' Asks Shi.

'South, to the Song.'

Shi has an insight. 'Ah, of course.' He turns to the others. 'After the great tidal wave of 1231 C.E. the coast of Huaiandong, Liangzhe and Fujian was inundated and the fishing villages were wiped out. It was a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions. The tidal wave was so great that the sea lapped up against the city walls of Kinsai. With few fishermen there was even fewer fish. But three years later there arrived from the north thousands of fishermen who settled all along the coast and thereafter, in a very short time, fish was plenty

once more. So this must be the area from whence they came. Remarkable.'

'What is a tidal wave? Envoy Zhen.' Asks a mystified Kublai. Shi looks towards Bao as a means of a prompt.

Bao bows to Shi in mock acceptance of his, Bao's, supposed superior knowledge. Then he turns to Kublai. 'There are records of tidal waves going back to the beginning of the Imperial Age. Giant waves bigger than a three-storied house, and even bigger, which sweep in from the ocean. The only warning they give of their approach is that the sea at first retreats, before returning in the form of a giant swell. They are not like normal waves that curl and break. The sea simply rises and keeps on rising carrying all before it. Few survive. But what causes these strange waves we do not know.'

'So your knowledge is not unlimited, Master Librarian?' Says Kublai with humour.

'Indeed not, for if I did, they would call me, Sage.' He bows to Kublai.

'A horseman fast approaching from the south.' Comes a cry from outside.

They all look out of the windows.

'I recognize the horses. This is one of my men.' Asutai shouts.

Kublai and Asutai followed by the Han dash outside. They don't have to wait long before the horseman arrives.

'There has been a disaster great Khan. When our men set out to find Gorogene they did not expect to find him already returning. Lieutenant Caspintai had barely time to bring fifty men with him to the silk warehouse. And with Gorogene following his tracks they will soon be on us at the warehouse. You must return with us to swing the odds.'

Kublai leaps onto his horse but on seeing Bao mounting he stops him. 'This is not your fight, Master Coward. I will not have you killing Mongolians. Give me my grandfather's battle-axe.'

Bao swings the battle-axe off his back and hands it to him.

'Wait here until we send for you.' And with that he and his bodyguard are gone.

The Han watch in silence as Kublai and his men gallop at full tilt until they are out of sight.

'So what do we do now?' Asks Ling-ling with her eyes still on the beach.

'We should prepare for the worst.' Says Shi. 'If Kublai is killed then we will be next.'

'Kublai will not be killed.' Says Tai with authority.

'He is a Man of Destiny.' Bao adds.

'How can you be so sure?' Asks Ling-ling.

'Because the Taoist Illuminate told me.' Answers Tai.

'And what else did he tell you?' Demands Shi.

'Only that Kublai travels with two other Men of Destiny.' Tai turns to Shi. 'And you are one of them.'

'And the other?'

Bao struts like a cockerel. 'I always knew that I was destined for great things.'

Tai walks behind him and gives him a strong slap to the back of his head that sends him flying. 'Men of Destiny often end up dead, or have you forgotten. Arrogance is often their downfall, or have you forgotten that also.' Says Tai close to anger.

Bao picks himself up and hangs his head in mock shame.

Ling-ling laughs at his antics but Shi and Tai do not.

Suddenly Bao stops and then sighs then sags. He breaks into tears and sits down on a veranda of one of the building and holds his head in his hands. 'It's not easy keeping up this pretence. Trying to persuade these Mongolians that we have a secret agenda by behaving in a strange manner and one that can only be convincing by behaving in this strange manner all of the time is wearing me out.'

Tai takes pity on Bao and joins him on the veranda and rubs the back of his neck. 'Now I understand Bao. This is all an act. A role you have to play all the time. I now can see that it must be very hard. I'm sorry that I have criticized this character that you are playing, mistaking the role you are playing for a change in your Inner Truth.'

'Thank you.' Bao says in a tiny voice almost lost in his tears.

'Accept my apologies, also.' Says Ling-ling.

'And mine.' Says Shi.

'Beating beneath this strutting monster is still the old Bao whose Inner Truth has not wavered.' Then he speaks with force. 'I cannot stop playing this role or we will not get to where we need to be. It is hard enough playing this role without all of you criticizing me for this character that I am playing. I need you to support me in this. It is working; he is suspicious. And while he is suspicious he will take us where we want to go because he hopes to discover what our secret agenda is.'

'It makes things difficult that we can spend little time together because they watch us continuously. This is the first time we have been left alone and able to discuss these matters.' Says Shi. 'Let me apologize again, Bao. It is a role I would not wish to play myself.'

Bao recovers and hugs his wife to him but in so doing he glances along the beach. He can see in the distance riders coming their way. 'We have company.'

Bao and Tai get to their feet and join Shi and Ling-ling who are now watching the riders in the distance.

'It can't be Kublai returning. Surely they would be mopping up their enemy if the battle went well. It must be Gorogene's men who have escaped Kublai's trap. Do you agree?' Says Shi.

The others agree.

'Then we should hide before they get here.' Says Shi and he turns to go up into the village away from the beach. But in turning he looks along the beach in the other direction and sees a column of horsemen breaking through the sand dunes onto the beach. These horsemen are much closer to the village and the others to the south. 'So who is this?'

They prepare to flee when Bao stops them. 'These new horsemen cannot be Gorogene's men. They numbered only forty. There must be at least a couple of hundred or more already on the beach and still more arriving.'

'They must be Kublai's men. Come, lets us warn them of the others that are approaching. Shi doesn't wait but sets off at speed with the others following close behind.'

The column is soon upon them and pulls up to where they are.

General Salkai is amazed at their presence. 'What are you doing here?'

'There is little time to explain but we think Gorogene and some of his men are coming along the beach from the south. They must have escaped from Kublai's trap.' Says Shi with concern.

General Salkai thinks only for a moment. 'Stay here and we will see to this.' And with that he sets off at a gallop followed by his column of horsemen.

Shi counts off the column as they pass. 'Close to five hundred.'

'Gorogene is doomed.' Says Bao with a certain satisfaction.

'Just in case some escape we should not be found out in the open. Let us return to the village where we can hide.' Says Shi taking command.

They set off at pace and arrive just in time to see General Salkai's column split into two parts both mounting the sand dunes.

'They are obviously in pursuit of Gorogene's men.' Says Shi.

'Let us hope they capture them all.' Says Ling-ling reflecting the sentiment of the others. 'I do not relish fighting men who have such skill with bow and arrow.'

Tai agrees and leads the way into the village away from the beach. They find a suitable building that has a view of the beach on one side and a view of the top part of the village on the other. Taking turns to stand on guard the two that are free hunt through the village looking for anything that may be useful against the common enemy.

★

They wait for most of the light filled day, seeing only groups of horsemen at a distance on both the north and south side of the beach. These appear and disappear in quick succession. Then, as the sun is setting, a group of horsemen appear far down the south side of the beach. They approach only at a cantor bringing spare horses with them.

Ling-ling, who has the eyes of a hawk, identifies Asutai. They go out to greet him.

'You are a welcome sight.' Says Shi with the others agreeing.

'And I am pleased to see that you are all alive and well.' He re-joins.

'How went the trap? Did you kill Gorogene? Is Kublai alive and well?' Questions Bao in Quick succession.

'Enough questions Master Librarian. You will have all your questions answered all in good time. Now mount the horses we have brought for you and let us return to the silk warehouse.' Says Asutai in good humour.

They mount and ride and soon enter the confines of the silk warehouse. Here there is much coming and going of Mongolian horsemen.

Entering the house part of the warehouse they find Kublai and General Salkai in discussion in front of a large fire.

Kublai and the General look pleased to see them. 'Come, warm yourselves by the fire.'

The Han quickly take the places of Kublai and the General before the fire.

Bao can't contain himself and blurts out. 'So, how did it go?'

'It still goes on. We did not have enough soldiers here when Gorogene arrived, as such, a large part of their force was able to escape. Our soldiers are out there now looking for them. But have little fear Master Coward the warehouse is heavily guarded. You will be able to sleep soundly tonight.' Says Kublai in good humour.

'Excellent.' Says Bao. 'This warfare is a nasty business and detrimental to my Inner Truth.'

'Spoken as only a librarian can speak.' Says Kublai. 'But this Inner Truth you speak of; what is this Inner Truth?'

'Inner Truth is the very core of an individual. His essence, as it were. Your Inner Truth would make you Master of a united world. A noble aspiration. Even though there are many who would not agree with you.'

'Including you Han?'

'Indeed. We Han believe in civilization. But we have long since recognized that many do not agree with us. I fear you will find that there are many besides us Han that do not agree with you as well.'

Kublai turns to Salkai. 'See how outspoken is our Master Librarian.' He turns back to Bao. 'Once you Han are part of our Mongolian Empire I will have you teach us this civilization. And we will take what is best and discard the rest.'

'Ah, so that is your cunning plan.' Says Bao in jest.

Kublai and the General laugh.

'Would it not be better to allow us to carry on with our very productive civilization and that we provide you with an arrangement that we had with the Jürgen by which we pay tribute. This was the proposal that Envoy Zhen was to bring to the Great Khan before we found out about his demise.'

'Indeed Bao is right.' Says Shi. 'We would gladly pay you tribute. For we know that your armies are greater than ours, and that your fighting men are far superior to ours. By allowing us to carry forth *this culture of ours* we could supply you with an increasing bounty of wealth. With you as our protectors we could easily give up our armies and pay you the same amount it costs us to maintain them on top of our normal tribute. Surely this would be beneficial all around.'

Kublai and General look at each other with surprise writ large on their faces.

Horsemen arrive and enter the building. A soldier brings forth a head and says while holding it up. 'The head of Gorogene.'

Kublai and the General examine it before the General announces. 'It is Gorogene.' He turns to the soldier. 'How many of his men have been killed?'

'At the last count there were thirty three.'

'Seven still missing.' Says the General.

'Plus the six Assassins?' Says Kublai in the form of a question.

'Of the six Assassins I cannot answer.'

'Then find out.' Says Kublai with just a little concern.

'Who are these Assassins?' Asks Shi.

'I will let General Salkai tell you of these religious fanatics, as he has personal experience of their ways.'

Kublai sits down leaving the General with a place in front of the fire so that he can deliver his speech to the Han gathered together around one corner of the low table.'

'I was campaigning in the Elburz Mountains south of the Caspian Sea far, far to the west. I followed a river, the Alamut, to an impregnable fortress known locally as the Eagles Nest. It was set upon a pinnacle of rock of great height with only one pathway leading from the river to its summit. This fortress was held by an Islamic sect that was an offshoot of the Ismaili Sh'ite Muslims known as Nizaris, named after their dead leader Hasan Nizar. They are fanatics with the most blind devotion to their religion; fearing nothing except their god Allah. Their name, Assassins, was first used as a derogatory name for them, for their drug of choice was hashish, of which they consume in great quantities. This word, Assassin, in the local dialect, means men who consume hashish to attain Heaven. There is a story, the truth of which I cannot verify, that states that young men were plied with large quantities of hashish and then introduced to a manmade paradise on Earth; where every worldly pleasure was afforded to them so that they believed they were actually in Heaven. When they awoke from this worldly paradise they pleaded with their leader Hasan to send them back to what they thought was paradise, but he said that the only way for them to attain paradise was to obey his command. And so he would send them on missions to kill other Imam's of different sects that he thought were heretics. If they died on their mission they would go straight to Heaven. Such are the stories that surround the Assassins. But few would question their sincerity when it comes to dying when on a mission ordered by their Imam.'

'Did Temuge buy the Imam's favour?'

'So it has been reported. But using Assassins to kill Mongolians is despicable. Temuge is an idiot in doing so. He will pay the ultimate price for this sacrilege; Genghis' brother or not he will die because of this.' Salkai sits down next to Kublai slapping his leg as he does so.

'Such men have a special danger, for they seek death. Many Assassins after they have killed their victim stand over the body and allow themselves to be killed. Unlike you Master Coward, who has a healthy respect for your own life.' Says Kublai.

'I see.' Says Bao somewhat disturbed by this information.

Asutai strides in. 'The bodies have been laid out for your inspection.'

Kublai and the General follow Asutai out.

As they walk along a long line of bodies Kublai questions Asutai. 'How many in all.'

'Forty one with Gorogene. Plus three Assassins.' Says Asutai in a low voice. 'We are still searching the groves for the other three but it is a difficult task.'

Kublai stops and looks into the groves. 'An impossible task.' He turns to Salkai. 'We will travel with you to the Kun Yu Shan range. The Jürgen bandits pose less of a threat than these three Assassins. At least for me.'

'It is for the best, Kublai. Surrounded by two thousand men all loyal to you. It will make it very difficult for them to get close to you.' Says Salkai. 'I will leave raiding parties hidden along our trail in case they follow us.'

'Oh they will follow us. We can be sure of that. Then I will have to think how best to give them the slip.' He looks back to where the Han are gathered on the veranda. Then more to himself. 'Perhaps our Han friends can help us. They are here for a purpose. I have always known that. But perhaps I have mistaken what that purpose is.'

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The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

The superior man finds himself in accord with the ruler.

Their clarity (Illumination) and energy are as one.

He takes the opportunity to advance the civilization

For the benefit of all.

Great success.

Changing Line in the second place means:

Abundance gives rise to factionalism as many want to share in this wealth.

The superior man trusts to his Inner Truth,

Knowing that the ruler is of a like mind.

Perseverance brings success.

Changing Line in the third place means:

The forces unleashed by Abundance

Have gained a malignant influence over the ruler.

There is nothing the superior man can do.

No blame.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

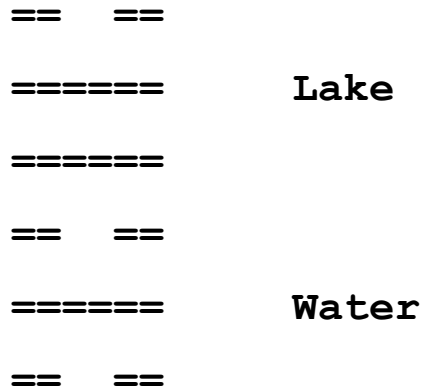
The ruler takes counsel from superior men

Who suggest a course of action for him to implement.

For the ruler, his counsellors and all of the people this brings Great success.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Oppression (39)



THE IMAGE

The Lake drains of Water:

The Image of OPPRESSION.

The superior man protects his spirit by remaining cheerful.

Thus he escapes from an Oppressive fate.

Chapter 9

The Family (22)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

24th Day of the 1st Moon

After Midday

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Wind

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Fire

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THE IMAGE

Wind emanates from Fire:

The Image of THE FAMILY.

So the great man adds actions to his words.

Like a father with his own family,

He is the power that regulates behaviour.

So acts the ruler with his people.

“It is only the sage who can relate the myriad things to the One and tie it to the origin. If the source is not traced and the development from it followed, nothing can be accomplished. Therefore, in the Spring and Autumn Annals the first year is changed to be called the year of yuan. The origin is the same as source. It means that it accompanies the beginning and end of Heaven and Earth. Therefore, if man in his life has a beginning and end like this, he does not have to respond to the changes of the four seasons. Therefore, is the source of all things, and the origin of man is found in it. How does it exist? It exists before Heaven and Earth. Although man is born of the force of Heaven and receives the force of Heaven, he may not partake of the origin of Heaven, or rely on its order and violate what it does. Therefore, the first month of spring is a continuation of the activities of Heaven and Earth, continuing the activities of Heaven and completing it. The principle is that they accomplish together and maintain the undertaking. How can it be said to be merely the origin of Heaven and Earth? What does the origin do? How does it apply to man? If we take the connections seriously, we shall understand the order of things. The sage did not want to talk about animals and such. What he wanted to talk about was humanity and righteousness so as to put things in order.”

From the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals by Tung Chung-shu. Chapter 13 of the outer chapters.

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General Salkai heads up the column with four despatch riders immediately behind him. Other despatch riders come and go at a gallop providing him with a continuous supply of information from the screening outriders of his army either side and out of sight. The outriders protrude well beyond the main column, like the horns of a bull, when entering enemy territory. The General will not be taken by surprise under any circumstance.

Behind this mobile headquarters comes Kublai and Asutai. Behind them the four Han followed by Kublai's bodyguard with whom Keshik has re-joined them, even though his wounds have not fully recovered.

Riding four abreast the rest of the column snakes its way across the mainly deserted landscape and behind them the baggage train with the spare horses bringing up the rear.

Raiding parties have been set the task of guarding the rear because of the Assassins, as well as in their normal role of scouting out the country they are entering. These are considered to be the very best troops that General Salkai commands; fast in mind as well as action they are quick to adapt to any new situation.

Shi makes mental notes of the structure and purpose of this Mongolian army on the move. He is impressed, very impressed.

Bao, on the other hand, observes the landscape with the eye of an artist. The Tai Shan range draws ever closer as the column travelling east is set to intersect the range near its most easterly end. The forest covered foothills are still covered in the previous night's snow, enhancing the relief like quality of the scenery. The mists tumble down into the valleys and spread out onto the plain giving the impression that the entire mountain range is floating in the air on the back of great clouds. This Image of beauty was one that Confucius himself would have recognized as this was his land. Bao wondered if he was right, if his ancient ancestor was right, if he, Bao, was experiencing exactly what Confucius experienced and therefore knew the very mind of that ancient sage at that very moment.

Tai is giving instruction to Ling-ling from the Consciousness Only branch of Chan Buddhism. Ling-ling has a natural bent, just like her brother, for this instruction. But just like her brother it is hard for her to sustain her attention. This, Tai knows, will only come with time.

Keshik lolls on his horse. The pain has been getting worse for some time. What a fool he thinks he has been in convincing Kublai that he was well enough to travel, when he is clearly not. A darkness descends and he looks up to see why, but the darkness is in his own mind and he falls from his horse.

The whole column is brought to a stop.

Tai is on the ground cradling Keshik's head and trying to revive him to she can administer a potion from her emergency supplies when General Salkai joins Kublai and Asutai watching from their horses. 'I knew the young fool was not ready to travel.' He turns to Kublai. 'He did this to please you.'

'Have little fear General, we will both learn lessons from this.' Says Kublai.

'Still, this is not such a bad place to make camp. There is a river and plenty of open ground between us and the mountains. And, we are not too far from the end of this mountain range. What say you Kublai?'

'If it suits you General, then it suits me.'

'I will take a raiding party to explore beyond the range.'
Asks Asutai in the form of a statement.

'Return before morning.' Commands the General.

Asutai gives a heart, head and Heaven reply before riding towards the rear of the column. He checks his saddle bags to see what provisions he will need for his journey. As he arrives at the baggage train he sees a raiding party arrive from protecting the rear of the army. More out of curiosity than duty he approaches them. 'Have you come from the furthest out position?'

'You will have to ask the Rear End Captain. He logs the raiding parties.' Says the soldier before speeding on.

Asutai heads to the very end of the baggage train where the Rear End Captain is having an argument with another raiding party. 'You should not have left before being replaced.' He says in anger.

'What is going on here?' Asks Asutai. 'You soldier. Why have you left your position?'

'Three soldiers from further back told us that they were staying on and that we did not need to stay.'

'Staying on where?' Asks Asutai.

'Staying on the top of that ridge we came over today. The one with the clear line of sight of where we came from.'

Something is wrong and Asutai can feel it. 'Raiding parties do not get to choose when they come or go. What is going on Captain?'

'I have not issued orders for anyone to leave that particular position.' The Captain hands Asutai a list of raiding parties. 'As you can see, this particular party should still be in position. There will be severe repercussions if they have left that position unguarded.'

Asutai ponders his options. 'I had come to acquire a raiding party to explore the region beyond the Tai Shan range. However, I must first ascertain what has happened to this raiding party as it may prove to be detrimental to Kublai himself if anything has happened to it.'

'Let me join you.' Says the Captain.

'A good choice, Captain. Now let us gather an experienced raiding party for this task.'

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Asutai and the Captain slither along the ground atop the ridge. The position the raiding party were supposed to be in seems deserted from where they are, about 200 metres away.

'Where are their horses? Surely they should be on the leeward side and plainly visible from here.' Asks Asutai.

'They would appear to have deserted their post. The punishment for which is decapitation.'

'There is little point in crawling to that position from here. Let us remount and gallop in at speed.'

This they do with reckless speed and arrive at the position in a small wood to find seven of the ten of the raiding party dead. Killed in a terrible sword fight. The ground and even the trees are covered with blood.

'Where are the other three?' Asks Asutai.

The Captain directs his men to search the area while Asutai and the Captain examine the bodies.

'Two of them at least have had their throats cut. A sure sign of a stealth attack.' Says Asutai.

'And at least three have been stabbed in the back.' Says the Captain.

A noise has them back to back with their swords drawn. The noise, now recognizable as a groan, has the two men scramble to where it is coming from; a thicket of brushwood.

While the Captain keeps guard, Asutai searches the thicket until he comes across a boy of perhaps nine years of age. He has been sorely wounded in the back by a sword and left for dead. Asutai turns him over and sees the exit wound. The action is too much trauma for the boy's body and he expires in his arms.

The sound of horses has the two men dash back to where the other bodies are. Their raiding party has discovered the other three bodies.

'They were covered over in a ditch, stripped of their clothes and with their throats cut.' Says one of the raiding party.

'Could these be the Assassins that we were told to look for?' Asks the Captain of Asutai.

'I can think of nothing else. We must return immediately to the camp to warn Kublai that the Assassins are now disguised as Mongolians and could already be in our camp.'

'What about these bodies?'

'Leave them for now. We will send out another party tomorrow to take care of our comrades.'

Asutai and the Captain are quick to mount and gallop off into the night.

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A full camp has been established by night fall. Many fires light the milling of troops with many voices in cheerful banter.

Around one fire in front of a number of large tents sit Kublai, General Salkai and the Han. A Tibetan medical herbalist, Kundareeper, arrives in their midst. 'Keshik's wound has reopened and much bile has issued forth. I have done what I can, but he cannot be moved. Not under any circumstance.'

'Thank you Kundareeper. We have made this our base camp for the campaign against the Jürgen so he will not have to move until the campaign is complete.'

Kundareeper leaves as Asutai arrives. 'Grave news Kublai. The raiding party we left on the ridge we crossed today has been slaughtered. I fear these Assassins are now disguised as Mongolians and could easily be in the camp already.'

General Salkai is on his feet before Asutai has finished speaking. He turns to where Mongolian troops are gathered around a fire nearby. 'Come here you men.'

They soon assemble before the General who goes amongst them picking out men he recognizes. 'You men will stand guard around Kublai and not allow anyone within striking distance of our great Khan. There are Assassins disguised as Mongolians amongst us, so be vigilant.'

Kublai and the Han are also on their feet and looking about them with concern. Kublai questions Asutai with concern. 'How was it that one of our raiding parties was taken with such ease?'

'It would appear they used a young boy as a decoy. Once distracted they would appear to have been easy prey for the Assassins' swordplay.'

'They are famous for their skills in killing.' Says General Salkai, then he points to one of his men that he knows well. 'You go and bring another twenty men that you recognize here to form an outer ring around Kublai.' The man leaves in a hurry. 'This is an unfortunate turn of circumstance.'

Kublai takes off his metal helmet with its famous new moon emblem atop its spike. He scratches his head. He looks about him deep in thought. 'So they used a decoy. Perhaps we can use a decoy. Come, let us visit Keshik. He wants to prove his loyalty to me to the point of folly. So now he has the chance to prove himself for real.'

Kublai, General Salkai and Asutai leave. Shi dissuades Bao and their wives from following. 'This is of Mongolian concern. We should not interfere even by our presence.' The others see sense in what Shi has just said.

'These Assassins have even these Mongolian warriors in fear.' Says Bao. 'Who would give credit for such an outcome.'

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Kublai, General Salkai and Asutai stand around Keshik as he lies in obvious pain.

'You have forced us to alter our plan by your total disregard for your own wellbeing. Keshik, you must learn that your loyalty is not in question. Never was, nor ever will be. But now you may yet play a role that is both dangerous and helpful to me.' Says Kublai.

'Whatever you ask, great Khan.' Says Keshik.

'I want you to act as decoy by playing me.' Says Kublai. 'I will have my standards placed outside of this tent, in an effort to lure the Assassins into a trap. It is dangerous in the extreme, as you well know, for they do not fear death but do seek it. As long as they kill me their own death is welcomed like an old friend.'

'I will gladly play this role but give me a weapon.' Keshik goes to sit up but then collapses back.

'I will fetch a crossbow which is about all that you can manage.' Says General Salkai and he leaves.

'Let us place him with trunks behind him and to either side so the Assassin if he manages to get in will be forced to come at him from his feet.' Kublai orders Asutai.

They quickly arrange the baggage trunks as Kublai suggests and by the time the General returns Keshik is half hidden in furs that cover the trunks.

'This is the smallest and lightest crossbow that I can find. It is probably all that you can manage. Here, hide it beside you undercover of these furs.' The General arranges the crossbow so that it can be easily raised and fired by Keshik from where he lies.

'How much time you will have if the Assassin breaks in will be little indeed.' Says the General. 'Aim at the lower part of the body.' He places a hand between his hips. 'This will knock him of his feet and allow our men to dispense with him.'

'Excellent.' Kublai exclaims with false enthusiasm. 'If we ring the tent with our men and leave only one weak place for him to enter then we may have him easily enough.'

Kublai takes off his famous helmet and exchanges it for Keshik's which sits near his feet on a small table. 'Keep your face covered. For he may well know what I look like.' He turns to the General. 'Now let us fetch my standards and my horses and have this turned into my tent. We will have only two of my bodyguard inside, so that the Assassin can't be mistaken in the confusion of his attack.'

Kublai with his new helmet and the clothes of Keshik leaves the tent with Salkai and Asutai.

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Sometime later Kublai and Asutai return to the Han. 'I have a great favour to ask of you.' He sits down amongst them. 'We have prepared a trap using Keshik as a decoy. However, this may well not be enough. So tomorrow, when General Salkai sends half his army along the south side of the Kun Yu Shan range to flush out the Jürgen, I will go in disguise with them. Will you accompany me?'

'Indeed.' Says Shi instantly.

'Indeed.' Says Bao, Tai and Ling-ling.

'The idea is for us to slip away from the army and head south along the coast to Lao Shan, with only Asutai to travel with us as guide. They will not think that I will travel without my

bodyguard. So even if they do see our small party leave they will not recognise it for what it is.' Says Kublai hopefully.

'Especially if you are disguised as scholar official in the service of the Han.' Says Shi.

'And Asutai is disguised as a Song Palace Librarian.' Says Bao with some humour.

Kublai and Asutai look at each other in surprise.

'We have spare clothes with us.' Continues Bao.

'And it will be easy enough to turn you into Han Chinese by altering your hair and beard.' Ling-ling says relishing the opportunity.

'Best if we do this now. Then we can move into that part of the army that heads for the coast tonight. Surely they cannot know how many Han there are in our party. Would we not normally travel with servants?'

'Even if they did see us they would only think the Han are fleeing before the fighting begins.' Says Shi with some irony.

'We have our reputation to think of. Are we not a race of cowards?' Says Bao with a grin.

'Master Coward, only you can joke about such things.' Says Kublai with satisfaction.

'Then let us retire to our tent and have you transformed forthwith.' Tai leads the way. 'And you too Asutai.' Who is hanging back. 'This will not work unless we are all Han travelling together.'

Kublai pulls Asutai along in a friendly manner to much laughter from the Han.

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With the transformation complete the six Han emerge from the tent. Kublai and Shi lead in the dress of scholar officials easily seen under the furs they wear. Bao and Asutai as Palace Library officials follow on behind with Tai and Ling-ling bringing up the rear. So successful has the transformation been that none of the Mongolians recognize Kublai or Asutai even though they are being stared at out of curiosity by everyone they pass. Normally the Mongolian troops would have given Kublai a heart, head and Heaven salute but such is the quality of their disguise that none do.

Slowly they walk towards the section of the army preparing for the offensive on the far east of the Kun Yu Shan range. General Salkai trots up alongside them and has to restrain his desire to laugh. 'I have brought your horses, excellent mounts for the mountains. You would do well to leave with the advanced party that will leave soon.'

'Good advice Salkai. I have a desire to leave as soon as possible. So far I have not been recognized by men who I know well. So this subterfuge would appear to be working.' Says Kublai in a low but light manner.

'Good hunting.' Says the General and with that he turns his horse and trots back to his headquarters.

The Han take their horses but do not mount. They walk quietly on into the preparing army.

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The attack comes with swift precision. The Assassin passing in front of the guards unrecognized quickly kills one guard and is through the tent with a single downward slash.

He kills one of the two guards inside the tent before he has time to pull his sword and the other by deft swordsmanship in a moment. He turns to where he expects Kublai to be but sees a wounded man levelling a crossbow at him. He dives and rolls just in time as the bolt grazes his arm. This is not Kublai and his chance for Heaven, now gone, he leaps back through the slit in the tent intent on fighting his way out.

He is sent back through the slit by six arrows killing him instantly. With the trap sprung the tent is soon filled with soldiers. They stare at Keshik who is laughing almost hysterically.

'What ails you, Captain?' Asks a soldier with concern.

'I missed.' Is all he can say. 'I missed.'

Standing far back from the tent the other two Assassins, Hassan and Ali, watch what has happened and realize that it was a trap.

'The time to leave is now before they have time to close the gates and we are trapped inside.' Says Ali already on the move. They mount their horses and canter out of the nearest gate. Then, once free, they spur on their horses into a full gallop. Until out of sight, in the darkness of night, they

change direction and head for a copse of trees. There they dismount and watch in the distance as the gates are closed.

'What now?' Says Ali.

'We cannot stay here, that is for certain.'

'Then where?'

'We must split up with you following the Eastern Army and I will follow General Salkai's main army, once they make their move.' Hassan intimates with relish.

'You would choose the most favourable option for paradise; Kublai is certain to stay with the General.' Says Ali in bitterness.

'You asked the question and I gave the answer.'

'That is not the answer that I require. Besides, how will I know if you have obtained paradise and our quest is over.' Ali spits out.

'We must leave this place now. And sort out the problem once we are safe.' Hassan leaps on his horse and Ali is forced to follow him, filled with anger.

Hassan finds a place close to the road where the Eastern Army must pass. He does this just in time as the Eastern Army has already left the camp and is approaching fast.

Ali drops down beside him. 'Why have you chosen this place?'

'The light is already in the sky and we might be able to see something that will give us a clue as to whether or not Kublai is with the Eastern Army.' Says Hassan as if talking to a child.

This angers Ali even more. 'Even if there was full light it would not matter. If Kublai is in disguise we will never be able to make him out. You are just doing this to try and fool me into believing that there is a chance that Kublai is with the Eastern Army.'

'Keep your voice down and just wait. It has struck me that the best place to strike would be when the two armies meet after annihilating the Jürgen. Surely Kublai will want to be there after the victory. We can join the battle without a problem dressed as we are as Mongolian soldiers. Then keeping close to General Salkai we will soon see Kublai emerge to celebrate the victory. It is then we can both have a chance at paradise.'

'What? Attack him at the same time?'

'That would be best. Now silence. They are upon us.'

The Eastern Army pass at a cantor. Acting General Borui leads from the front with his personal bodyguard just behind. Two lines of horsemen gallop either side of the column and salute as they pass General Borui. They fan out into screens for the column leading the advance.

Watching this manoeuvre, Hassan and Ali almost miss the Han pass.

'That must be the Song Envoy and his men. What are they doing travelling with the Eastern Army?' Asks Ali in surprise.

'What did Gorogene say about these Song Officials? Can you remember?' Whispers Hassan.

'Only that Kublai was taking them to the place where their prophet was born and to places where he would teach. Or something like that.' Whispers Ali.

Hassan shakes his head in disbelief. 'Confucius was not a prophet, because he did not receive instruction from Allah.'

'Then what was he?'

'I don't know. Some kind of wise man that made laws.' Hassan whispers in frustration. 'How would I know? I'm not Chinese.'

Ali whispers a scoff. 'What fools these Chinese must be. Obeying laws that have not been handed down from Allah.'

'What was it that Gorogene actually said? Didn't he say that there was two Song officials and their wives?'

'That's right. Two officials and their wives on a pilgrimage.'

'Two officials and their wives makes four. But I have just seen six Han pass.' Whispers a mystified Hassan. 'Who are these other two Han Chinese?'

'Probably their servants. These Chinese officials are said to be decadent and need to have everything done for them including have their bottoms washed.' Ali softly laughs.

'Oh I see,' says Hassan sarcastically 'these two men are their bottom washers? Do you think that these officials would allow men to wash their wives bottoms as well?'

'Who knows? Men who obey laws written by other men are capable of anything.' Ali becomes thoughtful. 'If they do not believe in Allah, then what do they believe in?'

'They believe in Heaven.'

'A heaven without Allah?'

'How would I know? I'm not Chinese.' Hassan is frustrated in the extreme. 'Listen. Why don't you take General Salkai's army and I'll take General Borui's. That's what you have wanted from the beginning.'

Ali is now suspicious. 'I'm beginning to think we should stay together. A double attack on Kublai would have more chance of success, for one of us at least.'

'Alright. But I get to choose which General to follow. Do you agree?'

'I agree.'

'Then we will both follow General Borui.' Says Hassan with satisfaction.

'You really think one of these bottom washers is Kublai, don't you?'

'We will soon find out. If these Han officials leave Borui's army and head south, then I will be certain.'

'That should be easy enough to establish. Kublai would never go anywhere without his bodyguard and group of twenty odd men riding south will be easy to identify by their tracks.' Says Ali with a superior air.

'Perhaps.' Says Hassan deep in thought.

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Acting General Borui is just a young man the same age as Kublai, but his skill in warfare having been noticed by General Salkai. The General wants to test his skill in this campaign before promoting him to the position of permanent General under his command. As result he is not taking any chances with Kublai's life and has twice ringed their tents with handpicked guards.

It is still dark when the Han, now with Kublai and Asutai having joined their group, prepare to leave the Mongolian camp.

Borui tries reasoning with Kublai. 'I can still give you a bodyguard of my very best fighting men, great Khan.'

'There is little to fear.' Kublai jokes. 'When I have that famous Song axe wielder Master Coward guarding my back.'

Borui looks at Bao with trepidation and in particular the grin that Bao is wearing.

Borui comes close to Kublai and whispers in his ear. 'Are you certain you can trust these Han officials?'

'He may look like a fool, but I tell you this. He saved my life. Why would he do that if he wanted to kill me?' Kublai whispers back.

Borui can think of nothing else to say and shows the Han out to their horses.

'We will leave you now. And good hunting.' Says Kublai.

The Han leave and gallop south with Asutai leading the way.

They ride hard across open deserted countryside, until they can push the horses to the point of exhaustion and they are forced to stop. In the distance they can see Lao Shan rising up over the horizon; a dark presence in a bright blue sky.

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Hassan and Ali are tracking the Mongolian army when they come across horse tracks heading south. Ali drops down and examines the tracks. 'Six horses. Travelling at speed. A small raiding party, I wager.'

Hassan ponders the situation. 'And I wager you are wrong.' He turns his horse to the south. 'Six to one are good odds for an Assassin. You decide which way you want to go but I go south to kill these Han bottom washers.' And with that he spurs his horse on.

Ali is furious but within moments he follows Hassan.

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The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Just as the father must set the order inside of a family,

So he must also enforce the rules and regulations of that order.

He must not allow the love he has for his wife and children deter him.

How much more true then, for a ruler and his people?

Changing Line in the second place means:

A wife must obey her husband

While attending to her duties of providing nourishment

And ritual sacrifice.

Changing Line in the third place means:

The mean between severity and indulgence must guide the ruler.

Just as it must guide the father of a family.

To err on the side of severity is preferable

Because it preserves discipline.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Dispersion (40)

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Wind/Wood

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Water

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THE IMAGE

The Wind carries the Rain:

The Image of DISPERSION.

Penetrating to the core of his Inner Truth

The superior man finds that the

Greatest of all its attributes is spirit;

That which unites all things in union

Chapter 10

Affection (30)

The Song Dynasty

1058 C.E.

7th Day of the 9th Moon

Mid-afternoon

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Thunder

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Lake

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THE IMAGE

Thunder rolls over the Lake:

The Image of AFFECTION.

Thus the superior man

Understands the transitory

In the light of the Eternity of the Primordial State.

“Love without wisdom means love without discrimination. Wisdom without humanity means knowledge not translated into action. Therefore, humanity is to love mankind and wisdom to remove its evil.

What is meant by humanity? The man of humanity loves people with a sense of commiseration. He is careful and agreeable and does not quarrel. His likes and dislikes are harmonized with human relations. He does not the feeling of hate or a desire to hurt. He has no intention to conceal or evade. He has no disposition of jealousy. He has no desires that lead to sadness or worry. He does not do anything treacherous or cunning. And he does not do anything depraved. Therefore, his heart is at ease, his will is peaceful, his vital force is harmonious, his desires are regulated, his actions are easy, and his conduct is in accord with moral law. It is for this reason that he puts things in order peacefully and easily without any quarrel. This is what is meant by humanity.

What is meant by wisdom? It is to speak first and then act accordingly. It is to weigh with one's wisdom whether to act or not and then proceed accordingly. When one's weighing is correct, what he does will be proper, what he handles will be appropriate, his actions will bring results, his fame will become glorious, benefits will gather around him with no trouble, blessings will reach his offspring, and benefits will be bestowed on his people. Such were the cases of wise kings T'ang and Wu. When one's weighing is wrong, what he does will be improper, what he handles will be inappropriate, his actions will bring no results, his name will become a shame, injuries will gather around him, his posterity will be cut off, and his state will be ruined. Such were the cases of wicked kings.”

From the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals by Tung Chung-shu. Chapter 30.



Having disembarked from the ferry Shao Yong walks up through the small town of P'eng-chou, some way up the Wei river valley.

On a small busy junction he stops and wonders which direction he should go. On the opposite side of the junction he sees a woman on a veranda beckoning. He looks around to see who she is beckoning to and realizes it must be him. Crossing over he soon comes alongside the woman who has a welcoming smile projected in his direction.

'Shao Yong. I presume you are looking for lodgings.' Her smile broadens considerably and does so even more when she sees his consternation at the mention of his name. 'Come, join me. You will find my teahouse clean and pleasant.'

Yong joins her if somewhat nervously. 'Perhaps, good Mistress, you can tell me how you know my name?'

She shows him to a low table with low cushioned seats. Then clapping her hands she summons a servant and orders tea. Sitting down opposite Yong her smile returns in warmth. 'You do not recognize me? But then, why should you. It must be all of twenty years and more since last we met. I was but a girl of thirteen or perhaps fourteen.'

Yong is now truly mystified. 'Excuse my memory. For I have forgotten who you are.'

'My name is Zhang Loo. I was the daughter of Zhang You, a well-respected teacher of the I learning. And were you not a student of my father?'

'Indeed. But that was not here but in Hubei County, near the Yellow River.'

'Indeed it was. After my father died I was forced to move here. This building was all my father left me. He suffered a strange illness that eventually killed him. All his wealth from being a successful teacher was spent on different cures for his illness. It was all a waste of time for he died anyway.'

'I am sorry to hear that. He was a kind and knowledgeable man. He took me in as a student even though I had little money. And it was from him that I learned a very important insight about the nature of reality. It was that the world is a realm of perpetual activity, and that activity is governed by cycles. If anything, my philosophic work is still governed by my search for these cycles.' He says with reflection. 'Where do they come from and why do they exist.'

'I'm sorry, I don't understand what you mean by: these cycles.' Loo says slightly embarrassed by her ignorance.

'The cycles of life: birth, immaturity, maturity, death. Or, the great cycle of the year: spring, summer, autumn and winter. Or, the cycle of day and night. Or, the cycle of the tides: high tide and low tide. And which are somehow in tune with the cycle of the moon: from new moon to full moon. Waxing and waning over a 28 day cycle.'

'Oh I see.' Says Loo. 'And you wish to discover where these cycles come from and why they exist.'

'Precisely.'

'My father never knew the answers to these questions that you ask, or I would have known. He told me most things, using me as a sounding board for his ideas.'

'I do much the same with my friends.' Says Yong with laughter in his voice. 'And none too happy they often are with some of the strange ideas I often come up with.'

'Would that be the Cheng brothers you are referring to?'

'You know of the Cheng brothers?' Says Yong in surprise.

'We may live in a backwater here in P'eng-chou but there are often students and teachers and scholar officials that pass through and I glean what I can. My father taught me to read and write using the I learning as material for this purpose. This gave me a sincere interest in philosophic discourse. And with the printed works of the Cheng brothers and their famous uncle, Chang Tsai, readily available, I have been able to keep abreast with recent developments in philosophy.' She says in all modesty.

'What a remarkable woman you truly are.' Says Yong in sincerity.

Loo blushes with such praise. 'Forgive me. It is only that my father had a keen interest.'

'You say that there are often students and teachers passing through P'eng-chou. Is there any reason for this?'

'Indeed. It is the furthest west that Confucius travelled.' Here, she has to stop herself from laughing. 'Then there is the famous, Last Stand of Confucius. Surely you have heard of it?'

'I'm afraid not.' Says Yong slightly embarrassed.

'Then you must visit this place. I will give you directions tomorrow. But for tonight, will you not stay in my humble teahouse?'

'Indeed. Of course. Perhaps it will be possible to have a bath. I haven't had one since I left Loyang and I fear I must stink like an old goat.'

She laughs and infectious laugh. 'Come, I will show you to your room and will have the servants boil some water for your toilet.'

Yong is captivated by this beautiful, intelligent and vivacious woman, some ten years his junior. A woman who wrings

a sensation from deep in his being that he has not felt in many a long year.

★

Yong enters his room from the adjoining wash room to find his clothes missing but a fresh garment laid out on the bed. He ties his hair in a top knot and then dons the garment.

A knock on the door has him sliding it open to find a servant bowing to the horizontal. 'The Mistress would have you join her for a meal. Follow me.'

He is shown into a beautifully decorated room of superb simplicity. She sits dressed as a courtesan with a painted face delicately coloured but rises and bows to the horizontal when he enters. He bows to the horizontal in turn.

There can be little doubt that she is the Madam of a teahouse where singing girls are employed. Two now enter with dishes for the table. They bow in deep respect.

After they have gone. 'Does it surprise you that I am the Madam of a teahouse?'

Yong is troubled by the question and the implication. 'How have you fallen to such a position, when your father was such a great and well respected scholar?'

'As I have already told you, my father suffered a strange illness, the various cures of which consumed his wealth. He left me this building but little money. I was forced to sell my virginity to the highest bidder to raise the money to convert the building into a teahouse. The alternatives were far worse. Sell the building and I would not have had a means of earning a living. I would have soon been destitute and would have been forced to sell myself into servitude. This way I am the Mistress; the Madam. The three singing girls I employ provide us with a living. There is, however, little to put by for our old age; we simply do not get enough customers to achieve that.'

Yong is now even more disturbed. 'But why did you not contact me? Surely you would have known that I would have helped.'

'My dear Yong this happened nearly twenty years ago. You were not so famous then.'

'I did not know I was so famous now.' He says in all honesty.

'You count amongst your friends Ssu-ma Kuang, a past Prime Minister of the Song Dynasty, and you say you are not famous? Why would such a man befriend you if you were not already famous?' She says with the confidence of reason. 'Your circle of friends consists of Chengists and some of the most powerful men in all of China, you can't possibly be unaware of your importance in this new philosophic movement?'

Yong, who had taken little notice of the excitement in the literati and scholar officials concerning the Chengist agenda is nonplussed. 'I had little idea that my friends had become so famous.'

She laughs with abandon. 'You are that rare thing, Yong, a man so consumed by your thirst for knowledge that you take little heed of the social consequences. You were that man when you became a student of my father. You have remained that man to this very day.' Then a personal comment that is as revealing about herself as much as it is about him. 'I am not surprised.'

Yong is surprised and it takes him a while before he can reply. 'I suppose I am very single minded; I always have been, it is true. Knowledge of the Nature of Reality is my passion. That is also true.' He changes tone. 'But to the exclusion of what is happening all around me, I must admit, I was not aware.'

Her laughter is infectious and he laughs at himself with embarrassed delight. 'What must you think of me?'

Then she answers with serious honesty. 'I think you are a man who seeks beneath the surface of Reality to find out how and why it is the way it is.'

'Indeed. But my quest has ground to a halt. It is the reason that I have taken to the Wanderer's life once more. It is the reason that I am now here. I hope by following in the footsteps of Confucius that I will gleam an insight into the mind of that great sage.'

They eat in silence, each lost in their own thoughts.

★

Yong, tired from his journey, takes an early night. Loo entertains recently arrived merchants.

In the middle of the night Yong awakes with a start and for a moment does not know where he is. He gets up and slides open

the paper clad window and leans on the balustrade. He looks across P'eng-chou lit by a moon half full and remembers her.

The door to his room slides open and he turns to see Loo enter. She slides up to him and he sees the make-up of the courtesan has been removed and now with only a light application to highlight her natural beauty in place.

She wraps herself around him and desires, long forgotten, emerge from within him with a violent expression. He is consumed and throws her on the bed, making love with the unrestrained power of the feral. She responds in kind and they wrestle with desire as much as with each other.

Finally sated, they close in an embrace. Silent the night. Silent the desire. They lie in silence until even their minds fall silent.

Yong awakes from a dream of exceptional joy, where he has returned home to find that Loo is his wife. Then as he awakes her beautiful face changes into the careworn face of Mistress Nameless. It makes him sit up in bed as he searches for ... her.

He quickly dresses and enters the teahouse where clients are being waited on by fawning singing girls. But where is ... she.

She is on the veranda laying out objects as he arrives. 'You will need these for your journey today.'

A shoulder bag, inside which she places a gourd filled with water; a small hammer and a small chisel; a cloth filled with rice and pork in a bowl of white porcelain.

He goes to say something, he knows not what, but she places a finger across his lips. Silencing his thoughts forever.

She points up the street. 'You must make your way to the graveyard on the outskirts of town. There you will find a small lane off to the left, which winds its way around a big hill. From there you will see an outcrop of rock shaped like a fist with a finger outstretched. Steps cut out from the living rock takes you to the top and' here she smiles to the point of laughter 'Confucius' last stand.'

She places the shoulder bag around his neck and gently pushes him off the veranda. Then waves him away with a forceful playfulness.

He sets off reluctantly but by the time he has reached the lane beyond the graveyard he is fully into his quest. The

midday sun plays hide and seek with big sculptured clouds of relief like quality.

The cut steps are open to the side that in places present a shear drop. Yong hopes he does not meet someone on the way down as there is little room for two people to pass.

Of a sudden he is on a ledge cut into the stone. It at least has a small wall waist high to prevent people falling over.

He leans on the wall and looks up the Wei Valley. It has magnificent shadows playing in twists and curves across a landscape of farms and forests with mountains for a backdrop.

Uplifted, the sensation is joyous. Is this what Confucius felt? Is it what he experienced? Does the experience coincide across time and space? Is there resonance?

Oh, if he only knew for certain.

He turns to find a wall covered in writing. Mostly names with some comments. One stands out for the boldness of its construction. It is cut deep into the rock and says: Confucius stood here.

He laughs as it is obviously not fifteen hundred years old. Only slightly weathered it is still fresh, perhaps a few hundred years old, perhaps only fifty.

The space next to this aberration is free of characters, so he sets too with his hammer and chisel. He carves: Master Nameless never stood here.

Only those who knew him well would understand.

Sitting on the wall he eats his meal and watches the great shadows of the clouds write messages on the landscape. Confucius was here. He knows this as he knows his own face. How he knows this is from a knowledge that cannot be understood in words.

He has made real progress on the sage's path; on his own path.

After a large draft of water from the gourd he sets off with renewed vigour. Descending the cut steps two at a time he strides along the lane circumscribing the hill and arrives back in P'eng-chou as the light begins to fade.

Loo is waiting on the veranda for him. Her pleasure manifest on his return. He drops down onto the low seat and leans back putting his feet up on the low table. 'It is time for me to make amends. You will sell this teahouse as soon as possible

and you and your singing girls will travel with me to Loyang.' She goes to object but Yong is in little mood for objections. 'I have many rich friends in Loyang that will be more than willing to help you, once they know of your story. Many of them know of your father. As such, they will be compelled, as I am, to help you in whatever way they can.' He changes tone to one of authority. 'Why are you standing there? There is little time to loose. Off with you now and find someone who will buy this place.'

Loo is taken aback and stands in shocked silence.

'Must I take my belt to you like you are some common servant?' He says in mock anger. He gets up and starts removing his belt from his waist. 'Would you question the word of Shao Yong? What are you, a common strumpet?'

Loo backs off and then leaves under his pointing arm. As she leaves she turns and sees the pointing finger but she also sees the smile playing beneath his stern countenance. Only then does she set off in earnest.

It is close to midnight when she returns. Two men carry a heavy chest behind her and place it inside the teahouse. They bow in deep respect to Shao Yong as he enters. He only gives them a cursory bow in return and they leave.

'Is the business concluded?'

'It is.' Is all Loo can say.

'Then away and pack up your things. Your singing girls are already in a state wondering what they should take and what they should leave behind. One large trunk should be enough. The streets of Loyang are filled with every kind of merchandize that your imagination can make play. Now off with you and do not tarry. The first ferry is at dawn and I have already booked our passage. He points at his belt and angles his head.'

An apprehensive smile comes willingly but then, more out of affection than reassurance, she runs into his arms and kisses him on the lips. She bites her bottom lip before hurrying through to her quarters.

★

The ferry sweeps down river borne on a strong current and a following wind. The singing girls, wide eyed and staring at

every small object that comes into view, give small squeals of delight at everything that passes.

Loo watches from the cabin, from the edge of the bed, watching their antics. Turning, she sees Yong stretched out and watching her.

'How will I ever thank you?'

'How will I ever thank you?' Yong reflects the words but not the tone.

'I assure you Yong, you owe me nothing.'

'I owe you more than I can say. Or at least more than words can deliver.'

'You speak in riddles. Is this how I am meant to be repaid?' She says but not unkindly.

'It is well known amongst those of the I learning; someone such as yourself; that there are whole branches of knowledge that words cannot deliver.'

'Indeed. My father taught this to me. But what is this particular branch of knowledge that you speak of?' She asks with genuine curiosity.

Yong laughs. 'If I knew that, I would know everything.'

'This journey you are on, is it a search for a branch of knowledge or is it the process by which this knowledge is acquired that you seek?'

'You are indeed a clever woman. Not even my closest friends have understood this.' Yong appreciates her insight. 'Indeed, I myself have only realized this on visiting P'eng-chou. And, what is more, this insight has as much to do with you as to Confucius.'

'First it is riddles and now you mock me.' She says with annoyance.

'Indeed not. Ask yourself this: how do you learn knowledge that cannot be set down in words?'

'Spoken or written?'

'Either.'

'Now you mock me in the form of a riddle.'

Yong replies with a deep sincerity. 'This is the riddle that I must answer. Perhaps you would care to solve this riddle, now you are aware of how important it is.'

'My father once said that a tree holds more knowledge than all of the books of philosophy in the Imperial Library. But that the Image of a tree holds more knowledge than the entire world.'

Yong sits up with surprise. 'What did he mean by this?'

'I do not know. My father spoke in riddles in much the same manner as yourself. It was annoying in him as it is annoying in you.' She digs deep and sighs. 'The Image of a tree holds more knowledge than the entire world. What kind of statement is that?'

'If indeed it was a statement.' Yong finds a shift in his consciousness.

'If not a statement, then what?'

Yong gets up and walks to the door. 'I will see you for the evening meal. For now, I will reflect on what you have said.' He exits the door leaving Loo perplexed.

Only Yong's head comes back into the room. 'Your father didn't say anything about Tsao Hua, the continuing process of creation?'

'My father was dead before your metaphysics was published. As such, he almost certainly didn't know this concept.'

'Ah ha.' Says Yong, before his head disappears from the doorway.

'Men.' She says in exasperation. 'They would rather contemplate their own navel than lie with a beautiful woman.' She says more to herself.

Yong's head reappears with a smile. 'I heard that, but I will forgive you as you speak from ignorance. And as I now know you understand the concept of Tsao Hua, I charge you to contemplate this concept in regard to what is the Image of Tsao Hua. A navel will simply not do.' He blows her a kiss from a laughing face before disappearing once more.

Her sigh is long and dispirited but then she wonders what the Image of the concept Tsao Hua can possibly be.

She was to contemplate this for many a long year.

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The carriage, more a cart, arrives outside a silk merchant's establishment on one of the main boulevards of Loyang. Yong pays the driver and they unload their luggage. The journey up through Loyang has had the singing girls in rapture. Never before have they seen such splendour nor did their voices attain such a rancour. Yong was forced to cover his face in case he was recognized, when, on a number of occasions, people turned to see what all the commotion was about. Loo thinks she knows why he acts in this manner and had tried to quieten the girls, but with each new delight they could not contain themselves.

A large man in his forties, Wang Nien-sun, the proprietor of the silk emporium strides out onto the wooden walkway and surveys the confusion arriving on his door. 'The Wanderer has returned.' He directs at Shao Yong. 'And he has returned with his very own teahouse, if my eyes do not deceive me.'

'Nien-sun. Dear friend. I have a great favour to ask of you.' He joins Nien-sun at the entrance to the emporium. 'This is the daughter of Zhang You, the famous teacher of the I learning. Her name is Loo and she has fallen from grace since her father died. She is blameless on this account. And now needs our help to make a living for her and her singing girls. Will you help?'

'The daughter of Zhang You, you say? But why did she not seek our help when her father died?'

'She had little idea that her father was so well respected, especially amongst those of us that study the I learning. Will you not help her now?'

Nien-sun admires her form as she instructs her singing girls. 'She's a fine looking woman.' He says with lust tinged words.

'Indeed. And one that can hold a deep conversation as any member of the literati can.'

'A rare creature indeed.' Says Nien-sun. 'And as such, one of great potential in the profession she has chosen.' He adds with relish. 'I take it she needs a teahouse?'

'Exactly. She has money but I suspect not enough to purchase such a property here in Loyang. Can you help?'

'Indeed. In fact I know a property that has only recently come onto the market: Nest in the Clouds.'

'The teahouse on the old Golden Forest Trail?'

'Indeed. The family were persuaded to settle their dispute as the Nest in the Clouds, having stood empty for several years, would soon be beyond repair and as a consequence would be worth next to nothing. I'm sure I can get her a good price.'

'And the extra money she may need for repairs and furnishings?'

'I will lend her the money myself.' Nien-sun says with enthusiasm.

'You always had a good eye for business.'

Nien-sun shouts for his servants who come running. 'Bring in the luggage and store it in the strong room.'

Loo mounts the walkway and bows to the horizontal and has the courtesy returned by Nien-sun. The singing girls standing behind Loo also bow, much to the pleasure of the silk merchant. Then he turns to Yong. 'I take it that Mistress Nameless is unaware of these developments?'

'Nor must she ever find out. Indeed, she must never find out that I have returned to Loyang. Once I have Loo settled I will return to my quest and it will be as if I have never been here.'

'Consider Loo and her girls settled. They can stay with me above the emporium until the Nest is fit for habitation. I will see to these matters immediately.' Then turning to face Loo directly. 'With your permission, of course.'

Loo looks to Yong for guidance and receives this. 'Nien-sun is one of us. A member of the Loyang literati who has a keen interest in the I-learning. Feel secure and allow him to arrange everything. He has unrivalled knowledge when it comes to business.'

'Yong flatters me, when there is little need.' He directs this at Loo. 'I will take great pleasure in seeing you and your girls settled.' Seeing the girls looking about in wonder he adds. 'Why not take the girls on a tour of the merchants' premises while I arrange matters.'

'You are very kind.' Says Loo, taking a liking to Nien-sun. And not unaware of his attraction to her she adds. 'I hope I can repay your kindness all in good time.'

'Indeed. That would be most agreeable.' He replies with a smile.

Loo and the girls leave.

'If all things are settled then I must be on my way.' Yong says while watching Loo acting as mother hen to her girls.

Nien-sun takes the conical farmer's hat off the head of one of his servants as he passes carrying Loo's luggage. He places it on Yong's head and adjusts with care. 'Keep the brim pulled well down so few will recognize you. And take this.' He pulls out a small leather pouch from inside his robes. 'It is not much but it will remind you of my appreciation for adding a great treasure to Loyang's wealth.'

'I have refused your offers of kindness before.' He pushes the proffered pouch away. 'I have enough and that is all I need. Now I must away.' He embraces Nien-sun with affection then turning and without looking back he disappears into the crowd.

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The capital has an atmosphere entirely different to Loyang. Yong reflects on this as he stands between two great stone buildings barely a carriage width apart. These buildings run to one hundred metres in either direction from where he stands. And he stands in front of a great solid gate nearly five metres in height with a rounded top of a further two metres.

Both parts of the gate swing inward and he is confronted by ten Imperial Guards in full battle dress. The Captain looks at Yong with suspicion. 'State your business.'

'Will you tell Ssu-ma Kuang that Shao Yong is here and requests an audience.'

'Lord Ssu-ma is with the Emperor on state business and will not be back for several days.' The Captain speaks curtly.

'Then inform Lady Ssu-ma that I am here.' Yong speaks even more curtly.

The Captain instructs a soldier and he disappears with speed leaving Yong taking in the atmosphere and the Captain taking in Yong. The soldier soon returns and whispers into the Captain's ear. 'Lady Ssu-ma request you enter. I will show you the way.'

Through passage ways and state rooms Yong follows the Captain with two soldiers following behind. He arrives in a small room with highly decorated furnishings. On the walls are exquisitely executed pieces of calligraphy. While waiting he examines these in detail.

'Is that really you beneath a farmer's hat?' Lady Ssu-ma queries in stringent tones.

Yong swings around removes the hat, which he had completely forgotten about, and bows to the horizontal. 'It is indeed.'

Lady Ssu-ma produces a wry smile then speaks to the Captain. 'You may leave this scoundrel with me.' She offers Yong a bronze seat and takes the one opposite. 'If the Emperor hears you are here he will offer you a position.'

'I trust you will inform the Emperor that I am not here, nor do I covet a position even if I was.'

'I see you have lost none of your wit. Such a pity.' She says without irony.

'I can be none other than the person I am.'

'The famous recluse of Loyang.' She says with bitterness.

'I cannot pretend to seek office, as I have more important issues to attend to.'

'What can be more important than serving the Emperor and the Chinese people?'

'Discovering the Nature of Reality and revealing the hidden knowledge that governs its workings.' He says with strength.

Lady Ssu-ma sighs with frustration. 'I will say this for you Master Recluse, you are at least constant in your arrogance.'

'Arrogance? Is that what it is? My search for knowledge is born from a desire to end ignorance. I cannot see the arrogance in that.' Says Yong in annoyance.

'It sounds like a Buddhist mantra. But then you do not care from where you find knowledge, do you?'

'If knowledge presents the truth, then what does it matter from where it comes.' Says Yong in certainty.

Lady Ssu-ma stands and leaves almost catching Yong out in performing the correct protocol. He bows to the horizontal and remains in situ until Lady Ssu-ma leaves the room. She stops in the door and claps her hands. Two servants appear as out of

the very air. 'You will show Master Shao to the Yellow Room. Prepare him a bath and provide him suitable garments for this evening.' Without turning around she looks back at Yong still bent over. 'The first gong will give you enough time to get to the dining room. The second will be immediately followed by the serving.' With that she leaves.

★

Dressed in gold brocade, it is hard for Yong to keep up with the servant leading the way to the dining room. All of a sudden he is there. The doors open as if by magic and he enters a room of rich decoration.

Lady Ssu-ma is adjusting white camellias that decorate the ends of a table that would easily seat twenty. The two places that are set, sit opposite each other in the very centre

'Take your place.' Lady Ssu-ma directs with a wave of her hand.

Yong does as he is directed but remains standing until Lady Ssu-ma takes her place, helped onto her gilded seat by two servants. He bows then sits.

The first dish presented are quails. Cooked slowly, the flesh falls off the bones. The second dish is presented in a silver dish in the shape of a fish, the bones having been removed the mouth sized pieces are easily manipulated by the ivory chopsticks. Both of these dishes are eaten in silence.

The third dish is placed between them as it is a large succulent piglet already carved into delicate slices. It is surrounded by a wide variety of green vegetables coated in besam flour and deep fried.

'Will you not entertain me with conversation?' She slyly asks.

'What would you have me say?'

'Tell me how successful you have been on your ... quest, so far.'

Yong marshal's his thoughts, but only for a moment. 'Zhang You once said that a tree holds more knowledge than all of the books of philosophy in the Imperial Library. But that the Image of a tree holds more knowledge than the entire world.'

'The Image of a tree?' Lady Ssu-ma begins. 'Image, as in the Images in the Great I?'

'Indeed.'

'Tree as in a forest?' She continues.

'Indeed.'

'What knowledge can a tree hold?' Lady Ssu-ma asks mystified.

'The knowledge that makes a pine tree produce pine cones. And the knowledge that pine seeds possess that allows them to grow into pine trees that allows them to produce pine cones that proceed in an endless cycle.'

'This is not what I call knowledge.' Says Lady Ssu-ma annoyed.

'Then what would you call it?'

Lady Ssu-ma is caught off balance. 'Nature.' She finally responds.

'The natural world follows many of the same cycles as we do. If it is not in possession of knowledge, how does it know how to follow these cycles? Does a tree produce leaves in winter and shed them in spring? Mankind and trees both possess the same knowledge. This part of Wang You's statement is not what interests me. It is the second part that has me mystified.'

'The Image of a tree holds more knowledge than the entire world. Why would the Image of a tree hold more knowledge than the whole world?'

'Obviously, it is a metaphor.' She states with certainty.

'Perhaps you would care to illuminate me?' Says Yong with genuine interest.

'Surely the Image is in the human mind. This cannot be in the mind of a tree as they do not possess one. This second statement has everything to do with the human mind. As such, the statement refers to the human mind's capacity for understanding all knowledge.' Says Lady Ssu-ma with some satisfaction.

'But does it?' Says Yong with uncertainty. 'You may well have stated the obvious, but asked the pertinent question. I, myself, believe that we all have the capacity to understand all knowledge. But, what of knowledge that is beyond words. Beyond language. Or perhaps we should be learning a new language. The language of the Image.'

Lady Ssu-ma frowns but unable to think of a suitable reply says instead. 'Well, carry on. That can't be all.'

'The Image of Mountain over Lake gives us the Image of Decrease. It is easy enough to have this Image of a Lake at the foot of a Mountain, as we have all seen this Image in the natural world. But this most beautiful of Images, for the life of me, I cannot equate with decrease. Can you?'

Lady Ssu-ma cannot, which only increases her frown. Then seeking in her memory she says this. 'At the foot of the Mountain a Lake: The Image of Decrease. Thus the superior man controls his anger and restrains his instincts.'

'Why?'

The frown deepens to the point that it squeezes out a sigh as a reply.

'This is interpreted differently in three different versions of the Great I that I have had teachers explain to me, one of which was Zhang You. How do we know which interpretation is correct. The language that we use, Chinese, is the same in every case, but, the meaning is different because we rearrange the words and use different ones for each interpretation. So which one do we choose to be correct, when any member of the Literati could, if he wanted, produce an interpretation that makes sense in the Chinese language? I have tried this and produced an interpretation of The Great I that makes perfect sense when read, but, was an irreverent presentation of today's problems. Your husband laughed until tears ran down his cheeks. After he recovered he ordered me to burn this ... great conceit, as he described it, as it was liable to be labelled seditious. And, he feared, that I, as the author, would be considered a revolutionary and that he, as the Prime Minister, would have to have me decapitated.' Yong laughs at the memory.

Lady Ssu-ma joins in with his laughter. 'Now I see why my husband finds you so interesting. Master Nameless.'

'Your husband is one of the most intelligent men in all of China. He has been one of the greatest Prime Ministers that any Dynasty has produced. His administration skills are second to none. And, he has been a good and generous friend to me.'

Lady Ssu-ma having warmed to Yong, is now thinking down a different path. 'So why would you not accept his generosity when he offered to finance this insane quest of yours to find the unknown.'

'I have enough money for this journey. I do not need a great amount, having learned to live on very little when I was a

student, wandering from place to place seeking knowledge. Money has never been a problem.'

Lady Ssu-ma gets up and leaves Yong sitting at the table. She turns in the doorway. 'Remain where you are. I will return directly.'

Yong looks around him at the extravagance of wealth, the trappings of power and finds himself saying. 'Vanity. All is folly.'

Lady Ssu-ma returns but not to her seat. 'Remain seated where you are.' She comes behind Yong and leans over the back of the chair so that she can place a necklace around his neck. Yong examines the metal disc that it holds: The Imperial seal in white gold.

'This will afford you protection where money will not. It is the Imperial seal for those travelling on the Empire's business. Every soldier and every member of the bureaucracy will assist you in whatever circumstance you may find yourself.'

Yong goes to object but she cuts him off.

'You may refuse my husband but you will not refuse me.' She speaks with force. 'My husband would be most distraught if anything happened to you. He would certainly blame himself for letting you wander, and to who knows where, without proper funding.' The strength of her delivery increases. 'I will not have you risk upsetting my husband's Inner Truth by your demise while on this foolish quest for the unknown, and almost certainly, the unknowable. You will accept this protection of the Imperial seal, if not for your own sake then for his.'

Yong stands and bows to the horizontal in reply.

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The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Affection can occur between people of different rank.

The superior man acts with propriety in all relationships.

This Changing Line Delivers:

Deliverance (41)

== ==
== == Thunder
=====
== ==
=====
== == Water
== ==

The Image

Thunder and rain:

The Image of DELIVERANCE.

Thus the superior man pays special attention

To the special conditions created by disasters

Chapter 11

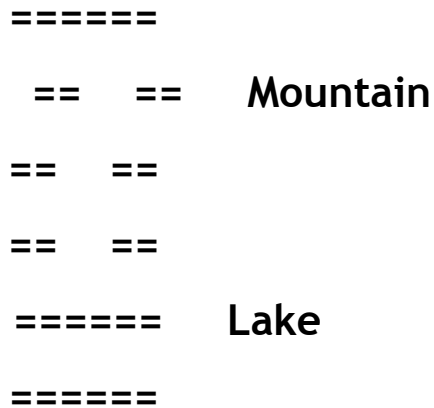
Decrease (19)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

1st Day of the 2nd Moon

Late Afternoon



THE IMAGE

Mountain over Lake brings forth

The Image of DECREASE.

The Lake at the foot of the Mountain evaporates.

Joy retreats in the presence of stillness.

No blame.



“When stars fall or when trees make a noise, all people in the state are afraid and ask, ‘Why?’ I reply: There is no need to ask why. These are Changes of Heaven and Earth, the transformation of yin and yang, and rare occurrences. It is alright to marvel at them, but wrong to fear them. For there has been no age that has not had the experiences of eclipses of the sun and moon, unreasonable rain and wind, or the occasional appearance of strange stars. If the ruler is enlightened and the government peaceful, even if all of these things happen at the same time, they would do no harm. If the ruler is unenlightened and the government follows a dangerous course, even if one of them occurs it would do no good. For the falling stars and the noise of trees are the Changes of Heaven and Earth, the transformations of yin and yang, and rare occurrences. It is alright to marvel at them, but wrong to fear them.”

From the book of Hsun Tzu. Chapter 17.



The four Han and the two false Han, Kublai and Asutai, would have made an unusual sight in less uneventful times, but now in a world in transition, they would have looked normal, that is, if there had been anyone there to see them.

The landscape was one of deserted farms in fertile countryside. A landscape only too familiar since the arrival of the Mongolians.

Finding a stream and good pasture for their exhausted horses they set up camp and prepared what little food they had; mainly dried meat and yak’s milk in its fermented form. The two Mongolians added fresh blood from their horses but only Bao would accept this addition to the Han’s diet.

The late sun has real warmth and foretells of the approaching spring. The snow having melted away has revealed the new growth of grass shoots struggling through last years yellowed stalks. Much to the satisfaction of the horses.

Bao wonders about nature’s seeming foreknowledge of this new cycle, and these thoughts bring him close to his ancient ancestor, Shao Yong.

‘What are you looking at Bao?’ Asks Kublai with curiosity.

Bao stands after picking some of the fresh blades of grass he has just been observing. He holds them out for Kublai to see.

'I was just marvelling at the ability of these grasses to know that spring is on its way.'

'Do you suspect that these grasses possess knowledge?' Says Kublai in a humorous tone.

'I cannot see how else they would know when it is time to grow. But grow they do and in perfect time as spring fast approaches. Perhaps they understand with a knowledge we have yet to reason. They are, after all, living things. And from what I have observed, in my short life, all living things are possessed of knowledge in one form or another.' Says Bao with sincerity.

'Did your noble ancestor, also have these thoughts?' Says Kublai with insight.

Bao smiles. 'Indeed he did. He was always looking for forms or patterns of knowledge, principles, which would explain the natural world. That would explain the world in which we live. He believed there were principles that would explain everything.'

'Secret knowledge?'

'Hidden knowledge. And hidden from us only by our ignorance of such knowledge.' Says Bao exercising accuracy.

'Such knowledge could be extremely useful.'

'Indeed. All knowledge is useful, some, are obviously more useful than others. We tend to categorize knowledge into what is useful to mankind and what is not. Shao Yong was, of course, interested in knowledge that was useful to us, but he was also interested in knowledge of all kinds. Believing that all knowledge was interesting in its self, and, that we can never tell what knowledge will be useful to us until we know it.' Says Bao with not a little pride.

Asutai, having awoke from a slumber with a start and having seen the setting sun, now approaches Kublai. 'We should be on the move. The sooner we reach Lao Shan the happier I will be.'

Kublai turns to Bao and explains. 'When we first conquered this territory it was obvious to us that Lao Shan was a perfect place to have as a look-out. From the summit it is possible to have a view of, not only of the bay where we have already visited, but also of the approaches to that great bay from the sea. So we set up a camp at the fishing village of Qingdao and keep a permanent watch-post from the summit.' He

presents Asutai in a theatrical manner. 'He wants us to arrive at the summit so that we can have added protection from our men in regard to the assassins.'

'You believe that these assassins are still following us?' Asks Bao with not a little anxiety.

'What we know of these fanatics would suggest that we take all possible precautions.' Says Asutai. 'Can we be on our way?'

'Indeed.'

Everyone is roused, the fire dampened, the horses prepared and they set off at a cantor towards the distant peak that is Lao Shan.

*

The last light of day squeezes between broken cloud and the distant western horizon.

Hassan is down on the ground feeling a small mound of earth. 'The Earth still has warmth in it. They were here not less than a short while.'

'Then let us be gone. Tracking in the dark takes more time and we must close on them as soon as possible.'

'We will never catch up with them on this night. Moonless and not even a star's light to show us the way. Besides, the horses need rest and time to feed. We will camp here tonight.' Says Hassan with authority. 'Tracking them in daylight and with fresh horses, we will soon catch them up, and with little chance of losing them altogether.'

Ali is angry in silence, for he can see the sense in Hassan's words. He dismounts and takes Hassan's horse and tethers both some way off.

Hassan builds a fire with a smile not far from his face.

*

The Han party travelling on a disused track come to a fork; one continuing around Lao Shan to the south west; the other to the south east heading up Lao Shan.

Asutai turns his horse and faces the others. 'Even if we were to take the most direct route to Qingdao we would still have to camp out one more night. And if the Assassins are tracking us it would be all too easy for them to find us as this track to the south west becomes a track on a valley floor and is

hemmed in between steep hills, making it easier for them to find us.' He turns to Kublai. 'I would council we take this track to the south east that will eventually, and via many different ways, take us to the summit of Lao Shan. The ground is rocky and so not as easy to follow tracks.'

Kublai turns to the Han. 'Asutai is cautious. But with reason. What he advises is a harder route but has the advantage that we will be among our own troops all the sooner.'

The Han agree to the mountain route and they set off immediately.

As the sun drops to just a short distance above the horizon a wind comes up from the north bringing icy fingers to play on neck and hands.

Asutai stops and dismounts. 'We must rest the horses for they have had a long climb and already blow from deep within their chests.'

They all dismount and take in the view, especially the one from the direction from which they have just come.

Bao speaks what they are all thinking. 'Do they follow us and if so how far are they behind.'

'Not far. I can feel their presence.' Says Tai.

'Then let us walk on and at least keep the distance between us as big as possible.' Says Kublai with concern.

On they walk, ever upward. Giant boulders litter the landscape casting lengthening shadows. Coming to an area of naked stone Asutai calls a halt. 'Here would be a good place to make a deviation. If we cover the horses hooves in rags we can set off around the mountain and this will make it difficult for them to track us.'

'Excellent.' Says Kublai.

The two Mongolians who have experience in these matters help the Han to bind their horses' hooves. Walking with more speed, they follow Asutai as he picks out a way that follows a horizontal contour of Lao Shan, still a third of the way from the summit. They finally run out of the easy ground and it is here they remove the bindings from the horses' hooves.

'Now we must mount and try to find a way to the summit.' Says Asutai. 'The sun is setting and it will be far more difficult in the dark.'

'Would it not be more practical to find a place that would be easy to defend and rest up until morning?' Shi asks of the Mongolians. 'Surely we will never make the summit in the dark?

Asutai looks to Kublai who looks at the Han who already look weary and tired. 'There is merit in what you say, Zhen Shi. So let us hurry and use what light is left to make as much progress as we can. And if we come across a place of a defensive nature and with shelter from this cold wind, then we shall call a halt.'

They spur their horses on until they arrive onto a small shelf on the mountain side. Giant boulders ten-fifteen metres high surround it and are part of its charm in the twilight. Boulders both horizontal and vertical form a natural barrier on the shelf's surface.

'Once the light is gone and with the wind from the north it will be possible to make a fire without alerting the Assassins to our position.' Says Kublai, much to the relief of the Han.

The horses are corralled in-between giant boulders and then the group set off to collect firewood as the darkness descends in the form of black clouds.

*

Hassan and Ali arrive at the fork. Even with the light almost gone they soon establish that their quarry has taken the mountain path.

'Why would they take this mountain path when it is obvious that they are heading for the Mongolian camp at Qingdao?' Asks Ali.

'You forget that there are Mongolians mounting a lookout on the summit of Lao Shan.'

'But even still they will eventually have to descend to Qingdao. So why do we make life difficult for ourselves by trying to track them in the dark on a mountain?' Ali almost sneers the words out.

'Then you go around the mountain and wait until they descend. While I will pursue them over the mountain.' Hassan directs his horse to take the mountain path.

'Oh, you think me such a fool to give you first chance at paradise. If you go that way then I will surely follow.'

Hassan sighs with frustration. 'Then you go that way and I will go around the mountain.'

Ali smiles to himself and sets off up the mountain. What he doesn't see is the smile that is now writ large on Hassan's face as he sets off the other way.

Ali takes a while to regret his decision but regret it he does when he loses all trace of the Han at the bare area of stone. He eventually sinks to his knees and raising his hands to Heaven he call upon Allah to help him. After much praying and begging he is just about to give up when he sees a strange light in the clouds further up the mountain. He soon realizes that it is the reflection of a fire in the low clouds. 'Praise be to Allah for this is his will that I will soon be in paradise.'

He sets off with renewed hope finally dismounting as he nears his prey. Running bent over and then crawling he arrives at the edge of the shelf where the Han are encamped. He circles the place with great skill. Marking out where each of the Han are positioned and eventually identifying which one is Kublai or so he thinks.

Two guards are set, one at each end of the shelf facing north and down the mountain. Ali wonders whether he should take these out before attacking Kublai but decides that a single cry from either will give the others more of a fighting chance. Instead, he crawls onto the vertical boulder against which the other four are sleeping. The firelight protecting his shadow from discovery.

The drop down is five metres - an easy exercise for one so well trained. He is amongst them with speed.

What he does not expect is that the two women are upon him with their short staffs in an instant. Stabbing at his face and forcing him back. Bao now joins in wielding Genghis' battle axe with Kublai behind him. Asutai leaps the fire and drives him further back. Ali sees his opportunity in that he can jump onto the side of a vertical boulder and bouncing off can be on Kublai in an instant. But to do this he needs a bigger run up and so backs off even further.

The blade cleaves him in two; the blade of Shi's double handed sword. But the action does not stop there as they run out from the firelight in all directions into the darkness of the night. They search the area until Tai shouts out. 'He was alone. I cannot detect the other's presence.'

They arrive back at the fire in high spirits. Only then does Shi look to his handiwork and is amazed.

★

Mounting the ridge, Kublai and Asutai with their Han companions, can now see how far they are from the summit of Lao Shan; one more decent and one final climb.

The decent is treacherous with loose shale giving even the Mongolian horses a difficult time.

They arrive in the depression into a ring of vertical boulders which look as if they have been placed in position by giants.

Mongolian horsemen ease their mounts out from behind the boulders; bows strung and arrows aimed.

'It is I, Kublai, grandson of Genghis.' He cries out.

Laughter erupts from the Mongolian horsemen.

'Then obey your mother and dismount. For I am Sorkaktani.' Cries out one of the Mongolians in a high pitched voice, to much laughter.

'Do you not recognize me? I am Asutai.'

One of the horsemen rides out into the open space and comes up close to Asutai. He calls back to the others in a shaken voice. 'It is indeed Asutai.' Then he turns to Kublai but directs his question to Asutai. 'Is this really Kublai?'

'Why don't you ask my mother?' Says Kublai with irony dripping off every word.

The horsemen drop from their horses and then onto one knee bowing their heads.

Kublai dismounts. 'I will forgive you this time for insulting my mother. But make the same mistake again now that you recognize me and I will part your heads from your bodies.'

A mumbling noise emanates from the Mongolians.

'Speak up. I cannot hear you.'

'Forgive us great Khan. You wear the dress of the Song. We thought you must be spies.' Says an unidentified voice.

'And who are you and what are you doing here?'

'We are the lookout that has just been replaced and we head back to our camp in Qingdao.'

'Is there not a shorter route?'

'There is but we scour the mountain every time we descend. Looking for spies that might attack the lookout.'

Kublai is impressed. 'There will be a different procedure this time. You will show us the way to the summit.'

Asutai draws alongside Kublai and leans down so he can speak into Kublai's ear. 'Can we not send two men back to the fork in the path to see if we can find out if the other Assassin has taken the other track?'

'An excellent suggestion. But let us send three men. Two to follow the Assassin and one to return here to inform us that the Assassin's track has been found or not.'

Asutai organizes the three man detachment with Kublai organizing the other horsemen into two groups, back and front of the Han party. He himself rides at the front just behind the man playing scout. Asutai bringing up the rear.

Shortly after midday they arrive at the summit and to a magnificent view of the bay on one side and the open ocean on the other.

At first the Han stand in silence taking in the view. Ling-ling breaks the silence. 'See. See down near the shore line. A ship, and what a ship it must be.'

'You can judge the size?' Asks Tai. 'I can barely make out there is a ship at all.'

'She has the eyes of an eagle. Even as a child she could make out the guards atop the embattlements from the roof of our home.' Says Bao with not a little pride.

They are interrupted by Mongolians fetching them bowls of a thick gruel. Did ever gruel taste so good?

White fluffy clouds drift south like great galleons seen from the ocean floor. Sea birds circle overhead enticed by the smell of food. Small birds hop about the encampment picking up scraps and all seems well in the world.

Kublai joins them. 'What lies beyond this great sea?'

'Korea and beyond that great peninsula is Nippon an island state but beyond that lies a mystery.' Says Shi. 'We have sent ships to explore but none have ever returned.'

'The world is vast but all things have boundaries. There must be something out there to contain all of this water. Surely?' Says Kublai with a slight hesitancy in his confidence.

'Perhaps.' Says Shi in a mysterious tone. 'Or perhaps it is the water that surrounds the Earth. Who can tell until there are brave men who will discover the truth.'

'My father has a Captain who is master of his great ship the Black Pearl, his name is Miko. He has sailed further than any other man. South to the islands of Indonesia and west to Champa and the Buddhist kingdom of Thailand. And still further to India and still further to the land of the Arabs and then south to a land that stretches so far south that the very stars are different.' He turns to Kublai conspiratorially. 'Even our brave Captain would not venture further south than that.'

'It sounds like you would like to make such a journey?' Kublai smiles back.

'Oh, how I begged my father to let me go with his great Captain that we might find new lands and new wealth and perhaps new wisdom. But he would not hear of it. I was too precious. Too precious to risk on such a journey.' He says this with sadness.

'And what is this great land with a different heaven called?'

'The Arabs call it the Land of Black Men. Captain Miko has seen these black men with his own eyes and says they are indeed black. He brought back some of their cloth, rich in colour with striking designs of a geometrical nature. But crude of construction and harsh on the skin.'

After a while in silence Kublai suddenly changes direction. 'Why are you here?'

'Here, on Lao Shan?' Bao asks with curious interest.

'Ever since we first met you have wanted to come to this place.'

'Tell him.' Says Shi. 'It can have little consequence.'

Bao searches through his pockets and pulls out a crumpled piece of paper. He straitens it out and shows it to Kublai.

'I do not read Chinese. Please.'

'This is a poem written by my ancient ancestor, Shao Yong. It is a four sectioned linked poem of which one of the sections

has a reference to this particular landscape. I will read out the relevant section:

I suddenly remember my days as a traveller in Eastern Ch'u.

Bao stops to explain. 'This region here' he sweeps his arm around to indicate the place 'was called Eastern Ch'u in the 11th century.'

: With a bold heart, I saw the waterways, clouds and towns for the first time.

The habitat of the Eastern Island Tribesmen bordered the wasteland expanse.

Bao points to the island directly in front of them but a few kilometres off the coast. 'That is the Eastern Island.'

: At high tide, it would mingle with the sea merchants.

Again Bao stops to explain. 'In those days, before the northern invasions, this region traded with the world and the sea merchants he was referring to was, of course, trading ships.'

: Lying down, I would watch the blue green waters encircle their great patch of earth.

Sitting up, I would watch the red sun emerge from the mulberry trees in the east.

Emptily living, Emptily dying - unlimited are the people of this kind!

The title - a man - is not an easy one with which to reckon.

Bao turns to Kublai. 'That is the end of the section. It is a difficult piece to understand especially the final two lines:

Emptily living, Emptily dying - unlimited are the people of this kind!

The title - a man - is not an easy one with which to reckon.

Bao uses his fingers like a comb to scratch his head in the same direction as his top knot. 'Is he referring to ordinary men who live their lives devoid of meaning? And who are markedly different from those men who live their lives with meaning. And yet both can be said to be men and given the title - a man. If that is the meaning of those two lines, then it explains the previous verse - the rest of the previous section - in terms of knowledge. Men who live their lives devoid of knowledge and those who live their lives in pursuit

of knowledge. Of which my noble ancestor was of the latter kind.'

Shi, who has been watching as well as listening, can see the confusion on Kublai's face, intercedes. 'Bao will take you on a journey through both his and his noble ancestor's metaphysical musings, if you let him. What he is trying to say is that the last two lines give the context by which to understand the previous two lines. That they can be understood in two different ways. One with meaning and one without. The one with meaning is hidden, the other is to be read directly like a set of instructions. Read out the previous two lines so that Kublai can understand these instructions.'

Bao gives Shi a disparaging glance but then does as directed.

: Lying down, I would watch the blue green waters encircle their great patch of earth.

Sitting up, I would watch the red sun emerge from the mulberry trees in the east.

'It is a particular location.' Says Kublai, much to the surprise and delight of the Han.

'Well said Kublai. It took me several attempts to grasp this fact. Although, I will say in my defence, I had to wade through the metaphysical musings of both Bao and his noble ancestor, to get to the meaning. Lying down gives the south north direction, sitting up gives the east west direction.'

'A precise location.' Says Kublai. He looks down the mountain. 'A precise location somewhere down there.'

'And now you are as confused and as fascinated as the rest of us.' Says Tai.

Kublai laughs and slaps Bao on the back. 'But my friend what do you hope to discover at this precise location?'

Tai, Ling-ling and Shi protest with Shi taking the lead.

'Please Kublai, opening that kettle of snakes will end up with your mind poisoned by his speculations, which will engage you, as it has engaged his poor wife and sister and my poor self in endless and pointless discourse through many a long evening.'

Bao raises his hands to Heaven but then just sighs. Much to the joy of his companions.

'Please tell me your thoughts on this matter.' Says Kublai with genuine interest.

The others, except Bao, groan. They move away to a place where they can get a better view of the great ship off the east coast and to where one of the Mongolian lookouts stands.

'Can you make out the insignia on the trailing flag the ship flies?' Ling-ling enquires of the lookout.

'Trailing flag? I cannot see any flag at all.' Says the lookout.

Then more to herself. 'I'm almost certain it is one of those floating castles that the Koreans are so fond of in their trading vessels.'

'How do you know this?' Asks Shi.

'My brother and I would visit that great port of the Song, Bingpo, whenever one of our father's ships came in. And there we would see many trading ships from many different countries. The biggest besides our own were Korean but unlike ours which are without a fore deck or an aft deck of any size, the Korean ships had massive constructions fore and aft. Just like the one down below.'

'Can you really see those constructions?' Asks the lookout.

'And how can you judge the size?'

'That is easy.' She points to place beyond the ship. 'Those two boats are fishing vessels. See the difference in size.'

But none can see the fishing boats.

'If you cannot see the fishing boats then you cannot judge the size of the ship. I'm afraid I cannot help you further.' Says Ling-ling with disappointment.

Shi pulls on his wispy beard. 'To judge most things we need something to compare them to. Why should the size of ships be any different?'

Bao is struggling with his explanations to Kublai to give them in a form that Kublai can understand. 'Then let me introduce you to two forms of philosophic enquiry that we use in our enquiries into the nature of reality. First, what we call the deductive method which starts with agreed concepts and an established base of knowledge which that we can then build upon. The second is the inductive method which usually begins with a phenomenon that is not understood, and for which there are few if any concepts. And so we must first try to establish concepts so that we can build with them a theory that explains the phenomenon. My noble ancestor, Shao Yong, was only

interested in this second method. He believed that the only way to understand that part of the nature of reality beyond what we already know, was to study those things and those phenomenon that do not fit into the established knowledge. He was much criticized for this by his fellow philosophers of his time. Cheng I, always a friend, criticized him greatly for this. And much later, when the Learning of the Way was formalized by Zhu Xi, he was more than criticized and indeed, was left out of the list of contributors.'

'He was searching for hidden knowledge.' Says Kublai with insight.

'Indeed.'

'And you think that he may well have found it at this location he describes in the poem?'

'This is my hope. So when can we descend and search for this location?' Asks Bao hopefully.

Kublai sighs. 'That I do not know. But this I will promise you. We will search for this together.' He gets up and stretches. 'A full stomach after a wearisome journey brings on sleep. Let us rest now and after we can decide upon a plan of action.'

Kublai joins Asutai who is talking with the Mongolian troops. They watch as the Han settle down to sleep.

'Did you hear what Bao said?'

'I heard his words but understood little of what they meant.' Replies Asutai. 'Only that he searches for secret knowledge that he believes his ancestor might have found.'

'Knowledge that his ancestor found on his journey and gave him the ability to predict the future. That is what he said before. Can you imagine what power that would give you?'

'There can be little doubt.' Replies Asutai. 'But why tell us about it?'

'Perhaps he needs us on this search. Without our blessing he can never find this location. Besides, his companions have little faith in his quest. Or so they say. Having little faith in his ancient ancestor. Yet they travel on this quest and I wager they will follow him to where ever he goes. The prize is too great if he proves to be right.' Kublai yawns. 'Bring me some furs so that I may sleep, and get some sleep yourself. We will all need to remain vigilant tonight.'

*

The smell of mutton grab awakens Bao and he licks his lips. Turning over he wakes up the others. The silver light from the moon on the horizon lights up the clouds bottom and top and makes an awesome sight of the sky above an ocean that dances to the sparkling light reflected by the waves. Bao is taken by this sudden beauty and transported to another world where floating islands traverses a star studded sea.

Tai joins him half leaning on him. 'Is this the same world as Mongolians and Assassins?'

'Is it the same world that Yong visited? Did he see this as we do now and therefore do we not understand at least part of his mind? I would like to think so.' He turns to look her in the eyes. 'Have you any regrets of accompanying me on this mad journey?'

Tai straitens. 'If I knew what I know now how our journey would have panned out.' She stops herself from answering in the negative. 'I would still have come. This view alone would have made it worthwhile.'

They would have kissed with their lips if it had been possible. Instead, they kiss with their Inner Truth.

Joining the others they settle down with Kublai and Asutai around a big dish piled high with rice and mutton.

'Have you plans that you can share with us?' Asks Shi of Kublai.

'Until we arrive at our garrison at Qingdao and receive word from my mother about what is happening at the Kuriltai in regard to the next Great Khan, all plans must be set on hold. There may be other messages from General Salkai or from some other source that awaits me. Only when I have gathered together all the concerns of others will I be free to make plans for myself. But for now we must wait for the return of our outrider to bring us news of the other Assassin.'

Kublai didn't have long to wait as the outrider enters the camp at speed. He presents himself to Kublai who offers him a place at their dish of mutton grab.

'At the fork we found a set of tracks that skirts Lao Shan. The other two have set off in pursuit. It was agreed that they would travel on to the garrison if they could not find him to let them know the situation. And that they would bring back a

company of our men on the short route down from the lookout. I hope this is satisfactory great Khan.'

Kublai looks to Asutai. 'What say you?'

'It's a good plan as long as our men aren't dispatched by the Assassin. If they are we could wait up here for a long time.'

'Then we should wait until midday tomorrow. Descend at speed and reach the safety of the garrison before nightfall.' He hesitates, then. 'If that is possible?'

'It is, if we do not stop and ride with speed.'

Kublai turns to the Han. 'There are only enough spare clothes for Asutai and myself. You will have to remain conspicuous in your Han clothes. There is nothing that can be done.' Says Kublai without emotion.

'What clothes we wear will make little difference. If the Assassin can count he will realize what has happened. And travelling at speed he will not be able to mark you out amongst your men. So it is a good plan for all concerned.' Says Shi much to the approval of Kublai.

'And what say you, seeker of hidden knowledge?' Says Kublai with affection.

Bao, who has a mouth full of mutton grab, speaks without waiting to swallow. 'Whatever plan that brings me swiftly to a proper bed' here he drops mutton out from his mouth before he can carry on 'is a good plan for me.'

Tai wipes his chin with her sleeve. 'At times Bao, I swear you are worse than a child.'

Bao grins a meaty grin to the company in general.

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The Changing Line

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Helping others is times of decrease is beneficial

But only if it doesn't injure oneself.

This Changing Line Delivers:

The Youthful Condition (42)

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==  ==      Mountain
==  ==
==  ==
==  ==
=====      Water
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THE IMAGE

Water springs up from the foot of the Mountain:

The Image of THE YOUTHFUL CONDITION.

Eventually the Water rises to cover the Mountain

But only after it has filled in every hollow, hill and valley.

Likewise Youth must attain all knowledge before becoming a sage.

Chapter 12

The Well (41)

The Song Dynasty

1241 C.E.

24th Day of the 6st Moon

After Midday

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Water

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Wind/Wood

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THE IMAGE

Water rising through Wood:

The Image of THE WELL.

The superior man organizes the people

In the same manner as the tree organizes its parts.

Raising nourishment from the wellspring of his Inner Truth

He spreads it through civilization. Success.

“Instead of regarding Heaven as great and admiring it,

Why not foster it as a thing and regulate it?

Instead of obeying Heaven and singing praises to it,

Why not control the Mandate of Heaven and use it?

Instead of looking on the seasons and waiting for them,

Why not respond to them and make use of them?

Instead of letting things multiply by themselves,

Why not exercise your ability to increase them?

Instead of thinking about things as things,

Why not attend to them so you won't lose them?

Instead of admiring how things come into being,

Why not do something to bring them to full development?

Therefore, to neglect human effort and admire Heaven is to miss the nature of things.

From the book of Hsun Tzu. Chapter 17.

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The soft swells of the landscape are more reminiscent of the ocean after a storm has spent itself than any other description. The nine farms, almost equally divided in size, have rich earth that will grow anything from wheat to barley and even rice. Vegetables of every kind flourish, flowers like forests splash colour on the valley floors. Pigs penned in small corals at strategic junctions where fields meet. Ducks and geese confined in ponds both large and small are pock marks on a beautiful face, where streams are green veins that mark out natural boundaries that define an estate of rare productivity. This is the Blue Jasmin Estate gifted to Zhen Shi by Lizong, Principled Ancestor of the Southern Song.

From Pheasant Calling Hill the highest point in the area, an area situated north of Kinsai on the border between Kiangsu and Chekiang provinces and running alongside the Grand Canal, Shi and Bao survey the great bounty of Lizong's gift from atop great horses of Arab lineage.

Standing up on his stirrups with arms outstretched Bao performs theatrically to an unseen audience. 'Master of all you survey, hero of the Empire, scholar without equal, friend to the poor and even wastrels that skive in the Imperial Library, give us the benefit of your great knowledge.' He turns to Shi like a great actor presenting a new character in a play.

'Mocking my good fortune does not become you.' Says Shi in a flat tone.

Bao sags and drops back down in his saddle. 'What ails you my friend? Since your triumphant return you look more like your old self but that spark of vitality that made you such a potent force seems almost extinguished. Ling-ling worries that she does not please you any longer...'

'That is not true.' He cuts Bao off with force. 'It is she that keeps me sane because without her I fear I would turn into a madman. Tearing at my hair and howling at the moon.'

'Then tell me what it is.' Begs Bao.

'I cannot. It is too painful.'

'You must, for you are like a dam that is fit to burst. We must drain the waters but only you can do that. Start when you arrived in Kwangsi to take up your post as Deputy Governor.' Shi sags in the saddle. 'Start with a description of Governor Zhao.' Shi's head falls to his chest. 'Was he welcoming? Did you form a bond?'

The anger spills out. 'Welcoming?' His head is suddenly upon his shoulders. 'Welcoming. I was as welcome as poison. He hated me before we met. My friendship with Zhao Yun gave him concern for his position. He was given the post because he was the cousin of the Emperor, and that, was given reluctantly. More to appease that side of the clan than because he was worthy. I was seen as a spy. I was seen as a bitter enemy set upon his destruction. This was only to be revealed later. At first he was all charm. The charm that snakes possess. Naively, I succumbed. But that is only half of it. The situation between the Song and the Kingdom of Dali was in crisis. And worse, the situation between Kwangsi and the province of Hunan was one of almost open conflict.'

'The province of Hunan? But that's part of China.' Says a mystified Bao.

'Precisely. The Governor Li Qinghai was a scholar official who worked his way up through the bureaucracy under Shi Mi-yuan the Prime Minister that brought Lizong to power. He was an able administrator and one who believed that more scholar officials should be appointed to positions of power because of their administrative skills. So he wasn't very happy when Zhao Meng was appointed as Governor of Kwangsi because of his connections to the Imperial clan and not because of his administrative qualities. Then, a man who should have known better, allowed his feelings to be known and the two Governors became bitter enemies.'

'This reminds me of children squabbling in the playground. What, by all under Heaven, was Governor Li thinking of?'

'What indeed? And while this feud was raging between the Governors, Western Hunan or Northern Kwangsi or Eastern Dali, depending on where your own position was on this matter, was in open revolt. It had been in dispute for a long time, ever since the kingdom of Dali had been established. The various tribes that lived in the disputed region had been in dispute themselves about where their loyalties lay. Then a local warlord, Barco, subdued all the other tribes and threw his lot in with Dali. But I'm getting ahead of myself here. Barco requested a meeting with Governor Zhao on the pretence that he wished to form a union with Kwangsi. He invited Governor Zhao to Guiyang the biggest city in the disputed region.'

'When was this?' Asks Bao.

'Only four lunar cycles after I arrived. At first, I was supposed to lead the Song delegation but Governor Zhao changed his mind. Fearing I would get all the praise from a successful outcome he decided he would lead the delegation. And lucky I was, because it was a trap.'

'A trap? What kind of a trap?'

'The very worst kind. Barco had already decided to join the Kingdom of Dali but Dali did not wish to end up in direct conflict with China. So this Barco forced the issue. He allowed Governor Zhao and two hundred soldiers of his bodyguard to enter Guiyang and then he slaughtered them in the name of the Kingdom of Dali.'

'But how did we never hear of this?' Asks a perplexed Bao.

'They suppress bad news from frontier states Bao. This was bad news of the very worst kind. It meant that the Song was, technically, at war with Dali. Not good news with the

Mongolians threatening from the north. Having another war in the south west would have been considered to be a disaster. As it was the nature of this slaughter was guaranteed to prompt a reaction. They skewed the mutilated bodies on poles and lined them up along the border. It was one of the worst atrocities I have ever seen. I will never forget that line of men, skewed like pigs. Never.'

'You actually went to see this abomination?'

'It was my duty, Bao. I had little choice.' The memory has a bad reaction and his head slumps forward onto his chest. He slides off his horse and sinks to the ground on the slope of the hill.

Bao follows his lead and puts a hand on his shoulder as he sits down beside him.

Shi can't hide the tears and it takes him several moments to regain his self-composure. 'After the shock, came anger then rage. But of course, this is what Barco had intended. I summoned my Generals and told them to prepare for war. They were reluctant and counselled restraint. One begged me to send a messenger to the King of Dali and find out whether Barco was acting on his behalf. For these Generals, having much experience in the region and knowing what a brute of a man Barco was, were suspicious of Barco's claim to be acting with the consent of the King of Dali. It was then I consulted The Great I and got The Well. That recommends consulting one's Inner Truth. And I got one changing line in the third place.'

Bao recites the changing line:

Changing Line in the third place means:

The Well produces clean water but no one uses it.

Misfortune.

The same is true when a man of ability is ignored.

'The Well here is obviously a man's Inner Truth. My Inner Truth. I finally did what The Great I recommended and I calmed myself so that I could access my Inner Truth. The very act of bringing forth my Inner Truth was enough to realize that the Generals were right. And so I sent a messenger to the King of Dali. I did so with a heavy heart, knowing I could be sending him to a terrible death.'

Shi falls silent and has to be prompted by Bao. 'He was killed?'

'He never arrived as the King of Dali had himself sent a messenger. Both messengers met on route and arrived back together, and much to everyone's relief the King of Dali said that he was not responsible for Barco's atrocity. And, furthermore, that he would close the border between Dali and Western Hunan so that Barco could not escape through his Kingdom when we sent in our armies to destroy him. This, of course, was the King of Dali's permission to send in our armies to destroy this wicked man. It was not, however, to be construed that Dali had given up its claim on Western Hunan. But in reality, of course, it was.'

Another long silence which Bao is forced to break and which he does in the most optimistic fashion. 'And that was how Western Hunan was brought into the Empire. We did hear in Kinsai about the conquest of Western Hunan and your noble part in this campaign.'

A terrible laugh of manic proportions erupts from Shi. 'My noble part. My noble part in slaughter.' Shi calms and turns a pinched face to Bao. 'Hear me out and then decide whether it was noble. Governor Li turned up unannounced and greeted me as if I was a long lost friend. I was a fellow scholar official, now, as acting Governor, this for him was a victory for the bureaucracy over the Imperial clan as much as anything. His army was already on the border with Western Hunan and he had come to synchronize our invasion. My Generals were ecstatic and calling for retribution. It took little time to organize a pincer movement that would have two shells the first was centred on Guiyang where one third of my army and a third of Governor Li's army would meet. The outer shell was centred on Lupanshui close to the border of Dali and would have the bulk of both armies arrive encircling most of the province. It was a good plan with the inner shell acting as a decoy and the outer as the containing shell in which we would capture Barco and his army. It worked as if it was an exercise. Barco's army was routed near Dafang near the border of the province of Szechwan. My armies arrived in Lupanshui and we took the town without a fight as the people on hearing of our immanent arrival fled over the border into Dali.'

'You were travelling with the army?'

'Indeed.' Shi says from an empty face. 'It was to be a victory for the scholar official Governors. And so it was. Eventually.'

'Eventually?'

Governor Li having routed Barco's army then slaughtered them to a man. Pursuing the remnants into the mountains. But the man that had caused all of this slaughter and the slaughter that was to follow was never captured. It was rumoured he made his way into the mountains of northern Dali and eventually into Tibet. What he left behind was the destruction of his own people.'

Shi stands up and stretches his face weary with pain. 'My Generals and Governor Li's Generals pursued a campaign against those tribes that had sided with Barco. They slaughtered them all. Men women and children. In frontier provinces it is the common practice. The land is then free for Han settlement. And so it is that the Empire expands. It expands through slaughter.' Shi sighs. 'There, I have said it.' He turns to Bao. 'I was responsible for the slaughter of tens of thousands of my fellow human beings. Their worthless lives made worthless because they were barbarians. Less than human. Worthless. And I condoned this slaughter in the name of civilization.'

'But you don't condone this slaughter. Your words find you out.' Says Bao trying to be helpful.

'Oh but I did. The memory of those men skewed in a line of shame blinded me to the slaughter of the innocent. Retribution must be paid. Revenge by any other name, will be my epitaph.' He breaks into uncontrolled weeping.

Bao slides across and puts his arm around Shi's hunched shoulders. 'What I am hearing is your common humanity expressing regret for your reaction to an atrocity of unparalleled horror. I would have reacted the same way. People who perform such wickedness are hardly human they really did need to be punished. And were worthy of being named barbarians. This Barco and these tribes that supported him stand for everything that *this culture of ours* does not. If your reaction ignored that part of your Inner Truth that stands for the common humanity of all human beings, it is having its say now. It has not been destroyed or you would not now regret the slaughter of the innocents - women and children.' Shi heaves with emotion and pulls his legs up grasping them to his chest. 'You are the most noble of men who lives his life in the embodiment of *this culture of ours* more than anyone that I have met or are likely to meet. As long as your common humanity remains a part of your Inner Truth then you will not suffer a dichotomy in your Inner Truth which would announce its destruction. You still possess your common

humanity which you have just expressed so forcefully. It may be pained but it is alive and well. If this event had destroyed your common humanity then I would be worried that your Inner Truth would have been destroyed as well. It has not, and as such, your Inner Truth is also alive and well. Inner Truth gains its strength from the harmony of the mind. It is the harmony that has been disturbed. The harmony that has been disturbed by this event. A real world event. You must be aware that we, both you and I, have been privileged to live in a world governed by *this culture of ours*. Perhaps one day the whole world will be so privileged. I need to believe that and you also need to believe that. We stand on the brink of disaster with the Mongolian barbarians set to destroy *this culture of ours* if we allow them. Hasn't Lizong taken this on board and aren't there plans afoot to make sure that it survives even after our conquest?'

Shi turns to Bao and gives him a weak smile. 'What will you do when the Mongolians arrive?'

Bao takes this question to mean a return of his old friend from a very dark place and launches into plans that are already afoot. 'My father is a very shrewd man. Even though my mother treats him as some sort of simpleton. He has ordered the Captains of the Black Pearl and the recently built White Pearl to trade only as far as Champa in the west and Balinesia in the south so that they can return to Bingpo in months rather than years. We, and that includes you, will then decamp to Champa where we already own warehouses or possibly to the Kingdom of Siam where we also own warehouses. The women of our household favour Siam because it is a Buddhist country and they will almost certainly get their way as they usually do. We, by this I mean you and I, will become Pearl Merchants.' Shi snorts a weak laugh. 'Oh laugh if you must but these plans are already well laid.'

'I could not possibly desert the Empire in its time of need.'

'As a member of the governing body, the Mongolians will certainly kill you and your family. What possible good will that do.' Says Bao with force. 'What nonsense you talk at times. However,' he softens his tone 'considering your disturbed Inner Truth at this time, I will forgive you for placing my sister in deadly peril by these present self-destructive thoughts.'

'That is most considerate of you.' Says Shi with dripping irony.

'Don't mention it.' Says Bao without a trace.

Shi turns even more towards Bao and looks at him with what can only be considered, awe. 'Do you relish becoming a pearl merchant?'

'A live pearl merchant would still be able to pursue knowledge, where a dead Imperial Librarian would not. Choice does not come into it.' Says Bao with gloating satisfaction.

His cheeky grin touches something in Shi's Inner Truth and he realizes that Bao has guided him through a very dark place and realizes he has not only rescued him from self-destruction but also brought some harmony back to his Inner Truth. 'Your father would not leave Ling-ling behind in the event of an invasion.'

'My father will not let you marry Ling-ling if you do not agree to the course of action that I have just described.'

'This has already been decided?'

'When my mother and father are in accord, not even the cruel north wind can alter their course.' Says Bao with a sense of resignation.

'Then my fate has been decided for me.'

'Not your fate, that is far too negative. Your destiny.'

Shi coughs out a laugh. 'In one thousand years of solitude I would never have guessed that I would end up a pearl merchant.'

'It could be worse. Once, when the pearl trade was going through a bad period, he considered becoming a pig farmer. On the grand scale, of course.'

'I suppose pearl vending is better than pig farming.' Says Shi in a tiny voice.

Bao suddenly jumps up. 'The horses have wandered off. Come, we must catch them before they enjoy their freedom too much.'

Shi follows Bao at speed and they spend a good while trying to capture horses that have already discovered what freedom means.

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The mansion of the state is a two story all wood affair with verandas all around. The main entrance is higher than the ground by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a metre and has a sloping area inside a

structure of some character protruding out into an open area for carriages to turn around. This porch is four metres long as measured from the two and a half metre wide door and three metres wide which has carved pillars and carved arches and is open on the sides where rich growths form panels of Camilla either side with white blossoms in dense profusion.

Intermingled with these shrubs are jasmine so rich in perfume that the inside of the house is drenched in the smell wafted in by people entering.

The veranda on the first floor is wider than on the ground floor and is supported by carved pillars so that the first floor is open and without pillars of any kind. The roof beams extending to cover the first floor veranda are massive and carved. The balustrades are made of thick wood and like the rest of the open surfaces are carved. These carvings that cover so much of the mansion are depictions of various recognizable flowers with their recognizable leaves and stems. At one time the flowers had been painted and a few still had traces of paint deep in the grooves. The rest of wood had never been painted, leaving the weathered wood a dark almost black colour, but two toned because of the light un-weathered wood underneath adding a rich texture to all of the surfaces. The windows are full length and paned with glass twenty five centimetres square. Three windows, two metres wide each, with four metres between each, are either side of the porch and that slide into hidden recesses so that they disappear altogether into the wooden panels that line the rooms.

Small shrubs of every kind surround the building to the depth of the porch's extension into the courtyard and come up the balustrade of the veranda half way. In all, a delightful country residence.

As Bao and Shi arrive back stable boys come and take their horses from them. Tai and Ling-ling come down the porch to greet their loved ones with happiness writ large upon their faces.

Ling-ling presses herself against Shi and he grasps her to himself. 'You look better for your ride.'

'Your brother has worked his magic and informs me that I am to become a pearl merchant in the fullness of time.'

'How do you feel about that?'

'He has convinced me it is better to be a live pearl merchant than a dead scholar official.'

'Then all is well with the world. Come and look at our marriage bed.' With that she drags him inside.

'The dam has burst and the poisonous waters have drained away. It was easier than expected.' Says Bao taking Tai's hand.

'And these poisonous waters?'

'Horror that led to revenge that led to slaughter of the innocent that led to more horror and then to guilt and the disharmony of his Inner Truth. Shi has found that he is human after all. Getting him to accept this was easy because he was in such a weakened state and his common humanity was still intact. If somewhat tarnished by real life in a frontier province. I would spare you the details if I could but you will know them next time we share our consciousness.'

'I will not search for them but if they arise then I will practice detachment as my mentor the Abbot has taught me. And you?'

Bao laughs. 'As you well know, I am semi-detached most of the time because of my rationality. Those things I consider harmful to my Inner Truth become merely an exercise in understanding. How I would fare if I was to witness them first hand, as Shi has done, I would not like to test.'

'Yet we will soon travel into the heart of darkness. Are you not afraid that you will confront them there?'

'Not with you beside me. Your destiny has already been revealed to you and it does not include such horror. What then can harm me?' Says Bao with confidence.

Tai smiles and runs her hand down his face. 'The Abbot tells me you will make a good Buddhist. Of a sort.'

Bao laughs. 'Of a Confucian sort.'

Tai laughs. 'Of the sort that understands universal centrality and knows that not all things can be understood by reason.'

'Perhaps.'

*

The Changing Line

Changing Line in the third place means:

The Well produces clean water but no one uses it.

Misfortune.

The same is true when a man of ability is ignored.

This Changing Line Delivers:

The Abysmal (43)

== ==
===== Water
== ==
== ==
===== Water
== ==

The Image

Water upon Water:

The Image of the ABYSSMAL.

Floods wash away the course of the river

Making a new way to the sea.

Chapter 13

Overbearing Power (16)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

2st Day of the 2nd Moon

Early Evening

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Lake

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Wind/Wood

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THE IMAGE

The Lake rises over the Trees:

The Image of OVERBEARING POWER.

The superior man is like a tree grasping onto the earth during a flood.

He is undaunted by the situation,

Knowing it is only temporary.

“Three Fallacies: ‘It is no disgrace to be insulted.’, ‘The sage does not love himself.’, ‘To kill a robber is not to kill a man.’ These are examples of the fallacy of so using names as to confuse names. Examine them in the light of ‘the reason for having names’ and see whether any of these statements is applicable. Then you will be able to stop the confusion.

‘Mountains are on the same level as marshes.’ ‘The desires seek to be few.’ ‘Tender meat adds nothing to sweet taste, and the great bell adds nothing to music.’ These are examples of the fallacy of so using actualities as to confuse names.’ Examine them by ‘the cause for the similarities and differences in names’ and see which of these statements are harmonious with them. Then you will be able to stop the confusion.

‘A white horse is not a horse.’ This is an example of using names as to confuse actualities. Examine it by using the convention of names and see what has been rejected contradicts what they have accepted, and you will be able to stop the confusion.”

From the book of Hsun Tzu. Chapter 22.



The Mongolian horseman pulling two tired horses behind him and riding a third stands up on his stirrups and stretches his arms up into the air as he approaches the entrance to General Salkai’s encampment on the southern side and eastern end of the Tai mountain range. The guards wave him through.

He comes to stop outside the General’s tent, stops and dismounts in one and the guards hold open the tent’s flaps and he enters at speed.

Dropping to one knee in front of the General who has swung around from a table where he has been consulting a map with his Captains.

‘News from the garrison at Yantai. The fishing village came under sustained attack from Jürgen cavalry last evening. I was sent to bring reinforcements.’

Salkai swings back around to the map while saying to the messenger. ‘Food and rest and be ready to ride before midnight.’ The messenger leaves as fast as he arrived.

‘Why attack Yantai? It gives their position away and there is nothing to be gained by taking the fishing village.’ Says Salkai as much to himself as to those gathered.

‘Food, they must be running short of food.’ Young Captain Chutsai enthusiastically declares.

'Possibly. And they do have an increased force to feed. But sending a relief force would alert them to our intentions and spring the trap too early.' Again he says this as much to himself as the others.

'Then let me take one hundred of our most experienced fighters. This would be what they will be expecting. A small force sent to fight another small force.' Says Chutsai.

'It has it marked here that Kadai had sent a force of one hundred men to Yantai.' Says Salkai's administrator looking at the book of records of army instructions.

'Does it say why Kadai sent so many of our fighting troops to this fishing village?' Asks Salkai to a background of surprised mumblings.

'Unfortunately not.'

'Could it be that it is close to the major headland of Rongchen Wan that sticks out into the East China Sea and provides unparalleled views to north, east and south?' Adds Chutsai.

'There is a lookout base marked at Rongchen Wan but says nothing about the number of troops or where they are stationed.' Says the administrator.

'Then that is what it must be. A fishing village would be an ideal place to garrison a force of that size.' There is agreement all round. 'Then a force of one hundred men to reinforce Yantai makes sense. Or at least would make sense to the Jürgen. And would keep our own plans safe from discovery.' More agreement. 'As this is your plan Chutsai you, then you have the honour to lead this expedition.' He turns and places his hand on Chutsai's shoulder. 'Hand pick your men and prepare to leave before midnight. But do not engage with a superior force. Retreat under these circumstance is good tactics.'

Chutsai leaves and General Salkai returns to the map. 'We should now consider moving the entire army through the gap between the two mountain ranges.' He turns to the gathered Captains. 'See to your men and have them ready for dawn. It will be good to be finally on the move.' Everyone agrees and the council breaks up.

As an afterthought he shouts out. 'Send a messenger to General Borui to inform him of our action.'

One of the Captains, Captain Chabi, returns. 'General, I have not been assigned a unit, would you give me permission to carry this message to Borui. At least I would feel I was doing something useful.'

'You were assigned to my command by Kadai himself. So that you could get some battle experience. Is that not so?'

'It is.'

'Your father was a friend of the Provincial Governor?'

'He was. Before he was killed at the battle for Kaifeng.'

'I see. Well, General Borui is likely to see the best of the fighting. So I give you permission to join him. Good hunting.'

Captain Chabi gives the General an enthusiastic smile and leaves.

The General turns to his administrator. 'We seem to be blest with an endless supply of good young officers.'

The administrator smiles as he writes the instructions in the records. 'We will need them all if Kublai becomes the Great Kahn.'

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Chabi doesn't wait but goes straight to his billet and packs his things. He picks out three good horses, mounts up and sets off. His greatest fear at this moment is that General Salkai will change his mind and stop him from what he sees as a great adventure.

Once out of the encampment he gallops his horses until he feels safe from capture. Capture by his own men. Depriving him of this sense of freedom. To be free. To wander alone in the world. He is very much his father's son. A man who had the confidence of Kadai and acted as his eyes on every campaign he undertook. How he would like to be in that position. But to Kublai. A man whose greatness he can feel. He knows instinctively that Kublai will one day be the Great Khan. And why? Because Kublai has his grandfather's vision; a world brought to everlasting peace under Mongolian rule.

As he walks his horses feeling for vibrations through the ground that will alert him to pursuit or confrontation, he wonders how he can gain access to Kublai. Who, is out there now, not that far away. He knows he must be ready to take

advantage of any chance of coming into contact with this man of destiny.

He feels vibrations. He stops and quietens the horses. He can hear the sound of galloping horses but they are not coming from behind neither are they coming from in front. They are coming from north from the very edge of the western foothills of the Kun Yu mountain range. He quickly leaves the well-trodden track of Borui's army and hides his horses in a thicket to the south of the track. And none too soon, because a handful of riders break out of the woods opposite to where he now stands quieting the horses with handfuls of barley. They stop and examine the tracks left by Borui's army. They speak in Jürgen. They argue. They split up. Half return from the direction they have come, the rest follow in the direction of Borui but only at a cantor.

Chabi waits until he can hear nothing. He returns to the track on foot and marks the spot with two crossed sticks. Then he leads his horses further south onto open land and rides back into the west for a few kilometres before returning to the track leading to Salkai's encampment.

Gallopig his horses he arrives back and is forced to stop at the entrance for he is still unknown to most of Salkai's Mongolians. A quick conversation and he soon on his way galloping right up to the General's tent.

The guards here recognize him but he still has to convince them to let him in as the General has left strict instructions that he is not to be disturbed.

Once inside he is forced to shake Salkai awake.

'This had better be good.' Says General Salkai once he is fully awake. 'Chabi, what are you doing back?'

'Not more than 25 kilometres from here I encountered Jürgen cavalry coming out of the north. They examined the tracks of Borui's army then half returned the way they came and the other half followed Borui but only at a cantor.

Salkai gets up and leans on the table peering at the map.

'Bring that lamp over here.'

'Twenty five kilometres you say. That would make it about here.' He points. 'That's if this map is accurate. What, by the flat plains of our homeland, are they doing there?'

'Surely, they have come to find us. They know we move against them and must know how.'

The General turns to Chabi. 'You have had time to think on this. Tell me your thoughts.'

'After they examined the tracks they argued. I assume it was whether it was our full army or just a part. So they split up. One half finding their way to this camp but avoiding the track. The other half returning to their encampment but by a quicker route that first entailed following Borui's army.'

'It sounds too complicated to me.'

'Those following Borui's army only set off at a cantor and slow cantor at that. If they wanted to catch up with Borui's army, surely, they would have set off at a gallop.'

'Perhaps.' The General examines Chabi's face that is still focused on the map and tracing out with his finger routes that lead into the hills to the north of the track. 'If they know that we leave ambush rear guards on all of our armies, which well they might, then what you say may have some truth to it.'

Chabi feels Salkai's eyes upon him and turns to face the General. 'Let me lead a raiding party back to the spot where this happened and once they are on the trail, let me pursue the others.'

'Finding tracks leading off from an army will be difficult enough in day light, and, slow work. At night it will be impossible.' Salkai relaxes and lies back down on his bed. 'Rest in the corner until first light. By which time I will make my decision.'

Chabi picks up a fur and curls up. Who would question a General of such standing?

*

Chabi finds his crossed sticks with ease and in just a few moments the trail the Jürgen had left the previous night.

The Captain leading the forty man raiding party sends his men on in pursuit then turns to Chabi. 'Take these two men who are the best trackers I have at my command. If you are right then you will shorten this campaign considerably but only if you can convey the Jürgen position to us without their knowledge.'

'I will send one of them back at the very first sign of large troop movements.' Says Chabi.

'Good hunting, Captain Chabi.'

'May the skies above your yurt be filled with eagles.' Chabi replies in kind.

The two groups part company.

As soon as Chabi and his men leave the woods they descend onto the deserted fields. Then separating by twenty metres as to form a line pointing north they begin the search for the Jürgen tracks.

After fifteen kilometres they finally come across tracks leading out of woods and establish by the marks left by the horses' hooves that they are those of Jürgen cavalry.

Chabi is ecstatic. 'I just knew I was right. Now trackers lead on.'

The tracks lead in a north-easterly direction but well to the west of Kun Yu Shan that they can see clearly once they have mounted a high hill.

Once they have ascended the next ridge they can see that the tracks lead towards a gap in between the foot hills and the beginning of the western side of the mountains proper.

Crossing over open land now plays on the nerves of the three Mongolians. Just one Jürgen lookout would easily pick them out and their quest brought to a sudden and certainly violent end.

They do not discuss it as it is a chance they must take. Having little choice in the matter they ride in silence fearing at every moment the arrival of Jürgen cavalry.

Making the top of the hill that marks the end of the foot hills they discover it is more of a plateau.

The tracks they have been following merge into hundreds of other tracks. Old, very old and recent.

'How can we track through this?' Says one of the trackers.

'The simple answer is that we can't.' Says Chabi. 'What has been going on here?' He says as much to himself as to the others. 'Spread out and see if you can see a main track or anything else for that matter.'

Chabi goes towards the west, the others to north and east. The plateau is several kilometres square and all three eventually meet at the northern most edge. A steep valley lies before them, not impossible for their sure footed Mongolian horses to

descend but with the disadvantage that once at the bottom they would be hemmed in. And their descent could be witnessed easily from the other side of the valley.

'This is a dangerous place to be. I cannot believe that the Jürgen have not lookouts guarding this place that is so well used.' Says Chabi to the agreement of the others. 'One of you must go back and inform General Salkai of what we have found. It must have some significance. But do not think it is the easy option. If we are already discovered the Jürgen will send men after you and with their swift horses will soon be upon you.'

The trackers decide amongst themselves and one sets off after changing horses. As they watch him go. 'All that remains is which direction we must go.' Says Chabi to the remaining tracker.

'Surely we must go east into the mountains.'

'If that is where their hideout is. That is what has been assumed from the very beginning of this campaign. But what if that assumption is wrong? What if they are waiting for General Salkai to move his army to the northern coast and then cross behind him and move into the Tai Shan mountain range?' Asks Chabi of the tracker.

'Also, the eastern route is very exposed and has confining valleys easy for ambush.'

'A small consideration as I expect the Jürgen cavalry to be with us soon. Let us head west and descend into a wood valley that I saw. It will give us cover and is every bit as likely to be the right direction as the one to the east.'

'More so.' Says the tracker. 'The original group you saw came out of the north and half of them returned that way. Perhaps you are right and the main Jürgen body is to the north from where you saw them. Which is to the west from here.'

Chabi smiles at the tracker. 'Well said. It gives us justification for taking that direction. Now let us be gone from this exposed place.'

They gallop their horses to the west of the plateau and look for the quickest way down into the wooded valley. The tracker leads the way and just before Chabi descends he has one look back scanning the entire area from north to south. Coming up on the horizon to the south a line of horsemen along its

entire length. It can only mean Jürgen cavalry. He drops his horse down the side with speed hoping they haven't seen him.

Catching up with the tracker. 'They are on to us. A line of horsemen coming from the south. We must skirt around this valley once we get into the forest.' He takes the lead and they make the forest before the first Jürgen horsemen appear on the ridge above.

From the safety of cover they watch the Jürgen descend. A column leads a direct line down into the forest but either side horsemen fan out as they descend.

For Chabi this can only mean one thing; they have been discovered. Then he sees tied to his horse the other tracker. Was he ever so right.

They mount and gallop their horses around the contours of the hill and near the edge of the forest.

Chabi stops and waits for the tracker to catch up. 'They will scour the forest looking for the tracks of our horses. We must abandon them here and drive them down to the valley floor. On foot we have a chance to hide and possibly escape.'

'Did you see? They have captured my friend.'

'There is nothing to be done. Now dismount.'

Taking what they can carry they drive the horses into a stampede. Running at speed they keep to the same contour of the hill. Running while continually looking back to see if they are followed. They suddenly find themselves on the edge of an open space.

'It looks like an old quarry.' Says the tracker. 'Perhaps it affords us a place to hide.'

'Or a place to trap ourselves. Move around the edge. Let us stay in the forest.' Chabi leads the way.

Half way around Chabi sees a puff of smoke coming from deep within the rock face of the quarry at its base. 'What was that?'

'A small cloud of smoke.' Says the tracker with curiosity.

'Let us press on until we can find a place to hide.'

They have to descend further down the valley to keep in the cover of the forest. They keep moving at speed until they come

across a recently fallen tree. Taking cover under the branches they stop to rest.

'That smoke. It was coming from the ground and can only mean one thing. It has to be an air vent for a mine. The entrance must be down on the valley floor.' Says Chabi. 'A mine in operation in a deserted landscape is strange indeed. We must find out what it means. But first,' he points to the ground beneath a branch that has dug deep into the earth, 'get in there and make a space for us. I will bring branches to cover us. Quickly now.'

Soon they have covered their tracks and are housed in a bower beneath the tree with branches seemingly crushed by the fallen tree covering their heads.

Voices and horses can now be heard back from where they came. Soon horses can be heard nearby but they are only passing through.

Chabi and the tracker give a sigh of relief.

★

Chutsai leads his men in front of the outer defence of Yantai a semicircle of staves buried deep in the ground and joined together by spiked poles. The inner semicircle is of the exact same construction with just 10 metres between the two. He notices blood stains on the ground where bodies had once laid. 'It is your reinforcement.' He calls out to the Mongolians he can see behind the inner defence. 'Open up the gate.'

A great cheer goes up from the defenders. They rush to the gate which is positioned where the staked defence meets the buildings of what is a small town; these buildings have been converted by the addition of battlements to their roofs.

Soon the entire relief force is inside.

'Where is the Captain in charge?' Shouts out Chutsai above the noise.

'I am here.' Captain Ariq cries out.

One of the defenders points Chutsai in the right direction and he forces his way through the chaos of their arrival, using his horse as a battering ram.

'Over here on the veranda of this ... tavern.'

Chutsai finally sees him and waves. Pushing his way through, he ties his horse up, mounts the steps and is given a bear hug

by Ariq who greets him like a long lost friend. 'Have we met before?'

'I doubt it.' Says Chutsai.

'You look familiar. Still, I expect I won't be able to stand the sight of you within side of a week.' He jokes. 'Take a seat and have some wine.'

'I take it you have slaughtered the enemy and burned their bodies.' Chutsai jokes back catching on to the jovial mood.

'Burned their bodies? Eaten them in the time honoured tradition of siege.' He laughs.

Chutsai pulls up a chair and the two men sit side by side watching the chaos. Wine soon arrives in the form of a small barrel. He takes a long draft. 'I was expecting a battle and arrive to find a celebration. You must inform me of that which we celebrate.'

'There's not much to tell. After the initial attack which we repulsed with the loss of only one man. The enemy, less twenty three of their pathetic soldiers, left and have not been seen since.'

Chutsai turns to Ariq with curiosity. 'They only attacked once?'

'I'm afraid you have had a wasted journey. Still, now you are here, you can help us demolish the great store of wine that this town is so richly endowed.'

After taking a draft from the barrel he passes it back to Chutsai, who takes another draft himself.

'Where do you think they have gone?'

'A mystery. They rode off into the east. But as you will know, means nothing.'

'Could this be a trick of some kind?'

'It could. Or, and more likely, they were testing our defences. Seeing how many men we have. Looking for a weakness. Which there is none, I may add. Kadai was quite specific when he sent us here.'

The barrel passes between them again.

'Specific about what?'

'The deep water port.' Ariq is surprised that Chutsai doesn't know.

'I know nothing of the deep water port.'

'Kadai was obsessed with invasion from the sea. Large ships carrying hundreds of men could make a bridge head here. Hence the defences we constructed both from the sea and from the land.'

'So this raid by the Jürgen wasn't about food supplies?'

'I doubt that.'

They each have another swig from the barrel.

Then Ariq carries on. 'I would have thought it would have been more to do with escaping by sea.'

'Have you seen any ships near here?'

'That's the strange thing, we haven't seen any ships since we have been here. Of course the headland lookout was attacked and the Jürgen massacred all but two of our men that managed to escape. So we were well prepared by the time they attacked.'

Chutsai considers this with his full attention. 'Did they attack with their full force?'

'That's another strange thing. Our men on the wooden battlement thought there was hardly more than one hundred. Had we known we could have routed them easily. As it was they escaped unmolested except for those cut down in the attack. And that was the last we saw of them.'

The barrel does the round again.

'Of course' he continues 'they could be waiting to attack in greater numbers once their ship arrives off the coast.'

'There must be other ports along the coast?'

'None that could accommodate a ship to accommodate five or six hundred men.'

'I didn't realize that there were ships that big.'

'We are hardly a seafaring nation. It was only when Kadai found this out that he had this place and Qingdao fortified.'

'Qingdao?'

'The only other place a large ship could put in south of here. The ports to the north were already fortified.'

Chutsai has a sudden insight. 'Captain Ariq I would like you to send your men out in a twenty kilometre arc around this port. And I would wager you will find few if any Jürgen.'

He stands up and looks at the joyful chaos they are surrounded by. 'What fools we have been. If your men cannot find any trace of the enemy then they have fooled us completely. They obviously intend to leave by the port at Qingdao and this attack was only a feint. Hurry man. Kublai is in Qingdao and woe to those who put his life at risk.'

Captain Ariq sobers considerably. He moves amongst his men giving specific orders to different individuals but the sun has set before sixty of his men have left on this scouting expedition.

Chutsai sees to his men's billet before retiring into a deep sleep.

★

Chabi awakes with a start. In raising his head he finds his face constricted by leaves and small branches. He fights against their constriction and then it all comes back. He relaxes and looks to see the tracker with sleep still in his eyes awakening too.

Fully awake the climb out of their bower into a white wonderland glistening from the light of the moon.

Establishing that they are alone they now descend through the forest through light wispy snow. Glad to be moving as it warms their bodies they ignore the footprints they are leaving behind. The quiet of the forest giving them confidence they descend till they reach the edge of a quarry but this one is enormous. They peer over the edge where they can see a few Jürgen soldiers who are just mounting up. One man on the far side of the quarry slides down on his backside through the vegetation.

Once down he is brought two horses and he mounts. They are all looking towards the base of the quarry expecting something. They do not have to wait long as coming out in twos are the Jürgen cavalry. Once out they set off at a gallop towards the south. Climbing back up through the forest with great purpose.

Chabi and the tracker watch in amazement as what seems an unending stream finally comes to an end after six hundred and fifty horsemen emerge from the very earth. The original group waiting on the quarry's floor fall in behind them and within a short time Chabi and the tracker are all alone.

It is their turn to descend on their backsides to the floor of the quarry. Unleashing their short bows from their backs they string them and fit arrows without looking. Their attention and senses awake to their surroundings. Silence.

They run to the entrance to the mine and listen inside. Silence.

Chabi drops down onto a boulder in frustration. 'What a waste. We have found the enemy but cannot deliver their position to our army.'

'At least we are still alive.' Says the tracker.

Chabi laughs in relief but has not time to say anything as the sound of galloping horses send them scurrying into the mine and just in time. Three horsemen arrive onto the quarry's floor from the west. They dismount and rush to the entrance of the mine only to be sent back with arrows from Chabi and the trackers bows. One makes it back to his horse before he too is cut down.

Chabi and the tracker lose little time in mounting these gifts from the gods.

They follow the Jürgen up through the forest and watch as they descend from the plateau. Making their way across they can see their enemy in one long line like an arrow pointing directly to the south.

'If we follow them we risk detection. It is now our duty to report this to General Salkai. Let us return to the mine and from there we will travel west.' Says Chabi to the agreeing tracker.

They ride with abandon.

★

At first he cannot make out what this dark wooden wall is. Then he realizes that he is in water. Water that has little substance to it but is cold beyond measure. He swims backwards away from the wooden wall as it slowly glides past. Then a moment of realization. A great ship with men leaning over the side and jeering at him, laughing at his plight.

He raises his arms in the air and cries out. 'Wait, wait.'

Captain Ariq shakes him by the shoulder. 'Wake up, you have been dreaming.'

Chutsai shakes off the dream and climbs out of his bed. 'They are leaving. They are leaving by a great black ship.' He dresses and arms himself. 'Give me three ... better four horses. I must leave at once to warn Salkai.' Then as an afterthought. 'Have your scouts arrived back?'

'Most of them.'

'And.'

'There are few signs and none of recent making. Only the tracks into the east made by those that attacked our fortress.'

'Keep my men here just in case I am wrong. They leave by ship. That is for certain. But I wager they leave from Qingdao and not from here in Yantai.'

Soon ready he mounts his horse pulling three others behind him. The gates are opened and he gallops into a new dawn.

*

General Salkai and his Administrator are at the very front of the two thousand man army.

'If we go any slower we will be going backwards.' Says the Administrator, more as an observation than a criticism.

'Then let us dismount and walk. By all that is green and all that is blue, I need the exercise.' The General says this as he dismounts.

The entire army takes this as a signal and like a wave they dismount from front to back.

'What are we missing?'

'What are we missing?' Asks the Administrator as a form of reply. 'A new spine for this old body would be a good start.'

The General gives a sour look. 'If you won't take opium on these long journeys, you can expect very little sympathy from me.'

'Opium has become the scourge of the Empire. Even young men now take it at the least excuse. When we were young men ...'

'When we were young men the world was young. We were too busy building an Empire to consider aches and pains. You should retire and return home.' Says the General, only slightly annoyed.

'Return home you say. This' he waves his arms about in all directions 'is my home. Why don't you retire? You are older than me.'

'Perhaps I will.' He looks at his old friend. 'Now that has taken the water from your trough.'

'Huh.' Is all that the Administrator replies but he fills it with as much contempt he can muster.

One of the forward scouts gallops into view and by the use of arm signals foretells of the arrival of a rider. He slows his pace and allows the rider to pass.

Salkai halts the column and the rider arrives, stops and dismounts in one.

Chutsai, for it is he, gives a heart, head and Heaven salute from a bended knee. 'They have disappeared from the coastal plain. And Captain Ariq has informed me that Kadai had Yantai fortified because it was a deep water port, capable of landing large numbers of troops.'

'Are we expecting an invasion?' Asks the General only half in jest.

'It is not an invasion that I suspect but a means of escape for these Jürgen cavalry.'

'Then shall we ride on at speed?' The General asks with concern.

'I have left my men in Yantai and the good Captain there ...'

'Captain Ariq.'

'The same. He has the situation well in hand. What I fear is the attack on Yantai was a feint to draw us in the wrong direction. Which it has. I fear they intend leaving by the only other deep water port in the province.'

'Where is that?'

'Qingdao.'

The silence is followed by murmurings of the name down the entire column.

'Riders to the east.' Comes a voice from the flank.

Bows are stringed and arrowed in an instant.

Two men ride out in front of several. But they are all standing up on their stirrups.

Chabi and the tracker arrive on their big Jürgen horses and repeat what Chutsai has just performed in terms of a salute.

'We have just come from the Jürgen hideout less than forty kilometres from here in the hills to the west of the Kun Yu Mountains. We counted six hundred and fifty as they left.'

'That's impossible.' Says an annoyed Salkai. 'We've had that area swept on numerous occasions.'

'Never the less, we counted them out from a mine, and there was six hundred and fifty, to be exact six hundred and fifty seven. My tracker will verify this.' Chabi turns to the tracker who confirms this.

'Six hundred and fifty seven. Not counting the three we killed to obtain these horses.'

'Which direction did they go?' Asks Chutsai after Salkai remains silent after this information is delivered.

'They were heading south and will cross well behind Borui's army's line of advance. I can only assume they intend to escape into the hinterland of China.' Says Chabi with sincerity.

'That is where you are wrong my friend. They intend to escape by ship back to their homeland. Escape through the port at Qingdao.' Chutsai says with force.

'Enough.' The General enforces his seniority. He turns to Chabi. 'If what you say is true then their tracks will cross behind Borui's army and so we will know if what you say is true.' He turns to his Captains who have gathered behind him. 'Organize your trackers to follow in Borui's footsteps and go at speed.'

The Captains return to their units.

The Administrator pulls alongside Salkai and whispers in his ear. 'Salkai, we cannot remain here while the trackers confirm what Chabi and Chutsai between them have made a certain case for. You must turn the army around now and pursue the enemy. Kublai's life may well depend on it.'

Salkai sags.

'For those of us that believe in Genghis' great dream we know that Kublai is his true heir. Without him lesser men will assume control and the great dream will die and be lost forever. There is little if any time to be lost. Even if this audacious Jürgen plan proves to be wrong at least we have shown that we placed Kublai's life above all other considerations.' The Administrator ends his advice by moving away.

The General looks at him but only for a moment. 'We cannot wait.' He speaks in a strong voice. 'Turn the army around we ride to Qingdao with all possible speed. The future Great Khan is in Qingdao and he must be protected at all cost.'

A great cheer goes up that takes the General by surprise and he looks to his Administrator who joins him. 'The wisdom of crowds has spoken.' He sets off at pace with Salkai but a horse's length behind him.

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Exceptional caution must be taken in exceptional times.

In particular,

The beginning of a solution must be cautiously applied.

Changing Line in the second place means:

Exceptional times calls for exceptional solutions.

The superior man casts far and wide to

Increase the chance of finding the right one.

Perseverance brings

Success.

Changing Line in the third place means:

Overbearing power is often blind to the situation.

Pushing on regardless only makes things worse.

Danger.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

The superior man finds a solution by working with others.

He makes sure there are no ulterior motives.

These would lead to humiliation.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Difficulty at the Beginning (44)

== ==
===== Water
== ==
== ==
== == Thunder
=====

THE IMAGE

Thunder then Rain:

The Image of DIFFICULTY AT THE BEGINNING.

In the chaos of a difficult beginning

Order is already implicit

Chapter 14

Duration (17)

The Song Dynasty

1058 C.E.

21st Day of the 12th Moon

Mid-afternoon

== ==

== ==

Thunder

=====

=====

=====

Wind

== ==

The Image

Thunder and Wind:

The Image of DURATION.

Thus the superior man remains constant in his ability to adapt;

Changing to the changing situation;

While holding to his Inner Truth.

“The nature of man is evil; his goodness is the result of his activity. Now, his in born nature is to seek for gain. If this tendency is followed, strife and rapacity result and deference and compliance disappear. By inborn nature one is envious and hates others. If these tendencies are followed, injury and destruction result and loyalty and faithfulness disappear. By inborn nature one possesses the desires of ear and eye and likes sound and beauty. If these tendencies are followed, lewdness and licentiousness result, and the pattern and order of propriety and righteousness disappear. Therefore, to follow man’s nature and his feelings will inevitably result in strife and rapacity, combine with rebellion and disorder, and end in violence. Therefore, there must be civilizing influences of teachers and laws and the guidance of propriety and righteousness, and then it will result in deference and compliance, combine with pattern and order, and end in discipline. From this point of view, it is clear that the nature of man is evil and that his goodness is the result of activity.”

From the book of Hsun Tzu. Chapter 23.

★

Yong had left Kaifeng through the eastern Qingming Ward where it ran alongside of the Bian River. The Bian River had been widened and made into a canal. This joined Kaifeng in the north to the Huai River and the Huai River joined the Grand Canal in the southeast near Lake Hongze.

It was well known that Confucius had travelled down the Huai River and unlike the Yellow River, that had changed course many times since the times of Confucius, the Huai River still followed the same course.

Here was Yong’s chance to experience the same sights that the great sage had experienced, at least in terms of the general geography. And to experience this over a long period; the time it took to travel some four hundred kilometres.

This was a journey of little import until about a half of the way down the Huai River, when an early summer thunder storm sprung out of the moisture laden atmosphere with great force. The wind came in blasts whipping up great waves for a river. The rain came down horizontally and in deluge. The lightening made great cracks on all sides of the ferry that Yong was travelling on. A ferry of substantial proportions being all of 20 metres long and six metre wide at its beam. Normally employing a set of 8 rowers on each side, the Captain had been forced to employ all 32 rowers - two to each oar - just to give the ferry some steerage.

Had the Captain stuck to the middle of the river he would have avoided the catastrophe that now unfolds.

Yong, sheltering in the passenger room above the oar deck, can feel the ferry lurch towards the northern bank. He makes his way onto the deck to see what is happening. He can just about make out a jetty in the torrential rain and he can already sense that the ferry is approaching the jetty too fast.

The oarsmen battle with their oars trying to slow the ferry up but one big wave is enough to send the bow of the ferry crashing into the jetty. The oarsmen have just enough time to ship their oars before the next wave brings the full weight of the ferry on to the jetty. It crashes on the down river side of the jetty smashing the timbers apart. Caught on an upright the entire ferry swings around and is driven into the water that runs alongside the jetty. This water is very narrow hemmed in by reed beds on the landward side.

Yong is almost thrown overboard by the next wave crashing into the stern of the ferry that in turn crashes into the side of the jetty. The sound of splintering wood as the bow of the ferry ploughs into the jetty cutting its way through what Yong can now see is a structure of flimsy construction.

Yong realizes that this jetty is only a picking up point for fishermen and would have had trouble with a boat the size of the ferry even in good conditions.

The end and middle of the jetty is now disintegrates under the solid construction of the ferry. But the ferry has been holed by the upright and caught on a number of other uprights the ferry list badly to starboard. With each wave the half of the ferry still in the river twists around the upright poles driving the ferry further into the jetty while listing ever more to starboard.

Yong struggles to the rear trying to stay upright on a deck that is almost at an angle that is heading for a capsize. Then a wave and Yong is in the water. He swims clear using the ferry as protection from the waves. Then looking back he sees the ferry turn completely on its side and sink along the length of the jetty where it is held by the smashed uprights.

Most of the ferry sinks until it hits the bottom. Most of the ferry is now under water and he can see people struggling free. Another wave sends Yong crashing into the reed bed beyond the ferry and another sends him into the calm water beyond the ferry. He swims along beside the reed bed and

finally struggles up the bankside at the end of the disintegrating jetty.

His shoulder bag now comes to his attention because in its water logged state it is very heavy. He swings it off from around his neck and empties the contents out so he can wring the water out of his sodden clothes. He pulls out his paper held between two boards and opens it up so he can empty out the sheets of paper held within. To his surprise the water has only wet the ends and the idea that he may be able to rescue the paper is just entering his mind when a strong blast of wind lifts the paper and the sheets fly from their cover. Some, held by a wet edge, take flight together, like giant butterflies. He watches as these ascend over a small crowd of people now gathered at the top of the bank.

'What am I doing?' He thinks, and quickly repacks his bag.

A young girl of perhaps ten or twelve years old comes down to help him as he struggles to make the top of the bank. Having taken the bag from Yong she hands it back when they reach the top. The rest of the people take little notice of him their attention now focused on the jetty as the planks begin to fly off in sequence from the far end. Everyone scatters as the planks head their way.

People who had been trying to make their way onto the jetty now flee, and Yong joins them running for cover. All that is left is the skeleton of the jetty. The young girl had managed to pull Yong to the bank on the other side of the jetty and they watch as the wind sends the last of the planks into the reed bed.

'What a disaster.' Yong says involuntarily.

'What is to be done?' Asks the girl.

This brings Yong out of his state of shock. 'What is to be done?' He finally asks himself.

The people trapped on the ferry cannot be rescued from the jetty and he can see many people clambering over the ferry looking for a way off. Down below him are fishing boats pulled part way up the bank. He turns to the people gathered on that side of the jetty and cries out. 'Launch these boats and we can rescue those stranded on the ferry.'

His words make little impact. Yong, having just recently recovered from shock himself, realizes that all of these people are also in a state of shock. He hands his bag to the

young girl. 'Take care of this for me while I take a boat and try and rescue those on the ferry.'

He runs down the bank and tries pulling a boat into the water but without success. He sees a smaller one and with a great effort launches it into the raging river.

People on the bank suddenly see what he is doing and try to stop him. But he will not be stopped. He drags himself into the boat and oars himself into the waves.

An argument ensues amongst the people on the bank. Most do not want to launch the boats while a few, ignoring the entreaties of the others, manage to get one of the boats launched

Yong pulls the small boat out into the river and is swamped immediately. But the little boat has enough wood to keep it afloat and he finds himself dragged past the end of the jetty and then past the end of the capsized ferry. A wave sends him around the end of the ferry into calmer water. It also sends him closer to the ferry where people see their rescue in the form of this small boat. They jump into the boat knocking Yong out and sinking the boat with their weight.

Yong swims back into the reed bed to get away from desperate people, most of whom cannot swim, and who are grabbing onto others dragging them down with them.

A boat with four men rowing rounds the ferry. Yong swims with as much speed as he can and stops the boat coming in too close to the ferry. 'If you get too close they simply jump in. Turn the boat around and bring in those that are already in the water.'

The fishermen can see sense in what he says and swing the boat around after they have fished him out.

Soon the boat is filled with those that can swim and the fishing boat heads back around the ferry and pass another two fishing boats rounding the jetty.

'Stay some distance from the ferry or they will swamp you.' Shouts Yong and the other rowers as they pass.

The boat, driven by the waves soon hit the river bank and everyone climbs out.

Yong collapses on the bankside and allows himself a few moments of rest. He knows he will have to go back out but only once he recovers. He sits up just in time to see a bolt of

lightning strike one of the uprights at the far end of the jetty. The crack is so loud that he is temporarily deafened.

The wooden upright that was struck issues forth steam in a strange cloud before exploding into flame. Everyone on the bankside has their attention captivated by the sight.

Jumping up Yong yells at the fishermen. 'Come on, one more time should do it.' Reluctantly they re-launch the boat and force their way back out into the river.

Rounding the jetty, now with its own fiery beacon, they pass another fishing boat laden to the gunnels with rescued passengers. They stand off until the other boat has collected as many as they can safely carry before they enter into the danger area.

Dead bodies float everywhere. Only a handful are pulled from the water, the rest are lost.

They return without incident and Yong staggers up the bank.

The young girl will not let him sit down but drags him away. 'Come with me. My mother will know what to do.'

Too tired to argue he allows himself to be led up into the village, to the shelter of a noodle shop.

The quiet inside. The warmth of the air. The smell of noodles and various sauces invades his exhausted senses. The girl and her mother strip Yong of his outer clothes and place a blanket around him. He lets them as he is not capable of stopping them.

A large bowl of noodles is set down in front of him as he sits next to a cooking range burning fiercely.

The warm noodles and atmosphere soon work their spell and he feels himself falling asleep.

★

He wakes to find his body so heavy that it feels as if it is made of lead. He finds himself in a barn lying on paddy, with several other people.

Turning his head he is confronted by the smiling face of the young girl. He collapses back and relaxes. 'I fear I am getting too old for such exertions.'

'You are alive. That is all that matters.' Her voice sounds so sweet that tears spring to his eyes.

'How long have I slept?'

'Since yesterday. My mother said it was best if we let you sleep as the body knows best.'

'Indeed.' Says Yong with tired satisfaction. He stretches.

'Help me up. I need more of your mother's excellent noodles.'

She pulls him to his feet smiling her sweet smile all the while.

Following her out Yong passes through a small courtyard and into the noodle shop through the rear door. The girl takes him out of the front door to where a bench seat has a table in front of it and which has a fine view of the river and the half demolished pier; the upright struck by lightning is still smouldering.

'Why are all those horses tied at the top of the bank?'

'The Regional Superintendent has sent the local militia to take care of things.'

'A scholar official?'

'I don't know.' She says a bit embarrassed by her lack of knowledge.

'Most, but not all Regional Superintendents are.'

A voice within summons the young girl but she soon returns with a large bowl of noodles. She sits down next to him and watches him eat.

Once he has finished he asks the pertinent question. 'So, what is your name?'

The girl almost curls up with embarrassment. 'My name is Mi-an.'

'Mi-an, ask your mother how much I owe her?' Then he realizes he hasn't got his bag. 'Do you know where my bag is?'

The girl runs off and soon returns with bag and his outer garments. Yong finds that all of his things have been dried and pressed. He searches through his bag and finds two pouches full of coins. One he recognizes as his own the other he soon recognizes because it is made of silk with Wang Nien-sun's monogram on the device that draws the strings together. 'What generous friends I have.' He opens it up and pours the contents out onto the table. A collection of gold, silver and copper cash he discovers.

The girl is amazed as she has never seen so much money in her life.

Yong picks up a gold coin and hands it to Mi-an. 'Ask your mother if this will do?'

The girl quickens away and soon returns with her mother who is slightly annoyed. 'I have not enough money to give you change for this.'

'What fortune.' Yong laughs. 'Then you must keep it all for you cannot go without payment.'

Mi-an's mother is about to argue when she sees coming from the riverbank four men. 'Hide your money, the Tax Collector and his guards are coming.' With that she returns inside slipping the coin inside of her garment.

'Are you the man that took the Tax Collector's boat?' Asks one of the men, who, because of his dress, Yong assumes is a member of the militia.

'Perhaps it would be wise to start again. The formal procedure is to state your name and name your status.' Says Yong with a slightly haughty tone.

'Give the man a thrashing.' Says one of the other men, obviously a petty official, which he assumes is the Tax Collector.

'Did I address you?' Queries Yong. 'You will talk when I tell you to.' He says with authority. All four men are taken aback by this. Yong continues in vein. 'Well, I'm waiting.'

The Captain of the militia feels obliged to answer. 'I am Captain Xi of the second quad of Chen-che region. And with whom do I talk?'

'I am Shao Yong from Loyang. Now tell me what seems to be the problem?'

'This is Tax Collector Tin-u. He insists you took his boat.'

'If he means I took his boat so I could rescue those unfortunate people stranded on the ferry, he is correct. If, on the other hand, he says that I stole his boat I will have you, Captain Xi, arrest him.'

'What nonsense is this?' Says Tin-u, annoyed in the extreme. 'You will arrest this ... Shao Yong, for theft. If you do not I will report you to the Superintendent of the region. Whom you well know is a friend of mine.'

'What a good idea.' Says Yong with a smile. 'You, Captain Xi, will send one of your men to fetch the Superintendent at the specific order of Shao Yong. If he refuses to come I will report him to Ssu-ma Kuang personally.'

The silence is finally broken as the Tax Collector makes a complete fool of himself. 'Who is this Ssu-ma Kuang?'

Yong laughs with abandon. 'See what a fool this man is. He doesn't even know the name of the Prime Minister.'

'You are saying you know the Prime Minister?' Asks the Captain nervously.

'He and I have been good friends for many years.' Says Yong with a simple directness that is having an effect on all present. Yong sees Mi-an running from the side of the house along the top of the riverbank and taking a track that leads upstream and wonders: Now where can that little friend of mine be going.

Yong's thoughts are interrupted by the forced laughter of the Tax Collector. 'Surely you cannot believe that this ... vagabond, can be a friend of the Prime Minister? Look at his clothes. He is surely a vagrant.'

'Captain, if you do not send for the Superintendent, then I will seek him out myself.' Says Yong strengthening his speech. 'How long will it take for one of your men to fetch the Superintendent?'

'Two days. One there and one back.'

'Then there is little time to be lost.'

Mi-an comes running at full tilt right up to Yong. 'Master Shao the boat is hidden in the reeds at the other side of the wood. Come and see.'

The Tax Collector turns pale then red with fury. He tries to hit the girl but Yong steps in the way. 'Remove yourself from my presence or I will give you such a thrashing you will never forget.'

Now the Captain steps in. 'If there is thrashing to do, it will be me that meets it out.'

Yong turns to Mi-an. 'Take us to the boat.' Then to the Captain. 'What are you waiting for? We will soon find out if it is the boat that belongs to this rogue.'

Mi-an and Yong set a good pace with the Captain following, and following him the Tax Collector and his two men.

They slow as they pass the bodies now laid out in neat rows just above where the fishing boats are pulled up. The militia men are still bringing in bodies from the ferry with the help of the fishermen. Yong stops and bows in respect with Mi-an taking his lead. Then they continue on their way.

The boat in the reeds is the one that Yong used; he recognizes the decorated metal rings for the oars. He turns to the Captain. 'Arrest that man.' He points at the Tax Collector. 'He is either a liar when he says that I stole his boat, or he is a thief, pretending that I stole his boat when it was in fact he that stole it from its sunken place in the river.'

'Do not believe this ...' The tax Collector is cut off by the Captain. 'Silence.' Then he turns to Yong. 'I will send for the Superintendent. And by all under Heaven, I hope you are who you say you are. For it will not go well for you if you are not.'

Yong smiles with benevolence. 'Two days you say. Then best mount a guard on the noodle shop, where I am staying, to make sure I do not escape during the night.'

Yong takes Mi-an's hand and they walk back.

★

With guards posted outside the noodle shop and even inside, Yong is satisfied and settles down to an evening meal with Mi-an and her mother.

They sit at the table outside and watch in the distance, the Tax Collector and his men discussing them. They do not seem very happy.

'Tell me about the Tax Collector.' Asks Yong of Mi-an's mother.

'He is a very wicked man. This poor woman had just lost her husband but the Tax Collector would not give her time to pay the Tax she owed. He forced her into selling her property to him so he could have collect the tax she owed. But the price he paid, which was set by him, was only enough to cover her tax. This left her and her children destitute. The shame was too great for her to bear, so she killed herself and her children.'

'She was my friend.' Says Mi-an her voice cracking with emotion.

'She means the woman's daughter, Cean.' Says Mi-an's mother.

Mi-an breaks into tears and hides her face behind her hands.

Her mother becomes angry and gives her daughter a sharp clip to the side of her head. 'Don't be so soft. We live in a cruel world so you must toughen up. And stop crying or so help me.'

The tears still flow but now in silence. Yong can't help noticing the mother's eyes are wet as she says. 'Collect up the dishes and clean the kitchen as you have finished eating.'

Mi-an does as her mother directs but can't look up or look at Yong and he watches as the tears fall drop by drop onto the table. He looks away not wishing to embarrass her further.

He turns away and looks at the Tax Collector in the distance. 'We really must do something about this rogue.'

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The next day towards evening Yong is teaching Mi-an how to use a brush properly outside of the noodle shop when the Regional Superintendent arrives with a ten man bodyguard.

Yong notes how the Tax Collector engages with the Superintendent but remains engaged himself with Mi-an.

Finally, after the Tax Collector has pointed Yong out, the Superintendent, seeing that Yong does not join him, he is forced to join Yong. 'You say you are Shao Yong?' He says with suppressed anger.

'The correct procedure is that you state your name and rank.' Says Yong with authority and without stopping with the task at hand.

Silence, then. 'I am the Regional Superintendent, Chu Yao.' He goes to say something but is cut off by Yong as he stands up and faces him. 'Where is your seal of authority?'

The Superintendent is taken aback and quietly furious but as he looks into Yong's eyes that remain fixed on his, he feels obliged to take out his seal of authority. Yong examines it with a practiced eye. 'Follow me.'

Yong enters the noodle shop and the Superintendent follows.

Once inside Yong closes the door. 'Is this Tax Collector a friend of yours?'

The Superintendent is taken aback by the question. 'What relevance is that?' He says, now hardly able to contain his anger.

'Because the Tax Collector says he is your very good friend. Which is a proposition I find very difficult to believe.'

The Superintendent senses a trap and he becomes wary in the extreme. 'He is not a friend of mine. Would a man in my position have friends amongst tax collectors?' He tries to regain control of the conversation. 'Now, can you prove you are the Recluse of Loyang?'

Yong is looking out of the window above Mi-an's head. Looking at the agitated state of the Tax Collector further along the riverbank above the lines of dead bodies. He suddenly turns around and holds up the Imperial Seal given to him by Lady Ssu-ma. He holds it up in front of the Superintendent's face so he can see it in detail. 'I am not such a recluse as it is commonly thought. For here I am on secret business of the Empire. That is why I need you to protect this information.' Yong smiles. 'That is why this great Seal of the Empire is for your eyes only.' The colour drains from the Superintendent's face. 'Do you understand?' Yong's question prompts the Superintendent to take one step back and he bows to the horizontal.

Once he returns to the vertical, Yong points out of the window to the Tax Collector. 'That man can cause you more trouble than the Lord High Censor. A man you would not wish to meet as he hates corruption in its many disguises. For your sake and also for mine you will end this situation now. I have not the time nor the inclination to act as magistrate in this matter. But be assured I will use the authority of this great seal' he holds up the Imperial Seal once more 'if I have too. I suggest to you that this corrupt official will ensnare you in his wickedness if he can. He is already doing that by claiming that he is your friend' The Superintendent can see where this is leading and gives Yong a quick bow. 'Finish this now by silencing this man for good.'

The Superintendent looks at the Tax Collector in the distance. 'Leave this with me.' He bows once more and leaves the noodle shop.

Yong follows him outside and sits down next to Mi-an and takes up where he left off. 'Hold the brush vertical allowing the height and direction of the stroke to change the thickness of the stroke. Here, let me help you.' He wraps his hand around

hers and alters the angle she is holding the brush to the vertical. Then pushing the vertical brush in the right direction he alters the height first down then up, producing a perfect stroke. Now you try it.

While Mi-an works on her brush stroke, Yong watches as the Superintendent talk to his bodyguard. These men talk to the Captain of the militia who points out a small warehouse at the edge of the village.

The Superintendent's men take the Tax Collector and his men to the warehouse where they are taken inside. The Superintendent's men come back out carrying their weapons. The other six men of the Superintendent's bodyguard go into the warehouse and blood curdling screams can be heard from inside. Mi-an looks up in horror.

'Ignore what is happening and concentrate on holding your brush vertical. If you do not you will never learn to write.' Says Yong in the voice of a strict teacher. Mi-an concentrates with all her attention. 'Now that is much better. Repeat this stroke ten times with your full attention.' By the time she has finished the screams have stopped. 'That's excellent. See how easy it is when you put your full attention to the task. You will find that putting your full attention to any skill will result in success.' He smiles benevolently at a face lit up by praise.

One of the Superintendent's bodyguard comes out of the warehouse and shouts across to the Superintendent so that everyone can hear. 'The prisoners have tried to escape, Master Chu Yao, and we forced to kill them.'

The Superintendent walks briskly across to the warehouse and goes inside. Then orders his men to perform various tasks before returning to where Yong sits. 'Their guilt is obvious or why would they want to escape.'

'Indeed, it is obvious to all.' Yong nods as direction for the Superintendent's eyes to follow.

The people of the village have all come out at the terrible sounds of the Tax Collector and his men have made while attempting to escape.

Everyone watches as some of the Superintendent's men dig a slit trench while others go into the warehouse with long

bamboo poles. The poles come back out and are carried to the slit trench and then erected. The base of the poles are then filled in. Atop of the poles the heads of the Tax Collector and his men are displayed in grotesque horror.

Mi-an's eyes are wide and staring, so Yong takes her by the hand and leads her up to where the heads are now on display. He turns to her. 'Has justice been done?'

'Indeed.'

'Then all is well under Heaven.' Says Yong without irony.

'Come, let us return to more important affairs. I will teach you how to make a perfect zero.'

'If the child is to learn to read and write then she should go to school.' Says the Superintendent who has come up to them.

'My son attends the best school in the region and I will make sure she has a place. A girl of such bravery deserves a reward.'

'Indeed.' Says Yong. 'And I will personally fund this child out of my own money.'

'You are more than generous.' Says the Superintendent, who then turns his attention to Mi-an. 'Will you not thank Master Shao?'

Mi-an turns to Yong and bows to the horizontal.

'Now you must excuse me. The affairs of the region are many and with this matter resolved I must leave you.'

'I would recommend that from now on you only employ Chengists from the ranks of the literati.'

'An excellent idea. This will solve the problems of corruption in public service once and for all.' The Superintendent bows to the horizontal. He leaves and all present, which comprises nearly the entire village, bow to the horizontal in gratitude.

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Yong sits opposite Mi-an's mother counting out money from Wang Nien-sun's pouch. 'This will pay for her school fees for ten years. This will pay for her paper, ink and brushes. This will pay for her clothes. This will pay for her lodgings. And this will pay for many other things that we have not thought of.' He feels the pouch. 'There is not much left so you might have this for yourself.' He passes the pouch across to Mi-an's grateful mother.

As she returns the money to the pouch Mi-an comes running down the lane with her spirit bursting with joy. She crashes into the table much to the annoyance of her mother. 'The Pang family were most pleased with the amount of money you gave them for their boat and asked me to thank you.' She steps back one pace and bows to the horizontal.

'Would you see how she now behaves and she has not even started school yet.' Scolds her mother. 'Now go and fetch Master Shao's bag. He must be on his way.'

Mi-an soon returns and even places the bag over his neck. She pulls him up. 'Come Master Shao. I will be sad to see you go but if go you must then I would have you go while I am still with good feelings.'

'So that is the reason you would have me on my way.'

'I would have you remember me with a smile on my face.' She says while taking him by the hand.

They walk to the top of the bank above where the boats are tethered. The bodies having been removed by the Militia there is now a semblance of normality returning to the village.

The villagers that are not already gathered there come rushing to see Master Shao leave.

His new boat, the one that the Tax Collector had said he had stolen is half in and half out of the water. Six fishermen stand ready to push it out once he is on board.

Yong bends down to Mi-an's height and looks her in the eye. 'You must promise me that you will write to me a long letter about how you have succeeded. Once you can write, of course.' He passes her a piece of paper. 'This is my address in Loyang. I will not forget and neither must you.'

'I promise.' And with that she forgets protocol and grasps him around the neck.

Once he has freed himself he descends the bank and is on board in a moment. The fishermen half lift the boat into the water then give it a big shove so that it glides out beyond the jetty. He takes the rear oar and sits it in its slot before turning to look back at the village and its occupants waving and cheering and he waves back.

Soon lost to sight the calmness of the river is the first of his new experiences. The Huai River is more on a human scale

than either the Yangtze or the Yellow river and is all the better for that.

He allows the boat to drift using the rear oar only to guide and not to drive his new joy. He lies back and allows the sensations to flow over him.

The many words that his inner voice say once they have returned were: Was that all a dream? Did I really have three men decapitated? Did a young girl capture my heart by her bravery and kindness? Am I the Recluse of Loyang, secret agent? Or was I only dreaming that I was? Oh Chuang Tzu one doesn't have to be a butterfly to dream that you are Chuang Tzu. I'm sure that if I really tried I could dream that I am Chuang Tzu dreaming that I am Shao Yong, secret agent or not.

The boat drifts beneath white dragons and a sapphire blue sky and he is lost in wonder.

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The Changing Lines

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Anything that endures arrives by continuous development.

To force anything to endure is bound to fail.

Misfortune.

Changing Line in the second place means:

That which does not accord with the times does not endure.

Those that act in such a way will surely experience

Remorse.

Changing Line in the third place means:

The superior man's character is one of Duration.

Thus he avoids inconsistency in his actions;

And the resulting humbling experiences.

No blame.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

Duration is not mere persistence.

Those that persist in folly remain in folly.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

Who knows what the Duration of the situation will be.

Not even the superior man can tell.

**Only a sage who is one with the Primordial State
Has this form of knowledge.**

**Changing Line at the top means:
Even Duration has an end,
As all things must change.**

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These Changing Lines Deliver:

Increase (45)

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Wind

Thunder

The Image

Wind and Thunder, Thunder and Wind:

The Image of INCREASE.

The superior man reads natural phenomena

To decipher the category of Change.

Supreme good fortune

Chapter 15 r p

Opposition (28)

The Song Dynasty

1241 C.E.

14th Day of the 8th Moon

After Midday

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Fire

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Lake

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The Image

Fire shuns the Lake:

The Image of OPPOSITION.

All men are born different and then brought up differently.

Individuality is a fact of life that often leads to opposition.

The superior man retains his individuality,

Even amongst men of a like mind.

“Man’s nature is evil. Therefore the sages of antiquity, knowing that man’s nature is evil, that it is unbalanced and incorrect, and that it is violent, disorderly and undisciplined, established the authority of rulers to govern the people, set forth clearly propriety and righteousness to transform them, institute laws and governmental measures to rule them, and made punishment severe to restrain them, so that all will result in good order and be in accord with goodness. Such is the government of sage-kings and the transforming influence of propriety and righteousness.

But suppose we try to remove the authority of the ruler, do away with the transforming influence of propriety and righteousness, discard the rule of laws and governmental measures, do away with the restraint of punishment, and stand and see how people of the world deal with one another. In this situation, the strong would injure the weak and rob them, and the many would do violence to the few and shout them down. The whole world would be in violence and disorder and all would perish in an instant. From this point of view, it is clear that man’s nature is evil and that his goodness comes from his activity.”

From the book of Hsun Tzu. Chapter 23.

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The sun sets over Phoenix Hill. Lizong stands at the open window looking at the open metaphor before him. Only when the dusk is more night than day does he turn and joins the others around a low table. He takes the low cushioned seat at the head of the table. Opposite him down the length of the table sits the old Head Librarian, Lai Si. Sitting opposite each across the width of the table, Bao and Shi mirror each other perfectly, cross legged and leaning against the cushioned backs their faces turned towards the man who has summoned them, the Emperor of China, the Principled Ancestor.

‘Your destiny is decided. The Mongolians have accepted our representation for a meeting. They suggest in the 13th lunar month. Is this satisfactory for you both?’ Lizong is addressing them both but he has his eyes fixed on Shi.

‘I’m fully recovered. Indeed my Inner Truth is more in balance after the ordeal of Western Honan. I accept my destiny as does my wife.’ Says Shi in his returned strong voice.

Lizong turns to look at Bao.

'My destiny has already been spoken for, ever since I married Tai. Her destiny has been revealed to her, as you know. Her destiny, my destiny, our destiny is as one.' Says Bao with a smile playing just beneath the surface of face.

'Excellent. Have you anything to say?' He directs this to Lai Si.

'I have come up with an idea of how to hide the written instructions for our friends in the north.' He smiles a cunning smile that transforms the others' faces in the same vein. 'Your Ambassador's hat. It would normally have a stiffened felt structure to give it form. Now it will have one constructed of written instructions. It was not easy and took several attempts, but beside the extra weight, it is impossible to tell that it is anything other than what it suggests to the eye. Inside, outside, it is a hat, and a hat is a hat is a hat and not a cat, as the old nursery rhyme goes.'

The others warm to the old man bringing a jovial atmosphere to the proceedings.

'We almost certainly overestimate the Mongolians. Their martial prowess clouds our vision and stops us seeing them for what they are; yak herders. Take their strictures on the bureaucracy of the north. They have replaced grades one through six with their own men. Leaving grades seven through nine still in the hands of Han Chinese. They have not the subtlety of mind to realize that *this culture of ours* is inherent in all scholar officials whatever their grade. So they leave the vast majority of the bureaucracy in the hands of our Han Chinese. There are at least ten times as many scholar officials in grades seven through nine than in all the other grades put together. They must work on the principle that if you replace the head then the body is replaced as well. Little realizing that the body is the same as the head in *this culture of ours*. But then, how can they understand a two and a half thousand year culture based on the positive elements of the human condition and driven by moral principles. When theirs is based on the negative elements and the simplistic principle that might is right.'

'What about this dream that Genghis Khan had where the world would be conquered by the Mongolians to bring everlasting peace? Surely there must be some merit in such a plan?' Asks Bao of the company there gathered.

'Indeed.' Says Lai Si. 'If conquered people enjoy being conquered. Look what happened to the first Imperial Emperor. Within twenty six years, after subjugating the warring states, the Han replaced him. But these Mongolians won't even get to subjugating even half the world for they have little understanding of how big the world is.'

Lizong changes the subject by asking Shi. 'This Khmer Empire south of our borders, did you not send a diplomat to make contact.'

'Indeed.'

'And what was his thoughts on these people?'

'They would appear to be Hindus as they have in India. Or at least they use the same mythology; the same set of Gods. But what impressed him was by the use of irrigation they were able to achieve three rice crops a year.'

'It is something that we should be able to achieve. At least in the far south where it is permanently warm.' Comments Lizong. 'What else?'

'They have started a monumental building program. In stone. They have many fine craftsmen, engineers and architects and the people seem happy enough even though they are basically slaves. But this land they occupy is filled with disease. My diplomat lost half his entourage to unspeakable forms of illness. Horses in particular seem susceptible to the many biting insects that infest the swamps that occupy the land for half the year.'

'The Mongolians have never encountered such conditions. They will lose half their army and all of their horses. Then their thoughts of conquering the world will dissipate like an early morning mist.' Says Lai Si with relish.

'Now to business.' Lizong states. 'What is to be included in our secret message to the northern bureaucracy? An outline of Daoxue we have already included but the good Librarian here assures me we have several pages more that we can set inside Shi's hat.'

'It is a good job that he has such a large head or we would not have this bounty in communication.' Says Bao poking fun.

'My head may well be large but it is at least filled with useful knowledge. Rather than the meagre metaphysical ramblings of your ancient ancestor.' Shi retorts.

'How they love to play.' Lai Si addresses Lizong.

'And these are the ones we trust the future of the Empire to.'
Replies Lizong shaking his head.

'We will confound them with our play. And once confounded they will be like wet clay ready to be shaped into whatever form we wish.' Says Bao only half in jest.

'What happens if we cannot persuade them to take us to Quiu?'
Asks Shi.

'Then return without making them suspicious. We will find another way of making contact. This is just the opening manoeuvre in what will be a very long campaign. If it works and we make contact with our friends in the north, all will be well under Heaven. If not then Master Bao will come up with another plan.'

'Indeed. The metaphysics of my noble ancestor has prepared my mind for such tasks.'

'And this location on Lao Shan, do you really believe it will it reveal secret knowledge.' Asks Lizong in sincerity.

'Why would he give such a precise set of instructions if it did not? I rest my argument before Shi has a seizure.'

They all laugh, even Shi.

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Bao and Shi leave the palace complex through The Gate of Tranquillity and walk in the direction of The Ink Stone.

'Will you not come in and at least greet my dear father-in-law?' Begs Bao.

'You only fear the wrath of your father-in-law, I must face the grim disapproval of my father. I must go immediately before I lose my self-confidence.' Says Shi with a strange treble in his voice. 'Look, he waits for you at the top of the stairs.'

Bao and Shi part company with Bao entering The Ink Stone and putting on a swagger, best to counter his father-in-law's fierce countenance, he makes the top of the five steps and bows to the horizontal. He has barely made his return to the vertical when Wu Chi grasps Bao to his huge chest.

'By all the virgins in Kinsai.' He cannot help but exclaim.

'My dear son-in-law' there is something sinister in Wu Chi's voice that realizes all of Bao's fear 'come, let us retire to my private quarters.'

Wu Chi clasps Bao to his side with a great arm and marches him to the stairs leading to the first floor. As Wu Chi opens the chain across these stairs, Bao sees his chance and takes the stairs two at a time, dashing down the veranda using his scholar official gait to make greater speed.

Wu Chi arrives at the seating area at the end of the veranda but a short time after Bao, to find him seated behind Tai who has an arm and finger pointing to the seat opposite. 'Sit.' She commands her father. 'We will discuss this matter in the time honoured tradition of reasoned discourse. Like all civilized people, should.'

He tries to reach around her. 'Just a few moments, daughter dear, and there will be little need for reasoned discourse.'

'You will sit down or I will tell the Abbot of your lust for singing girls.' Says Tai with force.

'You wouldn't really do that, would you?'

Tai simply points to the seat and after Wu Chi finally takes his seat, Tai sits next to her husband. Who, has found something of great interest under his finger nails.

'It is bad enough that you are to accompany this ... this poor excuse for a man, into the presence of the enemy, but if you survive you will then go to the Kingdom of Siam which is on the other side of the world. This is intolerable.'

'It is a precaution that must be taken in the event of the Mongolian invasion that is now immanent. They mass their troops along the border as we speak. Would you have your daughter and grandchildren left subject to these barbarians?' Bao speaks with conviction.

'I will stay and fight, like any full blooded man should.' Says Wu Shi growling with rage.

'Then you are a fool.' Says Bao. 'Haven't you heard? They eat their enemies.' Then more to himself. 'And you would make a fine meal for an entire corps of Mongolians.'

Wu Chi leaps to his feet but so too does Tai who pushes him back down. She then turns to Bao. 'Will you not excite my father with this ridiculous talk.'

'It is not ridiculous talk. They really do eat their enemies. Well at least the ones with large buttocks of the variety your father sports.'

'Bao!' Tai shouts. 'You will apologise to my father right now.'

Bao looks timidly at Tai. 'I apologise for pointing out the size of your father's buttocks. I was merely trying to point out the danger we are all in.'

'Coward.' Shouts Wu Chi.

'I would rather be a live coward than a morsel for the barbarians that are baying at our door.' Retorts Bao. 'Why are we arguing with this ... man? My father, in his generosity, has offered your father passage to a Buddhist Kingdom. Where, as pearl merchant of some wealth, he will be able to indulge his taste for singing girls.'

This final insult is simply too great for this bear of a man. He is shocked into silence. That, and the wrathful gaze of his daughter. Tai turns her attention to Bao who cannot hold her gaze.

'The two men that I love more than any other bicker like children. As daughter and wife I play my roles with sincerity. But I will not play mother to either of you again. One more word and I will offer myself to the Great Khan, who cannot be any more cruel to me than you two are.' She turns her back on them and sobs. The silence makes her turn to where she finds both Wu Chi and Bao bent to the horizontal.

After a while looking from one to the other, she bows in reply.

*

Shi bows to his father.

A man of great dignity the tears in his eyes betray the great love and respect he has for his son. 'What you have said fills me with dread. But how can I flee my post and retain my dignity. As for you, I can understand your actions. Especially when I know the Emperor has given them his approval. As for Shao Zuo, his generosity is the mark of the man. You must thank him for me. As for my other sons, I will leave them to decide for themselves. But not Yen, he is still too young to make such a decision. He will go with you under my instruction.'

Shi bows once more to the horizontal.

'Your long dead mother would understand my decisions in this matter. Do I not consult her still. Knowing her mind as well as my own. I will die gladly and join her in Heaven, better for my spirit to be spared any further separation.'

The tears fall freely from Shi's eyes at the mention of his mother and his father's desire to join her in a place beyond this world.

Zhen Yen arrives in his father's study and is taken aback by the state of his father and Shi. 'I hope beyond measure this is not bad news you bring Shi.'

Shi grasps the tall spindly seventeen year old to him. 'Of sorts. The Emperor has asked me to act as diplomat to the court of the King of Siam on my return from the north.'

'But that is excellent news.'

'And even better. Our father has given his permission that you may join us.' Lies Shi.

'Is this true father?' Yen can hardly believe the words.

'It is true. Has a father ever indulged his son as much.' Fresh tears fall. Zhen Ting-ta turns away to hide his grief. He shuffles his papers about on his desk but his Inner Truth burns with pain.

'Come my little brother. Let us leave our father to his work and I will take you to the Shao household to celebrate.' Shi bows to his father with unaccustomed formality and Yen follows suit even though he does not understand why.

*

Ling-ling and her father Shao Zuo lean on the balustrade of the first floor veranda looking at the busy street below. Once a favourite pastime of Ling-ling it belongs to a childhood now past.

'Are you sure that Captain Miko has this ability?' Shao Zuo asks with concern.

'It is not Captain Miko, father. It is Tai, how many more times must I tell you. Captain Miko opened his mind to her and now their minds are entangled. Tai can search for him anywhere on the plane of consciousness. Such is her great power.'

'And they tried this over a great distance?'

'Indeed. He was in Canton and she was here in Kinsai. The good Captain has become a Buddhist since this experience.' Ling-ling laughs. 'Not so easy when he has committed so many wicked acts.'

'And have you developed these powers?'

'Tai gives me instruction. And the Abbot knows how to tackle those whose mind's wanders like the clouds in the sky. He calls it the passing clouds practice. You see father, Buddhists are supposed to empty their minds in meditation. But for those of us who have thoughts that spring into our minds uncalled for and unannounced he prescribes the passing clouds practice. When these thoughts arrive one doesn't focus one's attention upon them but allows them to drift off like passing clouds. Eventually these thoughts give up and the mind quietens so that one can meditate on the source of consciousness. Which of course is the endless formless consciousness from which everything springs and which we can merge with as our finite consciousness, is, in fact, just a part of. However, it will probably take me a life time to learn such mastery, or none mastery, as the Abbot insists, of my mind.'

'And Bao?'

'They are a dreaming pair. Those whose consciousness entwine to such a level that they can share their dreams. Lucid dreams. She enjoys his company as she explores the plane of consciousness. Bao has a natural harmony to his mind. His Inner Truth is balanced perfectly, even though it does seem wayward most of the time.' Ling-ling can see the confusion on her father's face and loves him the more for that. She slips her arm through his and grasps him like she used to when still a child.

'It's all too much for an old man to grasp.' He sighs. 'Do you think that it is too late for an old man, such as me, to begin this long journey to enlightenment?'

'The Abbot says it is never too late for anyone. And if you do not arrive in this life then you will in the next. But, you have to commit yourself. It has to be heart felt. And once you start you should never stop. Don't make this commitment unless you are certain. Those who fall into the illusion of samsara suffer more than those who never begin.'

'How strange life is when the daughter is the teacher and the father the pupil.'

'Oh look. It is my husband and his young brother Yen. How happy they look.' She shouts down to them. 'Before you come in go to uncle Fat's and bring me some twice fried pork and' she turns to her father 'and what would you like?'

'It would appear, a whole pig of knowledge is what I need.'

'Father will have a little of this and a little of that. As long as it is tender for his crumbling old teeth.' She laughs as only she can laugh. With total abandonment.

*

Bao's mother is fussing about where everyone should sit around the new circular table. This table had to be constructed in situ as it would have been too big to come in through the windows and far too big to come up the stairs. Being circular it had neither a head position which Shao Zuo would have taken nor a position for the honoured guest at the far end of the length of the table.

There was also the problem of who was the honoured guest. They were now all members of the same extended family, and as such, none were guests in the sense of strict protocol.

But this vexing problem - vexing to Bao's mother - was solved conveniently by the arrival of the Abbot of the Lingyan Monastery. Unannounced, uninvited, he simply walked in as if he had been invited and announced by the Buddha himself.

There still remained the problem of where the position of the honoured guest should be on a circular table. The Abbot being wise decided to sit down opposite Shao Zuo which solved the problem, as now all of the other positions could be returned to protocol with who sits on the right and left sides of the head of the household and who sits on the right and left of the honoured guest.

However, a circular table allows for talk across the table as well as to either left or right. In this household this led to simultaneous conversations in every direction and where snippets of information from one conversation became part of other conversations. The volume also increased. And increased further in direct association with the volume of rice wine consumed.

The device in the centre - a rotating wooden tray - with fifteen separate dishes on board, circulated at increasing rates of speed. Servants had to replenish those dishes that had been exhausted and replace some with others, while trying

to accomplish this on a moving tray. Obviously the entire proceedings were an experiment in innovation and like all innovations they had their problems.

As Bao observed. 'Conventions of etiquette needed to be established for a round table.' While thinking to himself what fun it was living without them.

The reason for the arrival of the Abbot was never discovered. But it was revealed. He was the perfect guest of honour and also the perfect escort, in that Tai's father, Wu Chi, drank too much wine and was in need of an escort home.

This allowed Bao and Tai, freed from this arduous task, to take a midnight walk down by the West Lake. As they looked out across that magnificent expanse of water, ripples played across its surface in perfect coherence. And they knew with their entwined consciousness: this was the end of an era. The end of a cosmic cycle and the birth of another.

As it ever was. So it will ever be.

*

The Changing Line

Changing Line in the second place means:

Accidental meetings provide opportunities for people in opposition.

Serendipity happens too often to be mere chance.

The superior man knows that there are hidden laws that govern these things

And knows how to take advantage.

Success.



This Changing Line Delivers:

Justice (46)

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Fire

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Thunder

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THE IMAGE

Lightning then Thunder:

The Image of JUSTICE.

Clarity brings judgement.

Punishment brings shock.

Justice brings civilization.

Chapter 16 p

The Joyous Lake (26)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

5th Day of the 2nd Moon

Early Evening

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Lake

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Lake

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THE IMAGE

Lake on Lake:

The Image of JOY.

The superior man joins with friends in convivial discussion

Where knowledge and philosophy develop in joyful accord.

Great success.

“Mencius said, ‘If you let the people follow their feelings they will be able to do good. This is what is meant by saying that human nature is good. If man does evil it is not the fault of his natural endowment. The feeling of commiseration is found in all men; the feeling of shame and dislike are found in all men; the feeling of respect and reverence are found in all men; and the feeling of right and wrong are found in all men. The feeling of commiseration is what we call humanity; the feeling of shame and dislike are what we call righteousness; the feeling of respect and reverence is what we call propriety; and the feeling of right and wrong is what we call wisdom. Humanity, righteousness, propriety and wisdom are not drilled into us from outside. We originally have them with us. Therefore it is said ‘Seek and you will find it, neglect and you will lose it.’ Men differ in the development of these endowments, some twice as much, some five times as much, and some to an incalculable degree, because no one can develop their original endowment to the fullest extent. The Book of Odes says, ‘Heaven produces the teeming multitude. As there are things, there are their specific principles. When the people keep their normal nature they will love excellent virtue.’ Confucius said, ‘The writer of this ode indeed knew the Way. Therefore, as there are things, there must be their specific principles, and since people keep to their normal nature, therefore, they love excellent virtue.’”

From the Book of Mencius. 6A:6.

*

The early morning light reveals Ling-ling in a confrontational stance with fists planted on her hips in the same pose that her mother would adopt when confronted by her husband’s intransigence.

She is looking south towards the island but this is not the focus of her attention. The black ship fast approaching Qingdao, is.

Shi recognizes that stance and knows it does not bode well. ‘Have the birds of the air thrown insults at you?’

She ignores his inane comment. ‘I am convinced that ship is the same one we saw yesterday.’

Shi screws up his eyes and can just about make out the offending article to which she refers. ‘Even if it is the same ship, I cannot see why it should offend your sensibilities.’

‘And neither can I. But it does.’

Ling-ling goes and awakens Tai. ‘There is something wrong. I can feel it. Come and apply your great skill to this matter.’

'There is not any immediate danger or I would feel it. So go back to sleep and let my body have the rest it so richly deserves.' Tai turns over and cuddles into an unconscious Bao.

Ling-ling will not be put off and physically drags Tai from her husband's side. 'The Abbot said I should take notice of these feelings. They are a product of the passing clouds practice and should not be ignored.'

Having got Tai to her feet she drags her across to the vantage point and points at the ship in the distance. 'Do you see that?'

Tai strains her sleep filled eyes. 'That fishing boat?'

Ling-ling is exasperated. 'Fishing boat? It is the same ship we saw yesterday. Only now it is returning and heading for Qingdao.'

Tai shakes herself free from Ling-ling's grip. She walks someway down from the peak and finds a flat rock to sit in meditation.

Kublai rouses himself having heard the conversation. He joins Ling-ling watching over Tai. 'What is she doing?'

'She travels on the plane of consciousness. Reaching out to the consciousness's on board that ship. That way she can find out who they are and what their intentions are.' She looks at Kublai who has a confused look on his face. 'None the wiser?'

'None the wiser. You Buddhist amaze me with your secret knowledge.' Says Kublai.

'There is nothing secret about it. If you become a Buddhist and ask the right questions, all is revealed.'

'I cannot afford to choose a single religion as one day I will rule over many.' He says with sincerity.

'Your Tibet brothers are Buddhists. Do they not interest you?'

Kublai laughs. 'They scare me sometimes. They don't always agree with the path that I and my grandfather have chosen. But when one knows one's destiny, it is impossible to ignore.'

'Is it destiny? Or, is it fate.' Asks Ling-ling.

'Surely they are the same thing.' Says Kublai with only a trace of doubt.

'Maybe in your case. I do not know. My knowledge is not great and I am far from wisdom.' Says Ling-ling with disarming honesty.

Kublai warms to this young Han Chinese woman. This Buddhist on her way to enlightenment. Movement below changes his attention.

Tai arrives but passes them by. 'They are Korean mercenaries come to rescue the Jürgen cavalry. As we know this is impossible as they are caught in the trap set by General Salkai and General Borui. Now, can I get back to sleep?'

'What if they have escaped the trap? What if this is what they have planned all along?' He says these worried thoughts out loud.

Tai stops, then with resignation returns to her meditation seat.

'Why does she do this for me?'

Ling-ling looks at Kublai with astonishment. 'We are your guests. It is common courtesy for guests to behave in this manner. Surely?'

Kublai is relieved. 'It is as simple as that.'

'You have a suspicious mind that does not become you.' She says in a scolding manner; often used by parents admonishing their children for bad behaviour.

Kublai smiles and bows in Chinese fashion. 'I stand corrected.'

'Then, there is an end to it.' She bows in return.

They both sit and wait until eventually Tai arrives back. 'I have bad news. The Jürgen have indeed escaped the trap and are at this moment on their way to Qingdao.'

'How far are they?'

'My skills are not so precise. But they cannot be that far. Half a day's ride perhaps. But I could be wrong.'

Kublai does not wait until she has finished. He summons his men and gives them instruction. Only then, as the Mongolians busy themselves, does he return.

'We ride fast for Qingdao. You will have to follow as best you can. I can leave only a single man to guide you. Now I must be gone.' Kublai and the entire force dive over the edge of the ridge.

The lone Mongolian brings them their horses. 'We will not take such a dangerous route. Kublai tells me your skills with horses is not great and he wants you to arrive safely.'

They mount and follow at a steady pace taking a zigzag route down the mountain.

*

Kublai gallops into the open gate of Qingdao. He was at least relieved that the Jürgen cavalry had not arrived but was concerned that there was only two guards on the gate with none of the other Mongolians nearby. 'Where is everybody?' He demands intones of annoyance.

'They've gone to see the great ship arriving at the jetty.'

Kublai has to move to where Asutai is pointing before he can see the great black ship due to a slight bend in the street. 'Asutai go down and see what is happening and bring our men back here. We need to make these defences secure.' He turns to the Mongolians he has come down the mountain with. 'Get the gate stops in position and start digging the holes for the staves.'

Then one of the guards on the gate gives Kublai the bad news. 'Kublai, we do not have any staves. They were not deemed necessary.'

Kublai is furious because he knows that they have not time to make any. 'Then bring whatever object there is to strength the gate.'

Asutai gallops straight onto the jetty and joins the welcoming committee. 'What is going on here? Who is in charge?'

'I am.' Says the Captain, somewhat annoyed.

'These are Korean mercenaries come to rescue the Jürgen cavalry. They must not be allowed to tie up under pain of death.'

'On whose orders?' Demands the Captain.

'On the orders of Kublai. Who, is at this moment strengthening the main gate, because the Jürgen will soon be upon us.'

The Korean ship is within ten metres and the conversation is easily heard by those on board, and understood by those who have had dealings with the Mongolians. Orders are given and within a few moments hundreds of Koreans have lined the port

side and have unleashed a flight of crossbow bolts. Decimating the Mongolians on the jetty.

Asutai takes one in the arm but makes it off the jetty with a few more.

*

The Han come onto a wide track in their decent. It is near the bottom of the valley. Their Mongolian guide sets his horse into a gallop but the Han, unsure, slow theirs down.

Shi looks over the side into the valley and sees a broad track below. 'We would appear to be approaching the main track into Qingdao from the north.'

'Then we should hurry to reach the safety of the defences before the Jürgen arrive.' Says Bao.

'Will those defences be sufficient to stop six hundred horsemen when Kublai has only one hundred?' Says Shi.

'Best not to forget the four hundred Korean mercenaries on board that ship.' Says Ling-ling.

'Four hundred?' Asks Shi incredulous.

Ling-ling turns to her brother. 'It would be four hundred that it takes to sail a ship of that size?'

'That would be about right.' Says Bao to Shi, who is shocked into silence. 'Four hundred sailors, who double up as soldiers when need be.'

'Our good Captain Miko has seven hundred men under his command on board the Black Pearl. Is that not right, brother?'

'It is and a more fearsome band of villains you would not wish to meet not a dark night.' Says Bao with relish.

The four Han have come to a stop in order to digest the information.

Their Mongolian guide has reached the junction with the main track and now signals to them to hurry.

The sound of thunder. The thunder of many hooves can now be heard. The Jürgen have arrived.

The Mongolian guide sees this too late. He is cut down by many arrows as he retreats back up the track.

The Han retreat further up the track as the Jürgen gallop by. Even if they had seen them they would not have stopped for the Jürgen only had one thing on their mind and that was escape.

Once they have passed by, the conversation begins again but this time with vigour.

'Surely we must go into Qingdao to see what we can do to help?' Says Bao.

'This is not our fight. You have become too close to Kublai, Bao. He is not our ally, he is our enemy. We must wait until nightfall and only then approach with caution.' Says Shi with good sense.

They others agree.

'He's not such a bad person. Had he been born into a scholar official family with your credentials he would surely become one of us. Not least because he has been blessed with a high degree of intelligence.'

'He wasn't. Therefore he isn't.' Shi stops to change direction. 'Why do you think he promised to return with you to this location on Lao Shan?'

'Ah well.' Says Bao sheepishly. 'It may have something to do with the fact that I had mentioned that my ancient ancestor had become famous for his predictive power, once he had returned from his missing year.'

'Precisely. Such knowledge represents power to the barbarian. Let me ask you this, do you really think he would let you take anything that is in his control?'

'Probably not. But how would he know what is important and what is not.' Says Bao as a means of defence. 'We will have to play it carefully. Like a mongoose playing with a snake.'

The others agree.

'You have often complained of my cunning.' Says Bao in hurt tones. 'Now you actively encourage its use.'

'Situation is everything.'

'Moral inconsistency, if you ask me.' Says Bao in tones that reek of moral inconsistency.

They all laugh until the rumble of thundering hooves silences their play. Dismounting, they look over the edge of the track

and down below they see General Salkai and his entire army pass by at a gallop.

'This is not too be missed.' Shouts out Bao, and he quickly remounts.

'Wait.' Shouts Shi. 'The last thing we want is to get involved. A stray arrow. Being mistaken for Jürgen by the Mongolians. There's a host of imponderables.'

'Shi's right. This is not our war, so why risk everything to satisfy our curiosity.'

Bao sags in his saddle.

*

The Jürgen troops are upon them before they can mount any kind of defence. Using grappling hooks they soon have the gate stops removed in a well-rehearsed manoeuvre. Driving down the main street they ride at full gallop onto the jetty. Dispensing with their horses to one side they now run onto gangplanks laid out from ship to jetty to the cries of encouragement from the Korean mercenaries.

Just as the last man gets on board, General Salkai arrives frightening the Jürgen horses on the jetty and blocking his way.

Long poles push the ship off from the shore and sails are hoisted. The Mongolians force their way through the Jürgen Horses to the end of the jetty only to be met by hundreds of arrows and bolts. And worse. The jeers of their enemies.

General Salkai dismounts at the beginning of the jetty and leans against the rail.

He is joined by the Administrator. 'We were close. A hair's breadth close.'

'Had I been a young man ...' Salkai says with sadness. 'The time has come to retire before my infirmities bring defeat.'

The Administrator knows he is right. 'If you retire, then I will retire.'

'What is all this talk of retirement?' Asks Kublai emerging from the crowds of soldiers pushing their way onto the bridge.

'The failure to capture these Jürgen is all mine. If it hadn't been for two good Captains we would not have come even this close.' He speaks from the heart. 'I can bear this

humiliation. I could not bear a defeat that was due to my increasing infirmities.'

'Why even talk of defeat?' Kublai is in demonstrative good humour. 'The enemy flees before us.' He points to the black ship. 'This is victory.' Then to the men of the Mongolian army, who are also in good humour. 'They are well pleased. If they had, had to fight, many of them would have been killed, and for little good reason. They celebrate for they have won a great prize at little cost; Jürgen horses. And we all know how delicious they are.'

He points to where the Mongolians are choosing specific animals for slaughter. 'It is little wonder your men love you so well. Enjoy this great victory and forget negative thoughts.'

'You are too kind. However, I know I am not the man I was. I will retire and return home. Let the next generation have their time. I will split the army into three, giving Borui one part, Chabi one part and Chutsai the third. These last two I will make generals, for, as my Administrator will tell you, they deserve it.'

'They are exciting new talents that warfare has revealed. It is in our great tradition to promote those that are successful in action. These two men will serve you well. A new generation for a new generation.' The Administrator delivers a warm smile to Kublai. 'I will retire also and I can at least provide you with two apprentices who are my worthy successors.'

'Then go if you must. Go with my gratitude for it is all that I have to give.'

'It is enough, Kublai. It has been an honour to serve the true heir of Genghis Khan.' Says Salkai pushing himself off the rail. 'My bones are weary. I must rest. Like the old man I have become.' He places his hand on Kublai's shoulder as he passes. With the Administrator patting him on the other as he follows the General into the crowds.

*

Bao is agitated and paces about in bad humour.

'Oh, alright.' Says Shi mounting up. 'But let us proceed at a cantor and with caution.'

They set off down the track and join the main track. They have not gone far when a horse with wild eyes and foaming mouth

comes galloping by them with a man facing backward and tied to the horse.

'Grab the horse.' Shouts Shi to Bao who is a little way in front.

Bao manages to grab the tied reins only for the horse to pull him off his own. Never the less he hangs onto the horse that pulls up under the extra strain.

The man is dressed in rags of Jürgen origin. He is barely conscious.

Shi rides alongside and slaps his face.

'Am I dead?' He says this in Mongolian.

'What has befallen you?' Shi demands of the man.

'Nothing more than I deserve.' He weeps in great gulps. 'Sent to hell for my great crime.'

'Cut him loose.' Instructs Shi handing a knife to Bao.

Bao cuts his bonds and the man falls from the horse with Bao breaking his fall.

He can't stand so Bao lays him on the ground.

The others dismount. Surrounding him and looking at what is a broken man.

'Who are you and what have you done?' Shi demands.

'I am Uriyang, Kadai's nephew. A coward and traitor.' He curls up like an infant onto his side. Rocking back and forward and whining like a beaten dog.

Tai drops to her knee beside him. 'Calm yourself. Calm.' She places a hand on his forehead. 'Be at peace. We will help if we can. This is the Song Envoy, Zhen Shi and his wife, Lingling. And this is Shao Bao, Deputy Envoy, and I am his wife. We are not Mongolians nor are we Jürgen.' He calms and Tai helps him sit up. 'If you would look at our dress you would see that I speak the truth.'

He looks from to the other. All the while Tai keeps a hand on his head. 'I was on a campaign trying to capture Jürgen cavalry. In the midst of battle I slipped away. So full of fear anything seemed better than to let the others see my cowardice. I slipped away but was captured by the enemy. They would have killed me but once they knew that I was Kadai's nephew, they decided to keep me alive. A hostage that could be

bargained for. They kept me like a dog. Feeding me scraps and bound in such a way that I was free to move around their camp but only on my hands and knees. They made me bark and fetch sticks. The Jürgen despise cowards as much as Mongolians.

When it came to the great escape they tied me to this poor horse and left me for our men to find me as we neared Qingdao. The horse veered of the road in search of water but on hearing the horses of our men it struggled to follow. That is how I am here. The poor wretch that I am.'

'There is but one course of action left open to you. You must seek out your uncle and apologise for your behaviour. Your shame becomes his shame if you do not. As I, myself, have found out, you will often do things for others, especially for those that you love, which you will not do for yourself.' Shi says this in bitter sadness. 'You have been given this chance. Go, redeem yourself. Save your uncle from shame.'

Tai and Bao help him to his feet.

'Water and feed your horse for it looks almost spent. Take this food.' Shi throws him two tied sacks. 'Then avoid all contact with your Mongolian brothers. Speak only to your uncle. This way he will be free of shame by your return. Now get off the track and be gone.'

He staggers with the two sacks and drags the horse down to the stream.

'Come, let us leave this poor wretch to his fate. There is nothing more to be done.

The Han mount and ride into Qingdao.

As they approach the open gate the dismounted Mongolians suddenly become aware of their presence. They notch their arrows and the Han are only saved by Asutai. 'Put up your bows. The Han have been returned to us ... unharmed' His good humour, in spite of a wound that has his arm bound across his chest, is catching. The Mongolians laugh and jest.

'What has happened?' Asks Bao catching the mood. 'A great victory, perhaps?'

'At least not a defeat. They have escaped. But we came close to capturing them. Best of all Kublai is safe and your return will only make his humour better. So tonight we will celebrate. There are plans for a great feast but first we must

find you a house so you can refresh yourselves. This way.' He shows them into the village.

★

The house is that of a wealthy merchant. Wealthy in the context of the fishing village setting. In truth it is more a small town than a village with many Han Chinese still resident.

The family that own the property busy themselves boiling water and providing soaps and other articles for their illustrious guests.

Shi and Ling-ling share a tiled bath, which is off their bedroom, a product of happier times. Bao and Tai, a wooden bath in their bedroom, a necessity of more recent times.

'What luxury.' Bao states with enthusiasm. 'I swear that this insane journey was all worth it for this one moment in time.'

'Lean your head forward so I can release your hair from your topknot.' Says Tai struggling to undo a knot that has become caked with dirt and tightened with constant changes of wet and dry. 'How do you find these Han Chinese?'

'Cowed, it is true. Resilient, it is also true. However, they have not forgotten who they are. This is important for the future. Once we are reunited as we surely will.'

'More hot water.' Shouts Tai as the offending knot finally releases Bao's hair.

A young woman - the eldest daughter - enters and under Tai's instruction pours water over Bao's head. 'I will fetch more.'

'They have lost all dignity. It is hard to believe that this will be the fate of the Han of the Song. A people who have achieved a degree of civilization unparalleled in history. Our mission seems ...' she struggles for the concept 'forlorn.'

'Forlorn? Perhaps. Cunning and devious, more like. It will work in the fullness of time. That is what matters.' Says Bao with his customary vigour. 'We are participating in the making of history. We should celebrate that tonight. The barbarians will never know the difference. Thinking we celebrate their capture of horse meat.' He says this with derision. 'Thinking we are somehow equal. When we can understand them but they can never understand us for their culture has not the facility to achieve such an outcome.'

'Your arrogance has raised its ugly head, yet again.' She says this in the manner of a mother chiding a naughty child.

A voice from within the house silences both of them. 'Where are you?'

'We're in here.' Shouts Tai.

After a few moments Asutai appears at the open door. 'Kublai wonders if you will be joining us.'

'Indeed. As soon as we have dressed we will join you in celebration.' Says Bao with enthusiasm. 'Is it late?'

'Well past midnight.'

'I told you it was late.' Tai addresses this to Bao.

'Then it is my fault.' Says Bao. 'Give Kublai my apologies and tell him we will be with him directly.'

'It is probably my fault as I should have roused you earlier.'

'We are at least well rested and our spirits are high. With an appetite fit to eat a horse.'

Asutai laughs. 'I will have one put aside especially for you.' And with that he leaves.

*

In single file they make their way through a landscape of fires. The smell of horse meat roasting permeates the air. The sound of joyous laughter fills the ears. Directions are given by Mongolians happy to oblige until they come finally to a U-shaped configuration of chairs. Here the Han line up at the U's open end. They Bao to the horizontal to Kublai and Salkai at the head of a low table.

Kublai gets to his feet and bows back. Please take your seats.' He directs them to seats either side of the open U. 'I have just been telling my good General how you have saved my life on more than one occasion. How I owe you a debt that I can never repay.'

Sakai gets to his feet. 'We salute you.' The others stand and raise their drinks. 'May the big sky long be filled with stars over your yurt.' They say as one.

The Han get to their feet with Shi speaking for them. 'Heaven and Earth rejoice in your company. Let the water of life make your land fertile and filled with wisdom.'

He drains his cup and everyone follows suit.

A rider approaches through this city of light. He dismounts at the open U and kneels on one knee giving a heart hand and Heaven salute. 'Kadai requests your presence at the soonest possible time.' He addresses this to Kublai.

Kublai's eyes rest on Bao's as he speaks to the messenger. 'Tell him we will return after this great feast. Now go and rest and eat your fill.'

The messenger does as he is bid leaving the company with an unnamed anticipation.

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The road to the west is lined with kneeling Mongolians four deep. Salkai's entire army have come to pay their respect.

The General with Kublai by his side head up a small column. The Han, just in front of Kublai's bodyguard, are four abreast and silent.

Kublai turns to Salkai. 'This is your moment. Lead us for this one last time into the west.'

Salkai does not wait to reply but springs his horse into a gallop then standing up on his stirrups raises his arms in the air. As he passes the Mongolians leap to their feet and cheer.

Kublai waits until he is well on his way and then the whole column gallop after the fast receding General.

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The Changing Line

Changing Line in the second place means:

Joy expresses itself in numerous ways.

The inferior man often expresses joy in lurid ways.

The superior man expresses joy with sincerity.

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This Changing Line Delivers:

Following (47)

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Lake

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Thunder

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THE IMAGE

Thunder resting in the Lake:

The Image of FOLLOWING.

The superior man Follows nature's way

And rests in the joy of calm and tranquillity.

Chapter 17

Grace (23)

The Song Dynasty

1059 C.E.

14th Day of the 1st Moon

Mid-morning

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Mountain

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Fire

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THE IMAGE

Fire illuminates the Mountain:

The Image of GRACE.

So the superior man appreciates the transient nature of life,

Including his own.

“In good years most of the young people behave well. In bad years most of them abandon themselves to evil. This is not due to any difference in the natural capacity endowed by Heaven. The abandonment is due to the fact that the mind is allowed to fall into evil. Take for instance the growing of wheat. You sow the seeds and cover them with soil. The land is the same, and the time of sowing is also the same. In time they grow up luxuriantly. When the time of harvest comes, they are all ripe. Although there may be differences between the different stalks of wheat, it is differences in the soil, as rich or poor, to the unequal nourishment obtained from the rain or dew, and differences in human effort. Therefore, all things of the same kind are similar to one another. Why should there be any doubt about men? The sage and I are the same in kind. Therefore, Lung Tzu said, ‘If a man makes shoes without knowing the size of people’s feet, I know that he will at least not make them like baskets.’ Shoes are alike because people’s feet are alike. There’s a common taste for flavour in our mouths. I-ya was the first to know our common taste for food. Suppose one man’s taste for flavour from that of others, as dogs and horses differ from us in belonging to different species, then why should the world follow I-ya in regard to flavour? Since in the matter of flavour the whole world regards I-ya as the standard. It shows that our tastes for flavour are alike. The same is true of our ears. Since, in the matter of sounds the whole world regards Shih-k’uang as the standard. It shows that our ears are alike. The same is true of our eyes. With regard to Tzu-tu, none in the world did not know that he was handsome. Anyone who did not recognize his handsomeness must have no eyes. Therefore, I say there is a common taste in our mouths, a common sense of sound in our ears, and a common sense of beauty in our eyes. Can it be that in our mind’s alone we are not alike? What is it that we have in common in our minds? It is the sense of principle and righteousness. The sage is the first to possess what is common in our minds. Therefore, moral principles please our minds as beef and mutton and pork please our mouths.”

From the Book of Mencius. 6A:7.

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Shao Yong, having walked alongside the Grand Canal on its east side, now ventures a detour to a vantage point he can see some way off to the north east. Having achieved his objective he takes his time to take in the landscape. All the while imagining he is Confucius, whom, he assumes, would have passed through this very landscape on his great journey.

To regain the road to the north he had been previously been on, he now sets off on a north westerly path, thus cutting the corner off that he had made for himself by the detour. In so doing he is to pass through the most remarkable garden in all of China. For unwittingly, he has ventured onto the estate of the Marquis of Suqian, a cousin of the Emperor.

Finding his way barred by a stream and a tall thick hedge, he nearly turns back. Persevering, he fords the stream, struggles through the hedge and ends up somewhat dishevelled, in a grass covered field the like of which he has never seen before. The grass is luxuriant to say the least; coming above his knees in broad leafed splendour.

As he wades through this green sea he becomes aware of the bushes and trees surrounding the field. Except they are not like any bushes or trees he has ever seen before. One looks like a giant peony with its large red flowers. He wanders across to take a closer look and is amazed to find that these large flowers, although beautifully created, are indeed creations in painted paper.

Looking around he now sees many other flowering plants he recognizes from his own garden but here they are constructs on a grand scale. His perspective suddenly switches. It is as if he is the size of a mouse. With the perspective of a mouse.

The elation that he now feels soon turns his mind to wondering who could be possibly responsible for this wondrous creation. He is not to wait long to find out as he is accosted as he sets out across the lawn of a giant garden.

'And who gave you the right to wander in my garden?' Comes a voice.

Yong swings around to see a slender man in his mid-fifties striding towards him with anger distorting his thin features.

'I am Shao Yong. And who would you be?'

The man does not speak until he is but a few metres away and has had time to scrutinize Yong with a bright, if excited eye.

'I am the Marquis of Suqian. This is my estate that you trespass on.' He moves around Yong to take a closer look before continuing. 'You say you are Shao Yong? The Recluse of Loyang?'

'None other.' Says Yong happy that his reputation has travelled this far east.'

'Prove it.'

Yong produces the great seal from within his clothes. 'This was given to me by the Prime Minister's wife the Lady Ssu-ma on behalf of her husband, who was not at home when I called.'

The Marquis steps forward and takes the great seal in his hand and feels its weight. As he examines it in detail a smile

slowly emerges. 'So,' he says, handing it back and standing back 'you are the great recluse. In person. Here in my garden. But Why? A man who would rather spend his life in the pursuit of knowledge than carry out his duty to the Empire of the Song. Is it that you pursue knowledge even here?'

'Indeed.'

'Yet you make out that you do not know you are on my estate.'

'I did not until you have just informed me.' Yong says with sincerity.

'Is it that you are on a quest?'

'Indeed. Following in the footsteps of the great sage Confucius. By filling my mind with the sights the great sage filled his with, I hope to gain a further insight into the workings of his mind that studying his philosophic work alone provides.'

The Marquis is taken aback, so Yong continues. 'Are our minds not filled with the Images of what we have seen? Are they not part of our minds? By seeing the Images in his mind by placing them in mine, will I not gain an insight into the mind of the great man?'

'An interesting proposition.' Says the Marquis with genuine interest. 'What you are trying to achieve is the perspective of Confucius.' He says this as a statement rather than a question. But Yong answers as if it was a question. 'That is an interesting way of putting it. And yes, in part. However, there is more to knowledge than perspective. Do you not agree?' The Marquis strokes his face with his hand. 'I would agree, however, I would say to you that there is more to perspective than meets the eye.'

Both men laugh, enjoying the humorous moment that has infused both their minds.

'Come. I will show you my research into perspective.' He sets off through the long grass. 'Here, in this part of my estate you are given the perspective of a mouse.'

'Wonderfully achieved. I must congratulate you.'

'I appreciate your appreciation. Constructing this illusion was not easy. I have employed hundreds of artists in its construction. Artists, thankfully, are blessed with imagination. So the concept was easy to convey. The realization was a lot more difficult. But after two years we

have a garden for giants, or, we have become the size of mice. It works either way.'

'You can change your perspective by just being here.' Says Yong, impressed.

'Twice over.'

'Indeed.'

They eventually come to the far side of the perspective changing garden to where a large hedge marks its boundary.

The Marquis turns and looks back from whence they have come. Inducing Yong to do the same.

'Come.' The Marquis states. 'I will now introduce you to another perspective changing garden. Completely different from this.'

The Marquis walks straight at the solid hedge that, as you near, suddenly reveals that it is not as solid as it at first seems. Part of the hedge has an inset cunningly disguising a path off to the left that once taken leads to a turning off to the right that brings both men into another garden.

Before them is a long slender lake. On this side, that is the right side of the lake, there is a lawn of normal size grass. Behind the lawn banks of shrubs. Increasing in height as they move further away from the lawn and the lake. Planted in neat rows, one behind the other, the effect is one of a cascading waterfall. Where the shrubs meet the lawn a misty white ribbon of reed grass stalks looks like the foam that appears where waterfall meets river; here the grass lawn is the river. This charming effect takes on movement as the two men walk alongside the lake, increasing the illusion of a green waterfall. A light breeze helps this effect by adding movement to individual branches and leaves.

Ducks take off from the lake attracting Yong's attention and he now realizes the lake is more of a large pond, not being more than five or six metres in width. Across on the far side of this miniature lake shrubs come right down to the left bank. Behind this disparate collection of shrubs there is obviously a path because Yong can now see two men walking along it. He stops to ask the Marquis who these men are but then realizes that the men have also stopped and are looking directly at them. 'Who are these men?'

'Who indeed.'

Because of the shrubs on the far bank Yong can only see the top half of their bodies and not all them. 'Are they your gardeners?'

The Marquis laughs. 'Do you not recognise them?'

Yong looks back and in a moment of sudden realization he sees himself and the Marquis. The shock has the effect of transferring his consciousness to his mirror image and he sees himself and the Marquis with the waterfall backdrop. This out of body experience delivers an even greater shock that returns his consciousness back to his body and Yong staggers back a pace or two.

'Steady my friend.' The Marquis holds Yong's arm to steady him. 'It has the effect that you have just experienced on just about everyone. However, why, remains a mystery.'

Yong dare hardly look back at himself in case his consciousness is transferred to his mirror image once more. An unsettling experience he is not sure he wishes to repeat. 'I assume there is a wall of mirrors behind the shrubs.'

'Indeed. A wall of mirrors of the finest quality with ground edges so they fit together seamlessly. Thus producing a mirror image the entire length of the lake.'

'This change of perspective is truly remarkable. If more than a little disturbing. How did you know how to construct such a device?'

'As a child of perhaps nine or ten I was looking at myself in a mirror with a candle between. It was night and very dark. The reflection of the candle's flame was clearly visible in my mirror image eyes. As I gazed into my eyes in the mirror my consciousness suddenly switched to that of my image in the mirror. It was such a fascinating experience that I repeated the exercise countless times. And even now I still don't know which side of the mirror I'm on.' The Marquis laughs. 'It was almost certainly these experiences that started my fascination with perspective.'

'Perspective and not consciousness?'

'Perspective is a form of consciousness. Would you not agree?'

Yong is unsure. 'I suppose it must be.' He finally replies.

'Then is it not a gateway into our consciousness?'

'Perhaps.' Yong says after a while. Deep in thought he follows the Marquis along the lake's grassy bank. 'If one was to look upon consciousness the way you suggest, then our minds are full of different forms of consciousness.'

'I see the mind as a house full of different rooms. Each room filled with furniture and objects depending on the function of that room. As we don't experience two forms of consciousness at the same time, this is the same as the owner of the house visiting the rooms sequentially. The name of the owner of the house is Master Perspective, it is to him we must turn to find our way about in this house of many rooms.'

'A quite wonderful metaphor.' Says Yong. 'And, very seductive.'

They near the end of the lake and are once more confronted by a hedge. A hedge that reveals its exit only when they near. Passing through Yong marvels at the chamfered edges of the entrance and exit points; a key element in the disguise.

A curved path stretches out before them hemmed in by tall hedges either side. This leads to a small circle of carved stone slabs just big enough for two men to stand on. The hedge to their left stops abruptly before the circle. The one to their right carries on curving into a stand of trees where it disappears from view.

The Marquis grasps Yong by the shoulders and positions him at right angles to the path facing to the left. He then steps aside and presents what appears to be a painting in a gold frame, seven or eight metres away. Seven or eight metres wide and seven or eight metres high.

The painting is unusual in that it is very realistic and not at all stylized in the fashion of the day. The painting is of a trellised tunnel covered in foliage leading to a grand vista.

Yong can see a couple half hidden by the uprights of the trellis work in a loving embrace and kissing. It is a tender scene of poignant emotion.

It captures Yong's attention until the Marquis interrupts his focus. 'What do you notice about the frame?'

The frame is at least a third of a metre in width and covered in Chinese characters. Starting out at the top right of the frame and reading down as convention dictates he intones.

'Heaven, Progress, Approach, Army, Return, Modesty,

Enthusiasm, Contemplation, Splitting Apart, Preponderance of the Small ...' He slows and stops on realization. 'These are the categories of Change of the Great I. But they are not in the right order.' He turns to the Marquis for an explanation.

'You are right on both accounts. Indeed, the categories are delivered by random chaos. Not such an easy task if you have an ordered mind. I was forced to give one of my gardeners who does not read and write the task of picking out the characters I had written on pieces of paper and placed inside a bowl. The poor fellow became quite agitated as he thought it was some kind of test. I had to get the head gardener, who does read and write, to calm him by explaining that it was a job that only a man who could not read or write, could complete. I gave him a gold coin for his trouble which went some way to alleviating his fears.' Yong joins the Marquis in light laughter.

'But why did you need them to be delivered in random chaos?'

'To frame in context the painting that is in perfect order. The perspective here is not the painting as an object but what it reveals in its construction. Come. Let me reveal this to you now.'

Yong and the Marquis approach the painting, and as they do, Yong's perspective changes as he realizes it is not a painting on a flat surface but a painted construction that by stepping over the frame is revealed to be a three-dimensional space.

The trellises uprights have been compressed to give the right perspective as viewed from the stone circle. Here, in the construction, the compacted three-dimensional construction is revealed.

While Yong examines the fine paint work of the three-dimensional foliage, the Marquis stands next to the entwined lovers that are of perfect proportion. He lets his hand caress the woman's neck.

Yong joins him. 'What magnificent works of art.'

'Porcelain. Glazed to perfection so that the colours are as life like as is possible.' The Marquis sighs. 'This is my wife and myself when we were first married. She died in child birth and this is all I have left of her.' The tremble in his voice speaks of great emotion. 'I never remarried. Nothing will ever replace her. I chose to have concubines for my natural urges and to produce my children. It would have been a travesty to have acted in any other way.' He takes his hand from her neck.

'Come.' He leads Yong further down the compressed three-dimensional tunnel to a stone slab seat where they take their places to enjoy a vista of great beauty.

After a good while Yong raises his hands as if to present the vista. 'This vista is one holistic unit. Yet, it is comprised of many parts. The Grand Canal leading to the small lake. The tree covered hills on the far side of the Grand Canal. The road down here that runs into that village. Each part is made up of further parts that all add up to the vista before us.'

'Indeed.'

And, what is more, we can walk into this vista and become part of it. Will you not join me on my journey to Quiu?'

The Marquis takes only a moment to reply. 'Why not.' He exclaims with enthusiasm. He raises his right arm and beckons with his hand. A servant arrives at speed. 'Give me my bag.' His servant duly hands him the bag and he places the strap over his head so that it crosses his body. 'Inform my household I have decided to accompany Shao Yong on the narrow road to the north.' As the servant leaves, the Marquis stands and presents Yong with the way down from the hill. 'Shall we?'

'Indeed we shall.' Says Yong.

They set off down the hill and into the vista we are all part of.

*

The Changing Line

Changing Line in the third place means:

A charming gathering of friends

Blessed by the heady effects of wine

Brings the risk of indolence.

Beware.

The Changing Line Delivers:

Nourishment (48)

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== == Mountain

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== == Thunder

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THE IMAGE

Thunder at the foot of the Mountain:

The Image of NOURISHMENT.

Thus the sage provides nourishment

For all who seek The Way.

Chapter 18

Decay (18)

The Song Dynasty

1059 C.E.

14th Day of the 1st Moon

Mid-morning

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== == Mountain

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===== Wind

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THE IMAGE

The Still Mountain slows the Wind:

The Image of DECAY.

Thus the superior man avoids the debasing attitudes of decadence,

And inspires the people to renewal by great works.

Perseverance brings success.

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“The trees of the Niu Mountain were once beautiful. But can the mountain be regarded any longer as beautiful, since being in the borders of a big state, the trees have been hewed down with axes and hatchets? Still with the rest given them by the days and nights and the nourishment provided them by the rains and the dew, they were not without buds and sprouts springing forth. But then the cattle and the sheep pastured upon them once and again. That is why the mountain looks so bald. When people see that it is so bald, they think there was never any timber on the mountain. Is this the true nature of the mountain? Is here not a heart of humanity and righteousness originally existing in man? The way he loses his original good mind is like the way in which the trees hewed down by axes and hatchets. As trees are cut down day after day, can a mountain retain its beauty? To be sure, the days and nights do the healing, and there is the nourishing air of the calm morning which keeps him normal in his likes and dislikes. But the effect is slight and is disturbed and destroyed by what he does during the day. When there is repeated disturbance, the restorative influence of the night will not be sufficient to preserve. When the night is not sufficient to preserve it, man becomes not much different from the beast. People see that he acts like an animal, and think that he never had the original endowment. But is that his true character? Therefore, with proper nourishment and care, everything grows, whereas without proper nourishment and care, everything decays. Confucius said, ‘Hold it fast and you preserve it. Let it go and you lose it. It comes in and goes out at no definite time and without anyone’s knowing its direction.’ He was talking about the human mind.”

From the Book of Mencius. 6A:8.



Shao Yong and the Marquis of Suqian having marched down the hill with great strides, joined the Narrow Road to the North. The first village they come to provides the Marquis with a tough travelling coat of raw silk and a pair of strong leather sandals as worn by the local farmers.

Further on their journey they stop to lend a hand to a farmer whose pigs, having minds of their own, have scattered across a field as he tries to bring them into their sty.

Several kilometres further they are about to enter into a village where a great commotion is taking place. Having being spotted, the commotion, made up of some twenty men, now comes their way.

The men, obviously upset and angry, threaten Yong and the Marquis. In the din it is impossible to make out what is being said.

‘Silence. Do you not recognize your Master? It is I, the Marquis of Suqian.’

Slowly the crowd fall silent as they recognize him. They all bow as one.

'That's better. Now, who will tell me what is going on?' The men remain silent and bent to the horizontal. 'Come, raise yourselves.' They slowly rise. 'You' the Marquis points to a man 'farmer Chen. Tell me what has caused this strange behaviour. Surely it cannot be the murder that happened two months ago.'

'Indeed not, master. It is the murder that has just taken place that so excites us.'

'There is a fresh murder?'

'We have just found the body after we searched the village for the girl who was found missing from her bed this morning.'

The Marquis turns to Yong. 'I must investigate this abomination. Will you assist me?'

'Indeed.'

'I left the first murder up to the Captain of the Militia. Without success I may add. I failed in my duty to these people and now I must make amends.' He turns back to farmer Chen.

'Take me to the body.'

Farmer Chen leads the way for Yong and the Marquis with the rest of the village men falling in behind. The girl's body has been taken to her parents' house. She lies on a table surrounded by her grieving family when they arrive.

'The Marquis has come.' Announces farmer Chen.

Those gathered bow to the Marquis as he enters, all except the girl's mother who grasps on to her daughter lost in grief.

'Will you all step outside while we examine the body.' The Marquis signals to farmer Chen to take the mother.

The farmer has difficulty and needs the assistance of other members of the family to remove the poor woman.

Once they have gone Yong closes the door on the big crowd gathered. He joins the Marquis taking up a position on the opposite side of the table.

The Marquis has lost little time in removing the girl's clothes which he examines with close attention. Although soiled with work they are intact. Placing these aside he turns his attention to the body. 'There is still some warmth in the

body. There is stiffness, however, in the limbs. She must have been killed sometime before dawn.'

With the help of Yong they ascertain that she has not been sexually assaulted. There are a few old bruises on her legs but the strange marks on her neck are obviously recent; two round bruises on either side.

Yong tries aligning his fingers with the bruises both from the front and from the back and even from the side. 'She certainly wasn't strangled by hand. These bruises were obviously made by a knotted ligature. The kind used by assassins. The knots correspond to pressure points in the neck that immobilize their victims.'

'A professional killing?' The Marquis is incredulous. 'Impossible.'

'Indeed. This poor farmer's daughter could not possibly be the victim of an assassin. Yet the use of a knotted ligature is not in doubt. A mystery.' Yong looks at the Marquis who is clearly disturbed. 'How was the other girl killed?'

The Marquis looks up from the body. 'According to the Captain of the Militia, she was strangled.'

'After two months in the ground there will be few marks left to see if the same means was used.'

'That, at least, will save the poor family the trauma of having the body removed from its grave.'

'Indeed. What did the Captain make of the murder?'

'He swore to me that after talking to the entire village that he had to agree with the villagers that the crime must have been committed by a passing stranger. Of which, there are many.'

'An unsolved crime.' Says Yong to himself but unconsciously out loud.

'It is too much of a coincidence for these murders not to be related.'

'Find the murder of one and we will find the murderer of the other.'

'Indeed.' Says the Marquis with grim determination. 'Not far from here, some five kilometres, is the Cherry Blossom Teahouse. A favourite stopping place for merchants and

government officials. A good place to start our enquiry, I suggest.'

'There is little chance of the murderer having come from the village. We agree on that?' Yong looks to the Marquis for agreement and receives it. 'A stranger passing through would have to stay somewhere nearby?' Again the Marquis agrees. 'Then we should start with the nearest place and work our way out from there.'

The Marquis finds a blanket and covers the body. 'Poor child. It grieves me terribly.' Tears fill his eyes. 'I should have carried out the investigation on the first murder. The Captain lacks knowledge and cannot be held responsible for that. I, on the other hand, have failed in my duty.'

'We are all wise in hindsight. I will not judge you from that perspective. What is important now is to catch this villain before he kills again.'

'Indeed, but first, let me address the villagers.'

The Marquis followed by Yong go outside where the entire village is gathered. He takes advantage of a box to stand on. 'My friends, first, let me apologize for not having taken the first murder with the attention it deserved. You deserved better than that. Second, let me acquit the Captain of our Militia, a man we all trust and who has kept the region free of bandits by his martial skill. He has, however, neither the experience nor knowledge to bring to bear on these occurrences. That is not his fault. His youth and education freeing him of all blame. And third, I promise you I will not stop in my endeavours to bring this villain to justice. Now show me where the girl was found.'

The Headman of the village leads the Marquis and Yong to a barn not far from the village; a mere twenty metres. He shows them the exact place where the straw is flattened.

'Why would the girl be out here before dawn?' Asks the Marquis.

'We do not know. This wasn't even her parents' barn. Her family live, as you have seen, on the other side of the Narrow Road.'

As the Marquis digests this information while examining in detail the resting place of the body, Yong busies himself looking for clues around the inside of the barn.

The villagers are all gathered at the entrance watching with interest.

Behind a stack of paddy, Yong finds a flattened area where someone could easily have waited in ambush. He examines the area in detail and finds beneath loose stalks of paddy a footprint in the soft earth. 'Marquis. You should see this.' The Marquis joins Yong who points it out. 'If I am not mistaken, this is the footprint of a riding boot. See how the heel has sunk in further than the sole. I can't imagine any of the villagers would have a horse so they are hardly likely to have a riding boot.'

The Marquis approaches the crowd outside. 'Is there anyone in the village that rides a horse?'

The villagers assure him there is not.

He returns to where Yong is searching the area at the back of the barn. As he arrives Yong points out further boot prints in the soil just outside of the barn's cover. 'These prints lead in and out of the barn and stretch away in that direction.' He points to a copse of trees some two hundred metres away from the village.

The Marquis addresses the Headman. 'Stop the villagers from following us. We do not wish to lose the villain's footprints in theirs.'

The Marquis and Yong head out across the field occasionally finding further boot prints. Arriving in the copse they search it thoroughly finding the occasional boot print but without finding the hoof prints they were expecting. What is worse, they cannot find where the boot prints leave the copse to join the Narrow Road. This, after circling the copse at greater and greater distances.

'Where did this villain go?' Exclaims the Marquis in frustration.

'Perhaps we should not concern ourselves overly in this regard. He obviously did not bring a horse to this copse, which means either he did not have one, or, he left it near the Narrow Road. Either way we will never track him on the Narrow Road whether on foot or on horse. Your original suggestion about visiting the teahouses on the Narrow Road now seems to be justified. Riding boots are expensive, suggesting that this villain has money.'

'Indeed.' The Marquis looks to the sun not far above the horizon. 'If we set out now we should arrive before darkness engulfs us.'

They set off diagonally across the field to intersect the Narrow Road to the North with the Marquis beckoning the Headman to him.

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The Cherry Blossom Teahouse is well named, surrounded, as it is, by Cherry trees in great profusion. It is a relic from the Tang Dynasty with all the foibles and delicacies of the architecture of that time.

As Yong and the Marquis arrive the Teahouse is in the process of being filled with light as dusk has already settled.

Walking in through the main entrance, Yong is impressed by the opulence.

The welcoming singing girl approaches them, bowing in accordance with tradition but glances disapprovingly at their dress. 'I am sorry good Masters but we are full to capacity.'

The marquis understands the meaning of the glance and disapproves of her disapproval. 'Concern yourself without fear of prejudice, will you not. The Manager will give up his rooms for us. Now away and fetch him.' Says the Marquis with authority. An authority that sends the singing girl scampering away wondering who these poorly dressed and heavily soiled men can be.

The Manager, annoyed, is only two metres away when he recognizes the Marquis. 'Marquis. Why did you not tell me you were coming? I would have had everything prepared.'

'I could not inform you as I did not know. As such we will take what is available in terms of accommodation.'

'Indeed you will not. You will have your usual rooms. Please, take some refreshment while I have them prepared. And hot water for bathing. And, is there anything else you require?'

'Later.' Says the Marquis as he takes off his travelling coat to reveal the exquisite silk garment underneath.

The welcoming singing girl takes his coat marvelling at the fineness of the material now revealed.

The Marquis leans into her and says. 'You will pleasure me tonight while I teach you good manners.' The girl hurries away with more than just a little concern writ upon her face.

'Come.' Says the Marquis to Yong as he leads him to a slightly raised open sided room in the centre of what is a very large reception area. The Manager, who has followed them, quickly draws fine silk curtains on all four sides. 'Light only one small lamp and place it on the table.'

The Manager complies. 'I will see to the refreshment. If there is anything else you require please pull the cord.' With that he leaves after a full bow.

The Marquis takes up a position on the corner of one of the corner seats, leaning against the cushioned back with his legs stretched out along the seat. The room has two corner seats facing each other with a small table in in between. This arrangement allows for twelve people to sit in secluded comfort. The backs of the seats are less than a metre from the fine curtains and from where the Marquis has taken up his position he has a fine view of that side of the reception area next to the door. Yong sits across the diagonal in the corner of the other corner seat mimicking the Marquis. He has a fine view to his left across the rest of the reception room but his view to the entrance is restricted. The area behind Yong is taken up with private sitting areas of varying sizes.

What they can see happening is the lighting of the lamps. These are being lowered from the ceiling which takes two men to achieve as the lamps are large and of sophisticated construction. The large lamps have glass covers of a composite nature, comprising of many square glass panes, each pane having a bulge in the centre and each with its own colour. This glass cover sits on its own device that makes it slowly turn by the heat of the lamp.

A remarkable invention, these lamps, for there are many, fill the reception area with moving spots of coloured light in a most delight full way.

'I have often thought that the inside of The Cherry Blossom is an excellent metaphor for the Song Dynasty. The carved wooden pillars with their sculptured Tang Dynasty dragon motifs is what the Song is built upon. The lamps of exquisite design and function light up our age with creative and philosophic genius as portrayed by the moving multi-coloured spots of light.'

'An excellent metaphor.' Says Yong with sincerity.

'The spots of light have another function. They play on the outside of the silk curtains so that few can see in but we can still see out.' The Marquis smiles. 'My own accomplishment.'

'It gives us an excellent way to observe the guests without being seen.' Yong thinks for a moment. 'Who are all these people?'

'In the main they are merchants with a scattering of government officials and members of the Zhao clan when they are passing through the region. The despised merchants, I have come to recognize, are an essential ingredient in the great dish that is the Song. Without them I doubt if the Song would merit consideration as the greatest dynasty since the Early Zhou. The dynasty that gave us the Classics will always merit that position.'

'You would place the Song ahead of the Han?'

'We have surmounted the excellence of the Han with our creative invention. Perhaps, as you do not have a great estate to manage, you will not be aware of the introduction of many labour saving devices into farming. The use of water to power many contraptions, have given the economy a massive increase in all manner of produce besides farming. It is the merchants that drive these developments in their never ending search for profit. As a result, we all profit.'

'Exactly how big is your estate?'

'One hundred and fifty square kilometres.'

'That is a huge estate.' Yong says impressed. 'Do you manage it yourself?'

'Indeed, with the help of seven assistants and an accountant of course. It is my duty. It is my duty to provide the thousands that depend on me to advance their living conditions as much as it is to increase my own wealth.'

'A noble sentiment.'

'Thank you Master Shao.'

'What is to be our strategy?'

'First, I suggest, we look at the records to see if there are any customers that were staying here on the occasion of both murders. And, to ascertain if they are still here.'

The Marquis pulls the cord and within just a few moments the Manager arrives. 'Bring me the records of visitors for the last three months.'

The Manager returns directly and soon has Yong and the Marquis studying their content. They soon have a list. A list of ten names, compiled by Yong from the writing equipment in his bag.

'Your guests obviously have a liking for your establishment. Still, it gives us something to work on.'

'Bring us the records for which customers were pleased by our singing girls.' The Marquis says this to a confused Manager who, never the less, does as he is directed. 'If the murderer was pleased would he need to seek out young girls?'

'Remember Marquis, the girl we examined was not sexually molested.'

'Perhaps he attains sexual satisfaction only by murder. I have heard of such cases when I sit as Magistrate for serious offences.'

'You will have to excuse me. I have little experience in these matters.' Says Yong.

'And better for it. I would gladly forgo such knowledge as it disturbs my Inner Truth, however, it is my responsibility according to tradition.' Says the Marquis in displeasure.

The Manager returns with the records. They are again frustrated, in that all guest on their list had availed themselves of this service.

'Then we must interview each of these girls to ascertain if there is anything peculiar about these people on our list.'

Yong makes out a list of names of the singing girls they wish to talk to. He hands it to the Manager. 'Bring us these girls so that we may talk with them.'

'Now?'

'Indeed.' Says the Marquis, then on seeing his confusion. 'All will be revealed once we have the girls here.'

The Manager leaves but soon returns with the girls who file in and are directed to sit on the two corner units. Yong and the Marquis have taken places behind the seats. The Manager takes his place by the door.

'What I wish to know is if any men on this list have acted in anyway peculiar, or strangely, in or out of bed.' The Marquis reads out the list of names.

This starts a heated conversation amongst the girls with bursts of laughter intermixed with arguments. Moonbeam, one of the youngest singing girls breaks the conversation by addressing the Marquis directly. 'This man knelt on the bed and had me place this mortar up his rectum and then had me pull his great member back through between his legs and had me shake it with great vigour while thrust the mortar, also with great vigour, deep inside his rectum. Would you not call this most peculiar?' The other girls laugh and those next to her jostle her unmercifully. 'Well it seems most peculiar to me.'

Yong and the Marquis exchange humorous expressions until the senior singing girl asks. 'Is it peculiar to request a girl and then not take their pleasure?'

'Perhaps. Who on the list were you thinking of?'

Two names come out from amongst the girls but the senior singing girl soon makes a correction. 'Sung Lai is an old man. He often requests a girl just for her company and the warmth she brings to the bed. The other, Tung San, often just wants to examine your body, and will spend a great deal of time doing so.'

Another girl speaks up. 'He examined my neck for the longest time. Even putting his hands around it and applying pressure. Only a light pressure. But then, many men do this, but he is the only one that does not take his pleasure after.'

Looking from Yong to the Manager. 'Is this Tung San here at the moment?'

'He left yesterday on his horse.' Says one of the girls.

'Do you know which way he went?' Yong asks.

'He took the south gate. So I assume he was going south.'

'That's our man.' States the Marquis, then to the Manager. 'Give these girls a month's wages as reward and the girl who delivered Tung San's name, two months' wages. And give Moonbeam a dildo. And would someone please show her how to use it.' The laughter continues as the girls file out with Moonbeam the butt of many a lewd joke. 'Manager. Send for the militia immediately.'

'There is little need for here is the Captain of the Militia now.' The Manager points in the direction of the main entrance.

They exit the private room to greet the Captain, who sets out the reason for his presence at the Cherry Blossom. 'I have just come from the village of the murdered girls. They told me you were here. Have you found the murderer?'

'It is possible we have. His name is Tung San, and he rides south from here.' Says the Marquis at speed.

Yong who has knotted a cord from his travelling bag hands it to the Captain. 'If this is indeed the man he will be carrying something similar to this on his person or possibly on his horse.'

'Bring him back here, directly.' Says the Marquis.

The Captain leaves at speed.

*

The Marquis having spent the night with the welcoming singing girl and Yong having spent the night with Moonbeam both arrive for the morning sup in great good mood.

'I must thank you Master Shao for your assistance. Such devices as those used by assassins are well beyond my feeble knowledge of such things. How came you by this knowledge?'

'When I was travelling, as a young man, in search of knowledge. I studied with a Taoist mendicant who introduced me to the pressure points on the body and their use, for good or evil. It was he that showed me the pressure points on the neck, and indeed, their use by assassins to render a victim immobile when used in a ligature with knots that correspond to the pressure points. The search for knowledge can often lead to knowledge that may seem useless at the time but, as in this case, may be useful many years after.'

'Such is the course often taken by knowledge as it meanders the labyrinth of the mind.'

Moonbeam and the Welcoming singing girl arrive at the table bearing dishes of lemon rice, pork balls, stringy cabbage with condiments of chilli in wine and ground black peppers.

'It often seems to me that our minds are made of not one set of functions but many. And though we reason within a bounded rationality, the factors governing the boundaries of that

rationality may not have reason attached to them. Intuitions and emotions are often factors in the boundaries of our rationality.'

'Give me an example.'

'Take the concept of love. The bounded rationality of this concept contains the factors of what we love and who we love and in what way. But it also contains the pure experiential experience of love itself which has none of the qualities associated with reason. Thus we understand the concept of love and yet it contains elements that will not subject themselves to rationality.'

The Marquis sets about the meals with gusto. 'You have explained concepts in terms of bounded rationality very well. An idea I have not come across before. Is this your idea?'

'Indeed. What is the point of building a rational world if we don't know how that rational world comes about? That is what I thought when I was but a young man. My theory I have extended into a hierarchy of complexity. Would you like to hear it?' Yong fills his mouth while waiting for the Marquis to empty his.

'I take it you start with concepts as they are the building blocks of meaning?' The Marquis takes another mouthful.

'Correct. Then extending the idea of bounded rationality. The next level up is that ideas are the bounded rationality where concepts are the factors that make it up.' Pork follows lemon rice.

'That is reasonable. So what do ideas make up in this hierarchy?' Lots of stringy cabbage covered in black pepper.

'A multiplicity of ideas makes up a culture.' More pork and lemon rice.

'A culture?' The marquis stops eating and considers this with his full attention. 'You have lost me. Please explain.'

'One can have a culture of, say, carpentry, where that culture brings forth buildings and furniture and all manner of wooden instruments. The culture of carpenters is very rich, as I'm sure you would agree.' Yong offers by the means of a waving hand the amazing carpentry they are surrounded by.

'This is using the term culture in a general sense. That is a very exciting concept.'

'Indeed.'

'Taking this hierarchy of bounded rationality a step further, what is the bounded rationality where cultures are the factors that make it up?' Back to stringy cabbage but this time with chilli.

'Why of course, Civilization. And this can be seen to be true in that the richer the cultures in a Civilization the greater that Civilization is. Our own Chinese Civilization is a perfect example of that. Would you not agree?' Yong stops eating to look at the Marquis. Who stops eating to look at Yong and says. 'The idea of *this culture of ours* would be the ideal proof, in this regard. As our Civilization contains this wonderful idea of *this culture of ours* it is a truly remarkable Civilization. In comparison to all of the other Civilizations we have come across ours is far superior. And in large part due to the Classics of the golden era and in Confucius' interpretation of them.' He smiles the smile of understanding. 'So you have not been wasting your time as a recluse.'

Yong laughs. 'There are many that would not agree with you. However, I am content.'

'All we need now is a metaphor. Let me try one to see if it fits for it has suddenly come upon me as we sup. A great Civilization is a like a banquet. Where many dishes are prepared and each is a culture of its own. Each dish has many ingredients and these are the ideas. Some of these ingredients are made of many things blended together and these are the concepts that make up the bounded rationality of the ingredients. How does this work as a metaphor?'

'It works wonderfully well. I congratulate you.'

'This hierarchy of bounded rationality works wonderfully for man's relationship to his fellow man. But does it work so well for man's relationship with nature?'

'Ah.' Says Yong in a subdued tone. 'That is what I am working on at present. This great journey I have embarked on, is an attempt to shake up my mind. To try and establish a bounded rationality for this most important of relationships. The factors are not easy to establish. The Taoists tell me one would need the language of the holistic to achieve such a bounded rationality for man's relationship with nature is in the main, holistic. We are a part of nature and this makes it difficult to have a perspective that is independent of it.'

'The difference of an objective perspective to that of a subjective one.'

'That's an interesting way of putting it for it reveals a problem I have in that all perspectives are ultimately subjective. In man's relationship with nature the subjectivity is not man's. It is nature's. And that is because man is just a part of nature.'

'It is nature's subjective perspective that is required.' Says the Marquis with insight. 'A difficult perspective to achieve without becoming nature.'

'And the only way of doing that, as the Taoists have pointed out to me, is to meld my consciousness with the consciousness of nature. It is achievable. However, it is achievable only holistically. Yong sighs.

'Hence you search for the holistic language. A contradiction in terms if you were to ask me.' The Marquis says with sympathy.

'Indeed. It troubles me that there may not be such a language. That my quest is doomed to failure. That I waste my time in pursuit of something that does not exist, indeed, cannot exist.' Yong hesitates. 'And yet ...'

The Marquis changes the mood by becoming enthusiastic. 'And yet you cannot give up and you should not give up. I suspect there is something in your Inner Truth that speaks: it is possible. Am I correct?'

Yong smiles as much from embarrassment as from the happiness the Marquis has instilled in him. 'An intuition. That is all my Inner Truth has delivered to me. And yet the strength of this intuition is powerful and has the ring of Truth about it.'

'Then you must carry on. I work often on the strength of my intuitions and they are rarely wrong.' The Marquis says with conviction.

'I will remember your words when I have moments of doubt. They will give me strength when I am weak.' Says Yong in sincerity.

A commotion behind them has their attention.

The Captain of the Militia has entered though the main entrance. Immediately behind him, a man, with his arms tied behind his back, is being dragged in by two of the Militia. He raves like a madman, kicking out at anyone as he passes.

The Marquis is on his feet and approaches the Captain with great authority. 'Who is this poor wretch?'

'This is the murderer Tung San.' He hands the Marquis a leather ligature with four metal beads knotted in at different spaces. 'I found this braided into his horse's mane.'

The Marquis examines this instrument of death in detail then hands it to Yong has come up alongside him.

The Marquis brushes aside the Captain and addresses Tung San. 'What possible reason can you have for committing these heinous crimes?'

The madman tries to kick out at the Marquis while raving in some strange language. The two soldiers with the help of the Captain finally force him to his knees with his head bent forward almost touching the ground.

The Marquis looks at the Captain. 'We must rid ourselves of this abomination as quickly as possible.'

The Captain takes the Marquis literally and in a single movement has his sword out and has cut his head off. The head rolls across the floor bringing screams from the singing girls. The body jumps to its feet with blood spurting from the neck before collapsing forward shaking with great tremors.

The Marquis is in a state of shock and staggers into Yong's arms, who quickly leads him away and out onto the veranda, where he sits him down on a bench seat.

'Forgive me Yong. It was the first ...' His voice trails off.

'It was a great shock to us all. My hands are trembling with the experience.' Says Yong in a breaking voice. 'Take deep breathes letting them out slowly.' With this he, himself, takes his own advice and the two spend several moments thus engaged.

The Manager comes out with their travelling coats. 'Please put these on. You must keep warm after such a shock.'

Recovering, the Marquis allows the Manager to help him on with his coat before sitting back down. 'Water. Bring me water.'

The Manager quickly returns with a jug and bowl. Dispensing with the bowl the Marquis drains the jug before handing it back. 'Thank you. I feel much recovered.' He turns to Yong. 'Let us leave this place. I need clean air to return a clean mind.' Then to the Manager. 'Quickly. Fetch our things.'

The Manager reappears with speed. With their bags over their shoulders they set off out of the north gate. Yong finding it difficult to keep up with a reinvigorated Marquis.

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Unbending attitudes towards traditions leads to Decay.

Reforming tradition also has its dangers.

Mindful of these,

Perseverance brings

Success.

Changing Line in the second place means:

Even small amounts of decadence should be rectified,

But not at the expense of conflict.

Humorous persuasion will bring

Success.

Changing Line in the third place means:

Invigorating renewal can cause resentment.

Better resentment than decadent decay.

No blame.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

Tolerance to decadence leads to Decay.

Intolerance to decadence leads to renewal.

Changing Line at the top means:

The superior man withdraws from public life;

There is nothing he can do in these times.

He spends his time in self-cultivation

To produce a set of moral values for the future.



These Changing Lines Deliver:

The Arousing Thunder (49)

== ==
== == Thunder
=====
== ==
== == Thunder
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THE IMAGE

Thunder arouses Thunder:

The Image of SHOCK.

Even the superior man is momentarily shaken;

Showing his common humanity.

Then The Way beckons and he is lost in spiritual bliss.

Chapter 19

Standstill (13)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

10th Day of the 2nd Moon

Late Afternoon

=====

===== Heaven

=====

== ==

== == Earth

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THE IMAGE

Heaven and Earth pull in opposite directions:

The Image of STANDSTILL.

Fruitful activity is rendered impossible.

Thus the superior man cultivates his Inner Truth.

*

“Kung-tu Tzu asked, ‘We are all human beings. Why is it that some become great and others become small?’ Mencius said, ‘Those that follow the greater qualities in their nature become great men, and those that follow the smaller qualities in their nature become small men.’ ‘But we are all human beings. Why is it some follow their greater qualities and some follow their smaller qualities?’ Mencius replied, ‘When our senses of sight and hearing are used without thought and are thereby obscured by material things, the material things act on the material senses and lead them astray. That is all. The function of the mind is to think. If we think, we will get them. If we do not think, we will not get them. This is what Heaven has given us. If we first build up the nobler part of our nature, then the inferior part cannot overcome it. It is simply this that makes a man great.’”

From the Book of Mencius. 6A:15.

Each day comes forth wrapped in spring's boundless renewal.

The journey west was far more leisurely than the Han had expected, covering only fifty kilometres a day. A good camp site was enough to call a halt, often well before sunset. This did, however, afford hunters amongst the Mongolians to bring fresh game to the evening meal. As a result the journey had something of the festive in its makeup. A pleasant surprise for the Han who had been expecting another forced ride.

Was Kublai asserting his authority in acting in this way? Having been summoned by Kadai, even though this was conveyed as a request, he was obliged to obey the Governor of the Province according to convention. By dictating the time taken, was he asserting his position inside of the convention? His position as the accepted future Great Khan by these eastern forces who were willing allies of his mother, Sorkaktani.

The Han had more sense than to question Kublai on the matter. Simply enjoying the journey as a respite.

The whereabouts of the last Assassin was never mentioned by anyone.

The fourth and final night of their journey was marked by an early stop and a major hunt for game that most of the Mongolians participated in. At one point only the Han were

left to guard the camp. A rare opportunity to speak without guarding against expressed thoughts.

'It shows how much they trust us when we have been left to guard their precious horses.' Says Bao to Tai as they circle the horses, counting their number in the manner of the Mongolians.

'If we stay here much longer we will have little need to return to Kinsai as we will be more Mongolian than Han.'

'True, true. There is a certain freedom in their way of life that is most refreshing. But joking aside, I have missed our Civilization far less than I could ever have imagined. Would you not agree?' He turns to Tai who is keeping count.

'Will you not interrupt me. I have lost count yet again.' Says Tai exasperated.

'Why do we not go into that copse of bush over there and make love?' Says Bao with enthusiasm.

'Why don't you go over there and start without me, and I will join you once this task is completed.'

'We haven't made love for so long that my great member thinks he has only one function, and that of a fire hose.' Says Bao in wistful frustration.

'Let us finish the task at hand and then, perhaps, I will visit the copse with you.'

'Promise.'

'Promise.'

Bao sets off at speed counting the horses in a great display. He soon returns. 'Sixty, and including the four we have in camp. Sixty four.'

'What good fortune. The exact number that is required.' She looks at him with deep suspicion. 'I will blame you if the number is wrong on their return. For you know they will count them.'

'Then why do we bother. Let us go quickly to the copse and lay in each other's arms.' Bao takes her by the hand and drags her across to the bushes with Tai putting up only token resistance.

Their laughter and love making are being observed by friendly eyes. He waits until they lie in relaxed repose their lust

quenched by the climax of earthly desire. He walks past them and stops with his back towards them. Giving them enough time to adjust their garments in the name of modesty.

'Who is that?' Whispers Bao.

'It is the Taoist Illuminate.' Whispers back Tai as she stands up.

The Illuminate turns with a wry smile. 'Now I understand why you are taking so long to find enlightenment. A prior engagement with a man of destiny is reason enough.'

'Is he talking about me?' Whispers Bao as he too makes his feet.

The Illuminate changes direction as he changes tone. 'Soon you will have resonance in space. And synchronicity across time will soon follow. Trust to your instinct and not your reason. That way you will be in accordance with the divine dance. That way you will fulfil your destiny.' He addresses this to Bao. He turns and walks away. 'I will be waiting for you on Lao Shan.'

Bao looks at Tai who feels compelled to look at him. After sharing a moment they look back to where the illuminate was only to find he is now way off in the distance. Once more Bao and Tai look at each other to share a moment and once more they look to where the Illuminate was but now he is only a speck in the distance. Then, even the speck is gone.

*

Kublai, Salkai, the Administrator, Asutai and the four Han are sitting around a fire using their saddles as back rests. They face a small river full of boulders that provides a background of river sounds and shivers of reflected moonlight.

Behind them the bodyguard, except for the two patrolling the area, are gathered around a much larger fire roasting a selection of game including deer and feral pigs.

'If that was your greatest victory what was the worst? I have to ask you this as it is well known that you have never been defeated on the field of battle.' Asks Kublai of General Salkai.

'My worst victory? What a question to ask.' Salkai thinks for a long moment. 'I suppose my most disappointing victory was in the summer of 1233 C.E., when we surrounded the Jürgen Emperor on the Song border and he committed suicide. Thus depriving me

of the honour of parading him in front of Ogedei and claiming the conquest of northern China in his name.' A smile comes gradually to his face. 'However, this reminds me of a strange encounter I had with a librarian.' He looks to Bao whose attention is already engaged. 'The Jürgen had put up a poor defence of Kaifeng, their capital, and it was then the last Emperor of the Jürgen had fled and I was to trap him on the border of the Song. Before my pursuit began I was in the palace grounds searching for the renowned treasure that was supposedly housed there. I may add there was little of value, the Jürgen having spent most of it fighting our invasion. However, I entered one building which turned out to be the library and there I encountered a librarian, going about his normal duties as if it was just a normal day.'

'We librarians are not easily disturbed from our work.' Says Bao with exaggerated pride.

'Obviously not. When I asked him where all the treasure was he said it: it resides on these shelves. He pointed these out. And I pointed out to him that the shelves were filled with books. He said that knowledge was the greatest treasure and that those books contained the greatest knowledge known to mankind.'

'Was this librarian Han Chinese?' Asks Bao already knowing the answer.

'He was. And he was as other-worldly as you are.' Salkai says to much laughter.

Bao takes this as a compliment, bowing in gratitude. This brings more laughter into play.

'I had not the heart to kill this poor fellow who did not realize the danger he was in. So I asked him a question that I thought would find him out. I asked him which book contained the greatest treasure. And he replied, without a need for reflection, that the greatest book was the I Ching.'

'It is exactly the answer I would have given myself.' Says Bao.

'I asked him why this book was so valuable and he replied that not only did it contain the knowledge of man's relationship to his fellow man but also man's relationship with Nature and further more contained the knowledge of how all things change, and further more still, that it could be used to foretell the future. This roused my curiosity. If it really could foretell the future it really would be a treasure beyond measure. So I

asked him if he would show me this book and he duly obliged. The translator I had with me said he had heard of this book but never having seen it, he was forced to ask the librarian how it could be used to foretell the future. This librarian produced a leather cup in which were fifty yarrow sticks. He said that I must first ask a question of the Oracle. So I simply asked what was to be my future.'

'An understandable choice. But one fraught with problems when it comes to understanding what it means.' Says Bao. Then he adds thoughtfully. 'Your future, in what way? Your future as a soldier. Your future happiness. Your future in terms of longevity. You can see the problem. We have multiple futures making any reading difficult and where a clear explanation can be easily misread. For the 'I' may be commenting on one future and where you may be expecting the commentary to be on another.'

'I agree with you now. Back then it was a different story. As you will come to understand, if you would only let me finish.' Salkai says with humorous annoyance, to the delight of the company.

'My apologies, good General. Please continue.' Bao says this with exaggerated servility and a flourish of his hand that has the company in open laughter.

'As I was saying, before I was so rudely interrupted. This librarian placed one yarrow stick aside, then he placed ones between my fingers in some ritualistic manner until he eventually constructed a hexagram.' He turns back to Bao. 'And here's one for you, Master Librarian. A strong line at the beginning followed by five weak lines.'

'Return.' Says Bao without hesitation.

'Return. And with one changing line in the fourth place.'

'Walking with others he Returns alone.'

'Walking with others he Returns alone.' Salkai intones with a dream like quality shrouding his words. 'There was something in those words that spoke to something deep inside of my being. But only when I was Returning to Kaifeng from that place of the Emperor's suicide. Only then did those words take hold of my mind: On the seventh day comes Return. And it was seven days that came Return.' After a short silence. 'Those words still hold my mind.' He faces Bao and changes tone. 'So what new hexagram does this changing line deliver?'

'The Arousing Thunder.' Comes back Bao. 'The Image of Thunder upon Thunder. The Image of Terror. The Image of Shock upon Shock. These Images so affect our lives that The Superior man' Bao points out Salkai with his arm 'sets his life in order and examines himself. I trust you have examined yourself?' Bao says with a knowing smile.

'Long and hard. Long and hard.'

'This is the power of the Great 'I'. But it only speaks to the Superior man, for only the Superior man listens and understands what it means.'

'Where does such knowledge come from?' Asks Kublai in all innocence.

'It was delivered to us by King Wen. Father of Wu. The founder of the Zhou Dynasty, some two thousand years ago. How he came by this knowledge is more myth than history. He was, supposedly, locked in a tower for three years by the last Shang Emperor. Having little in the way to entertain his mind in the world of man or Nature, he turned his attention in. My noble ancestor, Shao Yong, believed he followed his consciousness back to its source. To the source of all things. Having discovered the holistic entity of the endless consciousness that we are all part. He was able to understand how our single consciousness is derived from the endless consciousness. The result is the Great 'I'.'

'How? How does this book do this?'

'Ah, Kublai, you have got to the end of my knowledge. Indeed, it was this knowledge that my noble ancestor, Shao Yong, was searching for. I believe he found this knowledge. He found this knowledge on his missing year. A journey he took following in the footsteps of the sage Confucius. As I have said to you before, it was on his Return from his quest that he was able to make predictions which were invariably right.'

'The poem he wrote describing a precise location on Lao Shan.'

'For me, and I suspect now also for you, the poem has significance in this regard.' Says Bao looking straight into Kublai's eyes.

The young man holds Bao's gaze and they share a moment.

'We, will Return.' Kublai says with the certitude of finality. None who are present doubt this is true.

*

They gallop into Quiu scattering the local Chinese inhabitants. Pulling up at the Golden Lu teahouse Kublai quickly finds out where Kadai's encampment is, and leaving the others he sets off into the west.

He soon arrives at the thousand man encampment and is soon entering Kadai's tent.

The Provincial Governor dismisses his entourage and only when they are alone do they greet each other like brothers, hugging with great affection.

'Sorkaktani has begged me to keep you here. She fears that you will return to the Kuriltai once you have heard of the great intrigues, plots and deaths that have occurred surrounding the positioning for the succession of Great Khan.'

Kublai pulls away from Kadai and paces the length of the tent. 'It is hard for a son to know that his mother is surrounded by danger and not want to rush to protect her.'

'This she knows. This is why she has begged me, that's right, begged me, to keep you here. Imprisoned if need be.' Kublai stops pacing and faces Kadai. 'That's right, imprisoned.' It is Kadai's turn to turn away. 'As if I could imprison you. I would rather ride by your side and take the Kuriltai by storm, knowing that we would fail.'

'Would we fail?' Gu

Kadai turns to face Kublai in anger. 'If Sorkaktani says we would fail, you can guarantee that we would. And that, is what she says.' He lightens his tone. 'There are too many big beasts still in play.'

'My mother was always too cautious.' Says Kublai in frustration.

'Do you really believe that?' Says Kadai, his anger gaining strength. 'Your mother is in a position of weakness as the power now lies with Ogedei's line. And Toregene, Ogedei's scheming wife, pushes to have her worthless son Guyuk made Great Khan. Batu and the Golden Horde have little interest in the politics of the succession, content with their territory in Russia, and so will support Ogedei's line which means Guyuk. The same is true for Chaghadai's line. Support for your father's line is not even under consideration, even though you

and your brother Monkhe are by far the best candidates for Great Khan, having Genghis' great dream.'

'My brother should be Great Khan. But that is not the point. My mother's safety is what I care about. I have heard that Toregene is ruthless and cruel, so my mother is in danger playing her games as she does.'

Kadai softens. 'Your mother is more than a match for Toregene. She will not endanger her children in a cause that is futile. She may well support Toregene in the succession to ensure you and your brother's survival.'

'You think she will do this?' Says Kublai, surprised.

'I know she will as she has more or less said as much to me.'

This takes Kublai aback. 'Is this how bad things are for Tolui's line? For me and my brother?'

Kadai comes up to Kublai and places both hands on his shoulders. 'You and your brother must believe in your destiny. Let Sorkaktani decide how best to ensure your survival so that when the time comes, as surely it will, you and your brother can fulfil your destiny.'

Kublai has lost the argument and he knows it. 'Then let my mother play her games. I will play the dutiful son and pass my time in preparation for my destiny.'

'Excellent. Now, what has happened to the Song Envoy?' Kadai affords himself a smile.

Kublai laughs a sigh. 'The Han have proved to be more than just enjoyable company. I have learned much about many things, not least an understanding of Confucius.' He changes tack. 'I must return to Quiu as there is still one of Gorogene's Assassins tracking me.'

'Why not stay here surrounded by your own men?'

'Do you recognize every one of your men? One thousand men and not all of them Mongolian. There lies the problem. In Quiu I am surrounded by men I know well, my bodyguard. Outside of that they are all Han Chinese. This Assassin is from western Persia and bears the features of his race. His face will be easier to identify in the midst of Chinese faces. Where amongst the faces of your army he will not.' Kublai has an idea. 'Why not join us? I have two old friends of yours with me. They decided to stay in Quiu to savour the delights of civilian life.'

'Who are they?'

'Come and join us. You will not be disappointed.' Kublai is almost laughing.

'Games were never strongly represented in my makeup. However, I will indulge you for showing such good sense in regard to Sorkaktani. Give me time to finish off here and I will join you later.'

With a final embrace Kublai leaves.

★

The inside of the Golden Lu is in festive spirit. Kublai and the other Mongolians have been taken in hand by Tai and Ling-ling. They have been dressed in the manner of rich Chinese merchants. So the party now gathered around a large low table could easily pass for a convention of silk merchants, all that is, except for Bao. Who, playing the fool, has dressed in Mongolian attire that is far too big for him. The bear skin sleeveless coat trails the ground. The metal helmet he has pushed back and sits tilted to one side. The fur skin boots pass his knees and are tied up the full length by golden ribbon.

He is up on his feet giving an account of his many escapades with Genghis' battle axe. Which he now swigs around his head with abandon, frightening the singing girls and bringing laughter to Han and false Han a like. Tripping over his coat he embeds the battle axe into a pillar and has to use both feet to prize it back out.

Kadai arrives into this Image of wild hearted madness, uncertain of what he is witnessing.

Kublai jumps to his feet followed by everyone else. 'Governor Kadai. Your loyal subjects greet you in the name of all under Heaven.' He bows in the Chinese manner to the horizontal followed by everyone else including Bao.

'Please. You are frightening me. I have just had a vision of what Mongolians will be once the Chinese have worked their culture upon us.' His words are serious enough.

Tai and Ling-ling remove his coat of fur and replace it with the silk robes of a rich merchant. Rearranging his hair with dexterity, the Governor of Shandong is soon transformed into just another merchant.

'Come, sit here at the head of the table, next to two old friends.'

It is only now that Kadai recognizes Salkai and the Administrator. 'General and Quarter-master General. What are you doing here?'

'The world has turned. And as our Chinese friends would say: Change. All is Change.'

The three friends hug each other in joyful friendship.

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

The superior man retires from public life,

As he can bring no influence to a stationary situation.

Changing Line in the second place means:

Confusion and discord have resulted in Standstill.

The superior man remains aloof,

Even though inferior men beg him to return.

Changing Line in the third place means:

Inferior men are unequal to the situation.

They bear their responsibility with shame.

Misfortune.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

The superior man is summoned by the chief minister.

Men of like mind share in this blessing.

No blame.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

The superior man has arrived to move things on.

He at least is concerned about the outcome.

Forgetting danger and avoiding confusion he ends the Standstill bringing

Good fortune.

Changing Line at the top means:

The standstill ends.

Will Good fortune follow?

The superior man prepares himself for anything.

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These Changing Lines Deliver:

Peace (50)

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Earth

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Heaven

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The Image

Heaven and Earth unite:

The Image of PEACE.

Thus man works in harmony with Nature.

And Nature rewards man with

Bountiful prosperity.

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Chapter 20

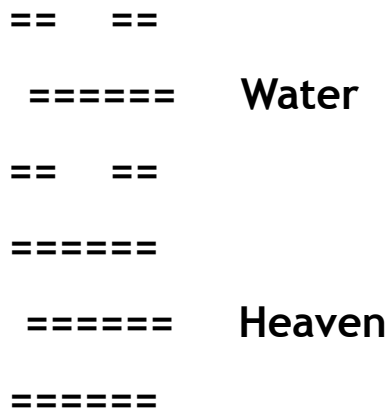
Patience (12)

The Song Dynasty

1058 C.E.

1st Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-morning



THE IMAGE

Clouds appear in Heaven:

The Image of PATIENCE.

Thus the superior man fortifies the body,

And fills the mind with good cheer.

“Mencius said, ‘A ruler who uses force to make a pretence at humanity is a despot. Such a despot requires a large kingdom. A ruler who practices humanity with virtue is a true king. To become a true king does not depend on a large kingdom. T’ang became so with only seventy li, and King Wen with only a hundred. When force is used to overcome people, they do not submit willingly but only because they have not enough strength to resist. But when virtue is used to overcome people, they are pleased in their hearts and sincerely submit, as the seventy disciples submitted to Confucius. The book of odes says:

From the west from the east,

From the south from the north,

None want to resist.

This is what is meant.”

From the Book of Mencius. 2A:3



Yong comes alongside the Marquis who is standing in the middle of the bridge that crosses a small ravine looking down to where the ravine’s small stream feeds a large pool not more than twenty metres away. It is a tranquil Image.

‘You will, I trust, forgive me for my behaviour. The Image of that spouting blood will remain with me and re-emerge in troubled dreams for some time to come.’ Says the Marquis in a distant voice.

‘There is nothing to forgive. And you will not be the only one who will have unsettling dreams with that Image imprinted on my mind.’ Says Yong also in a distant voice.

After a while the Marquis turns to Yong and notices spots of blood on Yong’s inner garment. ‘Take your travelling coat off.’ He points to the blood. ‘There is also some in your hair.’

Yong removes his coat to find there are spots of blood all over his garment. ‘This is not good. I must remove it and replace it with another. Have you not sustained these fowl marks?’

The Marquis quickly removes his coat but not a single spot of blood is to be found on either his garment or in his hair.

'Strange good fortune. You were standing closer than I was and yet you have nothing that defiles your person.' Says Yong finishing his examination of the Marquis.

'You must wash yourself in the pool for your hair is covered in blood.' Says the Marquis as he leads the way across the bridge.

They descend a small path to the pool where Yong removes his clothes and plunges in. He scrubs his hair, face and hands until the Marquis is satisfied that all trace has been removed.

As he dresses a man comes running down the path and passes them without saying a word. He is quickly followed by two others who treat them as if they don't exist so intent are they in catching the first man.

'I can see that this is going to be a day of strange happenings.' Says Yong. 'We should leave this place as quickly as possible.' He quickly dress in a change of clothes from his bag and not waiting to tie his hair he sets off back up the path.

Walking at speed he combs his hair out then as he ties his hair up into a topknot, a wagon comes along the road with the two horses galloping hard. Yong and the Marquis are forced off the road in fear of being run over. Not far behind come two riders also galloping at speed.

'Is this normal behaviour for those passing through your estate?' Asks Yong only half joking.

'Indeed it is not.' Says the Marquis playing the joke with exaggerated seriousness.

Their small laughter breaks their solemn mood and they enjoy the moment.

A few kilometres further on they enter a wooded area where they come across a small teahouse by the side of the road. A bamboo covered terrace, off to the side, has a number of tables and chairs. Yong and the Marquis take a seat at a table close to the road.

The Madam of this teahouse comes out to serve them. She is tall with an athletic build and not an unpleasant face for a woman in her mid-thirties. She bows and they bow. 'Would you like tea?' They affirm and she returns inside to return with a tray. As she places the things on the table she keeps glancing

at the Marquis. 'Is it possible that you are the Marquis of Suqian?' She enquirers already knowing his identity.

'Indeed.'

'Perhaps you can tell me why I am having to pay the standard charge for a large teahouse when, as you can see, this is only a small teahouse.' Her annoyance can be heard in her tone.

'I was unaware of this error.' The Marquis sounds flustered. 'What is the name of this establishment?'

'The Forest Teahouse.'

'Is that not the name of the teahouse in the Forest of Luoma?'

'It is. However, that teahouse is not on your estate.'

'Indeed it is not.'

'Perhaps there has been a mistake?' She cannot hide her increasing annoyance.

'Madam, if there has been a mistake, I will soon rectify it.'

'And will you refund the money that your rent collector has already taken from me?'

'Indeed. It is obvious that this is a small teahouse.'

'And reimburse me for a wasted journey into Suqina to pay my rent?'

'If ... if that is what it takes to rectify the situation. Indeed I will.'

She holds out her hand waiting for payment.

'I'm afraid I have little money on my person.'

'Will this cover it?' Asks Yong wishing to avoid further embarrassment. He hands the Madam a small gold coin.

She bites into it to test its authenticity. 'That will do very nicely.' She gives Yong a big smile but turns a sour face back to the Marquis. 'And you will rectify this mistake forthwith?'

'Just as soon as I return from Quiu.'

She makes a low guttural sound of disbelief. About to turn away she is stopped by Yong. 'Madam. We were witness to two men chasing another man down a small path next to a bridge a few kilometres back. Do you know who these people are? And perhaps, why they were chasing the poor man.'

The Madam thinks for a moment. 'It was probably farmer Ham being pursued by those he owes money to. He gambles. He gambles at the Forest Teahouse.' She turns to the Marquis accusingly. 'Someone should do something about that establishment.'

But before she can leave, Yong draws her back. 'There was also a man driving a cart with two horses at full gallop. Have you ...'

Her laugh cuts him off. 'That would be Blacksmith Ken. I saw him pass before. A creative man who believes he can improve the brakes of a cart. Not that he seems to be having much success by the speed he was travelling at.' Her face has lit up and been transformed.

The Marquis is quite captivated. 'Madam, would you do me the honour of pleasuring me?'

Both the Madam and Yong are taken aback.

She recovers first. 'Let me see your money.'

The Marquis turns to Yong. 'Please, Yong. I must take my pleasure with this woman.'

Yong takes out another small gold coin and hands it to her.

'This will do nicely.' She turns to Yong. 'There's enough here to pleasure you if you wish.' She doesn't wait for an answer but leads the Marquis into the teahouse. Leaving Yong bemused but not unhappy.

Yong watches the travellers on the Narrow Road pass by until one, a young man, ascends the few steps up to the terrace.

He looks about him waiting for service until Yong intervenes. 'I'm afraid young Master that the Madam is pleasuring my friend and may be some time. However, there is tea, freshly made, right here, that you are more than welcome to.' Yong points to the seat opposite him.

The young man joins him, bowing as he does so. 'Thank you for your generosity. My name is Xian. May I enquire of yours?'

'Indeed. My name is Shao Yong from Loyang. Now tell me, from the books that you carry, your dress and your manner, I would guess you are a student?'

'Indeed. I travel about from one Master to another seeking out what knowledge my poor mind can absorb.' The young man has an

insight. 'Would I be correct in thinking that you also were a student in your younger days?'

'Indeed. I was just thinking how much you reminded me of myself when I was your age.'

'Was it worthwhile?' Asks Xian with genuine interest.

'More than worthwhile. Although I had to discern what knowledge was useful and what was not. That comes with time. Once an Image begins to emerge of the nature of reality in one's mind, it becomes easier because it is then like fitting together one of those children's puzzles that form an Image when fitted together in the right way.' Says Yong with a certainty born from experience.

'A useful metaphor. I will remember that.' Xian smiles back at Yong. 'Have you completed this great puzzle?'

'Ah.' Says Yong with a knowing tone. 'The more you complete the puzzle, the more pieces you must seek out. For the Image expands because a boundary there is none either to the Image or to the wooden pieces it is painted on.' Then to clarify. 'To extend the metaphor.'

'Is it then endless?'

'Indeed. Endless like reality is endless.'

'It all seems so daunting when you put it in such terms.' The young man drifts off into his mind.

'Daunting, fascinating, frustrating and confusing. But endlessly interesting and rewarding in turn.' He changes tone. 'What do they say, the great sages of old: It is on the endless path of knowledge that you will find the Way.'

'Have you found the Way?'

'And lost it and found it again. Each great insight gives a tantalizing glimpse. But to achieve sagehood one must live the Way. I hope before my worthless life is over that I will become a sage. Indeed, I am on the path of knowledge as we speak. Following in the footsteps of Confucius.'

'I sometimes have doubts. But then, the rewards are so great if one becomes a sage that the doubts vanish as everything else seems meaningless.'

'You have already reached the understanding of meaning. The meaning of life. It is every man's birth right to become a sage. To fulfil your potential. The rest is meaningless.'

The young man ponders Yong's words when a horseman draws up to the teahouse pulling another horse behind him. He shouts. 'Are any of you going to Suqian? For I have a horse here that is sorely testing the strength of my arm.'

The young man jumps up. 'I am going that way. And I can ride a horse bare back.'

'Excellent. Come up young Master and I will reward you well for this service.'

Xian turns to Yong. 'Excuse my rudeness but I should have been in Suqian two days ago.' He bows to Yong but just before he leaves the terrace he stops and turns back. 'Did you say your name is Shao Yong?'

'Indeed.'

'The Recluse of Loyang?'

'One and the same.'

'What fortune. Is it possible that I may visit with you?'

'You may visit. However, I do not take on students as I am still a student myself.'

The young man laughs and jumps up onto the horse. 'Was there ever such a student as you?'

Yong calls out after him as they gallop off. 'I will not return to Loyang for at least a year.'

The young man doesn't reply but waves his arm in the air.

'Who was that you were talking to?' Asks the Marquis who has emerged from the teahouse.

'A young student.' Says Yong as he turns. 'It is time we also were on our way.'

'Indeed. There are several kilometres before we make the Forest teahouse and we must arrive there in daylight.' He turns as the Madam comes out of the teahouse still arranging her clothes. 'Madam, I thank you for the great service you have provided me with. I will visit again. Perhaps to pass the night.'

'You will be welcome, once you have rectified the matter of my rent.' She says with just a hint of suspicion in her tone.

The Marquis bows. Yong bows. The Madam bows. They go their separate ways.

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The turn into the Forest Teahouse is forbidding. The giant pines cast a shadow filled with darkness. The teahouse is unseen from the road as the track that leads to it curves through the forest itself.

Yong and the Marquis have reached a point where neither the road nor the teahouse are visible when they see a man hide behind a tree to their right. It does not bode well.

'Notice the rope passing between the trees.' Says the Marquis in a quiet voice. 'It runs from where the man is hiding behind the tree, all the way up to the teahouse.'

Yong is amazed at the Marquis' observation. 'Have you been here before?'

'Indeed. It is a place frequented by villains, murderers and worse. Let me do the talking. And stay alert.'

The Forest Teahouse is old and in disrepair. The weathered wood it is constructed from is almost black. The entrance is open. They walk into a space crowded with dark wooden pillars. Groups of men crowd around tables speaking in low voices.

The Marquis walks up to a woman working behind the welcoming desk. 'Madam, we are looking for Tung San.'

'Never heard of him.' She says without looking at them. 'Will you take tea while I make enquiries?'

'Indeed.' The Marquis heads for a table near an open door that leads onto the balcony. Far from the other customers and their prying eyes and ears. Once seated the Marquis takes out from his bag a round tube made of bamboo stalks some twenty centimetres in diameter and thirty five in height. Standing it on its round end he begins to untie the cords that bind it together.

'A man approaches them and without any formal greeting speaks. 'What do you want with Tung San?'

'I have need of the services of an assassin. I believe he is the man for whom I seek.' The man doesn't reply but walks off.

Yong is shocked and about to say so, when the Marquis nods in the direction the man went. And where he now confers with two others.

The cords untied and the end piece removed, the Marquis takes out a porcelain vase with a narrow neck. He starts to undo a cord that holds a device in place above the neck.

The three men come across with open blades to confront the Marquis. 'You better come with us, if you know what is good for you.'

'I think not.' Says the Marquis removing the device and revealing a wooden plunger that passes through the narrow neck. He holds his hand over the plunger. 'I'm afraid you are too late. This is a bomb. And when I press this plunger down like this.' He presses the plunger down and jumps up and runs for the open door, followed by Yong.

The three men run in the opposite direction shouting. 'Bomb. Bomb.' Chaos ensues inside.

Outside the Marquis and Yong close and hold the door shut.

An explosion deafens their ears. Within a few moments the militia arrive in strength. Taking up positions either side of doors and windows. A strange white smoke billows out of the main entrance surrounding men grasping for air and with their eyes streaming. They are cut down like dogs.

Yong and the Marquis have moved away from the door which is now opened by the militia to allow the inhabitants out. Out they come and down they fall beneath sword and axe.

Arriving from the north gate comes a regular detachment of the army. The Major approaches the Marquis and is soon joined by the Captain of the militia.

The four watch the silent slaughter until none remain.

'Throw the bodies back in and fire the place.' Shouts the Captain.

'A great success.' Says the Major. 'I wish to thank you Marquis for your assistance. It has saved the lives of many good men.'

'Indeed.' Agrees the Captain.

'We cannot tarry here as my men are sweeping through the forest as we speak. This is our chance to kill as many of these villains that we can catch. I bid you farewell.' The Major leads his men into the forest behind the teahouse at a gallop.

'Thank you Captain.' Says a joyful Marquis. 'Give your men an extra week's wages. And yourself an extra month's wages for being so adaptable at the Cherry Tree Teahouse.'

The Captain bows to the horizontal the re-joins his men.

'Now.' The Marquis turns to Yong. 'Shall we carry on our journey?'

'You have a lot of explaining to do.' Says Yong caught between annoyance and joy.

'Where would you like to start?' Says the Marquis as he heads up the north gate.

'What was that device? That ... bomb?'

The Marquis stops forcing Yong to stop.

'That was a lime bomb. A bomb originally created by my father; a renowned alchemist. He discovered that a fumigating agent, one of many used to clear out infestations in houses for millennia, was a substance known as lime. He found that when it was ground to a fine dust that it proved to be most effective against humanity. Not that it killed our fellow man but acting upon the eyes, mouth, throat and lungs, proved it capable of disabling any man it came into contact with. He envisaged its use for controlling riots and uprisings; a humane method of controlling angry and disgruntled people. His only problem was that it was only effective over short distances of four or five metres. The problem was, and which I discovered, was that the particles were too big and hence too heavy to travel far. I created a method of producing particles that are so small that individual particles are invisible to the human eye. You can only see them as they clump together.' The Marquis says with pride. 'Then, by placing this fine powder in a ceramic bottle in which a small gun powder bomb is placed. By detonating the gun powder bomb this could disperse the fine powder lime over distances of tens of metres.' He changes tone. 'You saw the effect yourself. Within but a few moments the lime was dispersed throughout the teahouse. Driving the villains out to their deserved end.'

'A remarkable achievement, I will admit. However, it would have been nice to have known what you were planning.' Says Yong with more than a touch of sarcasm.

'I did consider telling you but decided against it for two reasons. First, the general principle, best described in that

ancient saying: if you want to keep a secret, don't even tell the breeze.'

Yong is not impressed and it shows on his face.

'You must remember Yong that I had just met you. You could have been anyone. Anyway, the second, and specific principle, was that having had the most stimulating conversation with you, I was loath to tell you in case it would frighten you away. And I would not get to travel with you on the Narrow Road to the North. I am correct in thinking this?'

'Indeed. If I had known that you were planning to fumigate a nest of murders and worse, I would certainly have declined your offer to participate.'

'There we are then.' Says the Marquis with sincere finality as he beams a big smile to Yong.

'I'm flattered that you were so enamoured of my company that you felt obliged to risk my life to attain that end.' The sarcasm drips like honey from a jar.

The Marquis laughs at the expression, both in words and on Yong's face. 'Which is best summed up in another ancient saying: all's well that ends well.'

'Spare me your ancient sayings. They are sticking in my craw.'

'Yong, dear friend, there was little risk. The entire campaign was planned by myself in collaboration with the army Major and the Captain of the militia.'

'Including the beheading at the Chery Blossom Teahouse?'

'The beheading with its terrible Image was unfortunate, I must admit. My shock at all that spouting blood was, is, real enough. However, in the main, the plan succeeded, succeeding well. You can't deny that.'

'And of course it proves the veracity in the ancient saying.' Says Yong in mock agreement.

They both say it together: all's well that ends well.

They start walking again to the sound of the Marquis' laughter and the sight of Yong shaking his head in disbelief.

*

The outskirts of Quiu sees the Narrow Road become crowded with every type of cart laden with every type of produce. Stalls set out alongside of the road, as they are in so many towns,

here seem filled with a richer variety of goods than Yong has seen before. The place gives the impression of wealth and affluence as befitting the birth place of Confucius.

Arriving in the centre of town the Marquis moves directly towards a new teahouse. Built in the Song style where bigger doors and windows give a feeling of openness, lightness and inclusion. The Golden Lu is alive with the spirit of the day.

The Marquis engages the Madam's attention with friendly conversation born from a long and happy if sporadic relationship.

Yong is pulled away from the reception area into the main body of the teahouse by an atmosphere of convivial liveliness. The tables of different sizes for different sized groups are arranged in U-shaped groupings to provide for privacy, if somewhat limited in this regard as the wooden panels dividing the U-shaped formations are not even one and a half metres high. This contributes to the overall openness of the atmosphere both visually and from the fact that raised voices can be heard from different corners of the room. The nearest U-shaped area to the reception is large and filled with twelve men enjoying a conversation dominated by the horse trade but vying off into all manner of unrelated subjects.

One of the large wooden pillars that supports the high ceiling attracts Yong's attention. The gold paint that covers the carved pillars leaves a panel running down each of the four sides naked. These long panels that stop twenty centimetres from the ceiling and the floor are covered in scarlet red, and, unlike the gold paint which glistens, this red is dull having little reflection. The effect is, however, striking.

He feels compelled to run his hand down the scarlet panel to feel its texture. As he does so he momentarily sees a large battle axe sticking out from the corner of the pillar.

Having removed his hand from the scarlet panel with the shock of this momentary manifestation he now feels the corners edge, searching for any sign of an indentation. There is none.

'Is there a problem with the pillar?' Says a female voice.

Yong turns to find a beautiful a singing girl with laughter playing just below her skin. 'Excuse my curiosity but this combination of glistening gold and dull scarlet produces a most wonderful effect.'

'Indeed. The Master craftsman that decorated the Golden Lu is famous. It was he who newly decorated the Confucian Temple.'

'Indeed.' Says Yong sounding impressed.

'Are you staying here?' Asks the girl with professional interest.

'The Marquis is taking that matter in hand as we speak.' He directs the girl's attention to the Marquis by means of his arm.

'You are with the Marquis of Suqian?' She asks excitedly.

'Indeed. He and I have travelled together from his estate. And believe me, he makes for exciting company.'

The Marquis joins them. 'You have already met Snowdrop, I see.' The girl's smile bursts forth. 'She and her twin sister, Crocus, are quite a feature of the Golden Lu.' He turns to Snowdrop. 'Where is your sister?'

'She will be available for tonight. As I will be myself.'

'What fortune. My friend Shao Yong' he presents Yong 'and myself will avail ourselves of your services. He deserves a special treat, for I have sorely tested his good nature.'

'Let me show you to a table near the fire. Then I can take your travelling coats and have them cleaned.' She leads them further into the room towards a big round fire in the centre.

But not before Yong runs his hand down the pillar once more.

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The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

There is the feeling of impending change.

Patience is required to avoid acting prematurely.

Changing Line in the second place means:

Danger slowly approaches.

The superior man instils Patience in his fellow man,

So that they neither act prematurely or create discord

Amongst themselves.

Changing Line in the third place means:

Patience has been abandoned.

Action has been instigated prematurely.

Misfortune.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

The danger has arrived.

There is nothing to be done but accept one's fate.

Misfortune.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

The superior man knows that the cause is just.

Patience is all that is required to attain the end.

He cultivates serenity in himself and others by cheerful celebration.

Good fortune.

Changing Line at the top means:

Grave danger is overcome by chance.

The superior man, having practiced Patience,

Is prepared to take advantage of the new situation.

Success.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Progress (51)

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Fire

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Earth

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THE IMAGE

The Sun rises over the Earth:

The Image of PROGRESS.

Thus the superior man fulfils his function

While adding to his own virtue.

Chapter 21

The Power of the Great (11)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

15th Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Morning

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Thunder

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Heaven

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THE IMAGE

Thunder in Heaven:

The Image of THE POWER OF THE GREAT.

The superior man avoids doing anything

That is not in accord with the established order,

Or the times in which he lives.

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“Mencius said, ‘All things are already complete in oneself. There is no greater joy than to examine oneself and be sincere. When in one’s conduct one vigorously exercises altruism, humanity is not far to seek, but right by him.’”

From the Book of Mencius. 7A:4.

★

Tai and Ling make their excuses and leave the men to drink the night away. They have a busy schedule ahead. Once in their rooms at the Golden Lu they quickly change into their martial arts attire, binding their wrists and ankles, and replacing their court shoes with the flat tightly fitting martial foot wear they use in their sessions with the Abbot.

They take long lengths of cord draped across their bodies and go out onto the veranda. Down below they can see Kublai’s bodyguard. There are meant to be two men on each of the four corners of the Golden Lu, but there are only one man on three corners and the rest are gathered on the fourth, on the street side, along with the four others of Kublai’s bodyguard. They banter amongst themselves while watching the crowds pass by.

Tai and Ling-ling swing themselves up onto the roof and taking one length of cord they soon have a line stretched across between the Golden Lu and the building that is next to it. The one that is between the Golden Lu and the Confucian Temple. They achieve this feat by making a big loop at one end of the cord and throwing it across to a post that is part of a roof top veranda. Tying the other end to a similar post on the Golden Lu, they are able to hang from the cord and shimmy across using fur gloves to protect their hands.

Moving across this roof they scramble down the side of the building and make their way into the garden that surrounds the Confucian temple. At the rear of the temple they climb up the corner of the stone walls, arriving on the roof at speed. They soon have off one of the wooden clinkers that makes up the roof. They look down onto the mysterious balcony that Shi had pointed out to him on their first visit to Quiu. The door behind the balcony they can see is obviously false, for it butts against the rear stone wall of the Temple. A secret room there is none. Quickly replacing the wooden clinker they return back to the Golden Lu without incident. Kublai’s guards

enjoying the festive atmosphere in the street haven't noticed anything.

Tai and Ling-ling have to wait until dawn before Bao and Shi return from their drinking bout with the Mongolians. Having taken the precaution of drinking a potion that nullifies the effects of alcohol, they return sober and ready for action.

'What then is the purpose of that balcony and false door if it does not lead to a secret room?' Asks Shi. 'And why was it then pointed out to me?'

The three faces all have blank expressions as a means of answering him.

'You are absolutely sure there was not the space for a secret room?'

'My dearest Shi. There was only the thickness of the rear wall. The door was flat against the rear wall.' Seeing his agitation Ling-ling begs him. 'Please believe us.'

Seeing Tai's support for his wife he throws himself down into a chair despondent.

Bao pulls at his wispy beard deep in thought until he finally arrives at a remarkable conclusion. 'It must be a signifier.' The other three look at him unknowingly. Forcing him to continue. 'It signifies that there is a secret room but it is in the garden behind the rear wall.' He says this in triumph.

After a long while Shi finally speaks. 'It is the only solution that makes sense. We must go to the garden immediately and find out.'

'And how are we to get past the guards? I have little head for heights and few climbing skills.' Says Bao.

'As have I.' Agrees Shi.

'Then we must provide a distraction.' Says Ling-ling. 'Tai and myself will disguise ourselves as singing girls, whiten our faces and steal some of their dresses. Our womanly charms will be distraction enough.'

'I will not allow such disgraceful behaviour from my wife.' Says Shi with masterful authority.

'Calm yourself Shi. My sister pulls your tail.'

Ling-ling cannot keep a straight face and laughs behind a coy hand of false construction.

'I will take a whip to your hide young lady.' Says Shi in earnest.

'Promises, promises.' Says Ling-ling with the intent of annoyance.

'Please Shi. Whip her as much as you like but after we have resolved this problem.' Says Tai gently pushing Shi back down into his seat. 'Why don't we just walk out of here for an early morning stroll? The guards are here to protect Kublai from the Assassin. They are not here to guard us nor to keep us prisoner.'

'Bring a length of cord. And most importantly bring our secret communication. If we find the secret room we can safely leave it there as it will only be known to those we wish to contact.' Says Bao with good sense.

They need not have worried as outside the guards are fast asleep. Even the one still standing.

They pass by at speed and arrive at the Confucian temple. The gate to the garden is open and leaving Tai and Ling-ling as lookouts Bao and Shi enter. At the rear of the temple they stop for just a moment to look at the stone wall then press on into the garden.

At the furthest end they come across a stele two metres in height with the inscription: this maze was gifted to the Confucian Temple by the Marquis of Suqian in the year 1059.

'The Marquis of Suqian. Shao Yong mentions him in his notes. Apparently he was a keen gardener and had created many unusual gardens that change perspective.' Says Bao with just a little curiosity in his tone.

'This must be the maze here. But where is the entrance?' Says Shi with more than a little curiosity.

The circular hedge in front of them seems solid, but as they approach an opening reveals itself.

'That's right. My noble ancestor mentions that he was able to disguise entrances in hedges in many diverse ways.' He turns to Shi. 'Shall we enter?'

They enter and within a short time are completely lost. Only by chance do they discover the centre of the maze marked in traditional style by a small pond; a means of reflection on the maze of the human mind.

'Can this be it?' Asks Shi more of himself.

'I think not.' Answer Bao. 'It is hardly secret.'

'True.'

'Let us return to the outside. Perhaps there is another entrance. A hidden entrance, disguised by the Marquis.'

After many false turns they finally arrive at where they started. They walk around the maze but cannot find or see anything that would even suggest an entrance.

Bao searches his memory for a clue from Shao Yong's notes on the Marquis. Until he finds a possibility. 'One such entrance was only accessed by a person leaning on the hedge in the right place. But how do we find the right place?' Asks Bao in frustration.

'You don't. What you do is lean on the hedge and roll around the hedge until you find it.' Says Shi with intent. 'What are you waiting for?'

'But I will get dizzy.' Says Bao.

'Perhaps the experience will improve your temperament.' Shi says helpfully.

'Then dizzy it is.' He says leaning against the hedge and turning around. 'Even if we don't find the entrance we may still find a physical exercise for self-cultivation.'

'Can't you go any faster?'

'This is not as easy as it looks and I am already feeling the effects of dizziness.'

'Will you stop complaining and get on before anyone comes. Can you imagine what they would think?' Says Shi in laughter.

'That's right. Have a good laugh at your old friend. Nothing seems to please you more than to see me suffer.'

'True. Now keep spinning.'

They travel together in this fashion until they are about a third of the way around when Bao suddenly disappears with only his feet sticking out. Shi stands over them and pushes with his back against the hedge until the entrance is revealed.

'Why are you lying down?'

'I am so dizzy I fear I will not be able to stand.'

Shi moves inside, onto a path between hedges. Then he pulls Bao fully inside and then pulls him up. The branches that form the secret entrance spring back into position leaving them enclosed within.

'Are you not able to stand by yourself?' Asks Shi in annoyance.

'I feel sick. And the world swirls about me as if though I was drunk.'

'Then lean against me and we will follow this path as it is the only one.'

They stagger on slowly following twists and turns until they arrive in an open circle where two scholar officials sit facing them across a bronze round table. They are laughing.

'What took you so long?'

Shi helps Bao into a chair before answering. 'Perhaps it was the almost un-decipherable clues you left to lead us here.'

'Or, perhaps, it was the weather.' Says Bao beginning to recover.

'What have you brought us?' Says the older man.

Shi takes out a sheaf of paper and hands this to him. 'It's all in there.'

'Excellent. Written in our code.' He turns to Bao. 'Was that your contribution?'

'It was the Head Librarian. Lai ...'

The old man cuts him off. Please, names easily identify.'

'The language the code is based upon, do you know where it comes from?' Asks Bao with great interest.

'We only know it is of great antiquity. The bronze tablets we date from the middle Shang period. Whether it was a secret language of the Shang or a foreign language, we do not know. However, what I'm sure you are interested in is if it is possible to see the bronze tablets?'

'It is indeed.'

'Your ancient ancestor, Shao Yong, wrote a poem about his journey.'

'An exact location is described in that poem. Is it the location of the bronze tablets?' Asks an excited Bao.

'It is. And before you ask. They still are. Guarded by Taoists and it is said, by a Taoist Illuminate.'

'What fortune.' Cries Bao.

'Please. Lower your voice. The grass paths in the maze run close by and they silence footsteps.'

'My apologies. But I'm sure you can understand my excitement.'

'I do not. What possible use can they be? For centuries the finest minds in China have tried to decipher this language. Without success. Why do you think that seeing them will make any difference? We can provide you with a complete copy of the tablets. Indeed, we have brought one along today.' He turns to the younger man who produces a small book and hands it to Bao.

Bao leafs through it. 'Has anyone found any correspondence between the Great 'I' and our interpretations?'

The younger man replies. 'None. You would think it would be simply a matter of identifying the concepts by comparison and finding the character order by which the concepts are related. But this is not the case. A mystery that each generation tries to solve, but without success. Including my own.'

'There has been much speculation over the intervening centuries that your noble ancestor managed to decipher the language. But obviously he did not.' The older man asks the question in the form of a statement.

Bao sighs. 'I believe he did. But I have not found any evidence nor have I found any reference to such a translation. I have all of his notes as well as his formal works and I have found nothing.'

Silence follows. Until, Shi breaks it. 'We should really talk about the problem at hand. There are two bureaucracies. What we want to know is if the Mongolians manage to reunite China under their rule will there be coherent accord between us?'

The older man smiles a knowing smile. 'I'm surprized that you have to ask such a question. *This culture of ours* is alive and well here in the north. I trust it is still alive in the Song.'

'Indeed. However, Lizong made the Learning of the Way state orthodoxy last year.'

'The Chengist enlightenment?' Asks the older man knowing the answer.

Shi ponders this for a moment. 'You could call it that.'

'There are those that welcome it. There are those that think it is too restrictive. I belong to the latter. My young colleague here, the former. It hardly constitutes a formal change in *this culture of ours*. A change of emphasis, perhaps. Especially when it comes to self-cultivation. Old men, like myself, spend more time on self-cultivation as a matter of course. Having young men spend more time in self-cultivation hardly constitutes a change in *this culture of ours*. What the Mongolians cannot see is that we scholar officials of all ranks are infused with *this culture of ours*. Removing the top three ranks, as they have done, shows how little they understand us. They come from an inferior culture where might is right and the tribal structure dominates. They remove their leaders and change the tribe. They think they can remove our leaders, replace them with their own and that the bureaucracy will become Mongolian. They have little comprehension of why we Chinese have such a superior culture to theirs, so that we can organize society into True Civilization and they cannot. Coming from a tribal culture, as they do, all they can ever hope for is an expanded tribe. The Great Khan is only a leader of an extended tribe where the tribal structure is writ large. Therefore they can never hope to comprehend us, not without becoming like us. And to do that they would have to adopt *this culture of ours*. But if they were to do that, then they would not be Mongolian anymore.'

'Indeed, they would be Chinese.' Says Shi with satisfaction.

'Precisely.'

'Then we are of one mind.' Says Shi.

'How else could it be? It is *this culture of ours* that binds us, not the might of some tribal leader who is only one step removed from being a yak herder.'

They all laugh.

'Their fate is sealed. It is only a matter of time.' Says the younger man. 'They may even do us a great service by reuniting all of China that will eventually be dominated by *this culture of ours*.'

'Our own thoughts exactly.' Says Shi. 'Then we are as one.'

'How else could it be.' Says the older man in finality.

'You will find in these papers' he points 'how we will stay in communication. Now, we must return before we are missed.'

The younger man leads them back through to where they entered. Parting the branches so he can look out, he holds the branches back for Shi and Bao to exit. They re-join Tai and Ling-ling and walk back to the Golden Lu.

Kublai's bodyguard are awake.

'Good morning.' Says Bao in a happy vein. 'I trust you slept well.'

The Mongolians say nothing in reply. Only hoping their slumbers do not come to the attention of Kublai.

Once inside the Han return to their rooms and to deep untroubled sleep.

*

Bao leaves Tai to her toilet. Going downstairs he toys with the idea of going out but is prevented from doing so, when he is called across to the table where he had spent such a memorable time the night before.

Kadai, Kublai, Asutai, Salkai and his Administrator are finishing off a meal of some size. Bao is offered some of the pickings and a pair of chopsticks.

Kadai speaks with just a little concern in his voice. 'We have just been talking about the Assassins. Now you, Shao Bao, have knowledge of these Assassins having protected Kublai from their mortal danger. And, you are also a stranger in this environment but are already acquainted with the lie of the land, in much the same way as any of the Assassins that Gorogene brought to murder Kublai. If you were an Assassin how would you go about killing Kublai?'

Bao puts down the fresh water prawn he was about to put in his mouth. He looks at Kadai then dips the prawn in a sesame and chilli sauce before putting it into his mouth. He stands up and paces at the end of the table until he swallows. Returning to the table he stands poised with his chopsticks as if about to choose some other delectable morsel, but then points the chopsticks at Kublai. 'Kublai is easily recognized, anywhere. The Assassin, however, is not.' He starts pacing again. 'If Kublai was to seek protection inside of your army of thousands of men, as we found in the Assassin's attempt on Kublai's life in Salkai's army, it is only too easy for any Assassin to pass

himself off as a Mongolian soldier. Human beings can recognize hundreds of faces but not thousands. So your army would be an excellent place to hide for an Assassin. The same would also be true for a city like Quiu, where there are many traders from many different countries and thousands of faces that are not recognized.' He comes back to the table and picks up another prawn. 'A place the size of Qingdao, however, would be perfect. Twenty or thirty local Han faces would soon be recognizable. The twenty Mongolians that guard Qingdao and the lookout are already known to him as is his own bodyguard. The Assassin would find it very difficult to get near to Kublai. In fact, it would make good sense to bring another bodyguard whose faces are well known, such as your bodyguard' he points to Kadai with his chopsticks 'but of course that would mean that you would have to come to Qingdao as well.'

The entire company turn to Kadai as Bao dips his prawn.

'I must take the army back to Beijing.'

'But surely General Salkai can do that? Or perhaps you think that the good General would run off with your army and conquer Korea.'

The joke goes down well. The prawn goes down well.

'This will teach me to ask advice from our Han enemy. I now find that I have joined this quest to Lao Shan that so consumes both you and Kublai.' Says Kadai with humour.

'I think it is an excellent plan.' Says Kublai. 'It would allow us enough men to set a trap for the Assassin without compromising my protection. And I'm sure General Salkai and his famous Administrator would appreciate leading a victorious army into Beijing as their last act in the service of the Mongolian Empire.'

There is general agreement and much amusement at Kadai's predicament.

'You are wicked and devious scoundrel.' Says Kadai to Bao.

'Indeed. My longsuffering wife tells me this all of the time. Indeed, she spends much of her time trying to drive these unfortunate aspects of my character from my Inner Truth.' Says Bao with embarrassed honesty.

Kadai turns to General Salkai and the Quartermaster General.

'You deserve this. Your long and successful service deserves recognition.' He becomes thoughtful. 'I should have thought of

this myself.' Then to Kublai. 'I have hankered for adventure for some time. This may not be the kind of adventure I was thinking of, however, it does have its merits. We will travel together in search of, we-know-not-what, and set a trap for a fanatic.' He changes tone. 'Is it certain there is still an Assassin running free?'

'There were six and five are now dead. The survivor is not going home. He is going to heaven.' Bao says with poignant certainty.

The others agree.

'Then let us leave here tomorrow. Quiu is dangerous for you Kublai, as our Master Librarian has pointed out, so the sooner the better.' Kadai raises to his feet. 'Generals, come with me to our encampment. There is much to arrange and little time to do it.'

The party breaks up leaving Bao to pick over the remains of their meal.

*

The Changing Lines

**Changing Line at the beginning means:
Advancing by force alone brings
Misfortune.**

**Changing Line in the second place means:
Perseverance with Inner Truth
Prevents overweening self-confidence.
The superior man restrains his desires.**

**Changing Line in the third place means:
The inferior man uses power for display,
Like the peacock uses his tail feathers.
The superior man uses power as a tool to achieve
Great things.**

**Changing Line in the fourth place means:
Consistent even application of power
Eventually overcomes any obstruction.
Success.**

**Changing Line in the fifth place means:
When the obstruction is overcome
The superior man works on cultivating
A different approach for a different time.
Forethought is an oracle of sorts.**

**Changing Line at the top means:
Pressing on using mere power,
Eventually leads to entanglement.
Misfortune.**

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Contemplation (52)

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=====
      ===== Wind/Wood
    ==  ==
    ==  ==
    ==  == Earth
    ==  ==
  
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THE IMAGE

The Wind penetrates the Earth:

The Image of CONTEMPLATION.

Thus the superior man penetrates

The great mysteries of reality by Contemplating

The perfect order of Earth.

Chapter 22

The Song Dynasty

1059 C.E.

15th Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Morning

The Restraining Power of the Great (10)

=====

== == Mountain

== ==

=====

===== Heaven

=====

THE IMAGE

Heaven within the Mountain:

The Image of THE RESTRAINING POWER OF THE GREAT.

The superior man gathers strength from the wisdom of the past,

So he can apply it in the times in which he lives.

*

“Confucius said, ‘At fifteen my mind was set on learning. At thirty my character had been formed. At forty my mind had no more perplexities. At fifty I knew the Mandate of Heaven. At sixty I was at ease with whatever I heard. At seventy I could follow my heart’s desire without transgressing moral principles.’”

From the Analects. 2:4.

*

Snowdrop was consummate in her role as arbitrator of sexual desire. Bringing Yong to orgasm by placing the helmet of his penis in her mouth and holding it in position by placing her teeth behind the helmet and coaxing the orgasm to come forth by alternating strokes by her right hand both rapid and slow, she delivered the first orgasmic release quickly so that his penis was desensitized and hence able to fulfil long and fulfilling sexual pleasure for both. Men, it has been long observed, derive much of their sexual pleasure from watching a woman in the full throes of sexual ecstasy, for which early ejaculation is anathema.

Yong, a man in ripe middle age, was experienced in these matters and able to appreciate the endeavours that snowdrop was able to deliver while delivering the benefits of his own experiences in pleasuring women.

It was a happy union soon followed by deep untroubled sleep.

This was interrupted by the arrival of Crocus, who had been sent by the Marquis for the express purpose - best described as follows: could Yong distinguish the difference between the twins for which there was only one.

The twins, long acquainted with the Marquis, thought this hilarious and typical of the man they had both come to appreciate as a person and as a sexual partner.

As they were identical twins there was not any physical difference to identify them so Yong concluded, correctly, that it must be in the process of sexual pleasure the difference was to be found.

It was easy. Crocus was left handed.

This sets in motion a series of thoughts in Yong's mind, starting with the realization that these twins were an exact mirror Image of each other.

This quickly leads Yong to wonder if they are mirror Images in all aspects of their Inner Truth. Is Snowdrop good and Crocus evil or perhaps the other way around. He is mindful here of Mencius; that all human beings are originally good. So he sets out to find if these mirror Image twins are mirror Images in their Inner Truth which he does by asking Crocus if she and her sister are generous to the poor.

Crocus is specific in her reply, stating that as they are extremely fortunate, they, both her and her sister, dispense money to beggars and those less fortunate than themselves. Crocus even quotes her sister on this matter: how can one ignore suffering of any kind as it defiles one's common humanity.

'One's common humanity.' Thinks Yong in awe. 'Here was the eternal truth that Mencius was right about man's original goodness. The twins having the good fortune of being in a privileged position from an early age had not seen their original goodness corrupted.' And further more. 'That the basic state of original goodness is prior to the mirror Image status of the twins.'

Such is his joy on realizing this fundamental truth that he kisses Crocus all over her body and face, making her laugh with abandon. Making her cry out in ecstasy as he kisses her genitalia. Allowing him a certain degree of freedom in his rough sexual play where the pain only increases her orgasmic pleasure.

Yong thinks. 'Now this is the Way to discover eternal truths. If only all knowledge could be revealed by such means.'

*

Crocus and Snowdrop having washed the juices of pleasure from Yong and the Marquis take their own bath. Allowing their clients to dress and sortie forth in search of sustenance.

They soon settle on an establishment that specializes in spiced chicken of various kinds. The air is warm with the first spring sun. Warm enough to sit on the veranda in their travelling coats.

Quiu is busy with commerce. Happening just beyond the balustrade the city, more a large town, is vibrant in

activity, lending a pleasant atmosphere to an early afternoon meal.

'Well, what is the difference between Snowdrop and Crocus?'
Asks a curious Marquis.

'They are a mirror Image. Snowdrop is right handed and Crocus left handed.'

'And?'

'Their mirror Image is confined to their physical attributes. It does not transpose onto their Inner Truth. Proving, as they are both filled with common humanity, that man is born originally good.'

'What a Master you are.' Says the Marquis, impressed. 'It took me a number of years to work that out.'

'They are quite the most lovely of girls. You are most fortunate in having made their acquaintance.'

'Indeed. I have bought their bond and set them free. Soon they will run their own teahouse and all for a small consideration that they pleasure me whenever I am in Quiu.'

'You are fortunate that you have not a wife that would exclude such an arrangement.' Says Yong wistfully. 'However, I do. And if there is one thing I have learned on this journey, it is that I have treat my wife badly. She it is who puts up with endless visitors and having to cater for the endless variety of their tastes. I have resolved to make amends on my return to this wonderful wife and mother.'

'I would gladly reframe from these arrangements if I could only have my dear wife back.' Says a mournful Marquis.

After a short silence Yong asks. 'Have you not considered taking another wife?'

'My attachment to her precludes this. I have a number of concubines that take care of my physical needs but none can match that special emotion that only she can supply and that she can never supply again.' His emotion is flowing. His eyes fill with tears and he sits immersed for a long moment. 'I pay attention to those other aspects of my Inner Truth. Knowing that special emotion of unconditional love is lost to me forever. It is a good life, if one deprived of ...' His voice trails off.

'You make me appreciate my wife even more.' Then more to himself. 'I really must make amends.'

'You really must.' Says the Marquis recovering his composure. All the while they have been talking they have consumed several dishes. At the end they settle back to confront the future.

'I must return to my estate, forthwith.' Says the Marquis with force. 'It has been a wonderful journey but now my duties weigh heavily upon me now that I turn my attention to them.'

'It has been wonderful. I will never be able to thank you enough. Although I will try if you ever come to Loyang.'

'I will try to come but I cannot promise. My responsibilities would have to be taken care off in totality. It is a big ask. We will see. Now. I must visit the horse dealer so that I can return to my estate as quickly as possible. And you Master Shao Yong must come with me so that I can also buy you a horse to continue your journey. I could not help but notice a slight limp.'

'Blisters upon the scars of blisters. As you age they take longer and longer to heal. A horse is more than a good idea, it is fast becoming a necessity.'

They leave. Walking into the crowds and becoming part of everyone's common humanity.

★

Yong recognizes the Horse Dealer. He was the man who offered the student Xian Ki a ride at the Forest Teahouse.

The Horse Dealer recognizes Yong but speaks to the Marquis. 'What kind of horses would you be after?'

'A fast one for me.' The Marquis presents Yong.

'And a reliable old nag with a good nature for me. I'm not much of a horseman.' Says Yong

'It just so happens that I have exactly what you want. Come with me.' Says the Horse Dealer with a somewhat sly look to his strong face.

Or so Yong thinks. 'What happened to the student?' He enquires as they walk over to the stables.

'Now there is a strange occurrence. Once we arrived in Suqian he realized he had made a mistake. He said that he'd had the

good fortune to meet a philosopher of great merit and had abandoned the opportunity to ask him to become his student. He was most distressed. Seeing the boy was genuine and sincere I offered him a ride on the back of my horse. Even though this cost me good time as we had to walk the horse often because of the extra weight. However, I don't regret it as he has proved to be both genuine and sincere.'

'You don't know where he is now?'

'That would be him coming out of that stable pushing the wheeled cart.' Says the Horse Dealer enjoying something of a private joke. 'It must be your destiny Ki' he shouts out to Ki 'as search as you have for your philosopher' he turns to Yong and as a means of explanation 'and without success, as you well know' and back to Ki 'he has found you.'

Ki drops the handles of the cart and stares at the three men advancing towards them.

'Destiny it must be.' Says Yong. 'For in all honesty I did not expect to see you again.'

The smile comes slowly but breaking cover lights up his face in a most delightful way. 'Is it that you will take me as your student?'

'I warn you now. I have never had a student. And I am on a journey I cannot break. However, if you wish to travel with me and learn what little knowledge I have to offer then I will not object.'

'It will be three horses that we will now be wanting.' Says the Marquis to the Horse Dealer.

'Two nags and a flyer?'

'That will do nicely. Put them on my account. Who am I to stand in the way of destiny. Nor can I stand in the way of an honest Horse Dealer making an honest living.' Says the Marquis eyeing the Horse Dealer with just a little suspicion.

'That would be the nature of the business. Besides, who would cross a man who is liable to blow him up with some infernal contraption?'

'Ah, news of my escapades have reached your good ears? See Yong, there is merit in my lime bomb, when it keeps a Horse Dealer honest.'

Yong, the Marquis and the Horse Dealer share a humorous moment as Ki looks on, uncomprehending.

★

Another night comes. Another night of sexual pleasure.

Ki has fallen in love, first with Crocus then with Snowdrop. As he sits on his horse outside of the Golden Lu waiting for the Marquis, he cannot take his eyes from the singing girls. Who, arm in arm, have come to see their customers off. They quietly laugh at Ki but not in an unkind way.

'It is fortunate that there are two of them for I cannot say which I love most.' Ki whispers to Yong. 'If I could I fear I would abandon my studies and work to set my beloved free.'

'By tomorrow you will have forgotten they even exist.' Says Yong with the knowledge of experience.

'I doubt that.'

The Marquis exits and bows to the girls with a flourish. He mounts his horse as the girls bow and they cantor down the street and out of town.

Reaching the cross roads the Marquis bows and takes his leave. Galloping off into the distance. Yong and Ki wait until he is out of sight before turning east and riding their horses at a leisurely pace.

Yong had thought that they would make the village of Pingyi before nightfall where there was a teahouse of some repute. The late start and a leisurely pace made this impossible. As night descended they were forced to look for accommodation at one of the farms near the road.

A light rain makes this task imperative. Seeing lights in the distance they turn down a farm track and arrive at an old building filled with lights.

The door opens to Yong's knock by an old man. His face in shadow makes him look ancient. The heavy lines at the edge of his face disappear into shadow at its centre. Yong has to strain to identify the man's eyes that are mere slits.

'We seek a place to sleep and are willing to pay a fair price.'

The old man points past Yong to a barn.

Yong hands the man a coin. The old man looks at it as if uncertain what it is. It is only then that Yong notices a large group of people gathered around a body behind the old man. It is a funeral gathering.

Yong turns away now regretting his intrusion. As Yong and Ki walk their horses towards the barn Yong turns towards Ki. 'We cannot stop here. There is a funeral vigil happening in the house. It won't take long to find another farm.'

He goes to mount but stops when he sees a boy running towards them from the house.

The boy is about ten years old. He hands Yong his coin back. 'My grandfather says you are welcome to stay in the barn but will not take payment.' Then with terrible sadness. 'My grandmother has just died and my grandfather is not himself. He apologises for his rude behaviour and hopes you will forgive him.'

'There is nothing to forgive.'

The boy turns and runs back to the open door filled with light. A burning chasm in a wall of black. The door closes and the wall engulfs them in night.

Yong sighs. 'Now, it is impossible for us to leave.' He sighs again.

Ki takes his horse across to the entrance to the barn and feels around inside the doorway with his hand until he finds a lamp. He soon has it lit.

Yong leads his horse into the barn and ties it next to Ki's. Taking the saddle and blanket off he places them over a wooden partition behind which he sees the possibility for a makeshift bed.

Ki finds some grain, enough to feed the horses. Joining Yong in the straw filled compartment they lie down together. Feet towards the door they look out on a night turned fowl.

The rain comes down in great gulps and once Ki has turned out the lamp, lightning strikes illuminate the countryside and the interior of the barn.

Straw makes for an excellent mattress when compressed. With their travelling coats laid over them like blankets and straw piled on top and around their sides they lie in cocooned warmth.

'My father was a clerk in the Magistrates office. He had sat the Jinshi exam twice but failed and my grandfather could not afford to let him continue his studies. The burden of success has now turned to me. But I am not motivated by success. Only by knowledge. I fear I will be a great disappointment to my family who I cannot bring myself to tell. Did you take the exam?'

'I did not. The tradition in my family was the pursuit of knowledge, so I didn't have the burden that you carry.' Says Yong sympathetically.

'Filial duty is a given in our society. I feel guilty, Master Shao. Should I tell them or should I press myself against the wheel and study for the exam.'

'You are asking me: What knowledge I possess must surely include a plan for Xian Ki? Well, it does not.' Yong stops and softens his tone. 'It's not that I don't understand your problem, which is very clear. It is, however, a problem only you can resolve. It is still your life when all is said between Master and student.'

'Or, it is my family's life. Or, the life of our society. Why can't I be free to choose?'

'It would appear you have already chosen. Only that you cannot live with the guilt.'

The silence lasts a long time, until Yong can hear Ki sobbing.

'This is ridiculous.' Says Yong in frustration bordering on anger. 'Now I am going to prove to you what a useless teacher I am. I am going to tell you exactly what you should do. And that is, that you must return home and tell your family you have decided to pursue knowledge. Knowledge for knowledge's sake and not to pass some worthless degree that is only there to provide social status for the weak minded.' Ki sits up in shock. 'That you have better things to do with your life. And, if they cannot accept that, then you will disown them. It is the only possible course of action for a man who is on the path. And remember, it is only on the path of knowledge that one can find the Way.' Yong sounds smug. 'There you have it. The best advice, and the worst, you will ever receive.'

The lightning flashes reveal Ki looking down in awe at Yong who lies on his back with his head resting on his hands in contentment.

'Never to see my mother again, what pain.'

'What are you? A man or a slug? Or perhaps just a boy having his moment of rebellion.' The words are cruel and spoken with derision.

Ki gets up and staggers to the door then runs off into the storm.

'That went well.' Says Yong with satisfaction. Then he shouts after Ki. 'If you cannot face up to the truth. You cannot hope to face the perils of the path.' He turns over and is soon asleep.

*

Yong awakes to the smell of freshly cooked rice cakes and the sound of wooden bowls being placed on the ground. He sits up and sees the young boy from the night before unloading a tray. He is being helped by Ki.

'Thank your family for me.' Says Yong.

The boy bows and leaves.

'So, have you decided?' Yong confronts Ki.

'I have. I will travel with you to Lao Shan and return with you to Quiu. I will return to my parents' home in Tianjing and tell them what you have told me. That they must accept that I follow the path of knowledge.'

'That is all for the good, just as long as you have made those words your own.' Yong gives Ki a questioning look.

'Do you mean: is this what my Inner Truth tells me is true.'

'It is.' Says Yong hopefully.

'It was a long night. Filled with the anguish of a son that is not filled with filial piety. Filled with the fear of separation from one's parents; those that have cared for me and, indeed, loved me. But that was not all.' He stops and calmly takes a mouthful of rice cake and slowly chews it until it is gone. 'My parents still have ambitions, and that, because my father failed the jinshi exam. I must now take his place to fulfil their ambitions. I must pass this exam even if I fail to become a scholar official. It would be a step in the right direction as far as they are concerned. A step in the right direction for their ambitions. Not mine.' He stops and takes another mouthful and slowly chews it.

All the while, Yong watches him without eating.

With only a glance at Yong he begins again. 'If my parents cannot accept my decision then they cannot accept me. As such, I will be well rid of them. Parents who only see their children in terms of their own ambition are not worthy of filial piety.' He stops to look at Yong full in the face. 'In the end there was not a decision. Just acceptance. And as I have accepted myself, my parents must accept me. It would appear it is their decision and not mine.' Says Ki with strength.

'Indeed, it has been a long night.' Says Yong with surprise lacing his words. 'I never knew a person could travel so far in a single night.' Says Yong joining Ki who is already taking another mouthful.

'I am grateful Master Shao that you are such a bad teacher. A good teacher would have me seeking filial piety. I can see what a nonsense all of that is now.'

'But only for those that tread the path. For the vast majority filial piety is the only path they will ever know. It is their path, not ours.'

'You were blessed by chance to be born into a family where the path of knowledge was the only path. What fortune.' Says Ki with just a little envy.

'Indeed.' Yong is forced to agree.

'A chance to find the Way. That is all I ask.' Says Ki with sincerity.

'As it ever was.' Says Yong smiling.

'As it ever was, so it will ever be.'

They pack up their things, saddle their horses and leave without looking back.

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Circumstances present an obstacle.

Forcing an advance leads to

Misfortune.

Changing Line in the second place means:

Confronting a superior force,

The superior man contents himself with waiting.

Conserving his energy for an energetic advance later.

Changing Line in the third place means:

The obstacle has been removed.

It is possible to advance with others;

With great caution and with a specific goal brings limited

Success.

Changing Line in the fourth Line means:

The great man restrains his wild impulses.

This leads to great success in his endeavours.

Good fortune.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

Wild forces should not be confronted directly.

The superior man eradicates the source bringing

Success.

Changing Line at the top means:

The energy stored up by the obstruction is finally released.

Great success.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Gatherings (10)

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===== Lake
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==  ==
==  == Earth
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THE IMAGE

Lake rests upon the Earth:

The Image of GATHERINGS.

The superior man prepares for the unexpected

When men gather together.

Chapter 23

Inner Truth (9)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

15th Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Morning

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===== Wind

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===== Lake

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THE IMAGE

Wind penetrates The Joyous Lake:

The Image of INNER TRUTH.

Inner Truth makes the invisible manifest.

Thus the superior man acts in the world,

Using his Inner Truth to change it.

“Tzu-kung said, ‘If a ruler extensively confers benefit on the people and can bring salvation to all, what do you think of him? Would you call him a man of humanity?’ Confucius said, ‘Why only a man of humanity? He is without doubt a sage. Even sage-emperors, Yao and Shen fell short of it. A man of humanity, wishing to establish his own character, also establishes the character of others, and wishing to be prominent himself, also helps others to be prominent. To be able to judge others by what is near to ourselves may be called the method of realizing humanity.’”

From the Analects. 6:28.

★

They ride as if into battle with Kadai’s bodyguard acting as outriders guarding the flanks.

A small group of riders appears far off to the left making straight for the head of the column at full gallop. Kadai and Kublai slow their pace so Kublai’s bodyguard can over take them. Kublai’s body guard fan out into a leftward arc and rightward arc, until the five horsemen are encompassed then they fall in behind them completely enclosing the five riders in a ring of steel.

Asutai who is leading the group of five pulls up in front of Kadai and Kublai who have also pulled up. The Han who are not such good horsemen have splayed out either side of Kadai and Kublai to avoid a collision.

Asutai grabs hold of Bao’s horse before it takes off altogether. ‘You must tell me of this great strategy you were about to employ, Master Librarian.’ He jokes.

‘My apologies, Asutai. I was not concentrating. My attention being otherwise engaged.’ Says Bao, a little flustered.

‘Perhaps rehearsing in your mind a new way to act out your famous battles.’

Bao is only slightly embarrassed. ‘Something along those lines.’ Then as quick lightning. ‘Perhaps more dialogue and less the swinging of a great battle axe.’

‘I can’t wait.’ Asutai turns to Kadai. ‘You need to bring your outriders further forward. We should not have been allowed to attack the head of the column without challenge from them.’

'Point taken.' Says Kadai, then. 'Have you and the trackers found anything?'

'There are too many tracks. However, we have scouted out Pingyi which is in the main, deserted. You will have to decide whether to stay in the town, or, to make camp on open ground.'

'On open ground this side of Pingyi?' Asks Kadai.

'It will need be and soon. We did not have time to go beyond Pingyi and return, so we do not know how the land lies there.'

Kadai turns to Kublai. 'It is your life Kublai, therefore it is your decision.'

'If we stay in open country the Assassin will not risk an attack. However, if we stay in the town he almost certainly will. Surely this affords us to set a trap. A chance to go on the offensive.'

There is much agreement from everyone. All except Kadai. 'Your mother will have me boiled in oil if anything happens to you.' Then after a short silence. 'However, it is your decision.'

Kublai turns to Bao. 'What say you battle axe wielder?'

'I say I need more exploits for the telling. Let us set a trap for this villain so I have the chance of making him twice the man he is now.' He swings off Genghis' great battle axe and swings it around his head with everyone ducking in mock fear. 'That is, of course, if he is here.'

'Then let us ride into Pingyi as quickly as we can before night fall.' Says Kublai as he spurs on his horse to a full gallop followed by everyone else.

The outriders seeing a charge being led by Kublai shout out their battle cries and fall into a ramming charge with the others.

*

The Assassin, Ali, had come across the two Baghdadi traders encamped on a small river near the village of Zhucheng about sixty kilometres from Qingdao. He befriended them which was easy enough as he spoke their language. These traders had followed the Mongolians into China looking for valuables that they could trade on their return to Bagdad. They had little success as the Chinese had either taken their valuables with them when the Mongolians arrived or buried them. Or, the Mongolians had taken them as war booty.

It made little difference to Ali as he wanted the paperwork they possessed that allowed them to operate in northern China. These traders didn't last the first night of Ali's presence; he murdered them as they slept. He stole their identity, their valuables, their horses and their clothes. Taking time to bury them well, well enough never to be found, he was now Ali the trader from Bagdad.

It was in this guise that he came across, Uriyang, Kadai's nephew. Ali had seen this lone rider up ahead for the best part of the day as he slowly gained upon him. Finally Uriyang had waited for Ali to catch up. Ali was very convincing as a Baghdadi trader who spoke passible Mongolian. Uriyang was less so in trying to pass himself off as a Mongolian soldier who was recovering from some illness and was making his way back to re-join Kadai's army.

Ali knew there was something wrong almost from their first meeting. He intended to find out what in case it could prove useful. It is certainly the reason that Uriyang stayed alive for the next few days.

Ali wormed his way into Uriyang's confidence by his generosity and gentle ways. And, by showing Uriyang that he trusted him in many small matters.

It was during a conversation they were having about their families that Uriyang finally let it slip that he was Kadai's nephew. For Ali this explained a lot without explaining anything. For instance, why was Uriyang, the nephew of the Provincial Governor, dressed in rags? A strange mixture of Mongolian and Jürgen dress. The horse he was riding was almost certainly Jürgen with its clipped mane. His manner did not fit the usual Mongolian superiority. His manner did not fit that of a high station in life, at least not that of a high Mongolian position.

Ali felt the hand of fate in this meeting with Uriyang. He would play it to the end.

They arrived in the small deserted town of Pingyi in the afternoon and after having spent so many nights camping out they settled on a deserted house in the very centre of town. At the rear it had stables and on the first floor there was a fireplace and even beds.

They managed to contact some of the remaining locals who sold them a piglet and a few hens. Uriyang was delighted when Ali suggested that they stay for a couple of days. Ali was getting

to know what made Uriyang relax and the more he relaxed the more forth coming he was.

And what of Uriyang? His resolve had been to take the advice of the Han; to seek out his uncle and to tell him the truth. Once on the road back to Quiu he at least felt his life had direction. However, the more he progressed the more the old fear returned. His pace slowed. If he could have thought of another direction that made any kind of sense, he would have taken it.

Ali came along at just the right time. A Baghdadi trader and a man who was not Mongolian. A man who might offer an alternative. A man who seemed kind and generous and who might take pity on him. His imagination had him taking on a new life as a Baghdadi trader of becoming wealthy of becoming free of his past of becoming free.

As they settled down on that first night in Pingyi in front of a fire with full bellies, the contentment Uriyang felt was of this new life he would lead. That he was already leading.

'This life of a trader suits me fine.' Says Uriyang, to the surprize of Ali. 'What you need is a partner. A Mongolian partner who can ease your way through the Mongolian world we live in.'

'Are you serious?' Asks Ali with suspicion.

'I am serious.'

'A man in your position as nephew of the Governor of a Province has the world at his feet. Why, in the name of Allah, would you want to exchange such a life for that of a trader? A man who picks over the remains of conquered lands like a jackal picking over the carcass of some poor animal.' Ali paints the worst picture he can. 'Scavengers. Not even making the kill for themselves. The lowest form of life in a corrupt world.' He laughs to himself and in derision. 'Why would a man in your position even consider such folly?'

'I will tell you. But first you must promise to never tell anyone what I am about to reveal. Well, do you promise?'

Ali sits up from his mattress and leans against a chair. 'I will promise if you promise to tell only the truth.'

'Once I have told you, you will know it can only be the truth. So promise me in all you believe to be sacred.'

Ali is taken aback. What he holds to be sacred is Allah but then this is an infidel. A none believer. A man not worthy of the truth. 'I promise.'

'Before you is a coward. A man that fears death, a man that fears pain. A man that dreads torture to the point of insanity, and that, just in his imagination.' He takes his eyes off Ali and gazes deep into the white hot embers of the fire. 'By the time I had my first taste of battle under direction from my uncle, when tracking down Jürgen cavalry, I was already lost. I ran. I escaped into the forest where fate was waiting for me. I was captured by the Jürgen and they spared my life as I was Kadai's nephew and they thought that I might have some use.'

'Can we ever run away from our fate?' Ali asks, knowing the answer.

'They knew I was a coward and treat me with the contempt I deserved. They kept me hobbled like a horse and I had to beg like a dog to obtain food. And when they beat me, which was often, I whined like a dog. And when at last these Jürgen cavalry escaped by means of a Korean ship they had me tied backwards on a horse and left for my Mongolian brothers to deal with.'

Ali plays the sympathetic ear. 'A terrible act of cruelty.'

'But I was not found by Mongolians but by Song officials on some diplomatic mission. It was they who freed me and set me on my present path.'

'Which is?'

'They told me that the only honourable course was to seek out my uncle and tell him everything and hope for mercy.'

Ali needs time to think things through so silence falls between the two men. After some time. 'They are right.'

Uriyang is distraught. He had been hoping for a sympathetic reply one which would have taken him from his situation for ever. 'My uncle will not have any choice. The punishment for cowardice is death. All I will do is pronounce my own execution.' He pleads with Ali. 'Can you not help me?'

Ali needs time to plan a successful outcome for his own agenda, so he stalls. 'Perhaps.' Then he thinks out loud. 'Someone will recognize you somewhere at some time. Let me

consider the options.' He slides back down onto the mattress turning his back on Uriyang.

Uriyang holds his head in his hands and weeps.

The next day is spent on possible plans to extricate Uriyang from his plight. Ali suggests that he take Uriyang's personal possessions to Kadai and tell him that his nephew is dead. This on the presumption that if he, Uriyang, is dead then if anyone recognizes him they will assume it is just a close likeness. But if he is just missing then anyone recognizing him will assume it is him. Uriyang likes the idea of being dead, at least to the Mongolian world. The only problem is that Uriyang had been stripped of his personal things by the Jürgen.

Ali next suggests that they find Kublai and tell him that he, Uriyang, was captured by the Jürgen but had managed to escape. Uriyang has to remind Ali that it was the Han that he had confided in. To which Ali suggests that they kill the Han but has to immediately retract this, saying he was joking, as it shows a side to Ali that he does not want Uriyang to see.

Further suggestions follow, all with flaws. Ali even suggests that Uriyang join the Song by slipping through the Song defensive line. The basic problem of Uriyang's cowardice defeating this plan as the possibility of slipping through the most heavily defended border anywhere in the known world was almost nil.

The day wears on with more elaborate plans and plans that are ridiculous and others that are quite simply insane.

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They arrive in the centre of Pingyi like rolling thunder.

Kadai, calling a halt, addresses his men. 'Secure the town. Not you Asutai. You and your trackers will come with me and Kublai.' The Mongolian bodyguards fan out with practised ease, leaving the Han with Kadai. He now addresses those left behind. 'We must use this opportunity to practice setting a trap for the Assassin. So, we must find a suitable house where this can be achieved.' He turns to Zhen Shi. 'Will you help us in this matter?'

'Indeed. Perhaps a street house where we can break through into the adjoining buildings would be suitable.' Suggests Shi.

'An excellent suggestion.' Says Kublai who turns to Bao. 'Come axe wielder. Guard my back as we search.'

'But who will guard my back?' Says Bao only half joking.

'I will guard yours.' Says Tai, Joining in the joke. 'Shi will guard mine and Ling-ling will guard his.'

'And who will guard mine?' Says Ling-ling.

'I will.' Laughs Kublai. 'Now, can we get on?'

They leave in a disjointed group.

Kadai turns to Asutai. 'He trusts them beyond reason.'

'He trusts them because they have saved his life. But it is more than that. He trusts them because they have become a talisman to his destiny. I suspect that they think if they are to have a Mongolian overlord then Kublai would be by far the best choice. They consider him a man of destiny, and as such, is worthy of their loyalty.'

'Do you trust them?'

'I trust them to protect Kublai. But trust them completely?' Asutai hesitates. 'They have their own agenda. Kublai is aware of this and intends to find out what it is. How then can we trust them completely when they have their own, secret agenda?'

'How indeed. That, and the fact they are our enemy.' Says Kadai with force.

The first that Ali and Uriyang know of the Mongolians is the sound of their horses. Peering out from their first floor hideout they see Mongolians searching the houses opposite.

This sends Uriyang into a panic and it takes all of Ali's strength to stop him from fleeing. 'If they see you running they will hunt you down. Better they find us here, relaxing, just as Baghdadi traders would. Put this on.' He throws Uriyang his travelling coat. 'Say nothing and let me do the talking.'

They don't have long to wait. The Mongolians burst into the room.

'At last.' Says Ali, getting up. 'I have here Kadai's nephew, Uriyang. He wishes to see Kadai or Kublai to explain his position. Are either of them here?'

Uriyang is betrayed but is wrapped in the silence of fear.

'They are both here. But who are you?' Asks one of the Mongolians.

'I am Ali Al-shadeed. A Baghdadi trader. Will you not take us to them?'

Another Mongolian pushes his way into the room and drags Uriyang to his feet. 'I recognize you, Uriyang. Your uncle will be delighted to see his cowardly nephew.' He drags Uriyang out of the door. 'Bring the Baghdadi trader but search him for weapons.'

Ali allows them to search, secretly delighted at the turn of events.

Kublai and the Han have found a perfect street of conjoined houses. And while Kublai sets about joining the houses together by breaking through the walls on the first floor. Shi fetches Kadai to inspect their find.

Soon joined by Kublai's bodyguard who set about making a secure room, both Kadai and Kublai are satisfied with their trap.

Kadai gets the bodyguard to open up the walls between the houses and uses the wood to block the windows. Taking some of the wood Kublai and Asutai use the wood to block up the only window in the secure room. They are forced to do this behind the closed door of the only entrance to the secure room.

Kadai has constructed a long room stretching the width of three houses and with only one window left unbarred to let in light, and one entrance, through which now comes the Mongolians dragging a sobbing Uriyang.

Ali is shoved into the room alongside Uriyang and immediately starts speaking. 'I beg for the life of your worthless nephew as he is truly remorseful and ...'

'And who is this?' Asks Kadai of the Mongolian who has brought them in.

'He is a Baghdadi trader. Here is the concession.' He hands Kadai the concession who examines it then hands it back.

'Why would you bother with such a worthless creature as this?' Asks Kadai, suspicious.

'Allah teaches us to be merciful. Will you not be merciful to what is a frail man who bears ill only to himself?' Says Ali, lying through his teeth.

Uriyang looks at Ali knowing he is lying.

At that moment the door opens and Kublai steps into the room.

Ali whips out a three sided poisoned dagger disguised as a hair pin from his hair and lunges at Kublai. But not before Uriyang grabs hold of Ali by the arm.

Asutai pulls Kublai back into the secure room and slams the door as Ali turns and stabs Uriyang through the chest. Seeing that his chance is gone, Ali knocks the Mongolian standing behind him and who is drawing his sword, out of the way and leaps through the unbarred window onto the veranda outside.

He is quickly followed by Kublai's bodyguard.

Ali races to the end of the veranda and leaps down onto a Mongolian horseman knocking him from the horse and quickly speeds away. Soon followed by several Mongolian horsemen.

Asutai followed by Kublai enter the room to find Kadai kneeling down beside Uriyang who is dying.

'Don't ... tell ... my ... mother.' He begs Kadai before collapsing back dead. Kadai who has been holding Uriyang under the shoulders lays him down gently. He stays kneeling beside him unable to take his eyes from him.

Bao, who has watched from the door, enters the room with Shi coming in behind. 'He was not such a coward in the end.'

Kublai looks down over Kadai's shoulder. 'He saved my life. Sacrificing his own in return. How do you judge such a man?'

'Not with any simplistic label.' Says Shi with authority. 'If you judge him in that manner, then, you will have to judge Bao in the same way.' Shi presents Bao with a sweep of his arm. 'Bao names himself a coward because he will avoid any possibility of danger. Until, that is, he is thrust upon the core of his Inner Truth. Then he is all action. He acts without fear. For the core of his Inner Truth is fearless.'

Bao leaves the room returning with Tai whom he leads by the hand. 'Here is the only person I know who is fearless. Her Inner Truth, the whole of her Inner Truth knows nothing of fear. Such is the power of Buddhism. Her mystical knowledge reveals the true nature of reality. That we are not one being but two. The particular being that belongs to this particular world we all live in. And her other self that is the endless consciousness that has created these particular worlds including this one. Why would she suffer from fear when for

her death does not exist in the sense of oblivion. Death is the door to her other self and that is the endless bliss of the endless consciousness the Mystic. She lives this truth. She does not just understand it. How then can she know fear?’

‘My husband is a coward, for most of the time. Unable to conquer his fear as this poor man cannot. But then, all fear leaves him when it reaches the inner core of his Inner Truth. Then, as Shi has pointed out, he is all action. Fearless, uncaring of his own particular life. Right action in action overcomes all fear.’ She points to Uriyang. ‘Is this man any different?’

None will answer her.

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The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning Means:

**Inner Truth is the correct projected attitude towards the world.
It is to be shared openly,
So there are no secrets to disturb its harmony.**

Changing Line in the second place means:

**Giving voice to Inner Truth,
Has a mysterious and far-reaching influence.
Be careful of how it is delivered.**

Changing Line in the third place means:

**The superior man does not allow the attitude,
Of even those who love him to influence him.
He is always guided by his Inner Truth.**

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

**Humility is required to seek the help of a sage.
Even the words of a sage must find accord with Inner truth.
Then straight and true will be the superior man's actions.**

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

**If Inner Truth is important for the superior man,
Then how much more so for that of the ruler.
External unity is only deception without the ruler's Inner Truth.**

Changing Line at the top means:

**Some men speak like the cock crows,
These are only empty words without the meaning of Inner Truth.
Listening to these words brings
Misfortune.**

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Confinement (54)

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== == Thunder

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== == Mountain

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THE IMAGE

Thunder on the Mountain:

The Image of CONFINEMENT.

Thus the superior man turns to his Inner Truth

When he is confined by fate.

Chapter 24

Innocence (8)

The Song Dynasty

1059 C.E.

18th Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Morning

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===== Heaven

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== == Thunder

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THE IMAGE

Under Heaven Thunder rolls:

All things attain the natural state of INNOCENCE.

Thus the sage-kings of old,

Were in harmony with Heaven and Earth,

And with the times in which they lived.

Thus they nourished all living things.

“Tzu-lu asked about serving the spiritual beings. Confucius said, ‘If we are not yet able to serve man, how can we serve spiritual beings?’ I venture to ask about death. Confucius said, ‘If we do not yet know about life, how can we know about death?’”

From the Analects. 11:11.

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Washing the dust from his mouth with water from the Rizhou River, Shao Yong casts his eye along the river towards the big town of Zhucheng in the distance. The region is famous all over China for the quality of its silk and many of the fine quality silk bolts carry the name of this town. ‘We should give the horses a rest and at the same time stretch our legs.’

‘Indeed Master.’ Ki says while filling their water bottles from a small well next to the river.

As they approach the town they see a common sight; women washing clothes and sheets, and laying them out to dry in the early spring sun.

‘As you have set yourself on the course of righteousness by allowing to your parents to decide if they will accept it, and, by what you have said, it probably means they will disown you. How will you support yourself on the path you have chosen?’

‘I neither know nor care.’ Says Ki with abandon. Then, as an afterthought. ‘Perhaps I will study nature in the manner of the Taoists. I will find a secluded valley in the Western Mountains and commune directly with nature and thus find out nature’s secrets by direct revelation.’

‘It is not Confucian.’ Yong thinks out loud. ‘However, I have myself considered this option. Particularly in my youth. But these Taoists have given little in the way of knowledge for the benefit of mankind. Their writings are woefully abstract, more like the smell of some delicious meal than the meal itself.’

‘An excellent metaphor Master. But if needs must.’ Says Ki in the same vein as before. ‘I’m sure my writings will be able to describe the smell of the delicious meal with such accuracy that anyone reading them will acutely be able to taste the delicious meal.’ He glances at Yong. ‘I hope you don’t mind me extending your metaphor?’

'Indeed not. It shows great promise.' Yong looks around at the women washing clothes as they pass through this field of endeavour. 'Perhaps there are other ways. Take these washer women, just as an example. Many of them support their families by such work. Often being the main bread winner.' He stops and looks about at the women hard at work. 'You have to admit they are fine examples of the female form. Look at that one there.' He points out a woman in her early twenties. 'Strong arms and shoulders. A tight waist. Long in the leg which are supple. And just look at those breasts.' Her body drenched in water has her nipples standing out on cones of firmness. 'What a joy to the eye.'

'Indeed.' Ki licks his lips involuntarily.

'Would she not make any man a fine wife?'

'In certain aspects.'

'Ah, you mean she lacks those aspects that the tormenting twins possess?' He laughs out loud alerting the young woman to their attention.

'I was not thinking of those particular aspects.' Says Ki with some embarrassment.

The young woman having looked around to see who else it could be they are laughing at, and realizing it is indeed she, takes a confrontational stance placing her fists on her slim hips and staring with some annoyance at Yong and Ki.

'See how defiant she is. Magnificent and bold. What qualities she possess.' Says Yong with sincerity.

'Perhaps we should move on. We have become the centre of attention to women who have a reputation for violence.' Says Ki as he notices other washer women beginning to take notice.

Yong now sees the situation and bows to the young woman. Then to Ki. 'A hasty retreat is almost certainly called for.'

They start walking, increasing their pace by increments. Laughter behind them tempts Ki and he finally turns around. The young woman sees him turn, bows to the horizontal in mock respect. But it is her smile, a thing of beauty, which marks his attention. He bows in kind, walking on after catching up with Yong.

A cheer goes up from the washer women and turning, Yong and Ki are confronted by the sight of this fit young woman running after them with speed. She passes them before turning to

confront them blocking off their path. 'Now good Masters, tell me what ails you that you would mock my person?'

Yong takes an instant liking to her. 'You deserve an honest answer. I was pointing out to my young ... colleague, what an attractive young woman you are.'

The washer women nearby who have stopped work to listen to this conversation all cry out in a loud voice. 'Ooooooh.' Which is quickly followed by laughter and then by lewd comments, such as 'how much are you willing to pay to see her scrub your noble member' and 'what will you pay to have the cracks of your buttocks scrubbed.'

'Please, please, noble washer women of Zhucheng.' Yong appeals, unable to control his cheerfulness. 'My young colleague is a devotee of the path of knowledge and seeks a wife to support him in his endeavours. I merely suggested that he could do worse than choose you.' Ki tries to object but Yong waves him away. 'You are beautiful, strong in both body and mind, and have spirit of a powerful nature. This is not mockery but praise of the very best kind.'

'Does the young Master have nothing to say, so that his ... colleague ... has to speak for him?' She challenges Ki.

'I can only echo my Master's words. Adding, that after taking care of family business that I may, indeed, return. Would you be amiable to such a marriage?' Says Ki with the sincerity of youth.

Laughter upon laughter comes from the washer women. The young woman comes up close to Ki and strokes his face. 'I will give you my reply if ever you do return.' She swings away from Ki but holds his gaze even having to walk backwards to do so.

The power of attraction is felt by everyone and soon brings silence to all.

Yong drags Ki away. 'Leave it for now. She has given you a fair reply and one filled with sincerity. It is enough.'

As they walk away Ki keeps turning back to look but she has returned to her work. 'Would I need her parents' permission?'

'Undoubtedly. However, it would almost certainly be given. To have a literate husband for their daughter would be an honour for these people. And' he stops to arrange his thoughts 'the attraction is on both sides. In such a marriage this would have to be an essential ingredient.'

'How does one make such decisions?' Ki thinks out loud.

'One can always consult the Great 'I'.'

'Have you a copy with you?' Asks Ki enthusiastically.

'I have always one with me' he taps his head 'in here.' He suddenly realizes a defect in Ki's education. 'My father insisted that I memories the entire work including the Ten Wings. As your Master I charge you to do the same.'

'I have a copy at my parents' home. I will make it a priority.'

'And so you should. It is the nearest that mankind has to the holistic language of nature. The ancient sages who compiled this work operated between the worlds of the particular and the holistic. They understood a level of reality that conjoins them. It is this level of reality that I search for.'

'Are you close to finding it?'

Yong gently laughs. Then he sighs. 'Sometimes I think I have it in my grasp only to have it snatched away by some trivial detail. Yet, I know I am close. A single element may be all that is needed to bring my search to fruition.' His voice trails off.

'I wish you well in your search. Such knowledge would be invaluable for mankind.'

'Indeed.' Yong changes direction by pulling out from his bag a bundle of yarrow stalks. 'Let us sit by the river and cast the forty nine. While I will act as the embodiment of the Great 'I'.'

'It will be great honour.' Ki bows to the horizontal.

They sit beneath a weeping willow in a space of tranquillity. The only sounds are those of the river and their horses munching on their feed.

'What is to be your question?'

'I wish to know whether I should follow the path of Knowledge.' He says without hesitation.

The yarrow sticks are cast and the lines observed: one strong line is followed by two weak lines that are followed by three strong lines. All the lines are changing.

The reading Yong delivers is Innocence and with all the lines changing it delivers Pushing Upward.

'The meaning here is very clear.' Says Yong. 'Let us start with the Image:

Under Heaven thunder rolls:

All things attain the natural state of Innocence.

Thus the Kings of old,

Rich in virtue,

And in harmony with the time,

Fostered and nourished all beings.

Do you understand this Image?' Asks Yong with impeccable Detachment.

'I have neither my Master's voice nor his wisdom. What I sense from my Inner Truth is that this a positive Image.'

'Indeed. For a young man to receive such a reading is auspicious in the extreme. You are the very Image of Innocence. Remain rich in virtue and in harmony with the times in which you live and you will nourish all beings.' Yong allows himself a smile. The six changing lines deliver another auspicious Image. Pushing Upward:

Within the Earth wood grows.

Thus the superior man of devoted character

Heaps up small things

In order to achieve something high and great.'

Yong watches Ki's face as it displays quiet joy. 'Notice the emphasis on small things. Young men often make the mistake in trying for success in big things. Not knowing that big things are composed of small things. It is the small things that will deliver the big.'

'Thank you, Master. What of the Changing lines?'

'I will write them down and we will discuss them over time. Because of the nature of your reading they have relevance only in small ways. However, we must discuss the Judgement:

Innocence. Supreme success.

Perseverance furthers.

If someone is not as he should be,

He has misfortune,

And it does not further him
To undertake anything.

All spirit is pure at the outset in the particular world. It becomes corrupted by the particular individual's interaction with the rest of the particular world. In the holistic world of Heaven spirit is pure. Here it exists in the state of endless random chaos.

At the core of every particular individual's Inner Truth is spirit in its pure state. By referring to this core in one's reactions to the particular world, to let it guide us in our reactions, one can maintain spirit in its pure state at the very core of ourselves as individuals. Thus we can develop our Inner Truth in harmony with the pure state of spirit. This is called Innocence.

If we do not let the pure state of spirit guide us, then our Inner Truth will become corrupted and eventually the very core itself will become corrupted.

In this state of Innocence we instinctively do the right thing.

If, on the other hand, we have corrupted Innocence, then our instinctive reactions are also corrupted.

One can only be our true selves when we are Innocent. That is why in the Judgement it says: If someone is not as he should be, he has misfortune.

If someone is not as he should be it is because they have lost their Innocence.

In regard to yourself Ki, you must ask yourself: have I lost my Innocence?

If you have not then you will know instinctively what is the right thing to do in any situation.

If you have then your instinctive reaction will be wrong.

Well? Have you lost your Innocence?'

'I have not.' Ki replies immediately.

'What does your instinctive reaction say about you following the path of knowledge?'

'It says it is the right path for me.'

'It is the right path for you. I instinctively knew that when we first met. I have not lost my Innocence and so I knew immediately.'

'You are a very bad teacher but a sage never the less.' Says Ki with flattering admiration.

Yong laughs out loud. 'Perhaps. One day.'

'Must you find this hidden language of the holistic nature of reality before you can?' Ki asks with sincerity.

'I think that's what it is.' Yong sighs. 'I'm not certain. When the ancient sages wrote the Great 'I', my assumption is that they wrote it originally in this language. A specific language for the holistic nature of reality. The literati and scholar officials have produced over the millennia, different formal languages for different subjects. Scholar officials have to learn the specific formal language for the subject they deal with.' Yong can see confusion on Ki's face. 'Surely you know this?'

'I know only of it. Having not learned a formal language I have little real understanding of formal languages. Do you think I should learn them?'

'At least one, so that you have a better understanding of what they consist. However, you understand the concept: a specific language for a specific subject. I see this holistic language in the same vein as formal languages. It's a language specifically made for communicating an understanding of the holistic nature of reality. Or at least I hope that's what it is. If it exists.' He sees raised eyebrows and puffed out cheeks before him. 'I'm sorry Ki. The truth is that I have neither proof of its existence, nor what it is, if it does exist. The only thing I really do know is that there is something missing in our understanding of the Great 'I'. We don't know how it works for a start. There would have to be some kind of connection between the Great 'I' and the nature of reality. I am assuming that the connection is in a language specifically designed for that purpose. But then, I could be wrong.'

'I follow your reasoning Master Shao, but all I can say is that you could be right. It is a possibility.' Ki changes tack. 'What has this journey you have undertaken to do with finding this language?'

'A good question. I had hoped by putting myself in the mind of the sage, Confucius, that I would glean an insight. Knowing

what Confucius wrote about the Great 'I' through the Ten Wings, and, knowing what he saw of the natural world he travelled through, this combination would reap benefits.'

'Has it reaped benefits?'

'It has.' Yong laughs. 'Only I don't know what they are.'

'Is the path of knowledge always so difficult?'

'When you get to the cutting edge of man's knowledge, it certainly is. But I think that difficult is the wrong word as it implies something negative. The path of knowledge should inspire us, make us search for creative solutions, seek out insights but most of all fill us with joy which is a refreshing and vitalizing force. If you do not enjoy the path there is little point of being on it. The Great 'I' says this:

Lake upon Lake,

The Image of the Joyous.

Thus the superior man joins with his friends

For discussion and practice.

Is this not what we are doing now?'

'It is. And it is indeed joyous.' Says Ki, confident in his assertion.

They help each other up by means of outstretched hands.

They mount their horses and ride into Zhucheng. They ride into the centre of town which is marked by a five metre stele commemorating the Song Dynasty under Shengzong (982-1031 C.E.)

Whatever they were expecting they were not expecting what they found. Streets upon streets of shops filled with bolts of silk of every kind, of every colour and every design. The open fronts to these shops are set under the overhang of the floor above and on a wide broad walk made of wood a good half a metre above the street.

Rich merchants from all over China engage in vigorous barter with their silk merchant counter partners making for a lively if noisy atmosphere. Carts of every description line the streets being filled with silk or being unloaded from the surrounding warehouses of what is the very centre of the silk trade in northern China.

Search as they must for accommodation, it is fruitless as every teahouse is full beyond capacity. The large pleasure district of places to eat and objects to buy are also packed to capacity. They finally find accommodation in the stables they find for their horses, in a loft filled with hay.

Stretching their legs they walk into the mayhem of commerce and are soon absorbed. The path of knowledge disappears in the chaos of their senses and the mundane world of a flourishing civilization.

What would the great sage have made of all this?

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Innocent behaviour brings

Good fortune.

Changing Line in the second place means:

Each act should be completed for its own sake.

In this way man's intuitive instinct holds true.

It furthers one to undertake something.

Changing Line in the third place means:

No matter how Innocent we are,

We must still accord with the time,

Or undeserved

Misfortune follows.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

Remain true to man's original Innocent nature.

Avoid the persuasive arguments of others.

Follow this and remain

Without blame.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

Leading an Innocent natural life,

The superior man trusts the body to heal itself.

Good Fortune.

Changing Line at the top means:

Forcing the issue against the power of destiny

Only brings

Misfortune.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Pushing Upward (55)

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==  ==
==  ==  Earth
==  ==
=====
=====  Wind/Wood
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THE IMAGE

Within the Earth Wood grows:

The Image of PUSHING UP.

The superior man moves up

Without haste but with continuous application.

He will surely achieve something great.

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Chapter 25

Retreat (7)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

18th Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Morning

=====

===== Heaven

=====

=====

== == Mountain

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THE IMAGE

The stationary Mountain under the upward movement of Heaven:

The Image of RETREAT.

In a time of confusion,

The superior man shows his strength by dignified reserve.

“Tzu-lu said, ‘The ruler of Wei is waiting for you to serve him in his administration. What will be your first measure?’ Confucius said, ‘It will certainly concern the rectification of names.’ Tzu-lu said, ‘Is that so? You are wide of the mark. Why should there be a rectification?’ Confucius said, ‘Tzu-lu! How uncultivated you are! With regard to what he does not know, the superior man should maintain an attitude of reserve. If names are not rectified then language will not be in accord with truth. If language is not in accord with truth, then things cannot be accomplished. If things cannot be accomplished, then ceremonies and music will not flourish. If ceremonies and music do not flourish, then punishments will not be just. If punishments are not just, then the people will not know how to move hand and foot. Therefore, the superior man will give only names that can be described in speech and say only what can be carried out in practice. With regard to his speech, the superior man does not take it lightly.’”

From the Analects. 13:3.



Zhucheng is in ruins. It has never recovered from the Jürgen invasion when it was looted and in most part destroyed by fire. The roads in the form of a grid are still visible, just. Where the houses and shops stood are now a collection of copses. Some of these squares contain quite large trees, the ground being made fertile by the burnt wood of the houses. The spill over from these square copses have seeded the roads but lacking the fertility of the squares have remained in large part free of growth.

It has a strange atmosphere. Not least around the five metre stele in the very centre of Zhucheng. Where once it stood erect and proud it now lies at an angle of sixty degrees to the horizontal covered in moss and lichen with rotten ropes twisted near the point that hang like the strands of hair of some old hag.

An excellent place for an Assassin to launch a fanatical attack, Kadai's bodyguard form a line of defence either side of the column.

They walk their horses through the ruined town, the horses adding to the cover of Kublai's person. Now back in Han clothing he walks amongst the Han, a further attempt at disguising his exact position.

'In Quiu they call this the City of Ghosts.' Says Bao to Kublai. 'On a full moon, that cycle of the moon when the town was destroyed, the dead come out to ply their trades as in

life. Bolts of silk fly through the air unravelling as they go as they search for their former homes.'

'Who told you that, brother dearest?' Says Ling-ling with incredulity, from the other side of Bao.

'A ghost I met in the cemetery in Quiu. Who else would know of such things?' Says Bao in a matter of fact way.

'You must not take any notice of my brother, Kublai. He tries to play us like children, knowing full well that ghosts do not exist. They are instruments of the imagination that we use to frighten children with.'

'Why frighten children?' Asks Kublai in sincerity.

'So they may have their fears dispelled by an understanding of Buddhism. Ignorance dispelled by knowledge.' Ling-ling recites the famous proposition from the Buddhist canon.

'What a sad world it would be without ghosts. So, if you and the Buddha don't mind, I will carry on believing in ghosts.' He points to the horizon off to his right. 'See, a bolt of silk unravelled. It flies across the sky like a long flag.'

The others around Bao look to the horizon and see a long flag flying through the air as if lost from its pole.

Kadai's Captain of his bodyguard, Guai, jumps on his horse and sets off at a gallop in pursuit of this strange phenomena.

'He wastes his time.' Says Bao with forced confidence. 'He is chasing ghosts. A futile pastime as they do not exist.'

'I believe you have just swapped horses.' Says Ling-ling, then she speaks to Kublai around Bao. 'He often does this just to win an argument. Thinking, somehow, we will not notice.'

Kublai to Ling-ling around Bao. 'Having been brought up with your brother you must be fully aware of his devious nature.'

'Unfortunately, some of it has transferred itself to me. If I cannot rid myself of this burden, it will be one more time around the wheel.' Says Ling-ling in mock sadness.

'Have you not any shame ...' Kublai trails off as Guai returns with an arrow sticking out of his saddle.

'An ambush.' Says Guai. 'He could easily have killed me.'

'But that was not his intention. He wishes to break up our defence.' Kadai shouts out loud so the entire column can hear.

'Now we must ride in the close formation of rolling thunder until we reach open ground.

The entire column mounts and start at a cantor with Kadai standing on his stirrups and checking to see that the column is in the right formation with the bulging head followed by a trailing arm to where another bulging head is formed by the spare horses and the other trailing arm of the rear guard, ending with the last man who is often referred to as the dead man, who in this case is Asutai. With the rolling thunder formed to perfection Kadai points with his sword in the air and then to the direction. The whole column breaks into a gallop and they exit the City of Ghosts in an unstoppable charge.

*

Several kilometres out into the open countryside the column comes to a halt to rest the horses. The rear guard fan out behind the column in defensive formation before dismounting.

Only then does Asutai join the others around Kadai who speaks directly to him. 'You know this terrain better than anyone. Where would you suggest we set up camp tonight?'

'It is too far to make Qingdao in one last push. Open ground with short grass. This grass' he points to the grass either side 'is too long, filled as it is with wheat run wild. It provides too much cover for a slithering snake.'

'I know a place, northeast from here into those forests.' Says Tai, to the surprise of everyone. 'The Taoist illuminate I met in the Tai Shan range informed me. It is a Taoist monastery guarded by the natural world. There we will find sanctuary.'

Kadai goes to object but is cut off by Kublai. 'Twice before Tai has saved my life by her mystical knowledge. If she says we will find sanctuary then that is what we will find. Once the horses are rested, then you' he turns to Tai 'will lead the way.'

*

The forest is dense and silent with only animal tracks to indicate that living creatures live here. Tai leads, pulled by a force only she can feel. She leads them into a secret valley the base of which is flat and cultivated. In the middle, next to a large stream, stands the Taoist monastery. Stone built it looks more like a craggy outcrop of rock with its irregular outline and its irregular ground plan.

The monks, working in the fields, run to a cave like entrance in one of its many irregular walls on seeing the Mongolians arrive.

'Wait here.' Tai says to the company. 'You, however, must come with me.' She says to Kublai.

They cantor up to the entrance then walk their horses through solid rock into a large courtyard. Twelve monks stand in a line dressed in brown robes their hands crossed in front of them. Behind them thirty novices dressed in blue and of varying age and sex from as young as five up to fifteen stand in perfect Tai Chi posture.

A monk in his thirties addresses Tai and Kublai as they halt and dismount. 'Welcome, you are expected. Have your men camp outside of the monastery but bring in Kadai and the Song Chinese. You will sleep in the tower we keep for honoured guests.' He claps his hands, to which the entire gathering breaks into brisk activity. 'Your horses can feed on the area we have allowed to remain fallow. Let the novices guide your men to where they should be. There is not the danger you expect so your men can rest in confidence.'

Kublai is confronted by a group of novices waiting for his lead. His horse is taken from him as he walks outside and gives instruction.

Tai joins the spokesman, the only man left in the courtyard. 'The Master is not here. He will join you on Lao Shan at the appointed time.' He points the way with his arm. 'Let me show you to your quarters.'

Tai follows the monk through a small opening into solid rock where a staircase has been hued and leads to an open space ten metres above. Rooms surround the space on three sides leaving one open and without even a wall to protect from the ten metre fall.

'Water for washing you can find in there.' He points. 'Food will be served once the sun has set and again after the sun has risen. I wish you a goodnight's sleep and a fruitful journey.' He smiles for the first time. A smile of knowing.

*

The meal was simple enough and nourishing and even tasty. So as the Han and the two Mongolians, Kublai and Kadai, lie back on mattresses of stuffed straw, it is with a feeling of deep contentment. The warmth of the fire they are gathered around,

set as it is in a rock carved fire place, in a rock carved onion shaped room that has a good twenty small windows that have been burrowed through the rock to provide day light, the warmth in this nature inspired room has its occupants drifting off into sleep.

They are woken by thunder overhead. So loud that the novices in their beds cry out in fear which turns into distant laughter that the company in the onion shaped room soon join in. Shock followed by fear followed by laughter followed by an intense wakefulness has them all talking at once.

Bao pushes the heavy drape that covers the entrance to the room aside and walks along the twisting rock carved tunnel until he arrives on the open sided area of their privileged abode. The falling rain suddenly increases in strength with blasts of wind that soon sends him scurrying back to the warmth of the fire but not before he relieves himself of a full bladder by sending an arc of piss towards the open side.

The conversation he returns to is filled with laughter, the source of which he is not to find out, as Tai soon followed by Ling-ling turn him around and pull him back to the open area.

'Why do you need me? I cannot piss for you.' He pleads in whining tones.

'We need you to protect us from the storm.' Says Tai in frustrated tones. 'Hold out your fur coat.'

She holds it out for him and he complies by holding out the coat with outstretched arms. Tai and Ling-ling who have both removed their coats cuddle in beside him and they set off sideways, crab like, with their backs to the storm to the other side of the open space into the washing room.

'Don't go away. You must stand guard as there is only a drape to protect our virtue.' Directs Tai. She turns up the lamp and joins Ling-ling on the two toilet seats carved into the solid stone. 'What a relief.'

'It's the sound of running water. It does it for me every time. Looking around. 'Where is the toilet paper?'

'You will just have to wash yourself as we do on the island.' Says Bao with mounting frustration. 'Or do you want me to. Like I used to when you were small.' The thought changes his mood. 'You were such a sweet heart when you were small.'

'Pass me that bowl.' Tai directs.

'There's one beside you.' Says Bao. 'Or would you like me to rub you clean.' Bao adds with wicked glee.

'Do not be disgusting. You get worse the older you get.'

'He was always disgusting. I grew up thinking all men were like that.' Says Ling-ling with affection.

'All men are like that. It's just that I'm honest about it and most men are not.' Says Bao with strength.

'So true, so true.' Says Tai with resignation.

'Even Shi lets the mask of protocol fall from time to time. He can be quite disgusting at times.' Says Ling-ling with sincerity.

'Oh, do tell.' Says Tai, allowing her girlish self some exercise.

'For all those who suffer under Heaven. Give me strength.' Pleads Bao.

'I'd better not. It might give my brother ideas.' Ling-ling then adds. 'I'll tell you later.'

'If you don't hurry up I'll leave without you.'

The girls quickly finish and crab like all three return to the onion shaped room.

Kublai and Kadai leave for their ablutions as soon as Bao, his sister and wife, return.

Shi checks to see if the passage is free from prying ears.

'What news of Miko?' He enquires of Tai.

'He is one days sailing from the Island of Lingshan where he will remain hidden on the south side until we are ready.'

'How long will it take him to arrive in Qingdao once you have summoned him?' Having stayed by the drape he now has a peak into the tunnel.

'That depends on wind, tide and currents. Probably, or at least the best estimate that is possible to make it from where he is now to Qingdao, is half a day. But, it could take twice that long if everything is against him.' Tai raises her eyebrows as a means of communicating that the imprecise nature of her answer is unavoidable.

'That's not so bad.' Says Ling-ling to her husband.

'It is not.' He sighs. 'It is just, that as we have finished our main task of making contact with those in the northern bureaucracy, those that still hold to *this culture of ours*, that we could be gone from here by tomorrow night.'

'Shi, it will never happen. We have a meeting with destiny on the slopes of Laoshan. Kublai can feel it, as I can.' Says Bao.

'They are both right Shi. It is destiny that brings us together. It will be played out. As it should.' Tai speaks from knowledge.

Shi looks behind the drape. 'They return. Take up your places and talk about the weather.'

Bao plays the cryptic. 'An early spring invites the foolish farmer to plant early. Thus risking a late frost and failure.'

Kublai and Kadai enter. 'What is this about a late frost?' Asks Kadai.

'It is the early spring. At this time of year late frosts can devastate harvests.' Says Bao.

'Of these agrarian matters we have little knowledge.' Says Kadai, then adds. 'Surely, the I Ching can forecast these things?'

'The Great I reveals knowledge about man's relationship with his fellow man, in the main.' Says Bao. 'But what a good idea for passing the time. Kadai you have already had a reading. So it must be Kublai's turn.'

'How is it possible when you have not a copy of this ancient book of wisdom with you?' Kublai states with suspicious certainty.

'Ah.' Says a smiling Bao. 'There are two copies in this very room. Can you guess where they are?'

Shi can see that Kublai is wondering if this is a trick question and springs to his aid. 'Kublai, when we are young we learn the characters. Between the ages of five and eight we have to learn three thousand characters. How to write them thus how to read them and to understand their meaning and how to use them together. This is achieved by telling a story about each character, either in its construction or in its meaning. This produces a mind in the child that can readily memorize vast quantities of information. And, this ability stays with us for the rest of our lives. Memorizing the Great

'I' in its entirety is easy for us. There are standard questions in the Jinshi examinations that test our understanding of the Great 'I'. These are considered easy questions by the students because they depend on memory alone. Unless, of course, you just so happen to be named Shao Bao 'Bao takes a bow 'and insists on giving his own interpretation. For which he is roundly criticised by teachers and examiners alike.'

'They still passed me because my interpretations were often better than the ones we were meant to memorize.' Says Bao with a smug smile.

'That is not the reason. They passed you because to come up with these unique interpretations showed that you had a great understanding of the Great 'I' that we were all meant to memorize.' Says Shi with uncompromising certainty.

'This is also true.' Says Bao, then conspiratorially to Kublai. 'You have little idea how boring it is just to memorize things.'

Shi presents Bao with the direction of his arm. 'Here we have the man revealed. Like his ancient ancestor before him, Shao Yong, he insists on seeing everything from his own perspective.'

'The perspective of creative genius.' Says Bao with arrogance dripping from him like sweat from a hardworking man.

'One, six.' Says Tai with annoyance.

'One, six.' Say Shi and Ling-ling together.

Bao sighs and allows his eyes to wander up into the onion shaped roof of the room.

'What is this, one, six?' Begs Kublai.

'Tell him.' Says Tai in a quiet but demanding tone.

The eyes wander back down and fix on Kublai. 'One is the number of Heaven in the Great 'I'. Six is the number of the changing line. It is the top line in the hexagram.'

'Now tell him what it means.' Says Ling-ling with unconcealed merriment.

The sigh is long and exaggerated. 'It means: the Arrogant Dragon has cause to repent.'

Kublai and Kadai can see how accurate and humorous it is.

'Do you repent often?' Asks Kadai.

'I have taken to repenting all of the time and that way I can continue to exercise my creative genius at will.'

'See the devious and cunning nature of the Arrogant Dragon and weep.' Says Shi with force.

Bao can't look at him. Nor can he look at Tai or Ling-ling, so he changes direction. He pulls out from his bag a bamboo tube some twenty centimetres long and some seven centimetres in diameter. It has a bamboo cap on each end. One has the character for Heaven in silver imbedded on the top. The other has the character of Earth imbedded on its top. He bangs the symbol of Earth on the floor in front of him, once, then twice. He then removes the cap with the symbol of Heaven and places it to one side. Turning the tube on its side he changes his hand hold, places the open end on the floor and stands the tube upright. He raises it slowly until he can grasp the yarrow sticks now standing on the floor but still inside the bamboo tube. Lifting the tube over the yarrow sticks he places it to one side. Taking the yarrow sticks in one hand he removes one with his other hand. 'This yarrow stick represents the unity of nature and does not play any further part in the reading. What we are left with are forty nine yarrow sticks which will decide the reading that you will be delivered. Now, ask your question.'

Kublai thinks only for a moment. 'How will I become Great Khan?'

Bao has Kublai divide the yarrow stalks roughly into two heaps. Bao takes a yarrow stalk from the right hand heap and puts it between the little finger and the one next to it.

Bao places the left heap in his left hand and his right hand takes from it bundles of four until there are four or fewer stalks are remaining. This remainder Bao places between Kublai's middle finger and the one next to it.

[This procedure is fully explained in the Appendix.]

Bao finally stops writing. 'The category of change that the Great 'I' has delivered to your question is: Retreat. It has produced six changing lines thus delivering the transformation: Approach.'

'This is all very well but what does it mean.' Kublai asks sounding a little frustrated.

Bao presents Shi by means of his outstretched arm. 'Shi, tonight, plays the living embodiment of the Great 'I'.'

Shi speaks slowly and with clarity. 'The Judgment of Retreat is as follows:

Retreat. Success.

In what is small,

Perseverance furthers.'

He changes to an explanatory tone. 'Retreat is not flight. Flight is when one flees to save one's own life at whatever cost. Retreat is an organized withdrawal. Performed when the enemy is in a superior position. This allows one to retain one's forces so that they can be used in better circumstances. Learning to read the situation is essential. This is not easy. Knowledge of one's enemies' place in time and space, their intentions and their weaknesses are all elements for a successful outcome.'

He changes back to the slow clarity that he began with. 'The Image of Retreat is as follows:

Mountain under Heaven: The Image of Retreat.

Thus the superior man keeps inferior men at a distance.

Not with anger but with reserve.'

He changes to an explanatory tone. 'The Mountain remains still and Heaven retreats before its presence following its natural movement which is up. In its subtle form this can be expressed as a man in a superior position being approached by an inferior man who wishes to curry favour. The superior man retreats into his own Inner Truth thus avoiding conflict through a direct rejection. Instilling hatred in those of an inferior position is equally as bad as hating those in inferior positions. Both can be avoided by dignified reserve.'

Bao adds. 'You must not underestimate the concept of Retreat which is multifaceted, sophisticated and subtle.'

'Shall I continue?' Shi says sternly.

'I was merely pointing out to a man, who does not have our understanding of the Great 'I', that the example that the Great 'I' provides is set firmly upon a general principle. Namely: The multifaceted, sophisticated and subtle nature of the concepts used in the Images.'

'Shall I continue?'

Bao bows.

'If you follow the advice given by the Great 'I' then you will be successful and this will lead to a clear indication of what is possible. The indication here is that the category of Change is Approach.' He says this in his explanatory tone. Then he changes tone to the slow clarity of the reading.

The Judgement of Approach is as follows:

Approach has supreme success.

Perseverance furthers.

When the eighth month comes,

There will be misfortune.'

He changes back to his explanatory tone. 'The hexagram as a whole points to joy and progress. Success is certain. But these times do not last forever. Knowing this you must take notice of the change that is to come and prepare accordingly.'

Then back to his original tone.

'The Image of Approach:

The Earth above the Lake:

The Image of Approach.

Thus the superior man is inexhaustible

In his will to teach,

And without limits

In his tolerance and protection of the people.'

Then back to his explanatory tone. 'Here, the superior man acts like a sage. Teaching the people and is without limits in his tolerance and protection of them.'

'Once you become Great Khan then this is how you must act.'
Says Bao. 'Sound advice.'

Kublai turns to Kadai for his opinion. 'It sounds very good advice to me.'

'But first I must take the advice given by Retreat before I can become Great Khan?' he asks of Bao.

'I will write it all down for you because you have six changing lines which in their entirety must be considered to

achieve your destiny.' Says Bao, who changes tone to something more final. 'In all, a very good reading.'

Bao lies back on his mattress and closes his eyes. The rest follow suit and soon they are all a sleep.

*

A line of blue clad novices lead the Mongolians and the Han through the forest until they break into open ground. They stand to one side and once the company has exited the forest they disappear back to from whence they came.

'What say you about this monastery?' Asks Kublai of Tai who is looking back to the forest with curiosity.

'It does not exist. Not least in this world. I believe we visited another world. A world that runs parallel with ours that under normal circumstances we do not have access to.' She turns to Kublai. 'We should think ourselves privileged.'

She gives him a smile then rides out at a cantor leading the company into the south east.

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

At the tail-end of any retreat is a dangerous place to be.

The combatants are close and confusion reigns supreme.

Danger.

Changing Line in the second place means:

The combatants have become entwined and no separation is possible.

Danger manifest.

Changing Line in the third place means:

The retreat has been halted bringing danger to all.

Misfortune.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

The superior man only retreats voluntarily.

His previous preparations and strength of purpose,

Makes his retreat a

Success.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

When deciding when to retreat,

Timing is everything.

Avoid irrelevant considerations.

Changing Line at the top means:

The right time has been chosen and the retreat is successful.

Good fortune.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Approach (56)

==	==	
==	==	Earth
==	==	
==	==	
=====		Lake
=====		

THE IMAGE

The Lake rises up shaping the Earth:

The Image of APPROACH.

Thus the superior man

Has the depth of a Lake

In his endeavours

To teach and protect the people.

Chapter 26

Resoluteness (6)

The Song Dynasty

1059 C.E.

19th Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Day

== ==

===== Lake

=====

=====

===== Heaven

=====

THE IMAGE

The Lake has risen to Heaven:

The Image of RESOLUTENESS.

Thus the superior man showers riches on his fellows,

While promoting his virtue by self-cultivation.

“Confucius said, ‘I do not wish to say anything.’ Tzu-kung said, ‘If you do not say anything, what can we little disciples ever learn to pass on to others?’ Confucius said, ‘Does Heaven say anything? The four seasons run their course and all things are produced. Does Heaven say anything?’”

From the Analects. 17:19.

*

As Yong and Ki approach Qingdao the number of fellow travellers increases in both directions. When arriving at the outskirts of the town they notice camps on either side of the road. The side nearest the town has fairly sturdy wooden shacks. On the other side they are made from bamboo and are much more flimsy.

The town is entered by a gate where sleepy militia men watch those coming and going through half closed eyes.

Once through the gate the road runs alongside the beach of to the left with the town on the other side of the road to the right. The buildings facing the ocean are mainly two stories high but there are single storied houses scattered along the length.

The shingle beach off to the left is several metres below the road and plays host to a line of coastal traders; single mast boats some fifteen to twenty metres in length. These are being loaded with bolts of silk in their protective linen coverings.

The scene is one of extraordinary vitality with lines of men passing the bolts down to the coastal traders from carts on the road. With some boats unloading goods being delivered to the town.

This seafront is about one quarter of a kilometre long and at the end is a long jetty that stretches out into the ocean and then has a T-jetty capping its end. Tied to this structure are big ships, some sixty metres in length, having two and three masts.

Yong and Ki are impressed to the point of surprise as both had been expecting a fishing village rather than the busy port they are now confronted by.

A man dressed in the manner of a merchant observes them from a teahouse once they have pulled up their horses to take in the

view. He stands up and walks across to the entrance to get a better look. A smile slowly comes to his face, a smile of recognition. He leaves the teahouse and crosses the bus road coming up alongside Yong and Ki. 'It is you.' He says to Yong. 'What is the recluse of Loyang doing in Qingdao?'

Yong turns to the man with curiosity. 'Do I know you?'

'Forgive me.' He bows. 'Su Ch'ung, the Department of Revenue, at your service.'

'A scholar official? Why are you not wearing your robes?'

'It brings too much attention. I like to observe without any attention. Please' he swings around and directs with his arm 'will you join me for some rather excellent tea. All the way from Chekiang.'

Yong is impressed. 'Chekiang has some of the finest tea in all China.' He hesitates. 'I suppose I should not be surprized. Qingdao is proving to be full of surprizes. A large port where there should be a fishing village. Tea of exceptional quality that is usually reserved for the Capital and a scholar official in disguise.' He turns to Ki. 'What say you?'

'I am dry in the mouth and the mention of a fine tea is bringing on a thirst.'

They dismount, tying their horses to a post outside of the teahouse and join Su Ch'ung on the veranda.

'Are you from Loyang?' Asks Yong.

'Kaifeng. You are famous amongst scholar officials in the Capital. Along with the Cheng brothers and their uncle Chang Tsai.'

'What grade are you?' Asks Yong with mounting curiosity.

'Grade six.' Ch'ung notes Yong's surprized expression. 'I am older than I look being all of fifty years.'

'Indeed. You look younger than me and by some years. But how did you recognize me? Have we met?'

'My work takes me to many places including Loyang. You were pointed out to me by a scholar official who works for the Department in Loyang.'

'And what exactly is the nature of the work you do?'

A servant comes out and Ch'ung directs her to bring out tea for Yong and Ki. 'I assess districts for the Department. It involves a lot of travel which suits my temperament.'

'And by the looks of you, your body.' Says Yong with just a hint of jealousy.

Ch'ung's smile has a natural look and plays well on his face which is all for the better as he smiles a lot. 'Are you on a pilgrimage?'

Yong laughs. 'In a way. Lao Shan is a place that the sage often used to teach his many students. Though, of course, it is not as famous as Tai Shan. But you have raised my curiosity. How do you assess a district for revenue purposes?'

'Ask a philosopher a question and receive several in return.' Ch'ung mildly chides in a humorous way.

The tea arrives. Followed by much sipping then much praise. After a while Ch'ung begins. 'Have you heard of She Ye?'

'I have not.'

'He is a grade four in the Department of Revenue. He has advanced the role of taxation. Developing an entirely new set of principles that govern not just tax but also money, investment and financial governance. He calls this Development Economics. He advances the idea that development in social organizations is like the development of a tree from seed to seedling to sapling to young tree to mature tree. When a seed germinates it needs all the help it can get to become a seedling with its first leaves and roots. Think of the seed as an idea that some man has to get on in life. This idea needs to become reality which equates, in this metaphor, to the seedling. What this man's idea does not need at this stage is to have it taxed. Indeed, it is so fragile that taxation if applied too soon will destroy it. Even a sapling that is deprived of nourishment will not survive. Taxation must wait until the sapling has turned into a young tree which is producing fruit. Then taxation is like the farmer harvesting the fruit. It does not hurt the tree or its development into a mature tree.'

'And it is your job to assess when the sapling has turned into a tree, correct?'

'Correct. The idea is simple enough, however, the practice is far more complex. Take Qingdao. The Department of Revenue was

alerted by the scholar official in Quiu that revenue from the region had declined and that was because most of the bolts of silk were not being sent through Quiu anymore but were being sent to Qingdao to be shipped. Rather than sent by cart to the grand canal to be shipped which is three and four times the distance and therefore three and four times the cost. Once our scholar official in Quiu had informed the department of what was happening, I was sent to assess the situation. What a surprize. Qingdao was listed in our records as a fishing village of little consequence. But what did I find? A port of considerable size and of considerable consequence.'

'Ripe for the picking.' Says Ki practising the art of the extended metaphor.'

'Precisely.' Says Ch'ung. Then to Yong. 'Your student is does you credit.

'Unfortunately, I cannot claim credit.' Says Yong. 'He had these skills before we met.'

'My Master is a very bad teacher.' Says Ki with humour. 'Yet I have learned more from him than from those who claim to be good teachers.'

'Philosophers often break the rules in their quest to establish new principles. Your Master is famous for this.' Ch'ung speaks with praise.

'Not without criticism.' Says Yong, thinking of his friend Cheng I. 'One must be brave. Especially when your only ally is one's Inner Truth.'

'None could accuse Master Shao Yong of being a coward in this respect.' Ch'ung speaks to Ki. 'I doubt I could be so brave, but then, your Master holds a special place amongst those who lead the call for a reformation of Confucianism. What role he plays could be considered that of the sound box of a lute, excuse my metaphor, but if it resonates with him it must be that of a pure note, and as such, of considerable use to those reformers he is surrounded by.'

'Is this how it is?' Asks Ki of Yong.

'Master Su Ch'ung sings my praises with a little too much treble and not enough base.'

They all laugh.

'Come. You shall be my guests. For I am in a privileged position and can find you accommodation in a town that has none.'

Ch'ung leads the way through a maze of back streets until they arrive into the main street that runs parallel with the beach side road. The houses here of wooden two and three storied houses with shops on the ground floor and accommodation above the like of which you will find all over China. The exception is a large stone building near the end of the street close to the jetty. As they are walking in that direction Yong soon asks the question. 'What is that stone building further down the street?'

'That was the original warehouse used by the manufacturing companies when they first started shipping by sea. Once business expanded and the entire system changed it became surplus to requirements. The local people purchased it and converted it into a theatre. Where good masters we will be going tonight. A production by the famous Golden Globe Players of that most famous of plays, Heaven, Earth and the Myriad Things, will entertain us this very evening.' Says Ch'ung with enthusiasm.

'I suspect my student has not had the privilege of witnessing the Golden Globe players so it will be good for his education. I am amazed that such illustrious actors would play at such a venue.' States Yong as a question.

'Indeed. It shows how much development there has been in recent years. This town is not a seedling nor even a sapling but can be already be described as a young tree.'

'Ripe for picking.' Says Ki with a sort of naughty glee.

'Indeed.' Says Ch'ung in much the same vein.

They arrive outside a large three storied teahouse with balconies on all floors, The Waterman Teahouse .

'The best accommodation in town. If you wait here I will arrange things and have the stable boys come out and take care of your horses. If anyone asks, you are working for the Department of Revenue.' Ch'ung says conspiratorially.

After Ch'ung retires inside, Ki asks Yong. 'Is this how it works?'

'If you mean by that, is it who you know that matters. The answer is, of course. It probably always has been and probably

always will.' Ki looks slightly dejected so Yong continues. 'I remember feeling the same way as you do now, when I was a young man. It all seems terribly unfair.' Seeing Ki is overcome by the unfairness of life, Yong continues further. 'I came to accept it as a law of nature; knowing that it is not. But it just might as well be.'

'It is times like these when I feel like becoming Taoist or even a Buddhist.'

Ki's dejected tone prompts Yong into an admonishment. 'Take care not to fall prey to your emotions. A follower of the path of knowledge must remain detached at all times. Even in the face of such obvious unfairness, hold true to your Inner Truth by whatever means, but remember, these social ills should be viewed as objects for understanding for anyone on the path of knowledge.'

'I will practice detachment.' Says Ki with strength.

'We cannot be deflected from our main purpose. Which is?'

'Knowledge.'

'You will become a sage if you only remember those two things.' Says Yong with conviction.

The stable boys arrive and take their horses as a servant shows them inside.

*

Yong, Ki and Ch'ung step out into the last of the light of day. The sun having set there is a red glow in the west that sends fingers of orange along the horizon.

The shops are lit up displaying a rich variety of goods for sale. The street is full of people looking as scrubbed as the three members of the literati now walking with purpose to the theatre.

Ki could not help but feel pride to be walking in the middle of such worthies. Ch'ung to his right was a sixth grade scholar official with real social power and to his left the famous Recluse of Loyang. They were Heroes, in the traditional sense.

The sign outside of the theatre proclaimed: Heaven, Earth and the Myriad Things, presented by the Golden Globe Players.

They join the end of the queue the last of which is just entering the theatre. Ch'ung pays for all three. Ki is pleased

that he pays rather than assert his authority to gain free access.

Once inside they can see that the hall is almost full. The low level lamps lend a special atmosphere of warmth and comfort to what is a stone warehouse.

Ch'ung leads them to the back to where there are a few empty seats. Passing these he takes up a position on a raised row of benches. From this position they have a clear view of the stage above the heads of the rest of the audience.

The door is locked, the side lights are dimmed, the stage lights brought up and all achieved by men dressed in black.

A stage hand walks through the curtains and pronounces.

'Please silence for the narrator.' He exits stage left as a tall man dressed in long flowing robes enters stage right.

'What we present here tonight is a Great Conceit. The meeting of two great worthies who were contemporaries. Mencius and Chuang Tzu, before a classic mime performance of Heaven, Earth and the Myriad Things. Mencius having invited Chuang Tzu to visit him was disappointed that Chuang Tzu had not taken up his invite, so he journeyed to see him. Mencius finds him watching the mime performance. This mime performance is presented here as the backdrop to their conversation. A conversation that centres on the Tao Te Ching, the Taoist classic of Lao Tzu. If I were to say more it would be an insult to this noble audience.' He bows to the horizontal and exits stage left.

The curtain parts to reveal a line of the Myriad things dressed in highly decorative costumes. Here a tree with branches for arms and a headdress of twigs covered in leaves. Here a bird with feathered wings for arms and a long beak. Here a pig all pink and fat but standing on two piggy legs with a piggy face and upturned snout. Here a mountain tall with its snow covered peak and stony base. Here a river swaying with shimmering light. Here an ordinary man in the garb of a farmer. Here a further ten members of the Myriad Things easily recognized by their sumptuous dress. They are frozen in situ, waiting for the arrival of Heaven and Earth. They have not long to wait. Through the floor comes the Tiger. Descending from above the Dragon. Facing the audience they bow to the horizontal.

The audience as one stand and bow to the horizontal. Ki has to jump to his feet as he realizes that Yong and Ch'ung are

already on their feet and bowing. He bows in catch up, retaking his seat a moment after Yong and Ch'ung have taken theirs.

Heaven and Earth turn to each other and bow then turning again they bow to the Myriad Things who bow in synchronicity. Joining hands Heaven and Earth and the Myriad Things form a circle and dance in the direction of their left hands then turn and dance in the direction of their right hands finally breaking off and ending in a straight line facing the audience with Heaven and Earth in the centre. Breaking hands Heaven and Earth lead their lines in forming two circles in dance. Then entwining, they form a figure of eight passing between each other with precise skill.

An extra tall figure is lit up by the stage lights. He stands watching the performance from the edge of the stage. Another extra tall figure enters stage right. He walks across to the first figure.

'At last, Chuang Tzu, there you are.'

'At first, Mencius, here you are.'

They wear outsized masks that cover their faces from the nose up. Giving the impression of heads that are in keeping with the tallness of their bodies. The whiteness of their faces both on their masks and on their actual faces is contrasted with extra wide red lips that are wonderfully animated.

'This mime theatre that you watch, is it a Taoist theme that is portrayed?'

Chuang Tzu is surprised. 'As far as I know it is Confucian in origin. As far as the theme is concerned it relates the relationships between the various characters of the Myriad Things to the essential meaning of both Heaven and Earth.'

'The man is here treated as just another member of the Myriad Things. Surely, if this was Confucian it would differentiate between Man and the Myriad Things. It does not and so it must have its origins in Taoist philosophy.' Says Mencius with authority.

'Taoist philosophy.' Chuang Tzu finds this amusing. 'If there is a Taoist philosophy then it is immersed in Lao Tzu's Tao Te Ching. I will leave you, a philosopher note, to decipher this.'

'If the Tao Te Ching is not a philosophic work, then, what is it?' Asks Mencius with genuine curiosity.

'It is a literary Classic. A story of the Way and its Virtue.' Chuang Tzu explains as if to a child.

'A story you say? You will need to explain that to me.' Says Mencius a little miffed.

Chuang Tzu turns to the audience. 'A story has a beginning, a middle and an end. The beginning is easy enough:

The Way that can be spoken of is not the constant Way;

The name that can be named is not the constant name.

The nameless is the beginning of Heaven and Earth;

The named is the mother of all things.

Thus be constantly without desire,

So as to observe its subtlety,

And have constantly have desire,

So as to observe its outcome.

These two have the same origin,

But are named differently.

Both may be called mysterious.

Mysterious and still more mysterious,

The gateway of all subtleties!

This beginning is in the tradition of all storytelling. First, it sets up what this story is about and defines what it is not about. What this story is not about is The Way.'

Mencius interrupts in annoyance. 'Surely that is its main purpose.'

'It is clearly defined in the first three lines. Where it tells the reader that The Way cannot be understood in words. Hence, it is called The Nameless. What it is about, is that The Nameless is the parent of the named, Heaven and Earth. And that Heaven and Earth are the parents of the Myriad things.' He turns to the mime performance going on behind them. 'This mime performance celebrates this fact. Second, it informs the reader that the subtleties of the story can only be understood

by detachment, lines five and six. But the Language of Emotions is needed to interpret its meaning, lines seven and eight.'

Mencius interrupts again. 'The Language of Emotions?'

'Surely you understand that there are many types of language even though they use the same characters?' Asks Chuang Tzu with amazement.

'You will have to explain this, for I have not heard of such a thing as a Language of Emotions.'

'When you read the Tao Te Ching you must be aware that its tone is pompous and its meaning is ambiguous. Here are the clues that this work is only understood by using the Language of Emotions. Pomposity is a powerful emotion that signifies importance. Ambiguity arises only if you do not use the Language of Emotions.'

'I would agree with you that it is both pompous and ambiguous. However, I did not realize that these were signifiers that this work can only be understood by using the Language of Emotions. Which is difficult if you do not know that there exists such a language. Please continue.'

'Third, it returns to Heaven and Earth, lines nine, ten and eleven. Ending in line eleven, with the statement that both can be named mysterious. This statement is mysterious indeed.'

Again Mencius interrupts. 'You can say that again.'

'This statement is mysterious indeed.' The audience laugh. 'It can only be understood if Heaven and Earth are involved in a process that brings about the Myriad Things. The mysterious process by which Heaven and Earth together bring about the Myriad Things. That's why it states in line eleven that both may be called mysterious.'

'I will have to take your word on this, as although I will admit that Heaven and Earth gives rise to the Myriad things, I do not know the process by which this is achieved.'

'This process is described by a sacred language. A language known to sages. A language that has been translated into the common language and which we know by the name the Great 'I'. Lines twelve and thirteen: Mysterious and still more mysterious, the gateway of all subtleties. The Great 'I' is the gateway to the sophistication and complexities of life.

Surely you would agree with me on this?' Asks Chuang Tzu in tones of desperation.

'The Great 'I' is as you say. This is true. But it is the first rational explanation you have so far given.' Says Mencius with near to exasperation.

'Then let us leave the beginning of this story while we are in accord. The middle of the story, all seventy nine sections ...'

Mencius interrupts Chuang Tzu once more. 'I thought there were eighty one sections?'

'There are eighty one sections in the Tao Te Ching but the first section is the beginning and the last section is the end. This leaves seventy nine sections that are the middle of the story.' Explains Chuang Tzu in exasperation.

'Ah, I see. But surely you will not go through all seventy nine sections here and now?'

'There is little need for this, as in the middle of the middle section, section thirty nine, this section encapsulates the essence of the middle of this story. Let me remind you of what it says:

Of old, amongst those that attained the One:

Heaven attained the One and thereby became clear.

Earth attained the One and thereby became quiet.

Spirit attained the One and thereby became numinous.

Valleys attained the One and thereby became full.

All beings attained the One and thereby they live.

Lords and Kings attained the One and thereby became the upright ones of the Empire.

This came about through the One,

Without what allows it to become clear Heaven might have been sundered.

Without what it allows it to become settled Earth might have been shaken.

Without what cause it to be numinous spirit might have ceased.

Without what allows them to be full the valleys might have been depleted.

Without what allows them to live all beings might have perished.

Without what allows them to be honourable and exalted Lords and Kings might have fallen.

Therefore, what is honoured is rooted in the humble and what is exalted is founded in the lowly.

This is why Lords and Kings refer to themselves as the orphaned, the lonely ones, the unfortunate.

Is this not taking humility as the root? Is it not?

Therefore if you approach a chariot and enumerate its parts you still do not have a chariot.

Seek neither to be rare like jade nor common like stone.

The important lines here are the last four. The important concept is humility. I do not need to emphasize the importance of humility to you Mencius. You have shown in your writing that you know the concept well. But did you know that true humility is not a concept at all. It is an action. That you must do the right thing at whatever cost to yourself. And only when you have acted in this manner can you say that you know what true humility is.'

'I have tried to do the right thing all of my life. It is not easy. And it can be very painful to both myself and to others. It is more often the problem of knowing what is the right thing to do, rather than acting on it.' Says Mencius thoughtfully.

'How true.' Says Chuang Tzu with satisfaction.

The silence that follows is interrupted by a man sliding down onto the stage between Mencius and Chuang Tzu, and, Heaven and Earth and the Myriad Things. The man slashes out with a sword at Heaven and Earth but only the sound of metal on metal can be heard. A great net comes over the top of the Myriad Things held on poles by those at the ends of the line of the Myriad Things. It drops behind the man and engulfs him. He is dragged through the line of the Myriad Things who make way for him and he is pulled by unseen hands through the curtains at the back of the stage. All of this in just a few moments before returning the stage to what it was before. As if nothing had happened.

'Did you see that?' Asks Su Ch'ung of Yong in surprise.

'I did.' Says Yong, equally surprised.

'They say that men of destiny when they gather together in common cause can affect the past as much as they affect the future.' Says Ki as if he were in a trance.

Ch'ung and Yong look at him in surprise. But as he is oblivious to their attention they soon return to the play.

Mencius returns to section thirty nine. 'This reference to the parts and the whole. Is this a reference to the meanings of the sections not making up the meaning of the Tao Te Ching?'

'Exactly!' Says Chuang Tzu. 'The sections have their own meanings. But putting these meanings together do not make up the Tao Te Ching.'

'And this final line: Seek neither to be rare like jade nor common like stone. Does it mean to find the middle way?' Asks Mencius.

'It can mean that but you will have to wait until the end of the story to find out what it really means.' Says Chuang Tzu with a cheery smile.

'Then, in the name of all under Heaven, get me to the end of this torrid story.' Says Mencius in frustration.

'As you wish. Section eighty one:

True words are not beautiful,

Beautiful words are not true.

Those who are good do not argue,

Those that argue are not good.

Those who know have not wide learning,

Those with wide learning do not know.

The sage does not hoard,

The more he uses on behalf of others,

The more has himself.

And the more he gives to others,

The more comes back to him.

The Way of Heaven and Earth is to bring benefit and not to harm.

The Way of the sage is to do things without contending.

So there you have it.' Says Chuang Tzu with finality.

'What?' Says Mencius almost in fury.

'The end of the story, of course.' Says Chuang Tzu.

Mencius paces up and down until he calms down. 'You will have to explain it. But please say nothing about secret languages or their signifiers.'

'It is simple. It can be read in the language of reason that you Confucians use. The first and second lines are a warning about language and the words they use, and how they are open to endless interpretation. The third and fourth lines stress the importance of harmony. The fifth and sixth lines stress the importance of simplicity. Lines seven, eight, nine, ten and eleven stress the importance of teaching. Line twelve delivers the importance of the Way of Heaven and Earth. And, line thirteen delivers the importance of the Way of the sage. There can be little you do not understand or contend with, in these lines.' Says Chuang Tzu with a deep satisfaction.

'Indeed.' Says Mencius with surprise. 'It was a simple story in the end.'

'Ah, but then, if you ask a simple story teller to explain the Tao Te Ching, what do you expect.' Says Chuang Tzu with humour.

'And if I had asked a doctor there is little doubt that he would have diagnosed a terminal illness.' Says Mencius with dark humour.

'At last. We are in accord.' Chuang Tzu says with a deep satisfaction.

'Then show me the way home before it passes.' Mencius says while looking about.

'But I have already shown you that.' Says Chuang Tzu in mock surprise.

Mencius runs off stage right to Chuang Tzu's laughter as he exits stage left.

The Myriad Things dance to the front of the stage and bow then separate to allow Heaven and Earth to come forward and bow. Then they separate to allow Mencius and Chuang Tzu to come forward and bow.

The entire audience, including Yong and Ch'ung, rise as one and bow.

Only Ki does not rise but sits in tear filled sadness.

The stage and the entire theatre goes into darkness. When the lights come up the stage is empty and soon the theatre is empty.

Yong and Ch'ung can see that Ki is greatly disturbed.

Yong sits back down next to Ki. 'Come my young friend. The night air will soon revive you.'

Yong pulls Ki up by the arm with Ch'ung helping from the other side. Ki allows himself to be guided outside and into the busy street. A street he seems oblivious to.

'Let us return to the teahouse and there we can get some refreshment for our young friend.' Says Ch'ung to Yong with concern.

As Ki walks between Yong and Ch'ung he revisits the final conversation between Chuang Tzu and Mencius. He revisits the idea that interpreting the Tao Te Ching depends on who you are and that each individual has a different way of interpreting it. This had led Ki to asking himself who he was. A common enough dilemma for young people everywhere. Only, this was the first time for Ki. As he sat watching the two sages on stage with their pronounced characters and sat in between Yong and Ch'ung with their equally pronounced characters he was overwhelmed by the lack of his own. Who was he? He then jumped to the conclusion that he wasn't anybody. And worse, that his search for knowledge was little more than a search for himself. It was a devastating conclusion to arrive at.

His self-pity overcomes him in waves. Fresh tears fall and he dives into a pit of despair.

Yong and Ch'ung guide him into the busy teahouse and to a corner seat facing an open area full of people. While Ch'ung orders tea at reception Yong questions Ki. 'What ails you Ki? Why are you so distressed?'

'I might as well be a farmer.' Ki states from a faraway place.

Ch'ung hears this as he returns and jokes. 'You would make a poor farmer. You don't moan enough to attain that exalted position.'

Yong laughs at Ch'ung's joke but it is as much from relief as he thinks he knows what ails the youth - existential angst. He suddenly jumps up and strikes an heroic pose with an arm stretched up and in line with his extended leg. He speaks with enough force to attract the attention of the people gathered there. 'I am Shao Yong. The famous recluse of Loyang. And I search for the sacred language of Heaven and Earth.' He turns to Ch'ung and by a facial expression he solicits a response from him.

Ch'ung stands up and strikes an heroic pose the mirror image of Yong's. 'I am Su Ch'ung, sixth grade scholar official and tax assessor. I seek harmony in society through the application of *this culture of ours*.'

Ch'ung and Yong look at the bewildered Ki and by facial encouragement force him to pronounce who he is.

He can hardly stand but in a wavering voice he says. 'I am Xian Ki, I am a lowly student on the path of knowledge. I search for the Way.' He collapses back into his seat and breaks into tears.

Yong and Ch'ung retake their seats and put consoling hands on his back and shoulder.

'That wasn't so difficult, now was it?' Says Yong.

Ki turns to Ch'ung. 'Are you happy and content with who you are?'

'Why would I not be happy? I implement *this culture of ours* for the benefit of all.' He looks to the watching people then back to Ki. 'Oh how they hate me. I steal their wealth like a thief in the night.' The crowd agree but not without humour. 'Yet, deep in their Inner Truth's, they know I am a necessary evil. *This culture of ours* has produced a society which allows all its members to exercise their freedom. The freedom to be creative and industrious and create wealth in great measure. They also know if they were in the land of the barbarian they would be little more than slaves. Where their hard earned wealth could be taken from them without recourse to the law. And Master Shao Yong, along with his philosopher friends, is a man set on improving *this culture of ours*. As you will in your turn.'

Ki turns to Yong. 'I know you are happy and content, Master Shao, is this the reason that Ch'ung has just pronounced?'

'It most certainly is. This quest I am on may seem to be selfish and self-centred. But, I am a Confucian. I am immersed in *this culture of ours*, as *this culture of ours* is immersed in me. When Zhou Tan wrote the Mandate of Heaven, the very core of *this culture of ours* he said this: the ruler has a duty to create a society that is not for the few, nor for the many but for everyone. My search for the sacred language of Heaven and Earth must be seen in this light. As must your journey on the path of knowledge.'

'Come.' Says Ch'ung to Yong. 'Let us take this Wanderer on the path of knowledge and show him what we have already achieved.'

They help Ki to his feet and quickly drink the tea that has just arrived then they go outside into the street followed by many of the people that have listened to their conversation.

Ch'ung addresses the dynamic scene before him. 'This did not exist but a few years ago. This is what *this culture of ours* has achieved. It is achieving this all over China, as I can personally attest to. Never before in all of Chinese history since the early Zhou period has *this culture of ours* been the ruler. Confucius tried and failed but he was not forgotten. And finally, the Song Dynasty has succeeded where even the great sage failed. Will you not be part of this by improving it for the benefit of all?'

'If I can.' Says Ki with a re-found enthusiasm. 'I have been blind to what surrounds me and looks me in the face every day.' He starts running then stops and looks back to Yong and Ch'ung. 'I must see it all with my new sight before it fades and is lost forever.'

He runs off and Yong and Ch'ung can see him stopping and looking at things before running off again until he finally disappears into the crowds out of their sight.

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

The beginning is especially difficult in any campaign.

Filled with resoluteness

The urge is to press on.

Gauge the strength of the enemy and one's own.

Undertaking only what can be completed with

Success.

Changing Line in the second place means:

Eternal vigilance.

The superior man dwells in the midst of adversity as though it doesn't exist.

Fear nothing.

Changing Line in the third place means:

The enemy is within the clan.

Danger.

Be resolute and remain true to one's self.

Even at the expense of unpopularity.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

Obstinacy renders a man to foolishness.

Insuperable obstacles should be avoided.

Tackling these turns resoluteness to obstinacy.

Misfortune.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

A man in a powerful position promotes evil.

He cannot be confronted directly.

Only by being patient and resolute can one avoid deflection.

Changing Line at the top means:

Eradicating evil is like eradicating weeds,

All of the seeds must be resolutely destroyed.

If they are not, it will return.

Misfortune.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Branching (57)

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== == Mountain

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== ==

== == Earth

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THE IMAGE

Mountains are born from the Earth:

The Image of BRANCHING.

The superior man remains attentive

In times of a civilization's development.

Factions can cause problems.

Even danger.

Chapter 27

Illumination (5)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

19th Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Day

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== == Fire

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=====

===== Heaven

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THE IMAGE

Fire in Heaven above:

The Image of ILLUMINATION.

The superior man blessed by illumination,

Acts by curbing evil and furthering good.

The Supreme Ultimate is made manifest by his actions.

“In 535 BCE the people of Cheng frightened one another about Po-yu, crying ‘Po-yu has arrived.’ They all ran off not knowing where they were going. In the second month of year, when the criminal code was cast, someone dreamed that Po-yu walked by him in armour and said, ‘In the year jen-tzu I will kill Tai, and the next year, the year jen-yin, I will kill Tuan. When Ssu Tai did die in the year jen-tzu, the terror of the people did increase. Then, when in the year jen-yin, in the month that the Ch’I and Yen states made peace, Kung-sun Tuan died, the terror of the people increased further. It did not stop until the next month when Prime Minister Tzu-ch’an appointed Po-yu’s son Liang-chih as successor to pacify them. Tzu Ta-shu asked him for the reason. Tzu-ch’an replied, ‘When spiritual beings have a place to return to, they will not become malicious. I have given them a place to return to.’”

From Tso’s commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals. Duke Chao.

★

Ali is in the attic of a derelict house near to the entrance of Qingdao. After he smuggled himself into the town, an easy task as the main protection is the usual stakes and barriers which is mainly a defence against attack by horse men, he immediately set about creating a hide out from where he can watch everything entering or leaving this mainly deserted port. This hide out is the attic of a derelict house where he has removed a small section of the roof so that he can watch the comings and goings at the main gate.

Qingdao had never recovered from the Jürgen invasion and most of the town has since returned to nature. The main street that lies behind and runs parallel with the beach front road leads down to where the port used to be, now comprises a few wooden buildings that are still occupied by Han Chinese, and, the old stone warehouse which has survived, more or less, intact. The one teahouse that remains has been repaired over and over again from the remains of the other buildings.

The Mongolian garrison is based to the west of the main gate sandwiching Ali’s hide out in between the two. As such Ali has become a creature of the night when he goes out foraging for food and drink.

The arrival of Kadai and the Han is a surprise to Ali, in as much as they amble in through the main gate stopping to joke with the gate guards. It then comes as a shock when he realizes that Kublai and Asutai are not part of the company.

He watches as the two sets of bodyguards walk their horses to the Mongolian garrison, leaving Kadai, the Han and only two Mongolian soldiers, to settle at the one remaining teahouse.

He has to wait until nightfall before he can check out first the garrison and then the teahouse to see if Kublai and Asutai have smuggled their way into Qingdao as he himself had done. It is nearly dawn before he is convinced they have not.

He feels a fool. The Mongolians have tricked him. Kublai and the Captain of his bodyguard must be half way back to Quiu by now. Once there they have too many alternative routes to take to give him any chance of tracking them down.

He decides to use the last of the night to smuggle himself out of Qingdao and retrieve his horses from fields belonging to a deserted farm.

It is past midday before he is back on the road to Quiu. He pushes his horses hard, he has to, if he stands any chance of catching up with Kublai.

As dusk settles he comes across an encampment on the side of the road near a stream. Four large carts with cargoes that he finds impossible to recognize and a number of tents with perhaps twenty Chinese men and women milling about make up a pleasant relaxed company.

He stops and asks a man near the road. 'Are you coming from Quiu?'

'Indeed.' Says the man.

'Have you passed two of my friends?'

'We passed two men the day before yesterday but whether they were your friends I cannot say.' The man says cheerily.

'Mongolians?'

'Indeed. They are easily recognized by their horses. Just like yours.'

Ali is furious with himself and spurs his horses on, leaving the man bemused.

He gallops his horses for several kilometres before pulling up. Both he and his horse are exhausted and he finally admits defeat. He pulls off the road near a corpse of trees, hobbles his horses on fresh sprouting pasture and sets about creating a small camp. He even sets a fire to cook a meal and while he

waits for it to cook he stares into the fire with feelings of failure.

A full stomach combines with the warmth of the fire to send Ali into a deep sleep.

He awakes with the dawn. He awakes with the words: the day before yesterday, in his mind.

The day before yesterday is now two days before yesterday. 'But that is impossible.' He says out loud. 'Two days before yesterday I was on the road myself. I would have seen them.'

He works through the possibilities as he breaks camp. One thing is for certain and that is he will never catch up with Kublai before he reaches Quiu. If, that is, they were on the road three days ago.

But, what if the man from the encampment was lying. There could only be one reason for that.

He heads back to Qingdao but warily. Keeping off the road in case it is a trap he catches up with the four carts as they enter through the main gate with darkness falling.

He returns his horses to the deserted farm and then slips back into Qingdao at the end of the night.

He tracks down the four carts, now empty, to the old stone warehouse. But with light breaking he retreats to his old hideout and sleeps.

*

Ali wakes long after midday. He prepares a meal and eats it. He sharpens his sword and his knives until he can cut a single hair by allowing it to fall on the edge of each one. As dusk falls he risks being seen, making his way to the Last and First teahouse.

With night fall the lamps are lit. He peers into rooms filled with people; Chinese and Mongolian but of Kublai there is not even a trace.

Satisfied Kublai is not in the teahouse, Ali makes his way to the old stone warehouse. Scaling the wall at a rear corner he arrives on the arched roof. Considering its great age the roof is still in fair condition and it takes him sometime to find a weakness in its construction. Once inside he finds himself in an open attic. Open to the rest of the warehouse.

There is much activity below. The Mongolian soldiers are bringing in benches and chairs and setting up lamps around the inside of the stone walls.

Loud voices can be heard behind him. These are coming from below so he makes his way to the rear. Crawling onto a gantry he looks down and sees dancers practising. Two tall men dressed in black speak with theatrical strength away from the dancers and out into what he now realizes is a theatre.

Ali thinks to himself: These people are preparing for a performance. But why?

He is forced to hide as men, Han Chinese, climb up into the attic and fix a number of backdrops and curtains. They accomplish this with practised ease.

After they have returned to the stage he makes his way to a position over the front of the stage and watches as the great hall of the theatre fills with Mongolians and a number of Han Chinese.

He searches the faces of the gathering audience searching for the one face that is his passage to paradise. Kublai's face, however, is not to be seen.

Kadai, accompanied by Tai and Ling-ling, enter the hall. They are in joyful expression, laughing and pointing out something happening on the stage. They take up seats at the very front.

Ali thinks to himself: What folly is this? Don't they understand that paradise is to be won.

His superiority covers his face with contempt for these fools: What delusion they suffer. Fixating on entertainment. A fiction acted out for the fiction of their lives. How I despise them and all their works. How dare they display such happiness? Don't they know such happiness is only to be found in paradise?

The lights are dimmed and a hush comes over the audience.

Music begins with bells and drums followed closely by lutes and flutes.

The curtain opens. The music changes to something with a rhythmic beat and Ali can now hear dancing. He moves from the front of the attic to the gantry over the stage. From this vantage point he can see the dancers swirling in coordinated patterns of complex symmetry.

He's impressed in spite of their deluded creativity: Why do they spend so much of their time on such childish play?

The stage lights dim. The music quietens to provide a soft background to a mime.

Then, voices. Ali seems to recognize them: They are the voices of the Chinese Envoy and his Deputy.

Ali moves back to the front of the attic and sure enough the Envoy and his Deputy are not in the audience: They must be participating in this play. What folly is this?

He moves back to the gantry, slithers across to a landing on the other side and from there he can see two large figures in discourse. They speak in Mongolian but he finds it difficult to follow or understand: What madness is this? Enemies entertaining enemies.

Back and forward he goes as laughter from the audience and action on the stage engage his attention.

The music changes and he returns to the gantry over the stage. The mime has changed once more into dance.

Two large figures in elaborate dress are at the centre of two circles of dancers. What they represent Ali has not the least idea.

It comes like a flash of lightening. These two figures are wearing Mongolian riding boots. Then, like the following shock of thunder, comes the realization that he is looking at Kublai and his Captain: This is where they have been hiding.

He quickly looks around and finds a coil of rope. He lowers it slowly until it arrives at a place just out of sight of the audience, then ties it off. Positioned half way between the elaborate figures and half way between the figures at the front of the stage and the elaborate figures at the back of the stage.

He readies his sword for quick release and slowly descends the rope until it runs out then drops the rest of the way onto the stage slashing at the neck of first one elaborate figure and then the other.

It is the sound of metal that distracts him.

He misses the movement of two men with poles quickly moving to the front of the stage from the edge of the dancer's line. He

realizes too late a net being drawn down over him strung between the two poles.

A great roar goes up from the audience.

At the same time the dancers and the two elaborate figures run to the stages wings as the net is drawn across the floor sweeping him off his feet.

The two elaborate figures return wielding wolf clubs striking at the limbs of the assassin until they are broken and useless.

The two elaborate figures divest themselves of their theatrical garb revealing suits of armour of European design. Others quickly help them out of these suits while yet more disentangle the assassin tying his legs with a long length of rope.

Kublai and Asutai having had their disguises removed look down at the prostrate fanatic.

'We have a way of dealing with enemies such as you.' Says Asutai with anger.

'Take him outside and tie him to my horse.' Says Kublai with relish.

The Mongolian audience now on their feet help get the prone man outside with many a blow of fist and foot.

The two black clad tall figures at the front of the stage turn to each other.

'There goes the performance.' Says Bao playing the part of Chuang Tzu.

'And there goes the audience.' Says Shi playing the part of Mencius.

As the hall empties Tai and Ling-ling help Bao and Shi off with their bamboo platform shoes, while removing their theatrical dress themselves.

They are last ones out of the old warehouse theatre. Just in time to see Kublai drag the assassin's broken body behind his horse.

The Mongolians on foot or on horse follow shouting out their battle cries.

Soon the street is deserted as the Kublai takes the assassin down to the pier.

All that is left are Han Chinese; locals, theatrical players and the party of the Song Envoy.

'What will they do with him?' Asks Ling-ling.

'They will chop off his hands and feet cauterize the wounds then throw him into the ocean to die in agony.' Says Shi in disgust. 'Barbarians being barbaric to a religious fanatic.'

'Do they really believe they enter paradise by killing? Where is the sense in that.' Says Tai in sadness.

'Have you forgotten the seventy virgins they will be given on entering paradise.' Says Shi.

'This is the part that I don't understand.' Says Bao. 'What use are seventy virgins. Now seventy experienced singing girls. There is a temptation.'

He says this with just a bit too much enthusiasm and receives a slap to the back of his head from Tai, as if she was rebuking a naughty boy. She walks off, annoyed.

Bao follows, pleading. 'I was only joking; more precious than the world to me.'

Shi and Ling-ling laugh as they are approached by the Director of the theatre company. He is also laughing, having just witnessed the little drama. 'Envoy Zhen, we have fulfilled our side of the bargain. I trust that you will fulfil yours.'

'Indeed. You must be prepared to leave at a moment's notice. Our ship will arrive and be gone in double quick time. Keep a lookout posted at all times from tomorrow. Bring only what you can carry. There will be little time to load your props. But have faith as you will be compensated for your loss in providing such excellent service. And after this service in helping capture the assassin, I doubt if the Mongolians will object. However, we must act quickly during our departure. Given time they may find objections. That is why it is imperative that you remain silent about the ship that comes to collect us.'

'I understand.' Says the Director, conspiratorially. 'May I say how well you played your parts. A pity you didn't have time to complete the play as this particular version I have never seen before.'

'Bao and myself played these parts when we were at the Imperial College in Kinsai. It caused a great commotion and we received a rebuke from the Principal as it was played and here

I quote his official remarks: A play of undoubted creativity but of little merit as Mencius was made to look a fool at the hands of Chuang Tzu.'

'It is frowned upon for Confucians to become the butt of merriment at the hands of a Taoist. We would have been expelled if it had not been for the intervention of the Emperor.'

'I can well imagine. And who was responsible for writing such a merry play?' Asks the Director with sincerity.

'Surely you can guess.'

'Ah, your Deputy, Shao Bao.'

'Who else would dare? I still have shivers concerning my acquiescence to play such a role. But then I was young and this was Youthful Folly.' Says Shi with just a hint of humour. 'And, of course, we have an Emperor of great merit who believes that great truths can withstand having their tails pulled.'

'You make the Song sound a place of wonder.' Says a gushing Director.

'Indeed it is. And with just a bit of luck we will be there soon. To see what has happened to the north of China is painful in the extreme. One day we will see China reunited and civilization restored. Until then we must endure.'

★

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Difficulties always exist,

Danger arises if the superior man acts with arrogance by ignoring them.

Conscious of difficulties,

There is no blame.

Changing Line in the second position means:

It is possible to undertake great things,

If able helpers are at hand.

Success.

Changing Line in the third place means:

The superior man has no regard for possessions.

He either offers them to Heaven or gifts them to the people.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

To find one surrounded by the rich and powerful,

One must avoid envy and conflict.

No blame.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

Blessed by the Illumination of the Supreme Ultimate,

Sincerity and truthfulness is accessible to all.

Supreme good fortune.

Changing Line at the top means:

A sage walks the Earth.

His detachment delivers righteousness and benevolence.

His Illumination mirrors the Supreme Ultimate.

There is nothing that does not further.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Holding Together (58)

==	==	
=====		Water
==	==	
==	==	
==	==	Earth
==	==	

THE IMAGE

Water holds fast to the Earth:

The Image of HOLDING TOGETHER.

The Earth is like the father.

The Waters are like his children.

The Mandate of Heaven is his creed.

Supreme good fortune.

Chapter 28

The Taming Power of the Small (4)

The Song Dynasty

1059 C.E.

21th Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Morning

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===== Wind

== ==

=====

===== Heaven

=====

THE IMAGE

The Wind blows across Heaven:

The Image of the TAMING POWER OF THE SMALL.

Thus the superior man refines the outer aspects of his nature,

So his trustworthiness and sincerity

Can eventually be brought to bear.

“In the year 1121 BCE King Zhou Wu visited Viscount Chi. The King said, ‘Oh! Viscount Chi. Heaven, working unseen, has decisively made men with certain hidden springs of character, aiding also the harmonious development of it in their various conditions. I do not know how the various virtues and their relations should be regulated.’ Viscount Chi thereupon replied, ‘I have heard that the great Yu’s father, Kun, dammed up the flood and thereby created chaos among the Five Agents. Heaven was aroused to anger and did not give him the Great Norm with its Nine Categories. The various virtues and their relations declined in due course, and Kun was executed. Yu thereupon rose to continue the heritage. Heaven gave him the Great Norm with its Nine Categories. And the various virtues and their relations were regulated.’”

From the Book of History. The Great Norm.



Yong, Ki and the Tax Collector, Su Ch’ung, are on the jetty. They dodge in and out of the workers loading and unloading the large vessels tied up on either side. The largest vessels are on the T that sits astride of the main jetty that sticks out into the ocean.

Yong drifts across to the jetty’s rail to observe the men working on a small ship. Ki and Ch’ung carry on up the jetty heading for the T.

Yong becomes aware of a man standing beside him. His long flowing hair is confined at the base of his neck by a jade hair clip resulting in a pony’s tail that travels the length of his back. His beard, long and thick, is also confined by a jade hair clip under his chin, resulting in a pony’s tail that makes its way almost to his waist. He wears the outer garment of a Taoist priest with a blue under garment. He is looking out past the ship to the open ocean when he speaks. ‘The time has come.’

Yong is taken aback. ‘Are you speaking to me?’

The man points. ‘If you take a path east along the coast you will eventually see two large pine trees on a ridge. Make your way to them and then follow the trail. You will find what you seek where the trail ends. Go alone and be prepared for several nights in the open. Don’t forget to take your writing equipment and a good supply of paper to record the sacred language of Heaven and Earth.’

The man leaves without looking once at Yong. He has only seen the man's profile with its distinctive curved nose. As he is watching the man recede from view he is disturbed by Ki. 'Master Shao will you not join us. Su Ch'ung says he can get us on board that really large ship.'

'Go on without me. I must return to the teahouse for I have much writing to do.' Yong leaves without even saying goodbye.

He walks back up through the busy town looking for the man, but knows he will not see him.

He collects his writing material. Collects his horse and takes Ki's to carry the supplies for several days which he purchases from the Waterman Teahouse, and asks the owner to inform Ch'ung and Ki that he has gone to Lao Shan and may not be back for several days. Then he sets off along the coast.

★

With dusk approaching he finally sees the two pine trees on a ridge some way off. He struggles to find a way up to the pines and arrives as dark settles.

Finding a flat stretch of ground he sets a fire and cooks a simple meal. The calm is disturbed only by the horses feeding and in the distance the rhythmic sound of breaking waves.

Yong wonders: What could the man have meant by saying: The time has come? How did this stranger know that he was searching for the sacred language of Heaven and Earth? Unless, of course he was in The Waterman the previous night.

It was disturbing, and yet, he wasn't disturbed.

His relaxed mood, so conducive to sleep, especially after exercise, soon follows.

He sleeps, he dreams.

★

He awakens inside his dream. He recognizes the place. The Liangyuan Playhouse in Loyang. The lights go down and the curtain draws back. The backdrop filled with clouds is the usual depiction of Heaven in the Taoist theatre. To confirm this beyond doubt Zhongli the Taoist Illuminate enters stage right; his wild beard and hair with mad staring eyes is unmistakable. He is speaking to King Yama, easily recognized as the keeper of the Register of Life and Death by the great Register he is writing in, that, and the blindfold he wears.

Zhongli recites: The gate of our birth is the door of our death, yet how many understand this, how many become illuminated. The strongest of men should ponder this when night falls: Undying eternal life is a product of man himself.

King Yama: What brings you here, Zhongli?

Zhongli: Remove the actor Lan Caihe's name from your Register. He already possess half of what it takes to become an Illuminate by his great work in teaching the ignorant of The Way in the many plays he performs.

King Yama: Will you bring him the rest of The Way?

Zhongli: I will have to as he is suffering from the delusion that he is not an Immortal.

King Yama: As it is you, Zhongli. I will remove him from this Great Register. But remember, if you fail he will cease to exist. It will be as if he never existed and therefore he will sacrifice the chance of reincarnation.

Zhongli: It is my duty. And it will be my honour as he destined to become one of the eight Perfected Immortals.

King Yama: Then who am I to refuse. Even though he is wayward in his mind and actions.

The curtain falls on Act 1.

After just a few moments it rises again. It is the stage as it is, just a stage.

Two women and a child enter and introduce themselves to the audience.

Xiquian: I am Xiquian, Lan Caihe's wife and this is our son, a man in his twenties.

Xianlu: I am Xianlu, Lan Caihe's sister.

Two men dressed as Fools enter and introduce themselves.

Musician Wang: I am Musician Wang and I am married to Xianlu.

Thin-head Li: I am Thin-head Li and I am married to Caihe's other sister.

Two stage hands carrying a large prop stop in the middle of the stage and start arguing with Musician Wang and Thin-head Li about where the prop should be. While they argue Zhongli is lowered from above behind the prop on a cloud and seeing a bench on the side he sits down. None notice his arrival until

the prop, a large purple cloud, is moved. The stage hands solicit the help of the women and Caihe's son to take the prop off stage left.

Musician Wang sees Zhongli and goes over to speak to him.

Musician Wang: Old man you cannot sit there. That is where the musicians sit.

Zhongli ignores him: Is this where Caihe plays?

Musician Wang: Old man he will be here in a while. What is it you want with him?

Zhongli: I need to talk to him personally.

Musician Wang frustrated: Very well. Just sit here and he will be along in a while.

Two stage hands carry the sun prop across the stage from stage left to stage right denoting the passage of time.

Caihe enters stage left and introduces himself to the audience before talking with Musician Wang.

Caihe: Hurry up. There's a goodly crowd outside wanting to get in and we're not ready. What have you been doing all day?

Musician Wang: What have we being doing all day? My, you've got a cheek. Drinking with the city's worthies and taking tea with singing girls I'd wager.

Caihe: It was forced upon me. But don't tell my wife. She comes out in a rash at the very mention of singing girls.

Caihe looks around nervously. The audience laugh.

Musician Wang: And another thing. There's an old codger been waiting for you all day. There's something about him that makes me nervous. That's him sitting across there.

Caihe: Leave it with me.

Caihe walks over to Zhongli.

Caihe: Greetings old man. I am Caihe. I hear you wish to speak with me?

Zhongli: What an affront. I hear you have kept me waiting because you were having tea with singing girls.

Caihe looks around nervously as the audience laugh.

Caihe: I was having tea with the city's worthies. The city's worthies, not with singing girls.

Zhongli: As you say. But that does not change the fact that it should be the music that waits on the guests and not the guests waiting on the music.

Caihe frustrated: What do you want?

Zhongli: I have come to see you perform a comedy. Any comedy will do.

Caihe: Oh, is that all. Go and join the audience and we will start directly.

Zhongli: I will stay right here.

Caihe: But that is where the musicians sit.

Zhongli: I care not for music, so make your play without it.

Caihe can't believe what he is hearing.

Caihe: You must think you are Master Lao or perhaps Master Zhongli of the Han. Actually, you bear a strong resemblance to Zhongli of the Han. But never mind that.

The audience laugh.

Zhongli, angry: I bear a strong resemblance to Zhongli the Han, you rogue.

Caihe turns to the audience and behind his hand he speaks directly to them.

Caihe: I'd better humour the old codger or he may turn violent. Or worse, he may mention singing girls to my wife.

The audience laugh. Caihe turns back to Zhongli.

Caihe: Please sit there great Immortal while I set the stage and prepare the actors.

Caihe leaves, stage right.

The curtain comes down on the second act.

★

Yong struggles to wake from this dream. He struggles and struggles until he finally feels his mind free itself.

He is looking down on a man whom he suddenly realizes is himself.

The shock wakes him from sleep and he sits up with a start.

'What a dream.' He says out loud. 'What can it mean? And what was that opening statement that so surprised me?'

Yong recites:

The gate of our birth is the door of our death,

Yet how many understand this,

How many become illuminated.

The hardest of men should ponder this when night falls:

Undying eternal life is a product of man himself.

Wide awake he decides to carry on his journey. Thick clouds cover the moon and so he leads the horses until he realizes that the track is giving off a faint light. And deducing that if he can see this strange light then so must his horses. He mounts and finds his horse more than capable of following the track.

Soon the track turns up in one long continuous direction. After a while he mounts a lip and arrives on a flat shelf.

At first he thinks it is natural but because it is possessed of the strange light he can see that the shelf is man made because of the even nature. He dismounts and takes a rest. Thick grass provides a good place to rest beneath the lip and he stretches out as his horses, freed of their burdens, take advantage of new grass pushing through the old.

This time he wakes with a strange feeling of serenity into the first light of day. He can see looking past his feet the island in the bay. He sits up and sees the red sun rising through mulberry trees.

The horses are sitting down chewing the cud on the shelf. A look of contentment on their faces he has never seen before. He thinks that this might be another dream so he covers his eyes into darkness. This is not a dream.

In front of him is a large monolith some eight metres high and two metres in diameter. It stands close to a vertical rock face. Moving closer he sees that the monolith hides an entrance. An entrance to a cave.

He quickly lights a lamp and returns to the entrance. Gate posts of solid carved stone have strange hieroglyphs carved on the inside face of both posts. Above these are six unbroken lines on the right side and six broken lines on the left.

His excitement is tinged with fear. Dare he enter?

He enters raising the lamp above his head as he does. He has entered a perfectly circular chamber in the middle of which is what looks like the axel hub of a wheel. Around the outside are tablets fixed into the wall, sixty two in all.

He follows the tablets around to the right. These too are covered in the same hieroglyphs and at the top of each tablet are the hexagrams of the Great I. The first one in, next to the gate post of Heaven is, Heaven over Wind. The one next to that is Heaven over fire. And next to that is Heaven over Lake.

He almost runs across to the other gate post and starting from there he says out loud. 'Earth over thunder, followed by Earth over Water, followed by Earth over Mountain.'

It is all he needs to realize that he has the sequence that the Great I was originally written in. 'If I am correct then the thirty first tablet should be Water over Lake, and the thirty second tablet should be the hexagram's complete reversal in terms of the changing lines, Fire over Mountain.'

He counts around the circle. 'What joy!' He cries out as he views the hexagrams. 'The entire process of Tsao Hua, the continuing process of creation, laid out before me. This is indeed the process of Change that brings our world of the Myriad things into being. Every moment, everywhere to everything.'

'Now all you have to do is decide what you will do with this knowledge.' Says a voice in his mind.

Yong senses a presence behind him and standing there, standing in the entrance, the man from the jetty. They move in synchronicity towards the stone hub in the centre of the cave. Yong places the lamp on the centre of the hub and now he can see the man's face with its curved nose and flared nostrils.

'You must be a Taoist Immortal.' Yong states with certainty.

'And you would be wrong.'

Yong is surprised and it shows.

'What a thirst for knowledge you have, Shao Yong. An explanation of who I am means that I will have to explain from whence I came.'

Yong can hear the man's laughter inside of his mind.

'When the differentiation occurred inside of the primordial state and movement around the differentiation started, that movement was governed by the sixty two Changes that are laid out here.' He sweeps his arm around. 'The sixty two changes in this precise sequence. Starting from the endless chaos and energy of Heaven.' He points. 'To the perfect finite order of Earth. As you have already worked out. Change upon Change. Endless Change. Changing Change with each new cycle. First the stars then the planets then the planet you live on. Then the planet Changed bringing forth the life of the Myriad things. That eventually brought forth mankind from the endless Change. And mankind Changed from a lowly position to the enquiring creature that stands before me. As, indeed, I was myself. It is three thousand years ago that I was born. A man like any other. Except I was like you. I needed to know. I was born into a tribe that lived in the western mountains at the very eastern end of the Mountains of Snow. A tribe of men who needed to know. A tribe that explored the inner world as well as the outer world, the world of the mind as well as the natural world. It was a time when there were many tribes living on the great plain either side of the Yellow River. One such tribe was the Shang. They were from the north east from around Anyang. Indeed Anyang was their city. Because part of their territory included the Tai Yue Shan Mountain range they had discovered many metals including copper and tin and zinc and silver and gold first in the rivers then underground. They were a peaceful people and were willing to trade their metals for the products of the other tribes in the area. So successful were they, they extended this trade by building trading posts, usually at the junctions where the territories of the tribes intersected. Eventually, they built a network of trading posts across the entire region. These became towns and some even cities. The tribe I was from could see what was taking place and knew that they would encompass our territory and eventually they would absorb us into their network and we would become Shang, just like all of the other tribes had done. These Shang traders were not evil people. Indeed, they achieved everything without violence. Without any prior thought they had built an empire. But my tribe would not lose its mystically inclined identity and they spread out into the mountains heading west into the Mountains of Snow, taking their mystical practices with them. However, they left behind a great gift for the Shang.' The man sweeps his arm around denoting the Changes. 'This script is the script of my people. There are none that now speak it nor can read it or write it for that matter. But the knowledge it contains has not been

lost. It was translated into the early Chinese character script and became known as the Great I. The Shang much appreciated our gift to them and it was this knowledge that allowed Shen the Sage-King to rule without ruling and Yao and Yu to rule with wisdom. This happy state of affairs was not to last.' The sound of sadness enters his voice. 'A tribe from the far west in the Wei valley were jealous of the Shang and everything they had achieved. They invaded this peace loving Empire and Changed the course of history. These were the Zhou.'

'The Zhou?' Says Yong in astonishment.

'It is the victor that gets to write history. Your entire culture is based upon a lie. It was not good king Wen who wrote the Great I, nor was it the Zhou that overthrew an Empire that had become corrupt. It was the war inclined Zhou that usurped the Empire of the peace loving Shang.' The man sighs. 'But Change never stops. The Zhou were forced to adopt much of Shang culture to make it their own. But to retain power they still retained their war like culture. This eventually led to strife inside the Zhou Dynasty. And that was the way it remained until the first Qin ruler eventually subjugated the warring states and created the Imperial Age. The rest you know.'

'It explains a lot.' Says Yong. 'But why tell me?'

'You wanted to know.'

'But how did you know, I wanted to know?'

'I exist on the plane of consciousness only. I detached my consciousness from my physical body three thousand years ago. Your consciousness is still attached to your physical body. Unless you detach it from your body your consciousness will be absorb back into the infinite consciousness from whence it came. Is this not why you wish to become a sage?'

Yong is perplexed and speaks his thoughts out loud. 'But you are here as a man like myself.'

The man passes his arm through the lamp. 'I am an illusion. I exist only in your consciousness.'

The shock to Yong is great. 'Why reveal this to me?'

'You wanted to know. I could sense it on the plane of consciousness. And now you do know what will you do with such knowledge?'

'What are my choices?'

'You have gained wisdom, Shao Yong. There are alternatives and each has consequences.'

'Tell me what they are.' Demands Yong with strength.

'The first alternative is, you can tell your fellow man which shows your attachment to the physical world of the Myriad things but then you lose the chance to become a sage. The second is, you can keep this knowledge for your self and use it to attain Immortality on the plane of consciousness. And third, you can choose to be reincarnated, as all men can choose to be reincarnated if they choose, and, if they truly believe in reincarnation. This gives you the chance to deliver the knowledge at the right time and place, for all knowledge has its right time and place to be delivered. And if it is delivered at the right time and place then it will not interfere with you becoming an Immortal.'

'But when is the right time and place?'

'How would I know? The future hasn't happened yet. But when it does it will be the present.' The Immortal laughs.

Yong is surprised.

'Would you really have it any other way?'

On reflection he thinks not. He laughs. 'How could it be any other way.'

'But a word of advice. Attain the Way before becoming an Immortal. It is so much easier as the Yellow Emperor can testify.'

'Is this what Chuang-Tzu meant when he said that even the Yellow Emperor had to give up his wisdom to attain the Way?'

'It is. And he would know, true sage that he is. Chuang-Tzu sleeps in the Mystic, ploughs the plane of consciousness and visits the endless universes; worlds without measure.'

Yong walks to the entrance and places his hands on the gate posts. 'These, on going out, are the door posts of death. Are they not?'

He turns around but the Immortal is not there. He walks outside into a beautiful day. The magnificent view makes his heart sing. Then with purpose he takes out his writing paraphernalia and goes back inside.

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

Obstruction to the way ahead.

Return to the beginning to consider the way forward.

No Blame.

Changing Line in the second place means:

Others have been forced to return,

Men of like mind.

The journey has not been in vein.

Good fortune.

Changing Line in the third place means:

Forcing the situation leads to discord.

The superior man withdraws,

Having lost his dignity.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

A tiger rages, bloodshed may follow.

The power of disinterested truth overcomes all obstacles,

And the end is achieved.

No blame.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

Loyalty strengthens the clan.

Devotion by the weak and trustworthiness by the strong,

Leads to mutual reinforcement.

Good fortune.

Changing Line at the top means:

The young girl has achieved ascendancy,

By taking small steps.

The moon is full and will soon be on the wane.

The superior man waits for the correct time,

Or misfortune will follow.

The Changing Lines Deliver:

Enthusiasm (59)

== ==
 == == Thunder
 =====
 == ==
 == == Earth
 == ==

THE IMAGE

Thunder arouses the Earth:

The Image of ENTHUSIASM.

A burst of song,

The rhythmic movement of the body,

Inspired by this mysterious manifestation of spirit

Chapter 29

Treading on a Tiger's Tail. (3)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

21st Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Day

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===== Heaven

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== ==

===== Lake

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The Image

The Lake rises to Heaven:

The Image of TREADING ON A TIGER'S TAIL.

It is a young girl that treads on the tiger's tail.

Laughter.

Thus the Ruler by correctly allowing familiarity in the situation,

Has the acquiescence of the people.

“The descendants of Yin became subjects of Zhou.
 Heaven’s Mandate is not constant.
 The officers of Yin were fine and alert.
 These assist at the libation in our capital.
 In assisting in the libation,
 They always wear their skirted robes and close caps.
 Oh, you promoted servants of the king,
 Don’t you think of your ancestors!

Don’t you think of your ancestors!
 Cultivate your virtue.
 Always try to be in harmony with Heaven’s Mandate.
 Seeks for yourself the many blessings.
 Before Yin lost its army,
 Its kings were able to be counterparts to the Lord on High.
 In Yin you should see as in a mirror,
 That the great Mandate is not easy to keep.”

From the Book of Odes. Ode 235.

*

‘Bao, Bao. Get up you lazy old Chinese monkey.’ This and other Mongolian insults wake Tai, who thoughtfully wakes Bao. ‘Your Mongolian friends want you to go out to play.’

Bao wanders across and opens the window. He is greeted by cheers from Kublai, Asutai and two other Mongolians.

‘Is there a fire?’ Bao asks with sleep dripping off his words.

‘Get up. The time has come.’ Shouts Kublai.

'Have them prepare a morning meal and we will be down directly.' He closes the window and as he passes the bed on his way to his morning ablutions, he pulls the bed clothes of Tai leaving her shivering and annoyed.

All four of the Han arrive in to the sound of much merriment. A meal of lemon rice cake, prawns and fried fish wait for them. Soon they are indulging their appetites.

'Tai, I'm surprised to see you up for this mad escapade.' Says Kublai.

'I cannot miss the moment of this folly's fall, after having lived with it for so long.' Says Tai.

'Nor I.' Says Shi.

'Or I.' Says Ling-ling with laughter in her voice.

'So we are alone in thinking our quest has a noble purpose?' Says Kublai, pulling Bao's tail.

'You may all laugh' which they all obligingly do 'but you will not laugh much longer. So enjoy your merriment while you can. Now, what is the plan?'

'You mean that you do not have a plan of attack on this sacred mountain?' Asks Kublai in mock seriousness.

'I suggest we travel along the coast then draw a line between the island and the summit and then ascend vertically.' Says Bao in sincerity.

'This may have been a good plan if it was possible to see the summit from the coast. But as these two Mongolian soldiers' he presents them 'who are stationed here assure me, it is impossible to see the summit from the coast. What they have suggested is that we find the tree line of mulberry trees and follow it around until we come across the place described by your noble ancestor.'

'That sounds reasonable.' Says Bao. 'Are we prepared for this journey?'

'We have horses and supplies for a five days.' Says Asutai. 'Will that suffice?'

Before Bao can answer, Shi interrupts. 'It will more than suffice. And if Master Shao Bao is not satisfied then he can stay on the mountain as a hermit recluse.'

They all laugh.

*

It takes the best part of the day to arrive at the tree line. And the rest of the daylight before they find a place that is suitable to set up camp.

A shelf set into the mountain that is remarkably flat and with a boulder, more a monolith, standing against the wall of rock at the rear.

They collect wood and set a large fire that they place their sleeping blankets around. With the assassin dead Kublai does not set a watch and after a meal of rice and mutton they set to talking.

'And so Envoy Zhen, what would you say is the defining characteristic of the Song Dynasty?' Asks Kublai.

'A good question, great Khan. I believe that would have to be the development of Daoxue, The Learning of the Way, some call it Neo-Confucianism. It brings together the very best from the past and places a stronger emphasis on self-cultivation. Would you not agree Bao?'

'Indeed. But I would add the metaphysics of Zhou Dun-yi and my noble ancestor Shao Yong has given us a total understanding of the nature of reality. One that is comprehensive and comprehensible.' Adds Bao.

'We must also remember that these defining characteristics of the Song Dynasty are mostly confined to the scholar officials and members of the literati. It will take more time for these concepts to be common knowledge to all of our people.'

'Indeed.' Adds Bao. 'And it should be remembered that we Chinese are not so confined by strict rules and regulations that we cannot see merit in other modes of thought. The Buddhists and Taoists have both added to our knowledge.'

'And Confucianism and Taoism have both added to Chinese Chan Buddhism.' Adds Tai. 'And we muddle along, each individual placing a greater emphasis on one or the other without confining us to any one in totality.'

'My grandfather, The Great Khan, Genghis believed that all men have a right to choose whatever religion suits them. His wife and also my mother are Nestorian Christians and we have never been in disagreement. But then, they respect our shamanistic beliefs.'

'Respecting the beliefs of others is a sure sign of civilization.' Adds Shi.

'Come Bao, tell us who, besides Confucius, and your noble ancestor, of course' everyone laughs including Bao 'is your favourite Chinese philosopher?' Asks Kublai.

'A hard question. Mencius was a Confucian, so I will put him to one side. So I would have to choose, Chuang Tzu. He was a Taoist before there were Taoists. A great sage who showed me the mysterious mystical nature of reality.'

'You have mentioned him before. So give me an example of the mysterious mystical nature of reality that he showed to you.' Says Kublai with sincerity.

Bao digs deep into his memory. 'Here is something that affected me when I was a young. He said: Pleasure and anger, sorrow and joy, anxiety and regret, fickleness and fear, impulsiveness and extravagance, indulgence and lewdness, come to us like the music of the wind when it blows through the trees or out of the hollows and cavities of rocks and valleys. Day and night they alternate within us but we don't know where they come from. Alas! These feelings are with us morning and evening and its here' he taps his head 'where they are produced. Without them there would not be an I. And without me who will experience them? We don't know who causes them but sometimes it seems there is a true Lord who does. But there is not any sign of his existence.' Bao's voice fades off bringing silence to those gathered.

*

Kublai wakes to natures calling, a product of the fermented yak milk. He relieves himself on the slope and on the way back up he sees Bao lying down further along the slope. He joins him. 'I trust you're not tired already.'

'I can see the island directly in front of me from here.' He sits up and turns his head to the left. At just that moment the sun appears through the mulberry grove. 'Do I have to say more?' He gets up and mounts the shelf dropping down to his hunkers. 'See how flat it is. This is manmade. Ancient, but made with purpose.' He rises to his feet. 'And that stone against the wall. It looks like it was placed there.' He walks across and walks behind it. There being a good metre between it and the rock face. He feels the surface of the rock then placing his ear to a place free of moss he thumps the surface with his fist. Then thumps it again and then again. Then turns

to Kublai with excitement. 'An echo, a faint echo.' He steps aside. 'You try it.'

Kublai obliges but uses the blunt end of the axe he carries. 'You are right Master Librarian. Stand back.' His youthful strength soon has the earth and lime mix falling from a wall. A man made wall built of solid stone blocks.

The noise has woken the company. Asutai and the other two Mongolians soon join Bao watching Kublai clearing the stone blocks.

'Stand back Bao, your hands are too soft for this work.' Turning to his Mongolian friends. 'Chop out one of those stone blocks near the top. Once we have one free then the rest will follow with ease.'

Bao stands well back as chips from the lime mortar fly with malicious intent.

'What is happening?' Asks Tai, still wrapped in a sleeping blanket.

'A cave behind a stone built wall. And by the look of the mortar fairly recent. I would say within five years.'

Soon the blocks are being passed out and formed into a pyramid on the ground.

'Lamps. Bring lamps.' Shouts Kublai.

Shi and Ling-ling bring the lamps and set them with brightness before passing them to Kublai and Asutai. The rest follow them inside.

Placing the lamps on the stone in the centre they can see a circular space with empty niches dug out of the wall.

Bao walks hurriedly around counting the niches. 'In the name of all under Heaven.' He says with frustration. 'We are too late. Someone has beaten us to it.'

'To what?' Asks Kublai.

'To whatever filled these niches.' Bao says in sadness. 'This is what my ancient ancestor was directing us to. Of that I have little doubt.' He turns to Kublai. 'Our quest is a failure.'

'At least you know what your ancient ancestor was directing you to.' Says Kublai as a means of consolation.

'True.' But the disappointment cannot be kept from Bao's voice.

They search the cave with diligence but nothing, nothing at all is revealed.

Ling-ling is first to lose interest and she leaves but the rest soon follow.

Tai and Bao sit on the edge of the shelf with their legs on the slope. The view now revealed by the light of midmorning is magnificent. White fluffy clouds drift in magnificent majesty across a blue sky of great depth over a sea of silver clad slate. The island really does look like a ship heading for port.

Asutai is last one out and shows Kublai. Who directs Asutai to Bao.

'I found this. It is of little consequence but I thought you would at least not leave empty handed.'

It is a figure of a small fat man made of mortar; not more than half a hand high.

'Where did you find it?' Asks Bao with a smile emerging.

'In the corner of one of the niches covered in dust.'

'That's very kind of you, Asutai. May your beard grow long and your horses prosper.' Bao quotes a Mongolian saying.

Asutai bows Chinese style and returns to where Kublai is holding the horses.

'We will return and you must return soon or you will be travelling in the dark.' Kublai says as he mounts.

'We won't be long.' Shouts out Shi who is packing the horses.

The Mongolians leave retracing their steps.

Ling-ling comes over to see what Asutai has given Bao.

'Do you know what this is, little sister?' Asks Tai.

'It's Gunhai, the mortar God.' She says while taking it from Bao. 'The masons place it inside walls to insure their strength. Let me show Shi.'

As she leaves Tai whispers in Bao's ear. 'The time has come.'

The words send ripples through Bao's body. He allows Tai to pull him up and pull him across to the cavern. As he is about

to enter he sees at the top of the left hand gatepost a straight line. He reaches up and wipes away the loose mortar and reveals a six broken lines. He swings around to the right gatepost and with little difficulty reveals six unbroken lines. 'You realize what this means.' Says Bao.

Tai pulls him into the cavern where a single lamp remains with a flickering flame making the shadows dance.

'Did you really think you could escape your destiny, Shao Yong?' A voice at the far end of the cavern intones.

Bao walks to the central rock hub and raises the lamp to see who is speaking. At the other side of the rock hub is a man that Bao recognizes. His distinctive curved nose and flared nostrils make Bao stagger and he drops the lamp down onto the rim of the hub almost spilling it over.

'This is what you chose, Shao Yong. Reincarnation. But why now?' Asks the man.

Bao straightens. 'Because now I can solve the dilemma.' He says with strength.'

'Ah. Now I see your cunning plan.' The man laughs. 'A great conceit, is it.'

'In more ways than one.' Says Bao with relish.

'You will make for an interesting addition for those of us who ply the plane of consciousness.' And with that he fades into the flickering light.

'He is gone.' Says Tai with certitude.

'And I am free.' Says Bao in joy.

'Who is free? Shao Yong?'

'Shao Yong. Shao Bao. Shao Yong Bao. Who else could it be?'

Bao suddenly and with great purpose grabs the stone axle in the centre of the stone hub and lifts the axle out. Hardly and axel at all. He rests it on the side, reaches inside and removes a book with wooden covers. He laughs as he lifts the front cover then reads out loud. 'Shao Yong's Tsao Hua Interpretation of the Great I.'

'Here.' He passes it to Tai. 'I wrote it in a previous life and so I know it as I know myself. But you can read it. And you.' He says to Ling-ling who has just entered the cavern.

Bao places the axel back into the hub. 'Our mission is now complete. We can go.'

'The Black Pearl is on its way. I was just coming to tell you.' Says Ling-ling.

'We must leave now if we are to catch the high tide that Captain Miko intends to make for this night.' Says Tai with concern.

They leave the cavern at speed forgetting the lamp and the flickering light.

*

The jetty is lit with braziers that help to lift the gloom the thick clouds thrust upon the scene. Flashes of lightening illuminate the proceedings, revealing the enormous presence of the Black Pearl at the end of the jetty and the crashing waves of a heavy sea smashing against her hull.

Shi leads the Han onto the jetty at a fast cantor. Bao at the rear sees Kublai talking with Mongolian soldiers in a flash of lightening and pulls up his horse and dismounts.

'Kublai. What are you doing?' Shouts Bao.

Kublai turns and recognizes Bao. 'Have you not seen the black ship at the end of the jetty? I'm organizing my men to repulse an attack.'

'That ship is the Black Pearl. It is my father's ship that he has sent for me.' Bao shouts into the gusting wind. 'Come, stand your men down. The only danger here is if the Black Pearl crashes into the jetty.'

Bao doesn't wait. Abandoning his horse he runs at speed towards the Black Pearl. At the end of the jetty he finds Asutai having an argument with the theatrical players and Shi.

'You must have Kublai's permission before you can leave.' Says Asutai with force.

Two great crashes just behind them changes everything. The giant gang planks that have been dropped onto the jetty send shudders along its length. The crew swarm down and surround everyone including Kublai who has just arrived.

Captain Miko's booming voice can be heard over the storm as he descends one of the gangplanks. 'Will you not hurry up? The tide has turned and I will not have the Black Pearl beached.'

'Quickly. Get on board.' Shouts Shi to the theatrical players, who scramble past Asutai and up a gangplank directed by Captain Miko.

'Farewell.' Shout Tai and Ling-ling to Kublai then they too follow the Captain's direction.

Shi hurries to Kublai's side and shouts in his ear. 'We will send another envoy once you are Great Khan. Take care until then.' He doesn't wait for a reply as Miko is shouting for everyone to get on board.

'Govern well and know the meaning of mercy.' Shouts Bao. 'We will not meet again in this life. But perhaps in another.'

With that Bao too runs past the Captain of the Black Pearl who scans the jetty for any who might be left behind then he shouts to Kublai and Asutai. 'Can we give you passage?' Then he laughs and walks onto the gangplank as it is being raised.

Kublai and Asutai stand stunned into silence as the Black Pearl peels away from the jetty.

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

The situation is of minor importance.

Simple correct conduct will suffice.

Progress.

Changing Line in the second place means:

The superior man acts in the manner of a reclusive sage;

Asking nothing of anyone.

Thus he remains free of social entanglements and obligations.

Changing Line in the third place means:

Ignorance leads to a man treading on the tail of a tiger.

The superior man avoids reckless behaviour as he wants to avoid

Grave misfortune.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

The situation is one of a dangerous enterprise.

The superior man avoids treading on the tail of a tiger,

By circumspection and moving on.

Progress ultimately leads to

Good fortune.

Changing Line in the fifth place:

To overcome the danger one must be resolute.

Resoluteness itself brings danger.

Only awareness of both dangers makes success possible.

Changing Line at the top means:

Weigh the evidence of your conduct.

Only when everything is resolved harmoniously,

Will good fortune follow.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Modesty (60)

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== == Earth
== ==
=====
== == Mountain
== ==

THE IMAGE

Earth covers the Mountain:

The Image of MODESTY.

Thus the superior man balances all things.

Chapter 30

Fellowship of Men (2)

The Song Dynasty

1059 C.E.

23rd Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Morning

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===== Heaven

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=====

== == Fire

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THE IMAGE

Fire rising with Heaven:

The Image of FELLOWSHIP OF MEN.

The superior man organizes the people,

Each according to his ability.

*

“Abundant is the year, with much millet and much rice,
 And we have all granaries,
 With hundreds of thousands and millions of units.
 We make wine and sweet spirits
 And offer them to our ancestors, male and female,
 Thus to fulfil all the rights,
 And bring down blessings to all.”

“Heaven produces the teeming multitude;
 As there are things, there are their specific principles.
 When the people keep to their normal nature,
 They will excellent virtue.
 Heaven, looking down upon the House of Zhou
 Sees that its light reaches the people below,
 And to protect the Son of Heaven
 Heaven sent down Chung Shan-fu to help him.”

From the Book of Odes. Ode 279 & Ode 260.

*

The journey home began the day Yong and Ki left Qingdao. Ki, of course, wanted to know where Yong had been for seven days. And Yong, not wanting to lie, had told him that he couldn't tell him because it was not his to tell. Which was correct in that the sacred language of Heaven and Earth belonged to another time and another place and as those events, more space time coordinates, were not specified because they had not happened yet he was not able to relate them to anyone.

Ki and the tax collector, Su Ch'ung, had spent three fruitful days collecting information on the development of Qingdao and where Ki had acted as scribe to Ch'ung. Having achieved his

purpose and being a diligent scholar official he had left for his next assignment.

Ki was on the point of leaving himself when Yong had turned up, insisting that he must return home immediately.

Their journey was mainly in silence, each involved in their respective concerns. In Quiu they had parted. Ki was also heading home to tell his parents that he had chosen the path of knowledge and that as he did not know where that would lead him, he would say goodbye. Not an easy subject for him or his parents.

Yong gave him an open invitation to visit but he knew in his heart that he would never see the young man again. They parted in sorrow.

Yong had then made for Ping on the Yellow River. The nearest place to catch a ferry. The ferries were booked months in advance but Yong could not wait and used the Imperial Seal to secure not just a passage but the finest cabin. He travelled as any member of the government would in whatever luxury there was on offer. He did not feel guilt. He had somehow risen above such things and free from other concerns he was able to reflect on his great journey, which he did at great length.

One thing he was certain of was that his days as a Wanderer were over.

Arriving back in Loyang he visited his wife's favourite silk merchant, where he purchased two pieces of material of a very special nature. This was silk woven with fine threads of silver that under certain light conditions, especially the moon's light, the material glistened with a metallic sheen. One piece in kingfisher blue and the other in midnight blue. He knew that to purchase just one piece of such material would send his wife into rapture. But two would convince her of the very special place she held in his affections.

Next he visited the old toy shop where he purchased a range of toys for his children. For Po he bought something special; a cherry wood box to hold his calligraphy brushes and that had a secret compartment to hold important documents or secret communications between father and son.

Yong decided to walk back. He knew his passage through town would be the best way to let his friends know of his return.

Farmer Ham gave him a bow from where he was working in his vegetable garden. Giving a mimed performance of drinking from

a large barrel, that Yong with his hands full could only reply to by staggering like a drunk man. Now he knew he was home.

A servant saw him coming and ran back into the courtyard before he could stop her. He had hoped to take her by surprise himself.

Shrieks and shouts now greeted him before his wife came running out into the courtyard and promptly collapsed. Taken inside she was revived while still in his arms and promptly fainted away. When she did recover she gave him such telling off that he was forced to show her the material he had brought for her. This stunned her into silence and this was eventually followed by rivers of tears. She clung onto him and made him promise that he would never leave her again. He gladly promised, already having made up his mind in this respect.

His friends had taken Yong's request to look after his wife in a most agreeable way. They turned up every quarter of the moon's phases as if he was still in residence. Mistress Nameless performed her usual functions and for a brief time she could imagine that he was there as normal. Such was the genius of Yong's friends.

Ssu-ma Kuang posted two soldiers to guard the household that was without any male protection and would visit when his duties allowed and when he was in Loyang. Such was the consideration of his friend.

On the next quarter of the moon after his return all of his friends arrived and questioned him extensively about his journey. He answered all their queries except one. Deflecting them from his great secret by tales of justice and perspective and knowledge gained by his experiences.

Had he gained an insight into the Mind of Confucius? He could not say. What the Illuminate had told him had Confucius a dupe of a great conceit. He could not reveal this without revealing his meeting with the Illuminate and this was not possible. However, it did not matter. It was only in the detail that Confucius was wrong. It did not detract from *this culture of ours* nor the great truths handed down through the classics.

Over the years that followed he would use the sacred language of Heaven and Earth, which explained the mechanism of Tsao Hua, the continuing process of creation, to extrapolate situations and events where the changing lines in delivering the change that would dominate in these situations and events in the future, to make predictions that were invariably

correct. But his extrapolations were rarely clear cut and he put this down to the fact that he was not a sage. A sage would have been able to extrapolate with accuracy, he could not. How he wished, near the end of his life, that he had spent more time on becoming a sage. And now he would have to wait for a new life to become one.

When asked how he managed these feats he referred to his numerology, which in a way was true. The hexagrams were a numbering system that followed a reasoned progression. As none could understand his numerology he was on safe ground.

At his death he could see the door posts and passing through he could feel the sixty two changes of Tsao Hua returning across the boundary between the endless formless consciousness and the particular consciousness of the world of the myriad things. Just as he was about to be absorbed into the endless formless consciousness he rebounded from its surface after leaving his impression on it. Passing back through the sixty two changes of Tsao Hua, he is recreated in the continuing process of creation. He glimpses, just for a moment of a moment, the realm of the Buddhas, the Illuminates and the Gods. Then opening up before him he sees the gate posts of birth and like the shadow of a shadow he passes through ...

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

**The fellowship is organized outside of the gate,
Where all men are equal and in close proximity.
Success.**

Changing Line in the second place means:

**Factions form along clan lines.
Misfortune.**

Changing Line in the third place means:

**Distrust abounds in the fellowship.
It will take a long time to rectify.
Misfortune.**

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

**The situation is almost out of hand but it is now obvious to all.
A retreat from conflict is made possible.
Good fortune returns.**

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

**The factionalism is overcome by man's common humanity.
At last they come together in joy.
Good fortune.**

Changing Line at the top means:

The fellowship is local and not universal.

Within this fellowship,

The superior man aims to find common cause.

There is neither blame nor remorse.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

The Army (61)

==	==	
==	==	Earth
==	==	
==	==	
=====		Water
==	==	

THE IMAGE

Beneath the Earth, Water:

The Image of THE ARMY.

Thus the superior man organizes the people

With their consent.

Chapter 31

Coming to meet (1)

The Song Dynasty

1242 C.E.

23rd Day of the 2nd Moon

Mid-Day

=====

===== Heaven

=====

=====

===== Wind

== ==

THE IMAGE

The Gentle Wind penetrates Heaven:

The Image of GENTLE MOVEMENT.

The superior man notes the arrival of a young girl

And realizes her power for transformation.

*

“The mind of man is precarious.
The Way of Heaven is subtle.”

Shen the sage-king. 3rd millennium BCE.

★

... into his new life.’ Bao rests into the silence of the others gathered around the Captain’s Table, as they feel the deck of the great ship beneath their feet pitch and yawl to the might of the ocean’s waves.

Captain Miko is first to break the silence. ‘Perhaps Bao, or should I call you Yong’ Bao indicates that it really doesn’t matter ‘perhaps you can help me with this recurring dream that I have. I am on the stern of a great ship on a sealess sea made of stars. Of crew there are none. The great masts hold transparent sails that follow my every command. The rudder my merest whim. I dive this great ship into a whirlpool of stars and pass right through. Looking back the whirlpool shrinks into the distance as another flies up before me, even bigger and more grand than the last. What can it mean?’

Bao indicates Tai.

‘It means you will ply the plane of consciousness and sleep in the Mystic.’

Ling-ling, who sits next to her brother, is confounded. ‘But how, when we all know the many sins he has committed?’

Tai smiles at Ling-ling. ‘His is an ancient consciousness. He has reincarnated many times. His sins in this life were born out of ignorance of who he is. But now he knows, he only has to see them to see the error of his ways, and they are washed away in the ocean of the great dharma like so many grains of sand. You on the other hand, Ling-ling, are a new consciousness as your question signifies. Your path has just begun. Hold it true and you may even attain enlightenment in this life.’

Pig-face, who sits between Tai and the Captain at the head of the table, asks. 'If I am reincarnated will I be reincarnated with my nose intact?'

Laughter springs forth from everyone, even Pig-face, who wears a gold nose made for him by the good Captain.

'If I were you, with the cargo hold of sins that you have acquired in just this life, I would be more worried about being born a pig with a human nose.' Says Bao to laughter.

Tai sees the anguish this excites in Pig-face. 'He pulls your tail. As long as you pay penance and follow the eight-fold path, as I have instructed, your salvation will surely follow.'

'And you will eat from a golden trough in your next life.' Says Bao to more laughter.

'Mock me, it is all I deserve.' Says Pig-face in sincerity.

'And what of me?' Asks Shi of Tai.

'Your dharma is closed to me. For you are not a Buddhist. If, however, you really believe in reincarnation, as surely you must after Shao Yong Bao's revelation, and, if it is what you truly want, then you will be reincarnated. Perhaps, as a sage.'

'And what of you?' Shi asks Tai.

'The path I travel is long and complicated.' She looks to Bao. 'He is enough for me to contend with in this life.'

Bao reaches out his hand across the table and she caresses it with drumming impatient fingers.

*

Lizong stands at the head of the table in the discussion section of the Imperial Library. Seated to his left is the Head Librarian, Lai Si, and next to him is Tai who is sitting opposite her husband. Shi sits between Lizong on his left and Bao on his right.

I have only read the introduction to this.' Lizong places his hand on Shao Yong's Tsao Hua Interpretation of the Great I that lies before him. 'It was enough to for me to realize that this is neither the time nor place for such knowledge to be exercised. However, you must all decide for yourselves when helping Shao Yong Bao make up his mind with what he is to do with this knowledge. I say to you Bao, destroy it, before it

falls into wrong hands.' Lizong pushes the book to Shi then walks out.

Shi stands up and places his hand on the book. 'I have read this book and I say to you, Shao Yong Bao, that such knowledge is safe only in the hands of a sage. So I recommend that you destroy it.' He pushes the book across the table to Lai Si and follows Lizong out.

Lai Si stands and places his old hands on the book. 'I have consulted this book and read the two Hexagrams of Change it delivered. I wish I hadn't. Destroy it and have done with it.' He passes the book to Tai and walks out.

Tai stands and passes it straight across to Bao. 'Destroy it.' She follows the rest.

Bao stands and picks up the book. He follows Tai out into the great corridor that runs the length of the Imperial Library. A line of solemn consciousness heading for the exit.

Bao comes to the enclosed brazier that stands in the centre of the great corridor and which is used for destroying spoiled text.

He slips the book into the slot and the flames come up to greet it. Then, shouting. 'There, it is done. The Great I is destroyed.'

The line does not turn or alter in any way. As Lizong nears the doors they open by unseen hands and he passes through.

Bao stands for a moment watching the flames passing up inside the brazier and thinks to himself: Except, of course, for the one in my consciousness: His thoughts change tone: But I really can't see what all the fuss is about. After all, a Great Conceit of a Great Conceit is still a Great Conceit. Except of course, when it isn't. And when it isn't, it means that its time has come. And then it is a Great Truth:

He straightens himself up into a posture of dignity and adopts the serene smile of the Buddha. Then he walks with great solemnity after the others, until he nears the door posts then hops and skips through like the naughty child he is, into ...

*

The Changing Lines

Changing Line at the beginning means:

The superior man notes the arrival of a young girl.

Her progress must be blocked if great change is not to happen.

Changing Line in the second place means:

The young girl cannot be kept in check by violence.

Only gentle control will work.

Changing Line in the third place means:

The young girl's progress is influential.

Even the superior man is tempted but circumstances prevent this.

Clear insight is required into the danger of the situation to avoid greater mistakes.

Changing Line in the fourth place means:

The young girl must be placated and favour won,

If she is to be of use to the superior man.

Changing Line in the fifth place means:

The young girl's influence is controlled by the superior man,

Whose hidden qualities of strength and righteousness win through.

Good fortune.

Changing Line at the top means:

The situation is controlled by the young girl

And so the superior man withdraws.

Humiliation follows but there is no blame.

These Changing Lines Deliver:

Return (62)

== ==

== == Earth

== ==

== ==

== == Thunder

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THE IMAGE

Thunder sleeps within the Earth:

The Image of RETURN.

Thus the Kings of old

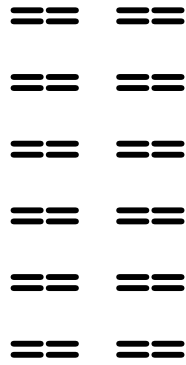
Attained union with the source of all things

So they could deliver to humanity

The Great I.

EARTH = SQUARE

*



*

“By concentration is meant to know that all dharmas, elements of existence, from the very beginning have no nature of their own. They neither come into nor go out of existence. Because they are caused by illusion and imagination, they exist without real existence. But the existence of existent dharmas is the same as nonexistence. They are only the one mind, whose substance admits no differentiation. Those who hold this view can stop the flow of erroneous thought. This is called concentration.

By insight is meant that although we know that things originally do not come into existence and at present do not go out of existence, nevertheless they were caused to arise out of the mind’s nature and hence are not without a worldly function of an unreal and imaginative nature. They are like illusions and dreams which seem to exist but really do not. This is therefore called insight ... It means to base and concentrate on the one mind in order to practice concentration and insight ...

This mind is the same as the Mind of Pure Self-nature, True Thusness, Buddha-nature, Dharma-body, the Storehouse of the Thus-come, the Realm of Dharmas, and Dharma-nature ...

Question: Why is it called the Mind of Pure Self-nature?

Answer: Although this mind has been obscured from time immemorial by contaminating dharmas based on ignorance, yet its nature of purity has never changed. Hence it is called pure. Why? Because contaminating dharmas based on ignorance are from the beginning separated from the mind. Why do we say they are separated? Because dharmas with ignorance as their substance are non-existent dharmas. Their existence is the same as nonexistence. Since they are non-existent, they cannot be associated with the mind. Therefore we say they are separated. Since there are no contaminating dharmas based on ignorance to be associated with it, therefore it is called pure in nature. Being central and real, it is originally awakened. It is therefore called the mind. For these reasons it is called the Mind of Pure Self-nature.

Question: Why is it called True Thusness?

Answer: All dharmas depend on this mind for their being and take and take the mind as their substance. When it is compared with dharmas all of them are unreal and imaginary, and their existence is the same as nonexistence. Contrasted with these unreal and false dharmas, the mind is regarded as true.

Furthermore, although dharmas are really non-existent, because they are caused by illusion and imagination, they have the character of coming into and going out of existence. When unreal dharmas come into existence, this mind does not come into existence, and when the dharmas go out of existence this mind does not go out of existence. Not coming into existence, it is therefore not increased, and not going out of existence, it is therefore not decreased. Because it neither comes into nor goes out of existence and is neither increased nor decreased, it is called true. The Buddhas of the three ages, past, present and future, and all sentient beings have this one Pure Mind as their substance. All ordinary and saintly beings and dharmas each have their own differences and differentiated characters. But this True Mind has neither differentiation nor characters. It is therefore called Thusness.

Furthermore, by True Thusness is meant that all dharmas, being thus real, are merely this one mind. Therefore this one mind is called True Thusness. If there are dharmas outside of the mind, they are neither real nor thus so, but are false and differentiated characters. This is why the Awakening of Faith says, 'From the very beginning all dharmas are free from the characters of mental causation. At bottom they are all the same, without differentiation, do not change or become different, and cannot be destroyed. They are only one mind. Therefore it is called True Thusness. Because of this meaning, the Mind of Pure Self-nature is called True Thusness.

Question: Why is this mind also called Buddha-nature?

Answer: The word 'Buddha' means awakening, and nature means mind. Because the substance of this Pure Mind is not un-awakened, it is described as the awakened mind."

From the Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men – The Method of Concentration and Insight – 1. The Various Aspects of the Mind.

*

"The young man, let us call him, Hsu for convenience, had set out to make his fortune with twenty silver coins cash given to him by his father. His father, a simple farmer, had saved all of his life to amass this small fortune.

Hsu had decided that the best place to try his luck would be in the regional capital of Loyang, but to arrive there he would need to cross the Yellow River. At that time of year the Yellow River was at its lowest level and it was normally possible to cross on one of the shingle banks the locals had built for that very purpose.

Arriving at the river crossing, Hsu could see that the river was still too high to cross safely. He would have to walk further down the river to where the ferry crossed; at least another days walk.

Sitting down to rest before setting off, Hsu was passed by another man, Lu, who didn't stop as he approached the river but waded in and soon was up to his waist, then, up to his chest. Lu held above his head a bag, obviously, filled with his valuables. Then, disaster, as Lu stepped into a hole on the shingle bank. He was under, all except for one arm and his bag, which he managed to keep above the surface of the river.

Hsu, having been raised to be an honourable man by his father, dropped all of his possessions and took off his clothes and was into the river to save the man. This he did with great

success and even brought safely to the river bank the man's bag; still dry.

Lu was so happy that he spoke with enthusiasm. 'My young master, Hsu, did you say, I have little money to reward you with but there is perhaps something that I can give you for your great courage.'

'I do not ask for a reward, Master Lu.' Answered Hsu.

'Nevertheless, a reward you shall have.'

After they had laid their clothes out to dry, Lu produced from his bag a book and some yarrow sticks in a leather cup. 'Have you heard of the I Ching?'

'Who has not heard of the Book of Changes.' Answers Hsu.

'Well here is the original.' He shows Hsu the book. 'An original copy you understand. Copied by myself from the one my father owned. You see my father and his father before him and his father before him and so on back into the ancient past had copied in each generation this book. And that is because our original ancestor had received this great work from the Master himself, Confucius. This is the very book that Confucius had written the ten wings for, and indeed, it contains the original ten wings.' Lu shows Hsu the end of the book, where Confucius's famous commentary resides.

'This must be a great source of pride for you and your family.'

'Indeed. Confucius had given the book to my ancient ancestor so that he could give its great wisdom to the people. And that is what my family has done for these past 1500 years or more. I normally charge a silver coin for a reading, for a man must live as he goes about fulfilling his destiny. However, I will give you a reading for free.' Lu smiles benevolently at the young man.

'I am overwhelmed with joy.' Says Hsu.

It takes little time for Lu to separate the yarrow sticks and for him to count them out in the traditional manner. The reading delivers: K'an, The Abysmal. But with changing lines in 1st. 3rd. 4th. and 6th. lines, the reading changes to Ch'ien, The Creative Heaven.

'What fortune.' Says Lu with joy.

'What does it mean?' Asks Hsu.

'Normally, The Abysmal, is a very bad omen, for it warns of danger. And here in this hexagram it is doubled, which means: Repetition of Danger. However, because of the changing lines, it eventually changes to, The Creative Heaven. A most auspicious omen.' Lu's voice trails off and he looks sad.

'But what is wrong, Master Lu. If all changes for the best in the end how can one not be pleased?' Says Hsu with concern.

'I am not sad for you, Master Hsu.' Lu says. 'But for myself. As now I must part from this great work. I must sell this copy and make another from memory. A long and arduous task.'

'But why?'

'It was a condition laid down by Confucius himself. This reading is special for it changes from the worst possible outcome to the very best. And when this happens the great cycle of Change is complete and I must pass the book on. The reason is beyond the knowledge of ordinary men and only for a sage to know. My father impressed upon me the importance of this condition, so I dare not ignore my father's warning for he said that our destiny would be the reverse of the reading. We would go from a state of, The Creative Heaven, to the state of, The Abysmal, if we did not.'

'I see.' Says Hsu. Then inspired. 'Why not sell the book to me?'

'I will Master Hsu, but only if you have enough money to keep me until I finish writing a new one. How much do you have?'

'I have twenty silver coins.' Hsu says hopefully.

'That is just about enough. And as you have saved my life I will only charge you nineteen silver coins so you have enough to live on until the danger is past and the change is completed.'

'Excellent.' Says Hsu.

And so it was that they parted company with Hsu the proud new owner of a copy of the original, I Ching.

Arriving in Loyang, Hsu was so filled with good cheer, he decided to visit a teahouse. The Laughing Duck was famous for

its beautiful singing girls and soon Hsu was attracted to a particular one by the name of An-an. She was attracted to him and offered him the pleasures of the bedchamber.

For a young man fresh from the country he was beguiled by her charms and soon agreed. His happiness was boundless and within a few days he had spent his only silver coin.

He awoke as if from a dream when he handed his last money over to An-an. 'Forgive me, for I have not enough money to pay what I owe you.'

An-an was furious. 'I will have to fetch the Magistrate's men and have you cast into prison until you do.'

'If you can only wait a short while, I have here,' he shows her the book, 'an original copy of the I Ching that was used by Confucius. With such knowledge in my possession I will soon make my fortune. Let me give you a reading to make up for the deficit of money.'

'Are you such a fool, that you think that I am as foolish as you. Everyone knows that you must be a sage to give readings from the Great I. And you are obviously not a sage.' She says with biting malice.

The truth in this last statement hits Hsu hard. 'Then what am I to do?'

An-an takes pity on Hsu when he breaks into tears. 'Where did you get this book?'

After Hsu tells his story and tells it with such truthfulness that An-an is convinced of its validity. She has also a liking for this country boy and does not wish to see him imprisoned. 'I will do you favour. I will buy the book from you. I have only 50 silver coins from my savings, so that will have to do.'

Hsu is unhappy with the arrangement but consoles himself that he will not be cast into prison. He leaves to look for cheap lodgings and finds himself on the outskirts of Loyang when he meets a drover of geese driving his flock to market.

Only the drover is lame with an ulcerated leg. 'Young man, will you not help me. I must get these geese to market so that I can have my leg cured. Will you not take them for me so that I may rest and stop making my infliction worse?'

Hsu's sweet temperament springs forth. 'What price were you expecting for your flock?'

'Five silver coins.'

'I will pay you five silver coins so you may get treated at once.' Says Hsu to a happy drover.

After taking the man to an herbalist and making sure he is settled, Hsu takes the geese to market where he is inundated by offers for his flock. A mysterious disease had killed many of the geese in the surrounding countryside and they were in short supply. He eventually sold his flock for 20 silver coins making a massive profit. But this being Hsu, he was soon troubled by this. He quickly returned to the herbalist where he found the drover, his leg now bound with herbs, and told him of his great good fortune, and how he wanted to share this with the drover.

'As you are such an honest man, why do we not enter into business together? The district where I come from is free of this disease and we will be able to pay a fair price to the farmers for their geese.'

Hsu and the drover made a small fortune over time; the drover doing business with the farmers and Hsu selling them in the market in Loyang.

An-an was not so lucky. She visited an antiquity emporium where she presented the book to, Lin Xiyi, the owner, who said. 'Let me show you my collection of original copies of the I Ching.'

An-an was horrified to find that he had seven copies.

'These all purport to be original copies, or more precisely, copies of the original I Ching that Confucius used. The only problem is that if they are original copies they should all be the same. This is not true. They are, in fact, all different.' He said with distaste.

An-an was despondent. So despondent that she related the whole story to Lin, who did not seem in the slightest surprised. He was, however, saddened by her story. The young man had been fooled by the drowning man, and she had fooled herself by believing the young man's story, which led her to buy the book hoping to make a profit, in the same manner as the young man. 'Fools and their money.' He thought, but what he said was. 'I can only give you 5 silver coins, and that's being generous.'

An-an took the offer and went back to work.

A few days later, Lu, the drowning man came into Lin's emporium. He wanted to buy a copy of the I Ching; this was the third copy that Lu had bought. This made Lin suspicious, especially after hearing An-an's story. 'You do realize that giving false readings from the Great I is filled with danger.'

'What do you mean?' Asked Lu.

'A man gave a false reading to a young man so he could make a profit out of it. He told the young man that he had been given the category of change, number 29, The Abysmal. Having brought the young man's spirits down, he then raised them up by telling him that because of the Changing Lines his category would change to, number 1, The Creative Heaven. Unfortunately for the man he didn't realize that if you give a false reading then that reading becomes yours.'

'But that is a very good reading. I'm sure the young man didn't mind a bit.' Lu jokes.

'I'm afraid it doesn't work quite like that. You see, to change, The Abysmal, into, The Creative Heaven there has to be four changing lines. The first and at the bottom says. "Repetition of the Abysmal. In the Abyss one falls into a pit. Misfortune." The third line says. "Forward and backward, abyss on abyss. In danger like this, pause and wait, otherwise you will fall into a pit in the abyss. Do not act in this way." The fourth changing line says. "A jug of wine, two bowls of rice with it; earthen vessels simply handed in through the window. There is certainly not any blame in this." And finally the sixth and top line says. "Bound with cords and ropes, shut in between thorn hedged prison walls: For three years one does not find the way. Great misfortune." To get to the Creative Heaven one must go through these repetitions of the Abysmal. If, after repeating the same mistakes, you carry on regardless then you will arrive at The Creative Heaven only to find that here, the meaning of The Creative Heaven means death.'

Lu is somewhat disturbed by this but buys another copy of the I Ching anyway and leaves.

Four years later Lin was invited to the opening of a new teahouse, The Laughing Goose, just down the street from his emporium. Arriving late due to family business he finds the teahouse full of customers and a joyful atmosphere. He is

approached by a woman he seems to recognise. 'Have we met? I seem to recognize your face.'

'We met some time ago. I brought you an original copy of the I Ching, a copy of the original used by Confucius.'

Lin thinks back and quickly remembers. 'I never knew your name.'

'An-an. I was too embarrassed to give you it at the time, as I had bought the copy from a young man hoping to make a profit. But as you know, that is not how it turned out. Still, I have learned my lesson. Come and meet the young man.'

An-an introduces Lin to Hsu. 'This is the man from the emporium that I sold the original copy to.'

Hsu is delighted. 'You certainly had a good effect on An-an even if the original copy did not.'

Hsu tells Lin how with money from An-an he had made a fortune from importing geese from up-river, and ran a small fleet of boats. Then he went on to tell him of his return to The Laughing Duck the following year. 'As I entered the teahouse, An-an recognized me straight away and begged my forgiveness for deceiving me into selling what she thought was a very valuable object. I told her that the misfortune was hers and that I had made a fortune from the money she gave me. I therefore had little resentment towards her and forgave her for her deceit as she was now being honest and filled with remorse. We soon became firm friends and playful lovers. A year later I asked An-an to become my official concubine and the following year she gave birth to our son. With so much wealth it was sensible to indulge An-an's ambition in running her own teahouse. And here we are.'

Lin is joyful at such news. 'The Laughing Goose is an excellent name when you know the story that lies behind it. But tell me? Did you ever hear what happened to the man that sold you the original copy?'

'Indeed. This was a trick he had played before.'

'Ah.' Says Lin. 'A changing line at the beginning. Repetition of the Abysmal. In the abyss one falls into a pit.'

'Then he plays the trick on me.'

'Ah. A changing line in the third place. Forward and backward, abyss on abyss.'

'But that turned out to be beneficial to me and eventually to An-an.'

'Ah. A changing line in the fourth place. A jug of wine, two bowls of rice with it.'

'He then went on to play his trick once more. Unfortunately for him, he tried to play it on the Magistrate's son, and for his troubles he spent three years in jail.'

'Ah. A changing line at the top. Bound with cords and ropes, shut in between thorn-hedged prison walls.'

All three are amazed at the accuracy of the I Ching reading.

After a while Lin asks. 'Did he learn his lesson I wonder?'

'Indeed not.' Says An-an with sadness. 'On release from prison he tried his trick one more time.'

'With disastrous consequences as he was swept away by a flash-flood and drowned.' Says Hsu.

'Ah.' Says a knowing Lin. 'He fulfilled his destiny and the I Ching's reading that he had constructed. For the Creative Heaven in this case represents death.'

All three sit in wonder at the workings of The Great I."

'You found this story in our noble ancestor's notes?' Says Ling-ling to her brother.

Ling-ling, Tai, Shi and Bao are sitting on the first floor of the Ink Stone overlooking Phoenix Hill.

'Indeed.' Says Bao. 'It is hard to tell whether or not it is a true story or one that has been created by our noble ancestor to serve as an illustration of the power of the I Ching.'

'Shao Yong's commentary on the Great I has never been found?' Asks Shi with extreme interest.

'Never. And yet, here, in this story, we see that his knowledge of the Great I was profound.'

'Profound indeed.' Says Shi.

'What I don't understand is why The Creative Heaven is death in this story.' States Ling-ling with genuine curiosity.

'That is simpler than you would think. In death we all return to The Creative Heaven from whence we came.'

'I see.' Says Ling-ling then after a while. 'It is similar to the Buddhist understanding of the nature of reality. Is it not?' She directs this to her fellow Buddhist, Tai.

'Indeed. It shows that all mystical traditions have a common root. Whether it is Confucian, Buddhist or even Taoism, the melding of the finite consciousness with the infinite consciousness is central to all.'

'An excellent way to describe it.' Says Bao looking at Tai with pride.

'Be careful Tai, he often flatters to deceive.' Says Ling-ling in mischief.

'Have little fear, my dear sister, I understand the arrogant dragon's cunning ways.'

Bao does fain horror in the direction of Shi. 'What have I done to deserve such an attack on my character? When you know what a sincere and simple mind I have.'

'As sincere as a dead scorpion and as simple as a swivel-eyed chameleon.' Says Ling-ling. But she cannot hold a straight face and neither can anyone else. Up she jumps and jumps on her brother with a great show of affection.

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Postscript

Shapes and forms pass through. Some like multi-coloured shadows, some like intricate works of metal glowing with intense light, some like sounds of a musical disposition. All changing but all in resonance with whatever passes by in this ocean of Consciousness.

: What was it that you thought in words?

: Our common humanity is fundamental in regard to the rest of the universe, and, as such, the universe would have to be real in some fundamental sense. And not at all like your world view where everything in the world of the senses is an illusion. If all human beings are capable of sharing the same unique experiences of the world of the senses, then this reality we share and experience as the same, is real and not an illusion.

: Start with the fact that there is only consciousness. That consciousness has two forms.

The world of the infinite consciousness as a single entity in a state of random chaos.

And,

The world of the finite consciousness in a state of infinite consciousness' obeying the principles of each particular universe. Does that help?

: Help what?

: Your need to understand everything in words.

: I am a human being. My consciousness has a rational component. That rational component finds expression in words. So indeed, I do need to understand it in words; as words and rationality are forms of consciousness as much as everything else. The Buddha understood this and that is why he spent so much time expressing himself in words. By the way, when do I get to meet the Buddha?

: Who do you think you're talking to right now?

: Oh, sorry. I thought I was talking to my other half.

Quotes

Chapter 1 (page 4) – From the Doctrine of the Mean. Section 1.

Chapter 2 (page 19) - From the Doctrine of the Mean. Section 6.

Chapter 3 (page 32) - From the Doctrine of the Mean. Section 21.

Chapter 4 (page 50) - From the Doctrine of the Mean. Section 25.

Chapter 5 (page 72) - From the Doctrine of the Mean. Section 27.

Chapter 6 (page 92) - From the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals by Tung Chung-Shu. Chapter 35.

Chapter 7 (page 105) - From the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals by Tung Chung-shu. Chapter 56.

Chapter 8 (page 121) - From the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals by Tung Chung-shu. Chapter 57.

Chapter 9 (page 140) - From the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals by Tung Chung-shu. Chapter 13 of the outer chapters.

Chapter 10 (page 152) - From the Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn Annals by Tung Chung-shu. Chapter 30.

Chapter 11 (page 177) - From the book of Hsun Tzu. Chapter 17.

Chapter 12 (page 195) - From the book of Hsun Tzu. Chapter 17.

Chapter 13 (page 208) - From the book of Hsun Tzu. Chapter 22.

Chapter 14 (page 227) - From the book of Hsun Tzu. Chapter 23.

Chapter 15 (page 246) - From the book of Hsun Tzu. Chapter 23.

Chapter 16 (page 259) - From the Book of Mencius. 6A:6.

Chapter 17 (page 275) - From the Book of Mencius. 6A:7.

Chapter 18 (page 286) - From the Book of Mencius. 6A:8.

Chapter 19 (page 305) - From the Book of Mencius. 6A:15.

Chapter 20 (page 319) - From the Book of Mencius. 2A:3

Chapter 21 (page 335) - From the Book of Mencius. 7A:4.

Chapter 22 (page 348) - From the Analects. 2:4.

Chapter 23 (page 361) - From the Analects. 6:28.

Chapter 24 (page 374) - From the Analects. 11:11.

Chapter 25 (page 387) - From the Analects. 13:3.

Chapter 26 (page 403) - From the Analects. 17:19.

Chapter 27 (page 423) - From Tso's commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals. Duke Chao.

Chapter 28 (page 436) - From the Book of History. The Great Norm.

Chapter 29 (page 450) - From the Book of Odes. Ode 235.

Chapter 30 (page 463) - From the Book of Odes. Ode 279 & Ode 260.

Chapter 31 (page 471) - Shen the sage-king. 3rd millennium BCE.

Earth=Square (page 479) - From the Ta-ch'eng chih-kuan fa-men – The Method of Concentration and Insight – 1. The Various Aspects of the Mind.

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GLOSSARY

Analects - The discourses that Confucius held with his students and consequently the most reliable source of Confucius' Doctrines. These exerted great influence on Chinese philosophic development especially in determining its defining principle of humanism.

Book of Rites - A Confucian Classic, the content of which contained material from the time of Confucius (551 - 479 B.C.E.), the early Zhou (1111 - 600 approx B.C.E.) and supposedly from the Shang (1700 approx. - 1111 B.C.E.). The Chapters on The Doctrine of the Mean (G) and The Great Learning (G) were selected by Zhu Xi (G) along with the Analects (G) and the Book of Mencius (G) to become part of the Neo-Confucian canon of Daoxue.

Book of Mencius - Meng Tzu in Chinese, is divided into 7 books each with 2 parts. It was almost certainly compiled by his students after his death.

Chan Buddhism - Or Chinese Buddhism or Zen Buddhism is marked by the influence of Neo-Taoism on the Indian forms of Buddhism in the 3rd and 4th centuries C.E. when Buddhism first arrived in China. The syncretic process once started proceeded throughout Chinese history. Like the Neo-Taoists the Buddhists regard ultimate reality as transcending all being, names, and forms, and as empty and quiet in nature - reality undifferentiated.

Chang Tsai - (1017-1073 C.E.) - Like the other 4 Neo-Confucian philosophers he drew his inspiration chiefly from the I Ching (Book of Changes). His metaphysics, however, was markedly different from Zhou Tun-I and also from Shao Yong in that he identifies material force (Ch'i) with the Supreme Ultimate itself.

Cheng Brothers - Students of Zhou Tun-yi, friends of Shao Yong, nephews of Zhang Zai. Considered 2 of the 5 most important philosophers that formed the core of Daoxue (Neo-Confucianism) and made Li (principle/pattern) its most important component. They were both influenced by Buddhism and Daoism, and as students of Zhou Tun-Yi accepted his metaphysical Theory of Everything.

Cheng Hao - (1032-1085 C.E.) - The idealist of the brothers. He proposed that man and all things form one body because all

of them possess principle. The concept of the Principle of Nature is accredited to him in the form of universal truth or natural law. He promoted self-cultivation to the exclusion of nearly everything else.

Cheng Yi - The rationalist. If Hao is more subjective looking towards the internal, Yi, while having this element also looks towards the external and is more objective. He insists that self-cultivation and the extension of knowledge must be pursued at the same time. The Investigation of Things becomes a cardinal concept in his philosophy.

Chinese Buddhism - By the 3rd century (C.E.) there were already 2 forms of Buddhism in China: Dhyana (meditation) and Prajna (wisdom). From the very beginning there was cross-fertilization with Taoism and knowledge cults such as that of the Yellow Emperor. This process of syncretism continued eventually leading to a uniquely Chinese form called Ch'an Buddhism (Zen).

Chuang Tzu (399-295 BCE) - Mystical sage-philosopher who in his writing managed to transcend the mundane world while remaining true to rationality and reason. You can read nearly everything he wrote from both the mundane and mystical perspectives - a remarkable achievement.

Chung-Wung - Literally translated means 'universal centrality'. There has been much debate over the meaning of this term. It is often used in the same way as the term 'moderation'. It is also used in the sense of unification of polar opposites leading to harmony. And it also has a purely Mystical meaning in that everything in an infinite universe is at the centre. The western translation 'the mean' - a statistical term - really doesn't do it justice.

Civil Service Examinations - To become a civil servant one first had to pass the examinations. Although this didn't guarantee employment it was an essential requirement for those without representation at court. There were 3 stages:
The Prefectural or Shenshi or 1st Degree.
The Departmental or Shengshi or 2nd Degree.
The Palace or Dianshi or 3rd Degree.

Classics - Handed down from the Early Zhou and commented upon by Confucius they are the Books of History, Odes, Rites and Changes. Plus the Spring and Autumn Annals, which records the events in the state of Lu during the spring and autumn period (722-481 B.C.E.) of the Zhou Dynasty. There was a sixth classic the Book of Music but this is lost.

Confucius - (551-479 B.C.E.) He was a teacher that commented and transmitted the classics. Gave Chinese philosophy its humanistic foundation and promoted some of its fundamental concepts: the rectification of names; the Mean; the Way; Heaven; jen (humanity). The one thread that runs through all of his teachings is benevolence.

Consciousness Only School of Buddhism - It was founded by Asanga (410-500 C.E.) for the purpose of enlightenment through metaphysical reflections. It bears a striking similarity to Constructivism (scientifically proven theory) where what we experience are the constructs or models of our own brains - we don't experience external reality directly.

Dao or Tao - See The Way.

Daoxue - 'The Learning of the Way' became the dominant perspective of Confucian philosophy in the Southern Song. It consisted of a genealogy from Confucius to Mencius to Zhou Dun Yi to Zhang Zai to the Cheng brothers. It placed great emphasis on the cultivation of the self and the importance of Principle (Li).

Dianshi - The final part of the Palace Examination (3rd Degree) where the Emperor and members of the Government set the questions. Those who past this part would normally expect employment. Those who past the exam on a first attempt, which was very rare, were destined for high office.

Doctrine of the Mean - is a discourse on psychology and metaphysics. Its subject is human nature and its relationship to the universe. This relationship was considered a unity the harmonious nature of which underpins all things. It is a Mystical concept that not only appealed to Neo-Confucians but also to Taoists and Buddhists. "Mean" as expressed in the Analects is chung-yung, where chung is what is central and yung is what is universal and harmonious. Hence, the holistic concept of universal centrality - all of Nature including man forming a unity.

Five Constant Virtues - humanity [ren], rightness [yi], ritual decorum [li], wisdom [zhi], and trustworthiness [xin]. They correspond to the five phases.

Five Phases - water, fire, wood, metal and earth.

Great Learning - It summarizes the Confucian educational, moral and political programs in the so-called 3-items:

manifesting the clear character of man, loving the people and abiding in the highest good; and in the 8-steps: the investigation of things, extension of knowledge, sincerity of will, rectification of the mind, cultivation of the personal life, regulation of the family, national order, and world peace. However, its interpretation caused factions in the scholar official bureaucracy of the Song Dynasty.

Imperial Age - In reference to the Common Era [C.E.] the I.A. started in 221 B.C.E,

King Wen - Father of Zhou Wu the founder of the Zhou dynasty. He was responsible for writing the I Ching (the classic of Changes). He was also, along with his son Zhou Tan, Wu's brother, responsible for initiating the Zhou Cultural Revolution - sometimes known as The Mandate of Heaven.

Kinsai - Literarily translated means temporary capital. It was the name originally used by scholar officials and the Imperial court, when, after the Jia invasion of the northern part of China, the court moved to Lin'an from Kaifeng in 1348 I.A. (1127 C.E.)

Ku-wen - The ancient style of writing used by the Confucians.

Li Ao (fl. 798 C.E.) - Along with Han Yu (768-824 C.E.) are usually considered as forerunners of Neo-Confucianism. There is nothing new in their theories of human nature - the dualism of good nature and evil feelings. However, by emphasizing the Great Learning, Doctrine of the Mean and the Book of Changes as works to study, they directed the literati to the importance of these Confucian Classics. They both saw Mencius as the person through whom the true doctrines of Confucius were transmitted to later generations.

Lingyan Monastery - One of the oldest Buddhist monasteries. Established within a century of the arrival of the Indian Buddhist Ai, who first brought Buddhism to China.

Marquise Zong Shen-he - The Censor.

Mencius (371-289 B.C.E.) - Mencius' teachings were derived from Confucius, however, where Confucius implied that human nature was good, Mencius declared that it is originally good. It logically follows that human beings have the innate ability to do good, and from this, if humans develop this ability they can serve Heaven and fulfil their destiny. It also follows that as evil is not inborn it must be due to human failings in dealing with external factors. When this happens serious

efforts must be made to recover our original nature. He was and still is considered to be the greatest Confucian.

Principle (Li) - It is the equivalent of the Natural Law of Mencius and stems from this concept. Principles, or Natural Laws, exist throughout the Universe and are found in all things. Moral Principle is common to all human minds but needs to be cultivated for it to flourish (this is central to both Mencius and Neo-Confucianism.)

Qi - Or Chi and Ch'i - Psychophysical substance that is in dynamic random chaos in the primordial state. The Myriad Things including the universe, all finite entities including human beings are made up from Qi. The application of Li (Principle) to Qi provides the patterns for the Myriad Things. Originally a Taoist concept it was supposedly derived from the Book of Changes. Used by Zhou Tun-Yi and Shao Yong in their metaphysical cosmologies. It has modern connotations in quantum mechanics and theoretical physics.

Shao Yong - 1232-1298 I.A. (1011-1077 C.E.) - Metaphysical Philosopher world famous for inventing binomial mathematics. His system of numerology gave all species of flora and fauna a specific number. However, the special place of human beings in relation to Heaven and Earth gave each individual person a specific number. A friend of the Cheng Brothers, he was often criticized by Cheng Yi for not placing enough importance on Li (Principle) as the foundation of social morality. He was far more interested in how the continuing process of creation (Tsao Hua) brought about the world we live in from the primordial state of the Supreme Ultimate. In this he would not be out of place in the company of Ed Witton (the creator of M-Theory) in that they both suggest a primordial state in dynamic chaos that gives rise through differentiation to the world (universe) in which we live. A truly original thinker whose work has a resonance with contemporary Theoretical Physics.

Scholar Officials - Paid members of the bureaucracy who have passed the civil service examinations.

Supreme Ultimate - This has many interpretations (See Zhang Zai's below for one). Zhou Tun-I's became the orthodoxy and is as follows: The Supreme Ultimate through movement generates Yang. Through tranquillity it generates Yin. Movement and tranquillity alternate becoming the root of each other, giving rise to the distinction and thus to 2 modes. The union of these 2 modes in various combinations gives rise to the 5 agents of material force; Water, Fire, Wood, Metal and Earth,

which in turn give rise to the Myriad Things. This differs from the explanation from the original Book of Changes where the 8 trigrams are the agents produced from the union of the 2 modes.

The Way - Dao or Tao is the most important concept in Chinese philosophy. It is, however, as difficult to understand as Dharma is in Indian philosophy. It is a Mystical/holistic term that has the following connotations: it is the primordial state; it is the experiential experience of the primordial state; if you follow a Mystical path to find Illumination (Daoism) or Enlightenment (Buddhism) then you will find these on 'The Way'; it is the natural law; it is the embodiment of chung-wung - universal centrality; it is all of these things and more.

The White Crane - Was a symbol of Illumination in Daoism. In Chan Buddhism it was often used to describe the vehicle that transported the enlightened to Heaven.

Zhang Zai (1020-1077 C.E.) - One of the 5 main Neo-Confucian philosophers he identified material force (Ch'i) with the Supreme Ultimate (G) itself. To him Yin and Yang are merely 2 aspects of material force. As the substance of the material force it is the primordial state before differentiation: the Great Vacuity. As the function of Li (principle/pattern) it is activity and tranquillity, integration and disintegration etc., it is the Great Harmony. But the Great Vacuity and the Great Harmony are the same as the Way (Tao), the One.

Zhou Tun-I (Dunyi) - One of the five major philosophers of Neo-Confucianism. His metaphysical cosmology was the foundation of the Daoxue movement. He interpreted the Taoist diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (G) in Confucian terms thus providing a Theory of Everything that was very appealing for the increasing number of literati in the Song Dynasty. He benefited, along with the other 4 philosophers of Neo-Confucianism, from the development of printing as his works were disseminated across the entire empire, allowing a grassroots movement to develop.

Zhu Xi 1351-1421 I.A. (1130-1200 C.E.) - Scholar official and philosopher. He promoted Daoxue as the correct interpretation of the classics. He brought together the philosophies of Zhou Dunyi, the Cheng brothers, Hao and Yi, with those of Zhang Zai to create Systematic Confucianism (Neo-Confucianism as it is known today). Although not an original thinker himself he took the 'grassroots' philosophy of Daoxue and turned it into what

would become state orthodoxy. This influenced not only China but also all of Southeast Asia for several hundred years.

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List of Characters

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Asutai - Kadai's Captain of his bodyguard and guide for Kublai and the Han's party.

Caspintai - Son of the Captain of the garrison at Mengyip, and guide to the mulberry region next to the coast.

General Salkai - The old General of many campaigns who served under Genghis as a young man.

Gorogene - Power mad associate and advisor to Temuge.

Ham Pi - Farmer and Shao Yong's neighbour.

Kadai Khan - Kublai's cousin and governor of China's Eastern.

Keshik - Kublai's Captain of his bodyguard.

Kublai Khan - Grandson of Genghis Khan and his eventual heir to the Mongolian Empire. Believed in his grandfather's dream of world conquest so as to bring peace to all of humanity.

Kung-sun K'un - The Wandering monk of Wedding Island who became the teacher of the island's children.

Mistress Nameless - Shao Yong's wife. A name of affection he uses to reflect his own description of himself - Master Nameless.

Ogedei - Son of Genghis Khan. Uncle of Kublai. Great Khan after his father died.

Shao Bao - Librarian palace official. He is a direct descendant of Shao Yong one of the philosophers of Daoxue.

Shao Tai - Wife of Shao Bao and devotee of the Consciousness Only School of Buddhism.

Shao Yong - 11th century Metaphysician of Daoxue. Friend of the Prime Minister, Ssu-ma Kuang, and the Cheng brothers. Ancient ancestor of Bao and Ling-ling.

Sorkaktani - Kublai's mother and a Nestorian Christian. A woman of immense diplomatic skills.

Temuge - Genghis's younger brother. Now and old man.

Zhen Ling-ling - Wife of Zhen Shi and sister of Shao Bao. Devotee of the Consciousness Only School of Buddhism.

Zhen Shi - Chinese scholar official and a former Governor of Yunnan Province.

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