

A CHINESE BANDIT NOVEL :
LONG NIGHT by Yao Xueyin* (5)

Translated by Philip Billingsley**

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The following is the fifth and penultimate instalment of my translation of Yao Xueyin's semi-autobiographical novel *Long Night* (Changye), comprising chapters 34 to 38 of the book. For previous instalments as well as an introduction covering the novel's creation process and historical background, see issues 4, 5, 7, and 9 of the present publication.

Long Night is based closely on the author's three months spent as the captive-cum-mascot of a bandit gang in his native province of Henan in the 1920s, when he was fourteen years old. The events that befell him during that time are faithfully related through the eyes of the novel's chief protagonist, the boy captive Tao Jusheng. Jusheng's personal experiences become a prism through which we are enabled to glimpse something of the lives and dreams of the men who were to him both captors and protectors. It is this personal quality that provides *Long Night's* uniqueness as a social document, and Yao Xueyin's literary abilities add the spice that make the novel such a gripping story.

* 姚雪垠：長夜（人民文学出版社，1981年）For her help with the translation, I am indebted to Ms. Guo Hongyan（郭紅焱）of the Central University of Nationalities（中央民族大学），Beijing.

** 本学文学部

The present segment of the story, in which we find the outlaws leaving their home village after spending a comfortable Lunar New Year there, sees the gang's fortunes hastening toward their inevitable conclusion. The tension is high: will their bid to have themselves enrolled as a formal military unit prove successful, or will they meet the violent end that was the fate of most outlaws? The combination of hope and fear that characterized the psyche of these underworld militants is reflected not only in the frenzied way they absorb themselves in gambling games and joke about the danger posed by encroaching troops, but also in the despairing pessimism displayed by the subchief Xue Zhengli.

Ironically, the troops that press the gang most closely are themselves former outlaws; from the contacts between them we learn not only of how easy it was for purveyors of official rank and power to turn one group of outlaws against another, but also of the lingering sense of common origins that made such contacts frequently amicable. We learn too of the strong sense of pride that characterized the chief of an outlaw gang, leading the 'Family Head' Li Shuimo to drive a hard bargain with the military figures seeking his allegiance. Behind it all, however, were the conditions that led Yao Xueyin to employ the term '*Long Night*' as the title of his novel: the hopelessness that drove many men into either outlawry or soldiery as the only way to remain alive while retaining a degree of masculine self-respect; and the unholy alliance formed between local landlord figures and the outlaws, which could only lead to those conditions being sustained indefinitely.

In addition to the Notes provided by the author in the original text (designated here by the letters YXY following the Note), I have also added some explanatory remarks wherever it seemed necessary. To enrich the flavour of his story, Yao Xueyin frequently resorts to terms taken from

the outlaws' secret argot (*heihua*, literally 'black language'). I have chosen to translate those terms literally only in the case of direct speech, preferring more straightforward terms for descriptive passages even when Yao himself employs argot terms.

Yao Xueyin today lives with his wife in a fairly well appointed apartment in the western suburbs of Beijing, where he continues to work on his mammoth novel *Li Zicheng*, based on the life of the 17th century peasant rebel of the same name. A photograph of him taken in his youth together with one taken in 1991 may be found in Part 2 of this translation, page 176.

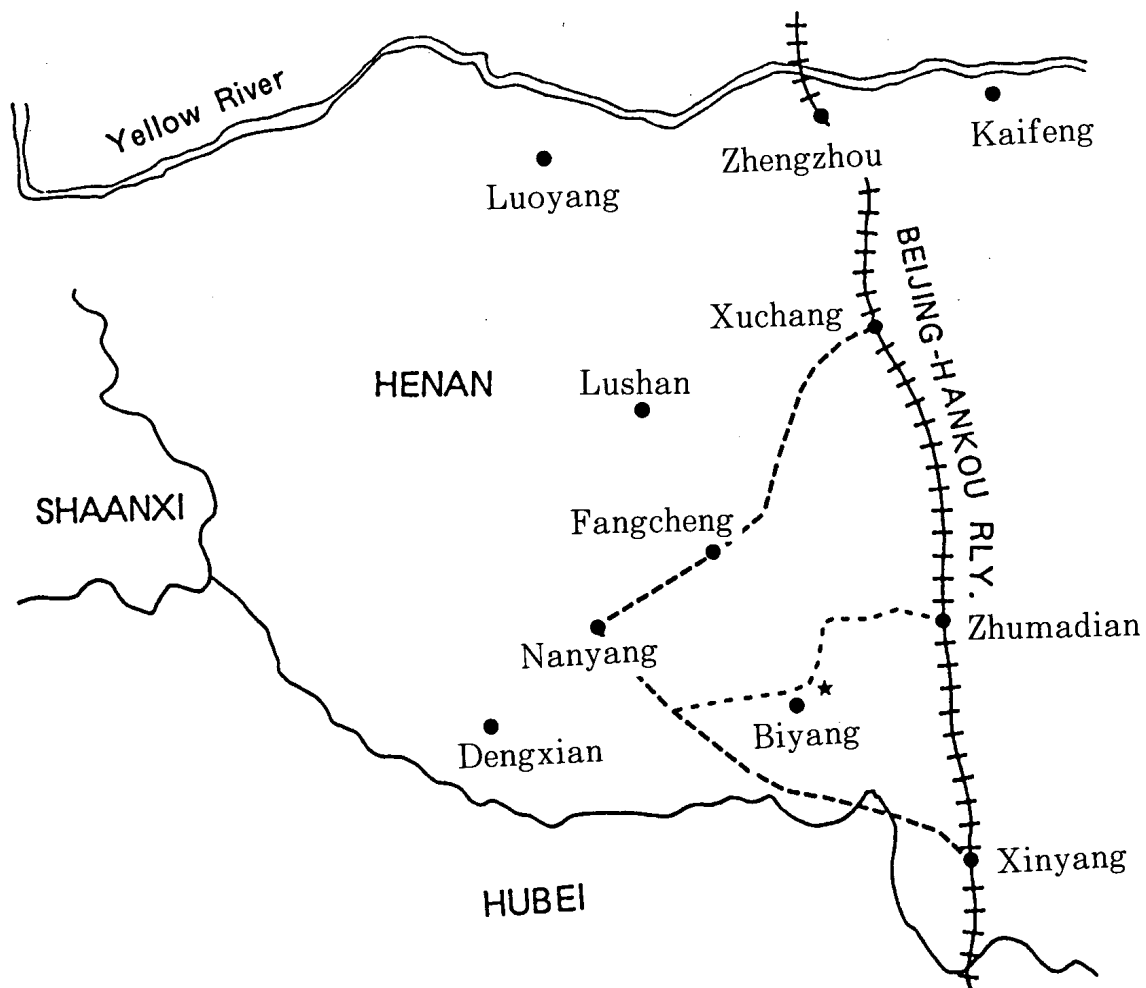
I have dealt extensively with the private lives and political meaning of China's bandit gangs in my book, *Bandits in Republican China* (Stanford University Press, 1988; Japanese translation published by Chikuma Shobō in 1994 under the title *Hizoku*^{*}); readers wishing to know more about this fascinating subject are invited to glance through it. A summary of some of its main points may be found in my article, 'From "Outlaw Kingdoms" to "People's China": Bandits in the Crossfire of the Japan-China Conflict' (*Intercultural Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 1990, pages 5-36).

* 匪賊：近代中国の辺境と中央，筑摩書房，1994

A Note on the Pronunciation of Chinese Names and Terms

Most letters are pronounced roughly as written, with the exception of the following:

- c = ts as in 'its'
- q = ch as in 'chin'
- x = sh as in 'shin'
- si = si as in 'sir'
- zi = zer as in 'Tizer'



- Highways impassable owing to bandits
- Jusheng's route
- ★ Point of capture (approximate)

THE STORY SO FAR

En route back to his home in Dengxian in southwest Henan province from Xinyang where he has been attending school (see map on previous page), 14-year old Tao Jusheng is captured by outlaws. Along with the rest of his party (including his elder brother), he is put up for ransom, but soon, because of his spirited personality, he is made the foster-son of one of the gang's sub-chiefs. Idealistic and unaffected by the customary prejudice against "bandits", Jusheng is able to see through the rough exterior of these men and to understand the conditions that drove them into their dangerous life. While not immune to the excitement that surrounds the gang's predatory raids, at the same time Jusheng finds the plight of those under attack a painful reminder of his own family's circumstances. After a rapacious tour of outlying districts designed to bring them to the attention of certain military figures whose offer of enrolment constitutes their sole hope of hoisting themselves out of their aimlessly violent existence, the gang spends a relaxed New Year in the two villages that comprise its home base. They are still there as the present instalment opens.

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The outlaws passed that New Year in an orgy of eating and drinking, the gamblers amongst them diverting themselves with incessant games of chance. One afternoon when Jusheng and Wang Chengshan happened to visit the captives' quarters¹⁾ they found the place in hubbub due to a large group of men crowded four or five deep around a square table enjoying a game of *yabao*.²⁾ Curious, the two newcomers pressed themselves up against the straining backs of the men and perched on top of a brick, craning their necks to catch a sight of the gaming table. The task of casting the dice was being assumed by the one-eyed Li Erhong. He wore a sort of skull-cap under which he had stuffed a blue handkerchief, folded to the size of his hand and arranged so that it would fall over his forehead and eyesockets. Despite all the yelling going on around him, Li never once raised his head nor opened his mouth, and the players could read nothing from his inscrutable face.

Zhao Shizi, seated beside Li Erhong, was playing the role of croupier. Thirty or more men were absorbed in the game, many of them still reaching out constantly to make adjustments to the piles of money representing their bets that were scattered all over the table. Yet, like his partner, Zhao too never raised his head to look at the faces of the players, relying on the sound of the voice and the characteristics of the outstretched hand to identify the owner of a particular stake. Each time the dice was uncovered, he would pay out what was due or take what was his, at the same time settling the stake left over from previous rounds, sometimes calling in, sometimes paying out. Not once did he make the slightest error. Jusheng and Wang Chengshan, though they knew nothing about gambling, gazed transfixed as they were jostled

back and forth at the back of the throng of men.

Chen Laowu was squeezed into the second rank, playing nervously with tiny sums of money which he would often move anxiously to a new spot the moment before the dice was about to be uncovered, making Zhao Shizi highly ill-tempered:

“If you can’t afford to lose, don’t join the game! Damn all of your ancestors, stop moving your stake around!”

Fate itself seemed to be deliberately making sport of Chen Laowu, for he lost several times in succession until his newly-shaven face was a picture of dejection. Once he had lost all the copper counters he carried with him, he reached into a pocket in his inner clothing and drew out a damp bundle of paper. Ripping open the layer of cloth and two or three layers of paper that it contained, he finally extracted a dozen or more shiny silver dollars and counted them. Then, after a moment’s hesitation, he took one and carefully re-wrapped the rest, restoring them to their pocket deep inside his clothing. No sooner had he changed the dollar into copper counters, however, than he had lost those too, and found himself left with just three coins worth no more than 100 cash each. His face growing steadily blacker, he clicked his tongue and muttered foully under his breath as if reproaching himself and cursing everyone else at the same time. Fiercely, he slapped the remaining three coins down upon the table, but for a long time left his hand covering them as if unwilling to let them go. For a few moments the back of his hand, as coarsely grained as the bark of a jujube tree, quivered slightly over the money. Then, just as the dice was about to be uncovered, he darted a worried look at the side of Li Erhong’s face and quickly retrieved the coins. No sooner was the bet called, however, than Chen Laowu slapped the table once again in his anguish and his chagrin:

“Damn!” he cursed, “What lousy luck!” He lingered for one more moment beside the gaming table, then, clucking his lips and shaking his head, pushed his way through the throng.

“Fifth Uncle, how much have you lost?” Jusheng patted Chen Laowu on the shoulder as he spoke.

“Damn it, I’ve lost everything!” replied the other furiously. “Today it’s like I’d been trying to touch up a nun’s cunt — I’ve been cursed since the minute I stuck my hand out!”

On his way out of the room Chen Laowu paused in the doorway and turned around: “Jusheng!” he yelled. “Come on out with me, let’s have a talk.”

Jusheng ran out and stood in front of Chen Laowu, his eyes already posing the question: talk about what?

“Lend me those two strings of lucky money³⁾ you’ve got on you,” Chen demanded, one dry, leathery palm clamped firmly upon Jusheng’s head. “I’m going back in there to win back some of what I lost!”

“But what if you lose again?”

“If I do I do! In a few days, as soon as I’ve got money, I’ll let you have it back.”

Jusheng, though sick to his stomach, had no choice but to pull out all the money he had and hand it over to Chen Laowu, but his eyes glared angrily at the man’s retreating figure as he turned about and pushed his way back into the room. Soon Wang Chengshan came out and asked in a low voice:

“Did you lend him some money?”

“He wanted everything I had....” replied Jusheng.

“Perhaps if he wins some he’ll give it back to you.”

“Huh, might as well throw a meat dumpling to a dog and wait for it

to come back!”

Pursing his lips angrily, Jusheng dragged Wang Chengshan out of the courtyard attached to the captives' quarters. Just as they were standing by the road wondering where to go to amuse themselves, Rangzi Jiu too came hastening out and cuffed Jusheng lightly on the back of his head:

“What are you two up to standing here? Aren't you coming to have some fun with me?”

“Where to, Uncle Rangzi?” replied Jusheng.

“They say the Family Head⁴ has caught a spy — come on, let's go over and see the fun!”

No sooner had they run over to the house where the gang's boss had set up his headquarters than they saw Xue Zhengli and several more of the gang's subchiefs come hurrying out. The minute he saw Rangzi Jiu Xue Zhengli waved and called out to him:

“Ninth Brother,⁵ go on back and tell them to stop gambling, tell them to man the walls fast!”⁶

“What's going on?”

“Soldiers....”

Before Xue Zhengli had finished speaking the gang's boss Li Shuimo came out of the house, a red cowl⁷ on his head and a cigarette between his lips; with him was a group of his bodyguards. Li glanced at the men standing there, then ordered in a toneless voice:

“Take your time getting them together, I'll go up and take a look first and then we'll decide what to do.”

Everyone climbed the ramparts alongside him and gazed toward the high ground lying to the west of them. Sure enough, on the crest of a hill not more than three miles away could be seen the faint silhouette of

a large body of troops advancing toward them; there must have been at least 500 soldiers there. Rangzi Jiu pointed a finger in their direction:

“Cheeky sods, they really look like they mean to have a go at us!”

Li Shuimo turned around to one of the bodyguards standing behind him:

“Go bring out that spy and let him have it.”

None of the others paid any attention to the spy, for all of them were standing peering into the distance, their eyes sheltered by their hands, hoping to figure out just what the troops were up to. Before long, the rays of the setting sun, as they touched the top of the hill, flashed off a red flag furling and unfurling in the breeze. In the middle of the flag a white point could be clearly seen, but no-one was able to make out what character was written there. Looking perplexed, Rangzi Jiu blew his nose into his hands, then wiped the snot on the heel of one shoe:

“Hell, are they Ma Wende’s or Xu Shouchun’s?”⁸⁾

One of Li Shuimo’s most trusted lieutenants replied angrily:

“Neither! They’re that turtle An Jianghu’s!”⁹⁾ Fuck his kid sister, only ten days since he went over to Ma Wende and he’s already got carried away — now he wants to show us how tough he is!”

Rangzi Jiu suddenly saw the light: “Don’t you reckon it’s because he’s pissed off about those two loads of opium that we lifted off him at New Year’s? Yesterday he sent a couple of people here wanting the opium back, but they were so cocky that the Family Head just plucked¹⁰⁾ their guns and gave them a mouthful. Up his mother’s — An Jianghu’s got it into his head to come over here today and try to twist our noses for us!”

The men on the ramparts all broke into a fury of arguing and cursing, waiting for the troops to make their move. Inside the fort, those out-

laws who had still been gambling, sleeping or simply chattering around the fires heard the noise and came running up onto the ramparts gun in hand. They were joined by many of the peasants, who crowded up alongside them. Jusheng, seeing that Liu Laoyi, Zhao Shizi and Chen Laowu were off to the right not far away, pushed his way into the crowd too, pulling Wang Chengshan behind him. Liu Laoyi signalled discreetly to him and winked, indicating for him to take a look at Chen Laowu's face. Jusheng glanced at the man's despondent expression, wrinkled his nose cheekily, and exchanged knowing smiles with the other two. Then he saw Li Shuimo throw a cigarette butt out over the wall and turn to Rangzi Jiu with a sardonic smile:

"Listen, Ninth Brother," he began in a grim voice. "By recruiting An Jianghu's bunch as an independent regiment, it's like General Ma swallowed the ointment he should have put on his bad eye, and ended up making himself feel worse! He can forget about calling us up any more — it's got to be one or the other, us and An's lot are never going to be pissing in the same pot!"

The second in command threw his cape around his shoulders and cursed: "Balls to An Jianghu! Back when the Family Head was already a regimental commander, An Jianghu was still carrying baskets of hay and yodelling as he watched cattle for some landlord on Nanshan mountain! The old man in Heaven didn't even have him in the corner of his eye!"

Another outlaw butted in: "Wang Sanshao's¹¹ with them now — he's sure to be whipping them up against us!"

Li Shuimo yawned: "No. 2, you and Second Brother Xue take some men and go head them off, drive them away so's they can't gallop up and down on those hills."

After giving the order, with an air of having worked out the answer to some difficult problem, the chief lit another cigarette and went off with several of his bodyguards to his quarters to satisfy his opium craving.

The second in command and Xue Zhengli, along with several dozen of the braver and more experienced outlaws, jumped down from the walls and scattered as they advanced westward along the ditch beside the road. Wang Chengshan, who had not gone with them, remained on the ramparts with Jusheng watching. Soon after the party had left, however, An Jianghu's troops, sensing that the gang was prepared for an attack, ceased their advance and rode off to the south after firing a few shots, whereupon the assault force that had gone out to head them off also doubled back to the fort. The heavy cloud that had weighed upon all of their hearts lifted, and one after another of the outlaws, their desire for opium suddenly whetted, disappeared to gratify their needs.

"Let's go!" yelled Chen Laowu, yanking at Zhao Shizi's arm. "Time to go back and throw some more dice!"

"Forget it! No way am I going to throw dice when you're afraid of fucking losing! Wanna fight me over it? Come on, try it then!" Zhao Shizi shook himself free of Chen Laowu's arm: "What's the matter then, your heart not in it?"

"I'm not interested in fighting with you, I just want to go and try my luck on the dice!"

"I told you I'm not throwing — if you really want to try your luck, try climbing on top of your mother!"

"I tell you you've got to shoot dice tonight!"

"And I tell you no way am I going to do it!"

"...."

Excited by the sight of Chen Laowu and Zhao Shizi up on the ramparts exchanging taunts and curses, all the other outlaws formed a ring around them to watch the fun, the whereabouts of the soldiers entirely forgotten. Both men did their best to maintain a humorous air despite the anger that was written all over their faces; Zhao Shizi in particular was concerned that this trivial affair might destroy his friendship with Chen Laowu. The onlookers too knew that no real enmity lay behind the quarrel, so, far from stepping in to separate the two men, on the contrary they yelled taunts from the sidelines to egg them on. Liu Laoyi and Rangzi Jiu, meanwhile, took it upon themselves to shout encouragements for both sides, their main fear being that the fight would die down and everyone be denied their fun. Xue Zhengli was in a quandary, unable either to put in a word or to remain silent on the sidelines, and he ended up by turning on his heels and absenting himself from the throng of men altogether. Resting his hand on the rim of the battlement and staring out in the direction that the troops had taken, he was startled to find that the walls of nearby Ciyuan¹²⁾ too were crowded with people and that the body of soldiers appeared to be turning toward them. Suddenly his heart jumped: "Would they dare attack Ciyuan?" Before he had resolved the question in his mind, there was the sudden sound of a shot followed by the notes of an army bugle sounding the charge. Without waiting to consult the No. 2, Xue Zhengli began waving his hands and yelling at the top of his voice to those outlaws still remaining on the walls of the village:

"Everyone with guns follow me, An Jianghu's attacking Ciyuan!"

Then, still not bothering to wait for anyone to follow, he jumped down from the wall, crossed the stream beyond and ran off in the direction of Ciyuan. Behind him Liu Laoyi, Zhao Shizi and Rangzi Jiu too

jumped down from the wall, followed by the second in command and several score more of the outlaws, their feet making a thudding sound as they dropped to the earth.

“Quick, we have to save Ciyuan! Everyone to the rescue, quick!”

As the outlaws raced yelling towards Ciyuan, from the walls of the beleaguered village came the distant sound of stirring war-cries and rapid gunfire. Wang Chengshan and Jusheng too were running along with the rest. As he ran, Wang Chengshan pantingly told Jusheng:

“I’m gonna bring myself back a gun....”

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Fortunately there had been a number of outlaws who had stayed behind in Ciyuan to relax, and together with the villagers they put up such a fight that An Jianghu’s men were afraid to come too close. Besides, An’s original intention had been no more than to show Li Shuimo a thing or two, not to get involved in a full-scale battle, so when his men found that Ciyuan too was ready for them they put up a show of a fight, then, as soon as Xue Zhengli’s relief force arrived, withdrew amid the murky shadows of the gathering twilight.

Xue Zhengli and the No. 2 led a section of the gang in pursuit for a half-mile or so until the already-thickening darkness persuaded them to put caution before valour. Finding a good spot, they let off a volley of shots, yelled a few curses, then finally abandoned the pursuit and entered Ciyuan, where Xue Qishao¹³⁾ came down from the ramparts pistol in hand. After inviting Xue Zhengli and the second in command together with several more of the outlaws to his own home, and finding space for the rest in the courtyards of other houses, he then feted the

entire company with large quantities of wine and food.

By the time the feast was over darkness was already beginning to fall, and the second in command, after ordering Xue Zhengli to remain in Ciyuan with Liu Laoyi and 20-odd of his followers, himself took Rangzi Jiu and the rest back to Xuegang. In order to guard against the possibility of a surprise attack during the night, Qishao ordered several of the farmers and tenants of the village to arm themselves with muskets, rifles, lanterns and rattles and to garrison the walls. Xue Zhengli too ordered his own section to keep their wits about them and to take turns patrolling the ramparts. Qishao himself, after vacating the western pavilion of his main courtyard and ordering the servants to clean out the eastern and southern pavilions, laid warm fires there and ordered huge opium trays and sets of gambling paraphernalia to be laid out before inviting the gang to use his house for its quarters. Once the rank and file had been settled in, he conducted Xue Zhengli and Jusheng, an opium lamp in one hand, into the interior of the house, and gave them each a small, warm study to sleep in.

“Jusheng,” he began, “If you’re feeling tired you can sleep on that small bed over there; if not, stay here with us by the fire and relax. Second Brother, you lie down and let me cook you a pellet of opium to ease away your fatigue.”

Xue Zhengli sat down on a huge canopied bed, stood his Mauser pistol against its side, and bent over to warm his hands at the brazier. Qishao went over to a small tea-table standing against a gable and poured out two cups of strong tea from a jar which had been insulated with cotton wadding against the cold; after placing the tea-cups on the opium tray, he too sat down on the edge of the bed. Taking off his velvet boots embellished with a double line of embroidered stitching, he

wrapped his feet carefully with the back of his fur robe, then lay back, his head resting on a mattress that had been folded to form a pillow. After first leaning closer to the lamp to light his cigarette, he then took up an opium pick and dipped it into an ox-horn jar inlaid with silver hoops. Suddenly he stopped what he was doing, lifted his head and murmured quietly to Xue Zhengli:

“Aren't we going to create problems with Ma Wende if we carry on like this?”

“Who knows what's going to happen?” Xue Zhengli too reclined on the bed, then went on sadly:

“Family Head Li is annoyed because General Ma has already given An Jianghu the title of regimental commander, so it's brigade commander or nothing for him. Problem is that General Ma himself is only a Mixed Brigade Commander....”

“An Jianghu's actual strength is just about the same as ours, isn't it?” responded Qishao, plunging the pick once more into the opium jar.

“True, but he lacks experience. He relies on the guns he has, instead of learning how to get people to follow him.”

Qishao laid his head on the mattress-pillow, then, while he cooked the opium pellet, asked:

“Didn't General Ma send anyone over to talk to Li Shuimo before he recruited An Jianghu?”

“He knows that us lot up here in the northern counties don't get on with them down in the south, so he made sure that Li Shuimo heard nothing more than hearsay about what was going on.”

From the enrolment of the southern gang, the two men's conversation switched to the rumours of the impending war between Ma Wende and Xu Shouchun, then finally came around to the affair that Qishao had

entrusted to Zhao Shizi in the small hours of New Year's morning.¹⁴⁾ According to Qishao, the family of the murdered victims had as yet to come to town to register a complaint, meaning that they were presumably too scared to raise a fuss. As the two men's murmuring continued, Tao Jusheng wandered idly over to the desk of drawers by the window and picked up a book from the window-ledge. After brushing the dust off, he found a dark-grey cover neatly inscribed with the four words *Anthology of Classical Authors*,¹⁵⁾ flicked absently through the pages within, then turned to the other books piled up on the ledge: there were the *Four Books*,¹⁶⁾ the *Five Classics*,¹⁷⁾ the *Poems of the Tang Dynasty, with Commentary*, the *Thousand Poets*,¹⁸⁾ and an annotated edition of the *Seven Models for Poetry*.¹⁹⁾ None of these books having the where-withal to divert him from his boredom, Jusheng finally crept stealthily out of the study.

Passing through the inner gate,²⁰⁾ his ears told him that, while the eastern and southern pavilions were quiet, their silence broken only by the soft sucking sound made by opium pipes, the majority of the outlaws were in the western pavilion playing *yabao*, their presence revealed by the sound of yells, laughter, curses, and the rattle of the dice in the cup. Understanding nothing of any form of gambling, and never having felt any interest in it, he paused hesitantly in the doorway, peeping to see whether Wang Chengshan was inside or not. The cup had been set on the ground, and beside it a candle had been stuck into the end of a white radish. Grouped in a circle round about was a seething crowd of men: at the very front a row squatting on the ground, then three or four more rows standing bent over at the waist. When it was the turn of the men at the back to place their bets, they would press toward the front, crane their necks, and use the shoulders of others as props for

their outstretched arms. The front row of outlaws had to keep their backs and shoulders constantly flexed to withstand the ceaseless pressure from the people behind them, with the result that the little throng of men was in a permanent state of motion.

With difficulty, Jusheng was able to make out the figure of Wang Chengshan squeezed in amongst the crush, neither in the front row nor yet at the very back, his body swaying like the others to and fro with the tide. Jusheng went into the room and gave his friend's protruding buttocks a slap, then tugged fiercely on the back of his ragged cotton-padded tunic. Wang stood upright amid the crowd and turned around, then, seeing that it was Jusheng tugging at him, grasped the boy's hand:

"How come you're not in bed yet?"

"I'm not tired. Won anything yet?"

"No, I've just been watching," replied Wang with a laugh.

Remembering that his friend had no money to spare for gambling, Jusheng pulled him over toward the door:

"There are people in the eastern pavilion smoking opium — let's go over there and chat by the fire."

"No, I want to go take a look at what's happening on the walls. D'you want to come with me?"

"You bet!" said Jusheng, nodding his head enthusiastically.

A rifle in his hand, Wang Chengshan led Jusheng out through the courtyard's main gate. Outside it was so dark that you could stretch out your arm and not be able to see the fingers on your hand. Luckily for them, from the top of the wall not far away came the dim, flickering gleam of several lanterns, and they groped their way hand in hand toward the light. Once atop the wall Jusheng gave an involuntary shiver,

and felt the tip of his nose and his ears go immediately numb. A north-east wind seared his cheeks with the keenness of a sword-blade, forcing him to hastily pull the folds of the great towel that enveloped his head down around his face, and to plunge his hands deep within his sleeves. Near the lanterns a straw mat had been laid, and on it squatted two villagers, shivering slightly under the ragged mattress that served to cover them. One of the peasants, a musket clasped to his breast, was taking a nap, his head sunk onto his chest; the other, a curved sword between his legs, was smoking a pipe whose flame had all but gone out. The latter, seeing Wang Chengshan and Jusheng approach, lifted his head lazily and knocked the ash out onto the ground as he spoke:

“Hey, you guys have had a tough time. Like a smoke?”

“Thanks, but we don’t smoke,” replied Wang Chengshan. “Tonight’s good and dark, but so cold eh!”

“Cold? Not for them sitting at home by the fire in their fur gowns it isn’t! Us lot weren’t born so lucky though!”

Wang Chengshan, sensing the rebelliousness in the man’s words, could find no suitable reply. Just then the other peasant woke up from his doze. Lifting his head, he first sized up the two new arrivals, then peered up at the sky:

“Looks like snow....”

“You’re right....” repeated Wang Chengshan.

Jusheng too looked up at the sky, but could perceive little difference between its inky blackness and the darkness that enveloped the surrounding plains. Above, below and all around them was shaded the colour of pitch, the vast sea of murk broken only by the dim light shed by the paper lanterns sporadically placed here and there on the battlements. Somewhere along the wall another watcher was sounding a pair of

wooden clappers and repeating wearily the same refrain:

“The sky is dark and the night full of danger,

“Guard the walls with all your might!”

From both inside and outside the fort came the barking of dogs, an incongruous echo to the monotonous chant of the sentinel. Jusheng had once imagined the task of protecting village walls to be one full of glamour, but a minute spent up there was enough to dispel all his romantic illusions. He nudged Wang Chengshan with his elbow and the pair continued their walk.

After they had gone a dozen or so paces, they were able to make out in front of them the shapes of three men huddled together against the cold and talking in low voices. As soon as the pair drew close there was the sound of a cough, whereupon the voices fell silent. Several seconds later they heard one of the sentinels beat out a tattoo on his clappers and call in a loud, rhythmic voice:

“The sky is dark and the night full of danger!

“Guard the walls as surely as you can,

“And keep a watchful eye!”

The reply came in an equally rhythmic voice:

“We’re all eagle-eyed, and all of us are fully prepared!”

The clappers sounded again, but before the chant was raised Jusheng and Wang Chengshan had already arrived beside the three figures. One of them was an old man who sat without moving. The others, one wearing a ragged cotton-padded tunic, the other with a dog’s skin draped around his shoulders and carrying a pair of clappers, rose trembling from a pile of wheat-stalks. In the reflection from the lantern they sized up Jusheng and Wang Chengshan, then invited them to sit down for a smoke, but the two friends, declining to linger there, merely

greeted the peasants and went on, picking their way carefully along the crumbling edge of the wall. Another dozen paces and they heard the three men begin speaking once again, and as if by prior agreement they each temporarily checked their step.

“Who are us lot risking our lives for, eh?” came a voice. “Are we waiting for someone to come and pinch our last cock-hairs off us, then? Look at me, only a *mu*²¹⁾ and a half of land left to me, in debt up to my ears, no millet and no flour to see us over the New Year, and did anybody help me out with even a cent? Fuck their mothers, the only time they notice me is when they want me to guard the walls!”

“Keep your voice down!” came another voice. “If I didn’t have a wife and all those kids I’d have been an outlaw too years ago. You farm your own land and you’re too poor to make ends meet, I farm somebody else’s and I’m no better off. It’s going to be a bad spring, and when it comes, when we’re at the end of our tether with nothing in the pot and no way to borrow either, how’re we going to avoid going off to be outlaws?”

An old man’s voice broke in: “Go on, go and join the outlaws! Do it now while you’re young, live it up for a while then you won’t feel you were born a man for nothing!”

“Have a bit of patience, Second Great-Uncle,” rejoined the first voice. “One of these days us lot’re going to show the rest of you something.... Fuck their mothers! First we’ll light a little fire....”

“Oy, keep your voice down!”

“Shit, a hero can’t be afraid of every little thing. Let those rich bug-gers hear what I’ve got to say!”

“Where did you find the booze to get yourself so pissed?!”

“What’re you so afraid of? They’re not worth the ash left after I

burned my cock-hairs!”

Despite the harshness of his tone, the first speaker was not as ruthless in his heart as he sounded, and so this time his speech lacked the kind of “light a little fire” addition of a few moments ago. Even so, the second of the younger peasants was evidently more wary, for he hastily picked up his clappers and gave them several blows, calling out again in his rhythmic voice:

“The sky is dark and the night full of danger,

“Everyone keep your eyes peeled,

“Guard the walls with all your might!”

Wang Chengshan and Jusheng looked at each other. Although neither could see the other’s face in the darkness, each of them could sense somehow that the knowing smile on his face was mutually shared, and so they set out on their stroll once more.

The cold on top of the walls was truly severe, and Jusheng’s feet gradually lost all feeling until he was numb almost as far as his knees. After they had continued their tour of inspection for a little while longer he tugged at Wang Chengshan, and the two groped their way down to the bottom of the wall and felt their way, Jusheng limping, towards the residence of Qishao. When they reached the threshing ground²²⁾ they made out in front of them the figures of two men also apparently making for Qishao’s house, conversing together in low voices as they went. At first they assumed that these were fellow-members of the gang, but after following them for a few paces and listening carefully to their conversation, they decided that the men must be local farmers without any connection to the gang.

Once they had reached the big main gate of Qishao’s house, the two men slipped away to their left and promptly disappeared. Feeling some-

thing was amiss, Wang Chengshan and Jusheng lingered for a moment before the gate, but not a trace remained of the mysterious pair, nor was there the slightest sound. As they stood there nursing their misgivings, a night-watchman carrying a tiny, dimly-flickering paper lantern approached from the opposite direction beating a cracked gong. Shoulders hunched, his neck drawn into his clothes, the watchman wore a battered old felt hat pulled down hard over his eyes. Breathing laboriously and shivering from the cold, he trudged, head lowered, past Qishao's gate. The glow from his lantern fleetingly revealed a large tree, then suddenly disappeared as it rounded a corner, and the sound of his gong drew further and further away.

"Let's go look for them!" proposed Wang Chengshan. "I don't believe those two could have just disappeared into the ground!"

Just past the big tree Wang Chengshan and Jusheng discovered a tiny thatched hut standing all alone. The gleam of a lamp peeped through from within, and they could hear the babble of men chattering together in low voices. Gingerly they made their way to the front of the hut and glued their eyes to a crack in the door. Inside the tiny room they could see a dozen or more young peasants crammed together, among them both Qiangwa and Shengwa.²³⁾ On the wall at the back of the room was a pair of portraits of the God of War Guan Di,²⁴⁾ on the altar candles burned brilliantly, and the room was filled with the scent of smouldering incense. Several young men, bursting with impatience, were urging on the others:

"Let's get on with it without him if he's not coming! What's the sense in waiting, why don't we just start the kowtows now!"

One of his fellows objected: "Let's wait a bit longer, he said he'd be here right away. While we're waiting we can use the time to ask Elder

Brother to say a few words for us. Elder Brother,” he urged, turning to a scrawny-looking neighbour. “Say a few words for us first, OK? Just a few words!”

“Good idea!” echoed the onlookers. “Elder Brother, give us a bit of a speech!”

“You’ve all just s-said everything that needs saying, what can I say that hasn’t been said already?”

“No, no, give us a few words!”

“Just say whatever comes into your head, then, if Elder Brother Xinwa still hasn’t come we’ll get on with it, OK?”

“That Xinwa pisses me off! Up his mother’s, this late and he still hasn’t shown up!”

“Never mind him.... Quick, Elder Brother, say a few words!”

Under the continued urging of the meeting, the thin peasant they called Elder Brother knocked out the ash in his pipe, hung his tobacco-bag from his shoulder, and stood up. Then, with a somewhat sheepish expression, he began to speak in a slow voice:

“You all want me to s-say something, but I’ve got p-piss-all to say. Anyway, it all comes down to the same thing. Xue Erhu, that’s me, I ate grain²⁵⁾ for a while, then I came back and spent a winter at home, but it was boring as hell, so I started thinking about going back to wear a fucking army uniform again. All you b-b-brothers are ambitious lads, you don’t want to stay at home for ever w-w-whipping the back of an ox, do you? That’s right! You can’t say getting along on the outside is the same as staying home to work the land, on the outside everybody looks to their f-f-friends, in the army it’s you help me, friend, and I’ll help you, everybody’s loyal to their mates there. Tonight, when we all become blood brothers, we’ll swear to share h-h-happiness and mis-

fortune alike....”

The room had become quiet enough to hear the ash fall from the fire. In the middle of the speech Wang Chengshan and Jusheng, hearing behind them the sound of hurried footsteps, tiptoed hastily from the doorway and flattened themselves into the shadows along the wall. The young man who had just arrived pushed open the door and went in, but immediately turned around and poked his head outside, searching the shadows to left and right with a suspicious air:

“Is somebody there? Who is it?”

Nudging Jusheng forward with his elbow, Wang Chengshan stepped guiltily from the shadows, explaining in an embarrassed voice:

“Nobody, it’s just me, inspecting the village.”

“Why don’t you come on inside and toast yourselves around the fire, have a smoke?”

“No, thanks anyway, we have to get back.”

Many of the hut’s occupants were by now craning their necks through the doorway, warmly inviting the two to come inside. Unwilling to take up any more of their time, however, Wang and Jusheng hastily paid their respects and left. Once around the big tree Jusheng turned to his companion and asked quietly :

“Isn’t that one who just arrived Seventh Uncle Qishao’s cook Xinwa?”

“Ah, and they’re swearing vows of blood brotherhood in there!”

“Did you hear, none of them want to be farmers any more!”

Wang Chengshan, clucking his lips with emotion, said no more. Once inside Qishao’s courtyard, Jusheng accompanied Wang to the western pavilion for a look around, then, leaving him to warm himself at the fire, returned to the study which was his own room. Soon after he had laid himself down on the bed Qishao’s wife came clip-clopping on her wooden-

soled shoes²⁶⁾ into the room; she carried a copper hand-warmer and had a water-pipe clasped to her breast.

“Think, Second Brother Zhengli,” she began, leaning against the desk of drawers by the window. “What are we all trying to do? Your reason for entering the water²⁷⁾ was partly to help your seventh brother, but all he’s interested in is his rich landowner relatives here in Ciyuan, aren’t I right? To tell the truth, we’re down on our uppers already, so what’ve we got to be afraid of? The main branch and the second branch of our family are raking it in, lending money and buying in land for all they’re worth, nobody for miles around can compete with them. Huh! If Seventh Brother wasn’t hand in glove with you outlaws, screening his relatives from the cold winter winds, d’you reckon they’d still be able to make so much money?”

“Ah, you certainly do talk, but just what are you getting at?”

“Getting at? I mean I can’t let you go on risking your life being an outlaw just so’s our rich relatives can rake in all the profits without lifting a finger!”

Qishao, annoyed beyond endurance, burst out: “Get out! Get yourself out! I can’t take any more of your drivel! You women only see the surface of things, and still you come and poke your nose into other people’s business!”

Furiously, she set the hand warmer down on the desk. Stretching out her right hand, she rapped several times on the table-top with her finger:

“Huh! Perhaps I do see only the surface of things, but there’ll come a day when you’ll wish you’d done things differently, and when that day comes you’ll find you’ve got no tears left to shed!”

“Hey, no need to get angry,” interposed Xue Zhengli, trying to calm

things down. "If the people in our village get the chance to live their lives out in peace, then Seventh Brother and I won't have made our names mud for nothing."

"Second Brother," cut in Qishao. "There's no point in trying to persuade a windbag like her — she just says whatever's on her mind whether it's the right thing to say or not."

"OK, done, let's shake on it! If I say another word to you from now on let me suffer from a boil on my mouth!"

Qishao's wife stamped angrily from the study and returned to the main quarters where she called loudly for Xinwa several times, then, failing to get an answer, began muttering to herself:

"That good-for-nothing Xinwa gets more and more impossible as the days go by — already asleep at this hour!"

Shivering with cold, Jusheng hastily pulled the quilt up as far as his chin and burrowed his head inside, but the confused thoughts crowding through his brain ensured that it was a long time before he entered the realms of sleep. When he did it was to dream of horrendous things, a sea of fire from which he vainly fled hither and thither to escape. Before his very eyes numbers of people were burned to death, others were horribly maimed, and still others fled wailing here and there like him amid the sea of fire seeking an escape route that was not there. Only when the cocks began to announce the break of day did he awake from those dreams, to find himself bathed in a cold sweat.

Chapter 36

The landlords of Xuegang and Ciyuan were taking turns to invite the gang to sit at their tables. Any of the outlaws with the slightest modi-

cum of a reputation were regaled daily with food and drink, some of them even having to attend two such banquets in a single day. Among the medium-rich or lesser landlords, not illustrious enough to invite the gang boss or his second in command to their houses, many had to be content with inviting their second- or third-rank lieutenants in their stead. Being locals and not wanting to appear to be putting on airs, Xue Zhengli and Rangzi Jiu were obliged to accept more invitations than anybody else. Not until the Lantern Festival²⁸⁾ on the 15th of the month was past did the festivities at last begin to slowly wind down.

Since the 5th of the month, the young peasants of the villages, at the landlords' behest, had been practising various kinds of local plays, causing the air to resound daily with the ceaseless clash of cymbals. After the 10th preparations began to heat up, and young men were commandeered from the smaller surrounding villages to take part. Those without the time to spare during the day would gather in the evening, and assemble the required props under the moonlight. The plays included land boats,²⁹⁾ stilt-walking and lion dances; for each variety of play there were two teams which would compete with one another on the night of the 15th. From the 14th Xuegang and Ciyuan were filled with hubbub as the full-dress performances began. All the local vendors of candy, peanuts, tobacco and sugarcane, the blowers of candy figures, and the solo theatrical performers flocked to the two walled villages, hoping to find a way to make a penny. There had not been such a festive occasion there for years and years.

Yet there was something about this year's festivities that distinguished them from those of past years when the country had been at peace. In the early days of the Republic every New Year had seen not only performances like these but operas, even fireworks as well. And

the plays, rather than being staged only within the confines of Xuegang and Ciyuan, would be taken out to the neighbouring villages, where the players would receive gifts of money wrapped in auspicious red paper every time they passed a landlord's house. In those days every family, rich or poor, was able to pass a New Year season worthy of the name. The rich, of course, would be able to clad themselves in brand new attire, but the poor too always had clean outfits to change into. The young women would be dressed up in bright colours, their hair resplendent with flowers and their cheeks rubbed till they attained the reddish hue of sunset clouds. Clusters of them would gather in front of the gateways to their houses to watch the plays and the fireworks, or sit in front of the temple to enjoy the operas. The two villages would also be packed with visitors who would congregate from as far as five to six miles away to make their New Year obeisances or simply to watch the performances. Some came in sedan-chairs, others in humble ox-carts, but the oxen would generally be big and well-fattened, their hides glistening brightly in the sunshine. This year, along with the absence of the customary operas and fireworks, it could be noticed that the young girls rarely showed their faces outside, and that the numbers of people wearing new clothes were extremely few. There was, in short, a superficial air to this year's festivities, for they were no more than a contrived performance arranged by a small minority of the landlords for the benefit of the gang of outlaws.

Once the Lantern Festival was past a small number of young male peasants enrolled in the gang, while another group left unannounced for distant places to seek a living as soldiers; the two events were a cause of considerable foreboding, not only for the parents concerned but also for the landlords. For the parents, it was the fear not only that their

children would never again be able to return to their native village as law-abiding citizens, but also that they could be killed any day. The landlords, meanwhile, worried that alongside the increase in outlaw numbers would be a corresponding decrease in the number of hands willing to work hard on the land, with the result that even around Xuegang and Ciyuan the fields would be destined to grow wild. They had already been to state their case with Qishao, hoping to convince him to put in a word to stem this growing tendency to resort to outlawry, but Qishao, whose own desire was precisely to see the world collapse in chaos, washed his hands of it all:

“This is all predestined, what can I do about it? In my view it'd be better for them all to stay here and be outlaws than to go off to eat grain as soldiers....If they were outlaws, at least they'd be able to keep an eye on their homes.”

“Ai, Seventh Young Master,” responded one of the landlords, a man older than Qishao himself. “If things go on like this all the land we have is going to go to waste!”

“Didn't I just explain? It's all in the cards. If the fields are destined to go to waste there's nothing we can do about it!”

“And then we'll all be finished, because there won't be any difference any more between rich and poor!” When the landlord spoke, it was if he was beseeching Qishao, but at the same time his words sounded like a warning.

“It's a matter of taking things as they come,” replied Qishao with a cold smile. “What's the point of being so miserable all the time?”

One old peasant whose son had just joined the gang gazed at Qishao's face, his hands clasped in front of his breast and his eyes brimming with tears:

"I wouldn't stop my son if he wanted to leave home to eat grain, because even being a soldier's always better than getting yourself a name as a brigand. Once he's an outlaw he's blacked for life — not only is he sure to come to a bad end himself, but he'll drag his family down too. Seventh Young Master, I beg you, you see how old I am, use that golden tongue of yours to bring my Liangwa home. When he's back I'll take him off myself to beg for food, and never forget your kindness for the rest of my days."

"How could I dare to try to bring your Liangwa home when Family Head Li is trying to increase his forces? Liangwa entered the water of his own accord. D'you think I could open my mouth to make a proposal like that to the Family Head? It'd be just like trying to eat fried noodles in a gale!"³⁰⁾

"Seventh Young Master, I beg you....When you see the Family Head, tell him I'm just an old man on my own, that Liangwa's my only son...."

"What sort of reason is that? Family Head Li himself is the only son of his generation, and he's trying to hold together all three of his close lineages on his own!"

The old peasant began muttering to himself hopelessly:

"Last spring Liangwa started going on about how he wanted to go and eat grain, how there was no future in staying at home. I said, no way was I going to let him go so far away, I kept on at him from every angle till he agreed to grit his teeth and stay home. If I'd known things were going to turn out like this, I'd have loosened the reins a bit then and gone along with him when he wanted to fly off to distant parts...."

"Venerable Fifth Uncle," replied Qishao consolingly, "Don't grieve like that. In times like these, being an outlaw and being a soldier are

the same thing — six of one are worth half a dozen of the other. Even if you're a soldier today, who's to say you won't be an outlaw tomorrow? And today's outlaw might be tomorrow's soldier, perhaps even an officer. If an outlaw is a guy whose head is already on the block, isn't a soldier just a piece of walking sesame fertilizer too?³¹⁾ Sooner or later he's going to be enriching the fields in some far-off place anyway, isn't he?"

Over Qishao's green-pallored face, a result of his addiction to opium, a smile flitted, and he gave a yawn before going on:

"Venerable Uncle, why don't you just sit back quietly and wait for the prosperity that's coming to you? You'll see, before long Liangwa'll come back a rich man!"

"As long as he comes back safe and sound and washes his hands of being an outlaw, that's all the prosperity I want," replied the old man, wagging his grizzled beard. "I'm not going to ask him to turn himself into a dragon or a phoenix!"

Qishao, far from trying to persuade the young men against becoming outlaws, on the contrary was secretly egging them on, and even putting guns in their way. He calculated that the world wasn't going to get any better for the next ten years, perhaps twenty, and he had made it his business to fish in those troubled waters. Long ago someone had read his fortune, and told him that by the time he was 38 he would be holding high official rank, at least that of Regimental Commander in the army. Qishao was convinced that this prophesy was true, and now had only three more years to wait before he reached the year of his destiny. His ties with the outlaws and his encouraging more and more young men to join them were intimately linked to this dream of becoming an official. Once the time was ripe, he calculated, all he would have to do

would be to send a relative to the local government or the garrison commander with a request for an empty title, raise his own flag, call together the men and guns at his disposal, and the official rank would be his for the picking.

Seeing that Qishao was secretly encouraging the young men of the villages to join the gang, Xue Zhengli too had no way of preventing them. In order to ensure that his own conscience was clear in the future, however, he permitted only Qiangwa to join his section, leaving the others to find their own backers. Later, chiefly out of sympathy, he took on a storyteller from the northern districts, a man known as Lao Zhang, who made his living as a travelling songster. Following the rape of his wife by a rich and powerful fellow-villager, this man had joined the gang to seek revenge. Being a new recruit his status was extremely low, and few among the outlaws paid much attention to him. His sole companions were Wang Chengshan and Jusheng, who, when no-one was about, would come to him for lessons in singing.

Naturally a taciturn man, Xue Zhengli seemed to become more morose than ever once New Year was past. One time, when only Wang Chengshan, Jusheng and Qiangwa were present, he rubbed a hand down over his face and sighed:

"It's not easy to stay alive in the world in times like these!"

"Second Uncle," inquired Qiangwa, looking up. "What's on your mind, coming out with something like that all of a sudden?"

"Think about it....farmers have all got their backs against the wall, and young people, if they're not wanting to be soldiers, they're becoming outlaws instead. What kind of livelihoods are those, eh?"

"What's wrong with being outlaws or soldiers?" replied Qiangwa, not understanding Xue Zhengli's meaning. "Take you, Second Uncle, as soon

as you're enrolled in the army you'll be an officer, right?"

"Huh! Getting to be an officer's not as easy as you think!" Xue Zhengli clucked his lips after he spoke.

"These days, all you need is a gun in your hand, and there's an official appointment for you somewhere!"

Xue Zhengli smiled bitterly and fell silent. Qiangwa too, seeing that the other man's heart seemed to be weighed down by something, dared not go on, and instead turned to Jusheng with a smile:

"D'you think your adopted father's going to make it in the world?"³²⁾

Jusheng too smiled by way of response, expressing no opinion; instead he made a grimace toward Wang Chengshan as if to tell Qiangwa:

"Look, Wang Chengshan is lost in thought too!"

Among the section of the gang commanded by Xue Zhengli, if the most extrovert characters were those of Liu Laoyi and Zhao Shizi, the most melancholy belonged to Wang Chengshan. Even more than did Xue Zhengli, Wang dwelled constantly upon the uncertainty of their future, and so his character accordingly became still more subdued. It was almost a month now since he had returned to enrol for the second time in the gang, and since he was still without a gun to call his own it seemed that his once-splendid dream was fading into obscurity. His mother, after finding out that he had returned to outlawry, had secretly sent someone to find him and warn him on no account to return home alone to see her, lest it lead to catastrophe. Hearing this visitor talk about his mother made Wang sick at heart, and it was as much as he could do to hold back the tears. After borrowing money from Zhao Shizi to see the visitor home, he found himself thinking of his mother every day, always regretting that he could not have been a more filial son to her. He dreamed often, sometimes that he had come into

possession of a rifle,³³⁾ sometimes that he was the owner of a pair of oxen and a plot of land, and in his dream he would be in the midst of sowing wheat; at other times, though, he would dream that he had been thrown into jail, and his mother would be outside the iron-barred window feeding him cold food that she had begged on the roads, the pair of them sobbing too hard to speak. At the moment that Jusheng had grimaced in his direction his gaze had been fixed on the bolt of the rifle he held clasped between his knees, the image of his mother dancing before his eyes as he relived the dream of the previous night. He sat there, motionless as a figure carved from wood, but his heart was sighing profoundly.

Chapter 37

On the 17th of the first lunar month the gang made its departure from Xuegang and Ciyuan, and from that day forth was almost constantly on the move. Relations with the Ma Wende camp grew steadily worse: for many days they received no messengers from the General. On the other hand, an agent of General Xu Shouchun rode with them all the time, and was generally to be found ensconced with the boss Li Shuimo; when the gang was on the move they would ride together, when they were encamped one bed would suffice for them to satisfy their opium habits, one room for them to sleep in. It lacked only for the official paraphernalia of enrolment to reach them from General Xu's headquarters — a seal of office, flags, uniforms, and ammunition; as soon as these things arrived the gang would be transformed into a regular army unit, and Li Shuimo would be a brigadier-general. Unfortunately, some 70-odd miles separated the gang's sphere of operations from Xu

Shouchun's territory, and much of the land between was controlled either by Red Spears³⁴⁾ or by the troops of Ma Wende; accordingly, day after day went by without any sight of the promised items. As it had yet to be officially enrolled, the gang thus had no choice but to continue to march this way and that within the gaps left between the two great power blocs, killing here and burning there as had customarily been its wont.

These past few days rumours had been particularly rife: Ma Wende and Xu Shouchun had already opened hostilities... Ma Wende had decided to dispose of the gang first... Because of the tension, when they encamped everyone would sleep fully clothed, and each section was required to take turns patrolling the boundaries of the village. Two totally innocent men, one a peanut-vendor, the other a beggar, were "sent back to their native place"³⁵⁾ on the mere suspicion of being spies for the military. Jusheng was in a state of constant perplexity, his heart swinging back and forth under the buffets of all the conflicting rumours, wanting to ascertain their truth yet afraid of putting himself under suspicion. One evening they settled for the night in a walled village while the setting sun was still level with the tops of the trees. Jusheng, finding himself missing his elder brother, arranged for Wang Chengshan to take him to visit the captives' quarters, but after he had been there no more than a short time he became so disconsolate that he quit the place pulling Wang with him. The sight of his brother Qinsheng living in the captives' quarters in conditions worse than Hell, coupled with the knowledge that his mother was living out her days at home in sadness and misery, made Jusheng suddenly begin to long heartily for the gang to be enrolled in the military, for then he and Qinsheng would have more chance of being allowed to go home. Once he and

Wang Chengshan were back by the fire in the thatched hut where they were sleeping, seeing that no-one else was around, Jusheng sought to feel his companion out:

“Elder Brother Chengshan, d’you think our gang is ever going to get itself enrolled?”

“Who knows?” Wang looked smilingly at Jusheng’s face: “I bet you’re hoping you can go home soon, right?”

Jusheng, reddening somewhat, quickly shook his head: “Not at all, I was just asking.” Then, after a moment: “D’you think we should go over to Ma Wende or to Xu Shouchun?”

“What difference does it make who we go over to? Whichever it is, no official rank’s likely to come my way, and whatever money’s up for grabs I’m not going to be the one to get it, so whoever’s orders I follow I’m just putting my life on the line for somebody else, right?”

“Don’t you want to be an officer one day?”

“All I want is to be an ordinary peasant with enough gruel to fill a bowl, and to be able to look after my old ma when she gets old and send her off properly when her time comes. Don’t they say, ‘For every one who gets to be an official, there are ten thousand more whose bones have turned to dust’? The only way to be an official is over other people’s dead bodies, you’ve got to be cunning, you’ve got to be lucky....”

Before Wang Chengshan had finished his sentence they suddenly heard the cheerful voice of Liu Laoyi belting out some local aria as he walked back from the eastern section of the village. When he reached the doorway he was singing a little ditty that Jusheng had never heard before:

“Old Bai Lang, Bai Lang’s fine,

“He robs the rich to feed the poor,

“And carries out the Way on behalf of Heaven:

"Everyone agrees that Bai Lang's fine.

"In three or five years' time from now

"Rich and poor will all be levelled!"³⁶⁾

The first thing Liu Laoyi did upon entering the hut was to grasp Wang Chengshan from behind and run his icy-cold hands all over his face and the back of his neck, sending Wang into a torrent of curses mixed with pleas for mercy. Pleased with the mischief he had caused, Liu Laoyi unleashed a peal of laughter and squatted by the fire to toast his hands before taking out a cigarette. Then, in a tone that made it sound as if he was the bearer of glad tidings, he announced:

"Well, my old loves, we'll soon be hearing the sound of shooting!"

"What news have you heard?" demanded Wang Chengshan at once.

"One of our spies just got back and said that General Ma has sent out several columns of troops, and by the look of it they're headed our way, sweetie!"

Liu Laoyi caressed the bolt of his rifle, then went on:

"Now I know why I heard my rifle-bolt rattle a couple of times by itself last night!"

Despite the heaviness that afflicted their hearts at the news of the impending fighting, Jusheng and Wang Chengshan were unable to restrain a smile at the carefree attitude of Liu Laoyi, especially his last wisecrack.

"What's the Family Head decided to do?" asked Wang concernedly.

"What else is there to do but stand up and fight? We're hardly gonna run for our lives with our tails between our legs, are we?"

"You're right," muttered Wang. "A fight'll be good sport." But when he finished speaking he lapsed into silence.

That night the gang was in a state of high tension, some of them

guarding the walls, others settling into hiding-places outside the village. Sure enough, just before dawn a battalion of troops suddenly attacked the east gate, the sounds of yells and of gunfire erupting in the same instant. Because the gang had been prepared, the soldiers quickly found themselves surrounded, and by breakfast time, after suffering twenty or more casualties, had dug themselves in in a small market-place outside the walls to await reinforcements. The outlaws, however, refused to give them any respite, baring their arms and screaming their war-cries as they pressed home a direct frontal attack. After an hour or more's bitter fighting, the troops realized that they could not hold, and announced their commander's identity:³⁷⁾ they too were a former bandit outfit, enrolled only the previous winter, and between their commander and Li Shuimo, who had previously been close, there still remained a degree of cordiality. Thanks to Li Shuimo's tolerance and generosity the battle was halted, and the commander was escorted within the walls to be feted with a huge banquet of wine, food and opium, while a breakfast was also made ready for his men waiting outside. Before long, as if the recent bloody battle had been no more than a minor misunderstanding already resolved, Li Shuimo and the battalion commander were clasping hands and laughing hugely as they swapped reminiscences of the past.

Once their cravings were satisfied and their stomachs sated with food and drink, Li Shuimo personally escorted the commander back to his unit outside the walls. He also ordered the outlaws to promptly return all the weapons and ammunition they had seized from the soldiers during the battle. Although no-one dared to openly contravene the chief's order, not a few of the better-quality guns were switched for inferior ones, and the ammunition all somehow disappeared. The commander,

after professing his gratitude to Li Shuimo time and time again, finally mounted his horse and departed with his troops. The gang had lost five killed and two wounded, among the dead being a recent recruit from Lushan,³⁸⁾ a big, tall man who was also a good marksman. With his death the three men who had joined up along with him became as miserable as chicks deprived of their mother, and when his body was lowered into the ground they all burst into loud tears.

Wang Chengshan was bitterly disappointed with the outcome of the battle. He had risked his life to acquire one of the soldiers' rifles, his desperation shown by the three bullet-holes that now adorned his clothing. Never in his wildest dreams did he imagine that the chief, whether in order to demonstrate his generosity and uprightness or as a strategic move, would actually issue that order to return the guns to their owners. Bursting with righteous indignation, he could not resist the temptation to tell all his friends of the wrongful treatment he had received. But Liu Laoyi and Zhao Shizi, for all their sympathy with his complaint, were not inclined to share his grief; laughing, they teased him saying that the eight characters³⁹⁾ that comprised his fortune had destined him to suffer a pauper's lot, that any land he farmed would always be someone else's, and any gun he came to carry belong to someone else. At this Wang Chengshan grew so furious that his eyes filled with tears and a deep sigh escaped him, but in the end all he could do was to smile bitterly. Seeing his friend's gloomy face, Zhao Shizi thought better of teasing him any further, and hastily gave him an affectionate pat on the shoulder:

"Forget it, don't worry yourself to death for the sake of a gun! I know a way to get hold of one for you — just leave it to yours truly!"

"Some hope! What're you going to do, shit one out for him?!" re-

torted Chen Laowu, doubtfully.

“Fuck you! Think I’m boasting do you? You’re a lot of dogshit yourself! Just wait till the next time we get in a scrap, and I’ll get hold of a good gun and bring it back for Brother Chengshan!”

“And if I manage to get hold of one next time around, I promise to bring it back for my old sweetie too!” Liu Laoyi clasped Wang Chengshan to his breast as he joined the chorus.

“If I can get two I’ll give you the best one!” added Qiangwa from the side.

Wang, seeing how loyally his friends sought to repair his feelings, was profoundly moved. His heart lightening, he smiled through his tears:

“How could I accept a gun that somebody else risked their life for? I’ve got two hands of my own, and when I can use them to bring home a gun myself, I’ll be content.”

That morning the gang hurried northward, not even taking the time to eat a midday meal. When the sun began to slant toward the west they encamped, only to suddenly set forth again near midnight. Such a forced pace was unprecedented, and could only mean that the chief had come into possession of some serious piece of news. Although he had chosen not to make the news public, presumably to ensure that everyone stayed calm, it was not difficult to guess what it meant: the gang’s situation was dire, and the fight which they had been dreading was just around the corner.

Chapter 38

A waning moon cast a pale, melancholy gleam through the rents in the clouds, barely enabling them to make out the shape of the road for a

few paces in front of their feet. The trek continued for what seemed an eternity, hill following hill and hollow following hollow, before the sky began to slowly lighten. Some of the outlaws were hungry, some were craving for opium, all of them were exhausted.

After putting up at two villages for several hours to fill their stomachs and satisfy their opium-needs, the gang set forth once again as the sun moved around to the southeast. From the opposite direction to their line of march appeared a rider on a white horse; the horseman was short and stocky, wore a sheepskin gown, and carried a short-barreled carbine slung from his left shoulder. After greeting the front rank of the outlaws, he swung his horse to the side and urged it over the newly-turned earth of a wheat-field toward Li Shuimo. Almost as one, the newcomer and the chief jumped down from their horses and stood talking for a while in the wheat-field before remounting and continuing their conversation as they cantered along. Jusheng watched them from afar, his curiosity aroused. The man on the white horse suddenly tapped his chest with his right hand, stuck his thumb in the air, and announced breezily: "Have no fear! Leave everything to your brother here!" He then let forth a peal of bellowing laughter that rivalled that of Liu Laoyi.

Evidently having accepted the advice offered him by the visitor, Li Shuimo ordered the men to turn their steps to the southeast. Optimistic reports spread through the gang like wildfire: the stranger was a former outlaw himself who several years before had ridden with the chief, but who had since gone straight and now lived at home. He was in league with the Red Spears in the southeastern counties, and his mission on this occasion was to help the gang to defeat Ma Wende. According to one of Li Shuimo's bodyguards, the man had sent Li

Shuimo a letter several days before, but because of its top-secret contents he had not dared speak of it before. Everyone in the gang felt their spirits promptly lifted, and Liu Laoyi could not resist seeking out Rangzi Jiu and exchanging ribald curses with him.

In the early afternoon the gang again paused for a bite to eat and to smoke some opium. At the first scent of the gang's approach all the young peasants had fled, leaving the village empty save for a small number of the old and frail who had stayed behind to guard the houses. As a result, preparation of the midday meal took longer than usual, and when the bugle-call sounding a charge together with a burst of rifle-shots suddenly resounded from the crest of a hillock behind the village some of the outlaws were still in the midst of eating or enjoying opium dreams. Amid great confusion they put up a hasty resistance, and managed to halt the soldiers' charge before they had got more than halfway down the slope of the hill. When the first shots had rung out Jusheng had been dozing against the stump of a tree; shaken into wakefulness, in the absence of Xue Zhengli, Liu Laoyi and the others he was panic-stricken, at a loss as to what he should do. Heedless of the bullets that rained all around him he raced madly about the village looking for his friends. In a while he discovered them fanned out along a roadside gulley outside the village, rifles blazing in the direction of the attacking soldiers. He ran hurriedly over and squatted down beside them, feeling the panic in his heart subside.

"Get out of here, kid! Fall back with Rangzi Jiu and the rest while you can!" ordered Xue Zhengli.

Rangzi Jiu at the head of the captives had left the village and was already some distance away. Jusheng crossed the village and ran eastward down the road. He no longer felt any fear, and it was a matter

of no concern to him whether or not he managed to catch up with Rangzi Jiu. He would run a space, stop and look behind him, then run on a little further. After continuing for a quarter of a mile or so he noticed the chief and his mounted retinue paused at a three-way crossroads not far ahead, apparently urgently engaged in discussing something. When he drew close to them he overheard the voice of Li Shuimo:

“This is no joke, you’d better make it fast!”

“Of course, of course, just leave it to me! replied the visitor with an air of earnestness. Then, turning to the others, he gestured with a wave of his whip in an easterly direction:

“Hurry to the Monastery of the Returning Dragon and make a stand there! You’ll find food already prepared. I’m going back to gather people together — we have to put paid to Old Ma!”

After these words this friend in need, who had ostensibly come to help the outlaws out of their difficulties, yanked the head of his white horse around and delivered a smart lash with his whip, causing the animal to plunge off toward the south, its hoofs kicking up a cloud of dust. Li Shuimo, hands firmly gripping his own horse’s reins, waited for the visitor to disappear into the distance. Then, with a flick of his whip, he urged his horse into a gallop and rode off in another cloud of dust toward the east, accompanied by his second-in-command, the recruitment officer from Xu Shouchun, and a group of his bodyguards.

The distance between Jusheng and the group of riders headed by the chief gradually yawned wider and wider. He tucked his green gown into the waist of his trousers and set off after them, sometimes walking briskly, sometimes jogging easily, no longer concerned to catch them up. Other outlaws without horses were running strung out along the road, many of them panting audibly. None of them paid heed to Jusheng,

nor did he bother to greet them. He felt himself suffused with the aura of a hero, to whom panting was forbidden in the sight of others, and who was obliged to demonstrate a sang-froid surpassing that of anyone else. To suit his mood, he slowed his steps, pursed his lips, and, forcing a slight smile onto his face, allowed his big eyes to glance disdainfully at the faces of the outlaws running by not far from him. Noticing a clump of small trees just off to the side of the road, he went over and broke off a longish branch to serve as his steed, then a shorter one for a whip, and set off at a run, lashing periodically at his "horse" and cursing it for being such a wilful, uncooperative good-for-nothing animal. After running along for some time in this way, he found himself bathed in sweat, so, throwing away his "horse" and "whip", he slowed his steps once more and began calling as he trotted along:

"One, one, one, two, three — FOUR!"

Beside the road there appeared a large walled village, its gates firmly shut. As Jusheng and the rest hurried past the moat that surrounded it, the outlaws waved towards the walls and called out a greeting:

"Listen to us, you friends up on the walls: we'll mind our business if you mind yours, just like well-water doesn't intrude on river-water. Don't go taking any pot-shots at us as we go by!"

The peasants manning the walls made no response, but neither did they fire their guns, simply maintaining an alert silence while popping their heads out from time to time to observe the gang go by. A couple of hundred yards further on was a river silted thickly with sand flowing from north to south, spanned by a single plank several metres long that served as a bridge. Jusheng had no sooner taken his first few steps across the plank than a panting outlaw overtook him from behind and rushed by for all he was worth, knocking him off balance and causing

him to plunge into the water below. Luckily for him, the patch of water into which he fell came only up to his shins and was free of ice-floes. Jusheng stood there in the water glaring fiercely and cursing at the disappearing back of the man who had brought him to this plight:

“Fuck your mother, you coward! All you’re worried about is saving your own miserable skin!”

But the guilty outlaw, probably unable either to catch Jusheng’s angry curse or to comprehend it if he did, continued his flight across the bridge without looking back. Jusheng, his anger unabated, scrambled back onto the plank, stamped a few times to shake the water from his legs, then ran across to the other side still cursing under his breath.

The chief and his retinue had already reached the eastern bank of the river and were waiting there in the cover of a grove of persimmon trees for the rearguard of the outlaws to fall back. When Jusheng arrived and looked back he noticed for the first time that his adopted father and the rest of the rearguard, several dozen in all, were already right behind him and almost at the water’s edge. In the same instant he also noticed, again for the first time, that stray bullets were whining and exploding thick and fast above and all around him. This, together with the sound of the bugle-charge from the direction of the approaching troops, finally convinced him of the gravity of the situation. By the time Jusheng had run over to where the chief and the others were they had already remounted, and the second-in-command called out to him from the saddle:

“Quick, grab hold of the tail of my sail,⁴⁰ Jusheng!”

One of the bodyguards echoed the call: “Right, hold onto the tails and we’ll give you a pull!”

After Jusheng had run forward a few paces and done as he was told,

the second-in-command gave the horse's hindquarters a lash with his whip, whereupon the animal abruptly gave a leap and lunged forward, throwing Jusheng to the ground. The second-in-command hauled on the reins and called out for the boy to try again. Jusheng, however, refused with a wave of his hand, adding:

"Never mind, the soldiers are still miles away!"

Once the riders had all left, Jusheng set off at a slow trot in the direction of the Monastery of the Returning Dragon. Under Xue Zhengli's leadership, the several dozen outlaws who had been covering the gang's retreat had already waded across the river and had fanned out along the road and in the fields, firing as they ran. Two wounded outlaws, supported by their comrades, hurried past, and another who ran by quite close to him looked back and called out some words of encouragement: "Hey kid, can't you run a bit faster?!" Yet Jusheng continued at his leisurely pace, unable to believe that one of the stray bullets might hit and kill him, and never thinking to use this opportunity when all was in confusion to run away from the gang. When he noticed several men panting their way past him, he put on an air of exaggerated courage, and called out to them mischievously:

"Everybody keep calm, running too fast'll just give you a stomach-ache!"

NOTES

1) Like most outlaw groups, the gang had a large number of captives which it was holding for ransom. Jusheng himself had originally been one of their number, and his elder brother Qinsheng remains a captive throughout this story. An outlaw named Rangzi Jiu was in charge of the captives' quarters. For details on kidnapping for ransom, see my book,

chapter seven.

2) Yabao: a gambling game in which the participants try to guess the number (or direction) written on the uppermost side of a dice which is hidden under a cup or bowl. It was a double or nothing game in which those who correctly guessed the number doubled their stakes and the rest lost everything. *Bao* refers to the dice, and *Ya* to the act of covering it with the cup. The game, though illegal, is still popular in China, and a version of it is also widely played among Japanese gangsters.

3) "Lucky money" (*yasuiqian*): money traditionally given to Chinese children at the Lunar New Year. See part 4, page 142 of this translation.

4) "Family Head" (*guanjiade*): the bandits' argot term for "chief", derived from the fact that bandit gangs were usually modelled on the hierarchy of the patriarchal Chinese family.

5) Ninth Brother: outlaws in China generally referred to each other as "younger brother" (*didi*) or "elder brother" (*gege*), depending on their relative ages.

6) On the North China Plain, which afforded few places to hide from enemies, most villages erected high earthen walls for self-defence. During the "Long Night" of the 1920s, such walls became essential to a community's survival.

7) Red cowl (*hongfengmao*): a form of headdress sometimes affected in Henan to add a dash of daring to the wearer. Originally worn only by landlords, it later came to be adopted by outlaws too to symbolize their difference from other peasants.

8) Ma Wende and Xu Shouchun: real-life military figures who have already figured in this story. For details, see page 76 of the first instalment of this translation.

9) An Jiangu: chief of a rival gang whose sphere of operations was

further south than that of Li Shuimo.

10) To “pluck” (*zhai*): the bandits’ argot term for “take”, substituted for the original because of the latter’s connotations of being “taken” by the military themselves.

11) Wang Sanshao: Wang Chengshan’s uncle, a former subchief in the gang who had left under a cloud because of suspicions of his having sold out a fellow-outlaw. He appears on pages 114~162 of part 1 of this translation.

12) Ciyuan: along with Xuegang where Jusheng’s section is billeted, one of the two neighbouring villages which the gang uses as its home base; it is also the home of Xue Zhengli’s family. See part 4 of this translation.

13) Xue Qishao: the title of one of Xue Zhengli’s kinsmen who has staked his future on abetting and protecting Li Shuimo’s gang; he appears extensively in part 4 of this translation. Although his title should be translated as “Seventh Young Master”, for the sake of simplicity I have chosen, except in dialogue passages, to transcribe it as “Qishao”.

14) the affair: Qishao had earlier entrusted Zhao Shizi with the task of killing the family of one of his enemies. See part 4, chapter 32.

15) Anthology of Classical Authors (*Guwen guanzhi*): a selection of classical prose and poetry compiled during the Kangxi period (1662~1723) of the Qing dynasty.

16) Four Books (*Si-shu*): the four traditional books of Confucian doctrine, consisting of The Analects (*Lun-yu*), The Great Learning (*Da-xue*), The Doctrine of the Mean (*Zhong-yong*), and The Book of Mencius (*Meng-zi*). Originally dating from the Spring and Autumn period (771~484 BC), they were edited and annotated by the Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi in about the year 1189, and thereafter formed the basis for classical elementary education in China.

17) Five Classics (*Wu-jing*): the ancient books which formed the basis of

Confucius' teaching, consisting of The Book of Changes (*Yi-jing*), The Book of History (*Shu-jing*), The Book of Poetry (*Shi-jing*), The Book of Rites (*Li-jing*), and The Spring and Autumn Annals (*Chun-qiu*).

18) Poems of the Tang Dynasty, with Commentary (*Tangshi hejie*), and the Thousand Poets (*Qianjiashi*): collections of poetry of the Tang and Song Dynasties, respectively, compiled and grouped according to theme.

19) Seven Models for Poetry (*Qijia shitieshi*): unidentified.

20) inner gate: most north Chinese houses were built around a quadrangle, with a moon-gate on the southern side opening onto an outer courtyard, which was in turn guarded by a huge set of double gates.

21) mu: a land measure equivalent to roughly 0.6 hectares.

22) threshing ground: in a north Chinese village this was a large open space of earth made hard and flat by a huge stone roller pulled by a donkey, and used for threshing the ears of the newly-harvested grain.

23) Qiangwa and Shengwa: young peasants from Xue Zhengli's home village. They appear on pages 90~118 of part 4 of this translation.

24) Guan Di: the deified version of the traditional hero Guan Yu, whose protection was often invoked by those engaged in dangerous occupations like outlawry and soldiering. For details, see part 4, page 159.

25) ate grain (*chiliang*): a euphemism for joining the army, since the army ostensibly guaranteed to provide recruits with a secure supply of food.

26) wooden-soled shoes: special shoes designed for women with bound feet. See part 4, page 160.

27) entering the water (*xiashui*): a euphemism commonly used in the Chinese underworld to avoid direct mention of words like "banditry".

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28) Lantern Festival (*Yuanxiao*): the first full moon of the new lunar year, when New Year festivities formally ended. Lanterns were hung up wherever possible to guide the souls of visiting ancestors back to the other world.

29) land boats (*hanchuan*): a stage prop made from wood and paper in the shape of a bottomless boat that could be carried on a person's shoulders. There were usually two dancers, one playing the part of a young girl, the other that of the helmsman, and the two would dance and sing out a tale of love pursued and finally requited.

30) eating fried noodles in a gale: to do something impossible. The author is using the literary technique known as *xiehouyu*, in which the first part of a two-phrase expression is used to suggest the second part.

31) sesame fertilizer: the residue left over after sesame had been squeezed into oil was often spread onto fields since it was an excellent fertilizer. (YXY)

32) While still a ransom victim Jusheng had been taken out of the captives' quarters and adopted by Xue Zhengli, a common practice in outlaw gangs.

33) Wang was a new recruit and did not yet own his own rifle, a fact which made his status in the gang very low. See my book, pages 111~12 for details.

34) Red Spears (*Hongqianghui*): a militant village self-defence organization that sprang up all over north China in the 1920s. See part 3, page 104 for details.

35) sent back to their native place (*songhui laojia*): an outlaw euphemism for the act of killing someone, used to avoid direct mention of the unpropitious word "kill".

36) Bai Lang: leader of a massive peasant rebellion between 1912 and 1914. The song, which follows the pattern of traditional rebel slogans, was a

propaganda rhyme that Bai Lang's advisers had composed to garner peasant support. The fact that it still circulated ten years after Bai Lang's death is evidence of the strong support that he had enjoyed. (YXY, amended)

37) It was a mark of honour among Henanese outlaw chiefs to announce their identity before commencing a battle. In this case it indicated that the army unit in question was a former greenwood outfit, and implied that the two chiefs would be able to talk out their differences.

The author here uses the word *tufei* ("bandit") to refer to these former outlaws, a word which carried a strong sense of moral opprobrium. It was always used disparagingly, either by the authorities to refer to all armed peasants, or by outlaws and other peasants to refer to gangs from elsewhere. When referring to themselves, gangs preferred such terms as the one Yao Xueyin employs for Li Shuimo's gang, *tangjiang*, a west Henan dialect word which I have chosen to translate as "outlaws". For the origins of the word *tangjiang*, see part 1, pages 85~6.

38) Lushan: a sub-prefecture some 500 kilometres from the scene of the present action (see map). It too was known as a county rich in outlaw traditions.

39) eight characters (*bazi*): in traditional Chinese fortune-telling, four pairs of characters indicating the year, month, day and hour of a person's birth were examined to foretell the person's fate. Each pair consisted of one Heavenly Stem and one Earthly Branch.

40) sail (*fanzi*): an argot term used by outlaws in place of the word "horse", since it was written with the radical which normally carries that meaning.

GLOSSARY

This glossary contains Chinese terms and the names of historical figures mentioned in the present instalment, but excludes the names of fictional characters appearing therein.

Bai Lang	白朗	<i>Meng-zi</i>	孟子
<i>bazi</i>	八字	<i>mu</i>	亩
<i>chiliang</i>	吃粮	<i>Qianjiashi</i>	千家詩
<i>Chun-qiu</i>	春秋	<i>Qijia shitieshi</i>	七家試帖詩
Ciyuan	茨園	<i>Shi-jing</i>	詩經
<i>Da-xue</i>	大學	<i>Shu-jing</i>	書經
Dengxian	鄧鼎	<i>Si-shu</i>	四書
<i>didi</i>	弟弟	<i>songhui laojia</i>	送回老家
<i>fanzi</i>	驕子	<i>tangjiang</i>	蹙將
<i>gege</i>	哥哥	<i>Tangshi hejie</i>	唐詩合解
Guan Di (Yu)	閔帝 (羽)	<i>tufei</i>	土匪
<i>guanjiade</i>	管家的	<i>Wu-jing</i>	五經
<i>Guwen guanzhi</i>	古文觀止	<i>xiashui</i>	下水
<i>hanchuan</i>	旱船	<i>xiehouyu</i>	歇後語
<i>heihua</i>	黑話	Xinyang	信陽
Henan	河南	Xu Shouchun	徐壽椿
<i>hongfengmao</i>	紅風帽	Xuegang	薛崗
<i>Hongqianghui</i>	紅槍會	<i>yabao</i>	押寶
Kang Xi	康熙	<i>yasuiqian</i>	押歲錢
<i>Li Zicheng</i>	李自成	<i>Yi-jing</i>	易經
<i>Li-jing</i>	禮經	<i>yuan</i>	元
<i>Lun-yu</i>	論語	<i>Yuanxiao</i>	元宵
Lushan	魯山	<i>zhai</i>	摘
Ma Wende	馬文德	Zhang Fei	張飛
		<i>Zhong-yong</i>	中庸