

【三國演義】

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Three Kingdoms

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THREE KINGDOMS

Volume III

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Chapter 64

Kongming Sets a Scheme to Capture

Zhang Ren

Yang Fu Borrows Troops to

Vanquish Ma Chao

In answer to Zhang Fei, Yan Yan said, "From here to Luoxian my men hold all the strongpoints, and they will do what I tell them. Allow me to lead the march to repay your kindness. The pass guards will surrender at my call." Zhang Fei thanked him from the bottom of his heart. Yan Yan went forth, followed by Zhang Fei, and the defenders indeed delivered each strongpoint to him. To win over those who hesitated, he said, "If I have surrendered, why not you?" In this way he advanced unopposed.

* * *

Kongming had already informed Xuande of his intended departure date, designating Luoxian as the meeting place. In council with his advisers, Xuande said, "Kongming and Zhang Fei are taking separate routes into the Riverlands. We are to join them at Luoxian and proceed to Chengdu together. Their chariots and boats set out on the twentieth of the seventh month and should be arriving shortly. We can begin to march."

"We have steadily refused Zhang Ren's challenges," Huang Zhong said. "Their troops are getting lax, lowering their guard. If we send a company out to sack their camp

tonight, it will be even better than a daylight rout." Xuande approved the plan and sent Huang Zhong to the left, Wei Yan to the right; he himself took the center. At the second watch the three forces set out together. In fact, Zhang Ren was utterly unprepared. The Han troops surged into the main fortification, setting fires that quickly mounted high. That night the Riverlands troops fled back to Luoxian where they found refuge. Xuande withdrew and camped on the road. The following day he advanced, encircled the city, and attacked it. Zhang Ren kept to his walls. On the fourth day Xuande personally led an attack on the west gate while Huang Zhong and Wei Yan went against the east; they left the north and south gates open to traffic. Xuande did not bother to guard the south gate, which led into mountainous roads, nor the north, which gave onto the River Fu.

In the distance Zhang Ren watched Xuande at the west gate to the city, riding back and forth, directing the assault through the morning hours. Observing that Xuande's forces were tiring, Zhang Ren ordered Wu Lan and Lei Tong to lead their men out of the north gate and swing over to the east, there to confront Huang Zhong and Wei Yan. Zhang Ren himself came out of the south gate and swung west to take on Xuande alone. Within the city soldiers and dwellers mounted the walls to beat drums and shout encouragement.

As the sun reddened in the western sky, Xuande ordered his rear contingent to pull back first. His troops were trying to turn when a great shout rose from the wall: Zhang Ren had charged out of the south gate and was heading straight for Xuande. Xuande's forces were becoming dis-

organized, and Wu Lan and Lei Tong had checked Xuande's two generals, Huang Zhong and Wei Yan. Cut off from their help, Xuande fell back and fled along a narrow mountain trail; Zhang Ren was close behind. Alone, Xuande raced ahead, Zhang Ren and a few horsemen giving chase. Riding straight ahead, Xuande laid on the whip. Suddenly a body of soldiers burst into view. "An ambush!" Xuande cried bitterly. "I'm trapped. Heaven has doomed me." Then he realized that the leader of the force ahead was Zhang Fei.¹

Zhang Fei and Yan Yan had been coming along that very road when they spotted dust in the distance, a sure sign of a battle in progress. Zhang Fei hurried forward and clashed with Zhang Ren. After ten bouts Yan Yan arrived in force, and Zhang Ren fled. Zhang Fei chased him to the city wall, but Zhang Ren passed through the gate to the city and hauled up the drawbridge.

Zhang Fei rode back to Xuande. "The director general is still making his way upriver," he reported. "It looks like I won the race." "The roads are so treacherous," Xuande responded, "and you must have met opposition. How could you come so far so fast?" "There were forty-five strongpoints, but Yan Yan, the veteran commander, gets the credit for taking us through without difficulty," Zhang Fei said and explained how he had won Yan Yan's allegiance by freeing him. He then introduced Yan Yan. "But for you, General, my brother could not have made it." Xuande said gratefully as he removed his gilded armor and gave it to Yan Yan. Yan Yan prostrated himself before Xuande. As they were arranging a banquet, a scout rode back and reported: "Huang Zhong and Wei Yan are

locked in combat with two Riverlands commanders, Wu Lan and Lei Tong. When Wu Yi and Liu Gui came out to aid the enemy, our forces could not fight off the combined attack. Huang Zhong and Wei Yan have fled east in defeat."

On hearing this, Zhang Fei requested that Xuande divide his field army into two forces to relieve Huang Zhong and Wei Yan. Fei led one force and Xuande the other as they charged to the rescue. Wu Yi and Liu Gui, hearing the tumult to their rear, retreated into the city in confusion; Xuande and Zhang Fei then intercepted Wu Lan and Lei Tong, who were closing in on Huang Zhong and Wei Yan. The latter two turned on their pursuers, catching them in the middle. Wu Lan and Lei Tong offered their surrender, which Xuande accepted. He then camped near the city.

Zhang Ren was sorely distressed by the loss of the two commanders. "The military situation is extreme," said Wu Yi and Liu Gui. "Without a fight to the death, we'll never repel them. We should report the emergency to Lord Liu Zhang in Chengdu while we think of a way to hold them in check." Zhang Ren advanced a proposal: "Tomorrow I shall challenge them to battle, feign defeat, and lead them around north of the city. At the right moment, rush out with a company and intersect their army. Victory can be won!" Wu Yi responded, "Let Liu Gui support our lord's young Master Liu Xun in the defense of the city. I shall conduct the attack at the north wall." And so it was decided.

The next day Zhang Ren led several thousand out of the city. Waving their pennants and shouting raucously,

they taunted the army of Xuande. Zhang Fei rode out to confront them and without sparing a word engaged Zhang Ren. After ten clashes Ren feigned defeat and fled along the city wall. As Zhang Fei came after Ren at top speed, Wu Yi struck at the appointed moment and Zhang Ren turned his company rearward, thus trapping Zhang Fei between them. In despair, Zhang Fei spotted a company fighting its way up from the edge of the River Fu, a general at its head. Spear high, horse in full career, the general crossed points with Wu Yi. Within moments he had taken Wu Yi alive, thrown back the enemy troops, and plucked Zhang Fei from their midst. The warrior was Zhao Zilong. "Where is the director general?" asked Fei. "He has already arrived," Zilong answered. "He must be with Lord Liu by now." The two brought Wu Yi back to camp, and Zhang Ren retreated into the east gate.

On their return Zhang Fei and Zhao Zilong found that Kongming, Jian Yong, and Jiang Wan were already gathered in Xuande's tent. Fei dismounted and came to see the director general. "How did you get here before me?" asked Kongming in astonishment. Xuande related how Yan Yan had been released under obligation and had aided the march. "General Zhang certainly knows his strategy," commented Kongming as he congratulated Fei. "This is a boundless blessing for Your Lordship." Next, Zilong delivered Wu Yi to Xuande. "Will you submit?" Xuande asked. "How can I refuse? I've been taken alive," Wu Yi replied. Delighted, Xuande personally undid the prisoner's bonds.

Kongming asked Wu Yi, "How many men are inside guarding the city?" "There is Liu Xun, son of Inspector

Liu Zhang, and two supporting commanders, Liu Gui and Zhang Ren. The former is no problem, but Zhang Ren is from Shu district and has great courage. Do not risk confrontation with him lightly." "We'll have to capture Zhang Ren before we can take Luoxian," Kongming said. "What bridge stands east of the city?" "Gold Goose Bridge," Wu Yi answered. Kongming rode directly to the spot to survey the river. On returning, he summoned Huang Zhong and Wei Yan and commanded them, "Along the river, five or six *li* south of Gold Goose Bridge, both banks are thick with reeds and rushes — a perfect place for an ambush. I want Wei Yan to hide a thousand spearmen on the left — they will stab at the commanders on horseback — and Huang Zhong to hide a thousand swordsmen on the right — they will cut down their mounts. Once their force is dispersed, Zhang Ren will have to come out by the small road east of the hills. That's where I want Zhang Fei with a thousand men in hiding — they will take him alive." Last, he ordered Zhao Zilong to wait at the north end of the bridge: "Destroy it as soon as I get Ren to cross. Then deploy your men north of the bridge to prevent his flight to the north. When he moves south, I'll have him!" His directions given, the director general went himself to draw the enemy out.

* * *

Meanwhile, Riverlands Inspector Liu Zhang had sent two commanders, Zhuo Ying and Zhang Yi, to reinforce Luoxian. Zhang Ren left Zhang Yi and Liu Gui to defend the city while he and Zhuo Ying went forth, Ren in the van and Ying at the rear, to drive the enemy off. Kongming led a rather disorderly troop over the bridge and arrayed

them against Zhang Ren. Kongming himself appeared in a four-wheeled carriage, holding a feather fan, surrounded by his hundred cavalry. Pointing at Zhang Ren, he cried, "Cao Cao had a million men, but he fled at the mention of my name. Who are you to refuse surrender?" Zhang Ren, noting the careless look of Kongming's lines, smiled coldly from horseback. "It seems there is little reality in Zhuge Liang's reputation as a marvel among strategists," Zhang Ren said and with his spear motioned his force into action.

Kongming abandoned his carriage and retreated across the bridge on horseback, Zhang Ren in hot pursuit. When Ren crossed the bridge, he saw Xuande to the left and Yan Yan to the right, both charging toward him. He strove to pull out of the trap, but the bridge behind him was already down. He started north, but saw Zhao Zilong's men arrayed on the opposite shore and decided to flee south around the river. Riding some five or seven *li*, he reached the thicket of reeds and rushes. Wei Yan's men sprang out, stabbing furiously with their long spears while Huang Zhong's men slashed at the horses' legs with their long swords. The entire cavalry force was downed, the horsemen captured and bound. How could the infantry follow?

Zhang Ren fled to the hills with a few dozen riders, but Zhang Fei blocked his way. Ren tried to retreat, but a shout from Fei brought his whole force to the fore, and Zhang Ren was taken alive.² His rear guard commander, Zhuo Ying, had seen the trap closing and had surrendered to Zhao Zilong, who brought him back to the main camp. Xuander rewarded Zhuo Ying.

Zhang Fei brought Zhang Ren in when Kongming was seated in the command tent. Xuande said to Zhang Ren, "The other generals of Shu have submitted. Why not you? The sooner you do, the better." Eyes glaring, Zhang Ren shouted back, "No loyal vassal serves a second lord!" "You fail to recognize how times have changed," Xuande went on. "Submit and save your life." "I might for today," Ren replied. "But not for long! Kill me quickly!" Xuande could not bear to give the order, but Zhang Ren continued to denounce him. Finally Kongming had him executed to preserve his reputation for loyalty. A poet of later times wrote of Zhang Ren:

No constant man consents to serve two lords;

Loyal and brave, he died a deathless death.

Now he shines like the heavens' circling moon,

Lighting up the city Luo beneath.

Xuande was inconsolable. He had the body interred beside the Gold Goose Bridge to honor Zhang Ren's devotion to his master.

The next day Yan Yan, Wu Yi, and a group of surrendered commanders in the van marched to Luoxian and shouted out, "Open the gates and submit. Spare the people of the city." From the wall Liu Gui shouted back defiance. As Yan Yan put an arrow to his bow, a commander on the wall suddenly drew his sword and cut down Liu Gui. The gate was opened and the city delivered to Xuande. Liu Xun exited from the west gate and headed for Chengdu.

Xuande comforted the population. The man who had killed Liu Gui was Zhang Yi of Wuyang. With Luoxian firmly in hand, Xuande rewarded his commanders richly.

"Luoxian has fallen," Kongming said, "and Chengdu will soon be ours. But I am concerned about the outer districts. It would be advisable to have Zhang Yi and Wu Yi lead Zhao Zilong in a campaign to pacify Jiangyang and Jianwei and the regions they administer along the Great River, while Yan Yan and Zhuo Ying lead Zhang Fei in a campaign to pacify Deyang and its subdistricts in Baxi.³ After they have appointed officials there, they can return and move on Chengdu." Zhao Zilong and Zhang Fei set off at once to fulfill their missions.

Kongming next asked about the strongpoints on the road to Chengdu. The former Riverlands commanders replied, "Only Mianzhu is well defended. Once that falls, the capital is easily taken." Kongming called a conference on commencing the attack. Fa Zheng said, "With Luoxian in our hands, the district of Shu cannot stand. If, my lord, you mean to win over the people here by means of humanity and justice, defer taking action while I write to Liu Zhang setting forth the perils of his situation. That should induce him to surrender." "This advice is most pertinent," Kongming added. And so a letter was sent to Chengdu.

Liu Xun, meanwhile, after his escape from Luoxian, had returned to Chengdu to inform his father of its fall. Inspector Liu Zhang hurriedly gathered his advisers. An assistant, Zheng Du, proposed: "Despite his victories, Liu Bei still lacks troops and the adherence of the officials and the population. He feeds his men with wild grains, and he has no supply train. I suggest that we drive the people of Zitong in Baxi west across the River Fu and burn all their stored foodstuffs and all grain in the field.

Then we can dig in quietly and wait them out, refusing to engage when they come to fight. Without supplies, they will have to leave inside of one hundred days. That will give us the opportunity to strike and capture Liu Bei.” “I doubt it,” responded Liu Zhang. “They say one drives off an enemy to secure the people. But who has ever heard of dislodging the people to prepare for the enemy? This is no way to ensure our safety.”

During this discussion Fa Zheng’s letter arrived. It read:

Only recently I was charged with binding Liu Bei to us in friendship. Little did I expect the opposition of those around Your Lordship would bring us to this pass. Yet Bei remains mindful of our longstanding amity and shared ties of kinship. If Your Lordship would reverse course and tender your allegiance, I am sure you would be treated most generously. We pray you will reflect and make your wishes known.

Infuriated, Liu Zhang ripped the letter to shreds. “Fa Zheng is a traitor! A mercenary, glory-seeking, faithless ingrate!” he cried and drove the messenger from the city. He ordered his wife’s younger brother, Fei Guan, to reinforce the defense at Mianzhu. Fei Guan recommended Li Yan (Zhengfang) of Nanyang as his co-commander. They took thirty thousand troops to Mianzhu.⁴ The governor of Yizhou, Dong He (Youzai) from Zhijiang in Nanjun, submitted a proposal to seek help from Hanzhong. Inspector Liu Zhang, however, rejected it. “Zhang Lu is my mortal enemy,” he said, “and would never rescue me.” Dong He responded, “Nonetheless, with Liu Bei in Luoxian, the situation is critical. And you still serve Lu as a buffer. It would be to his advantage to oblige.” And so a messenger was