

SHI JI 79: THE BIOGRAPHIES OF FAN JU AND CAI ZE¹⁴⁵

Able to endure the abuse of Wei Qi, entrusted with authority in powerful Qin, these two men promoted persons of worth and relinquished their posts to them. Thus I made “The Biographies of Fan Ju and Cai Ze”.

Fan Ju, whose polite name was Shu, was a man of the state of Wei. As an itinerant adviser to the feudal rulers, he hoped to obtain office under the king of Wei. But because his family was poor and he was lacking in resources, he first took service under the Wei palace counsellor Xu Jia.

Xu Jia was sent by King Zhao of Wei on a mission to the state of Qi. Fan Ju accompanied him, and they remained in Qi several months without being able to receive a reply on the matter they had come for. Meanwhile King Xiang of Qi, hearing of Fan Ju's reputation for eloquence, sent someone to present him with ten catties of gold and gifts of beef and wine. Fan Ju declined the presents, not venturing to accept them.

Xu Jia, hearing of the incident, was extremely angry, for he supposed that Fan Ju must have given Qi information on the secrets of the state of Wei in order to receive such gifts. He ordered Fan Ju to accept the beef and wine but to return the money.

After they returned to Wei, Xu Jia, still angry with Fan Ju, reported the matter to the prime minister of Wei. The prime minister, Wei Qi, was a son of the ruling family of Wei. He too was incensed and ordered his stewards to beat Fan Ju. Fan Ju, his ribs broken and teeth knocked out, pretended to be dead, whereupon he was wrapped in a reed mat and dumped in the privy. There the guests who were drinking with the prime minister at the time, drunk, took turns pissing on him, deliberately heaping insult on him as a warning to others never to blurt out secrets.

Still wrapped in the reed mat, Fan Ju said to the man guarding him, “If you can get me out of this, I'll see that you are generously rewarded.” The guard accordingly asked to be allowed to dispose of the body in the mat. Wei Qi, drunk at the time, gave permission, and thus Fan Ju was able to escape. Later Wei Qi regretted his action and sent people to look for Fan Ju. But a man of Wei named Zheng Anping, hearing what had happened, spirited Fan Ju into hiding and kept him concealed, changing Fan Ju's name

to Zhang Lu.

At this time King Zhaoxiang of Qin had sent his master of guests Wang Ji on a mission to Wei. Zheng Anping arranged by some subterfuge to be among the servants waiting on Wang Ji. Wang Ji asked, "Does Wei have any worthy men that I could take back west with me?"

Zheng Anping replied, "In my neighbourhood there is a Master Zhang Lu who would like to meet you and discuss the affairs of the world. But he has made certain enemies and does not dare be seen abroad in the daytime."

"Then bring him with you in the evening," said Wang Ji. Zheng Anping accordingly went at night with Zhang Lu to see Wang Ji. They had not concluded their discussion when Wang Ji, realizing that Fan Ju was a man of worth, said, "Please be kind enough to wait for me south of the third post station." Having privately promised to do so, Fan Ju left. Wang Ji then took leave of Wei and, picking Fan Ju up along the way and putting him in his carriage, returned to Qin.

They had reached Hu in Qin when they saw a carriage and outriders approaching from the west. Fan Ju said, "Who is this coming?"

Wang Ji replied, "It is the marquis of Rang, the prime minister of Qin, on his way to the eastern districts."

Fan Ju said, "I have heard that the marquis of Rang exercises sole authority in Qin and hates to have visitors from the other feudal rulers entering the state. He may well make trouble for me — I had better hide in the carriage."

Before long the marquis of Rang arrived and, thanking Wang Ji for his mission, stopped the carriage to chat "Is anything new happening east of the pass?" he asked.

"Nothing new," said Wang Jr.

"And are you not perhaps bringing back a visitor with you from one of the feudal lords? They're no good, you know! They just cause confusion in other people's states!"

"I wouldn't dare to," said Wang Ji. The two men then parted.

Fan Ju said, "I had heard that the marquis of Rang was a wise man, but in fact he is rather neglectful, isn't he? Just now, he suspected there was someone in your carriage, but he forgot to have it searched." Then Fan Ju stepped down from the carriage and set off at a run, saying, "He's bound to have second thoughts!"

The marquis had gone only ten *li* or more when, as Fan Ju predicted, he sent one of his outriders back to search the carriage. Finding no one, he let the matter end there. So Wang Ji and Fan Ju entered the capital city of Xianyang.

When Wang Ji had finished reporting on his mission, he took the

opportunity to say to the Qin ruler, "In Wei there is a Master Zhang Lu who is a man of great eloquence. He said to me, 'The king of Qin's situation is as precarious as a stack of eggs. If he has me to advise him, he will be all right, but it is not something I can convey to him by letter!' So I brought the man along."

The king of Qin was not convinced by this and merely ordered that Fan Ju be provided with lodging and simple fare. Fan Ju spent a year or more waiting for further instructions.

At this time King Zhaoxiang was already in his thirty-sixth year of rule (271 BC). In the south his forces had captured the Chu cities of Yan and Ying, and King Huai of Chu had died in confinement in Qin. In the east Qin had inflicted a defeat on Qi, and though King Min of Qi had for a time taken the title of emperor, he later abandoned it. Qin had also several times made trouble for the Three Jin, the states of Hann, Wei, and Zhao. But the king was weary of "men of great eloquence" and put no faith in them.

The marquis of Rang and Lord Huayang were younger brothers of King Zhaoxiang's mother, Queen Dowager Xuan, while Lord Jingyang and Lord Gaoling were both younger brothers of King Zhaoxiang by the same mother. The marquis of Rang served as prime minister, while the other three men took turns serving as military leader. All were enfeoffed with cities, and because of their kinship with the Queen Dowager, their private wealth exceeded that of the ruling house. Later, when the marquis of Rang became military leader of Qin, he hoped to cross through the states of Hann and Wei and attack the Qi city of Gangshou so that he could broaden his fief in Tao.

At this point Fan Ju submitted a letter to the king which said: "I have heard that when an enlightened ruler conducts his government, persons of merit never fail to receive reward, and persons of ability never fail to receive office. Those whose achievements are great receive generous emolument, those whose merits are many are awarded noble rank, and those who can govern the masses are given high office. Hence persons who lack ability do not dare accept assignment, while those who have ability are not allowed to remain in the shade. Therefore if you think my words worth heeding, please permit me to put them into practice and so bring increase and benefit to your regime. And if you think them not worth heeding, then it is pointless to detain me here any longer.

"The saying has it that the mediocre ruler rewards those he loves and punishes those he hates. But the enlightened ruler is not like this. His rewards go only to those with merit, and his penalties go only to those judged guilty of crime. Now although I may not even be worth the trouble it takes to haul me before the executioner's block or subject me to the

blow of the axe, I would hardly venture to take up Your Majesty's time with mere nonsense. And although you might dismiss me as a worthless person, one lightly to be scorned, you would surely think it a grave matter to suspect the one who recommended me of playing false with you, would you not?¹⁴⁶

"I have heard that Zhou has its Zhiai, Song its Jieli, Liang its Xuanli, and Chu its Hepu. These four precious jewels were produced by the earth but at first were overlooked even by expert craftsmen, though they have since become objects renowned throughout the world. Is it not possible, then, that among the persons cast aside by the sage ruler there are those who can enrich the state?

"I have heard that if one is looking for someone who can enrich his family, he searches throughout the state. But if he is looking for one who can enrich the state, he searches among all the feudal rulers in the empire. So when there is an enlightened ruler in the world, the other feudal rulers cannot monopolize those who are good at enriching. Why? Because the enlightened ruler grabs them for his own embellishment.

"Just as a good physician understands what will bring life or death to his patient, so a sage ruler perceives what will bring success or failure to his undertakings. If it brings benefit, he carries it out, if it brings harm, he discards it, and if he is in doubt, he tries a little of it. Even if the sages Shun or Yu came back to life today, they could find no fault with this.

"Words that are truly pertinent I would not venture to entrust to a letter. And those that are shallow would not be worth the heeding. I wonder if it is because I am stupid that I have failed to stir Your Majesty's heart? Or could it be because the person who recommended me is unworthy that I am not employed? If it is neither, then may I beg to be granted a moment when Your Majesty is not engaged in outings and excursions so I may gaze afar on your countenance? If at that time I utter one word that is ineffectual, may I be condemned to the axe!"

King Zhaoxiang was very pleased with the letter and, apologizing to Wang Ji, sent a relay carriage to fetch Fan Ju. So Fan Ju was granted an interview at the detached palace. Pretending not to know his way around, Fan Ju wandered into the passageway leading to the inner palace. When the king arrived, the eunuchs in charge angrily pushed him out of the passageway, saying, "The King is coming!"

Fan Ju, still dissembling, said, "Qin has a king? I thought Qin just had the Queen Dowager and the marquis of Rang!" He hoped in this way to rouse the ire of King Zhaoxiang.

When King Zhaoxiang arrived and heard the eunuchs wrangling with Fan Ju, he led Fan Ju into the hall and, apologizing, said, "I should have received

your instruction in person long ago, but I happened to be very much pressed by the Yiqu affair and every morning and evening was obliged to consult with the Queen Dowager.¹⁴⁷ Now, however, the Yiqu affair is settled and so I am able to receive your instruction. I fear you will find me pitifully ignorant, but I will do my best to receive you as a guest."

Fan Ju declared himself unworthy of such politeness, while among the various officials who were present at the interview, there were none who did not look on with awe and amazement.

The king of Qin then dismissed all those around him, until there was no one left in the hall. Kneeling politely on his mat, he said, "Now, sir, may I ask what instruction you have to give me?"

"Yes, of course," said Fan Ju.

After a while the king, once more kneeling politely on his mat, said, "May I ask, sir, what instruction you have to give me?"

"Yes, of course," said Fan Ju.

This happened three times when the king of Qin, still kneeling, said, "Then, sir, is it not your intention to favour me with any instruction?"

"Oh, no," said Fan Ju. "But I have heard that long ago, when Lü Shang met with King Wen of the Zhou dynasty, he was nothing more than a fisherman angling on the banks of the Wei. At that time their association was a very shallow one. Later, after Lü Shang had spoken to the king, the latter appointed him grand tutor and returned with him in the same carriage to the capital, because their discussions had become more profound. Therefore King Wen was able to reap benefit through Lü Shang and in the end to become ruler of all under heaven. If King Wen had continued to treat Lü Shang in a shallow manner and had not held profound discussions with him, then Zhou would never have enjoyed the position of Son of Heaven, and Wen and Wu would never have brought to completion their royal undertaking.

"Now I am a traveller from another state and my association with Your Majesty is a shallow one. And yet the matters I wish to speak about all pertain to reforms in the ruler's conduct of affairs and touch upon his own flesh and blood. I would like to speak in utter frankness and loyalty, stupid though I may be, but I do not know yet how Your Majesty will respond. Therefore when you questioned me three times, I did not venture to reply.

"It is not fear that causes me to hesitate. I am quite aware that if I speak out before you today, I may well face execution tomorrow, and yet I dare not remain silent. For if Your Majesty is truly willing to put my words into action, then mere death would be no grief to me, exile would be no sorrow, and I might paint my body with lacquer to become a leper, or loose my hair like a madman, without any sense of shame.¹⁴⁸

“Sages such as the Five Emperors have died, as have men of benevolence such as the kings of the Three Dynasties, worthy men such as the Five Hegemons, strong men such as Wu Huo and Ren Bi, and brave men such as Cheng Jing, Meng Ben, Prince Qingji, or Xia Yu. Death is a thing no human being can escape. But if, while facing the inescapable, I can at the same time be of some assistance to Qin, that would fulfil my most fervent desire. Then what grief would it be to me?

“Wu Zixu hid himself in a sack and so escaped through the Zhao Pass, travelling by night, hiding by day, till he reached the Ling River, when he had not a morsel to put in his mouth.¹⁴⁹ He crawled on his knees, inched over the ground, bowed his head, bared his arms, drummed on his stomach, and blew a flute, begging in the marketplace of Wu, yet in the end he raised Wu to greatness and made its ruler, King Helü, a hegemon. If I could offer all my counsels as did Wu Zixu, then although I might be condemned to prison for the remainder of my days and never again admitted into your presence, as long as my advice was put into practice, what sorrow would it be to me?

“Ji Zi and Jieyu painted their bodies with lacquer to induce leprous sores and loosed their hair to feign madness, though it proved no benefit to their rulers.¹⁵⁰ But if by imitating Ji Zi’s actions I could assist a ruler whom I deem worthy, that would be a great honour for me. How could it be a source of shame? My only fear would be that after I am gone the men of the world, observing that I exerted the utmost loyalty and still met with death, would seal their lips, stay their feet, and never again be willing to journey to Qin.

“If you should be intimidated by the sternness of the Queen Dowager and misled by the machinations of treacherous ministers, dwelling deep within the confines of the palace, forever shielded by your tutors, remaining all your life misled and confused and never waking to the treachery, then at worst you might bring destruction to the entire ruling family, and at best you would face danger to your person. This is the only thing that I fear. As to distress or insult to myself, or the threat of death or exile, these I would not venture to fear. If by dying I can bring order to Qin, then I would be of greater worth dead than alive.”

Still kneeling, the king of Qin said, “What is this you are saying, sir! The state of Qin is situated far away here on the border, and I am ignorant and unworthy. But since you have been kind enough to come all this distance, it must be that Heaven is troubling you for my sake, tasking you with the preservation of the ancestral temples of Qin’s former kings. If I may receive instruction from you, it will mean that Heaven smiles on the former kings and has not cast me aside. Why then do you speak as you do, sir?

“No matter how great or small the matter, whether it touches upon the Queen Dowager or the great officials, I beg you to give me all the instruction you have and never doubt my motives!”

Fan Ju bowed in acknowledgment and the king of Qin returned the bow. Fan Ju said, “Your Majesty’s state is well protected on all four sides. To the north is Sweet Springs and Valley Mouth, to the south the long-stretching Jing and Wei rivers, to the right Long and Shu, to the left the Hangu Pass and Shang Slope.¹⁵¹ With a striking force of 1,000,000 men and 1,000 war chariots, if it is profitable to do so, you may venture forth to attack; if it is not, you may guard your stronghold. It is the kind of territory fit for a ruler. Your people are cowardly in private vendettas but brave in public warfare — the kind of subjects fit for a ruler. Thus you possess both these assets.

“If Qin were to utilize the bravery of its soldiers and the plentitude of its chariots and riders to impose its will on the other feudal lords, it would be like loosing the swift hound Hanlu to strike down a lame rabbit! Qin could advance to the position of a hegemon king!

“But none of its ministers are worthy of their posts, and so for fifteen years now the passes have been closed and Qin has not ventured to show its troops east of the mountains. This is because the marquis of Rang has been disloyal in plotting affairs for Qin, and Your Majesty’s plans have been in some respects amiss.”

The king of Qin, kneeling, said, “I want to hear where my plans have been amiss!”

But many of the king’s attendants were eavesdropping on the conversation, and Fan Ju was afraid to speak of internal matters. Therefore he spoke of foreign affairs in order to observe what the king of Qin’s response would be.

Moving closer, Fan Ju said, “The marquis of Rang hopes to cross through Hann and Wei and attack the city of Gangshou in Qi, but this is not good planning. If he sets out with too small a force, he will not have strength enough to inflict damage on Qi. And if he calls out too large a one, he will do harm to Qin. I believe Your Majesty’s plan is to send out a small force and then have Hann and Wei call out all their troops, but that is hardly fair to them. And just because Qi, an allied state, chooses to be unfriendly, can you cross through someone else’s state to attack it? This is bad planning indeed!

“In the past King Min of Qi marched south to attack Chu, defeating its army, killing its leader, and expanding Qi’s territory by 1,000 *li*. But Qi in the end could not retain possession of an inch of that land, not because it did not want the land, but because the circumstances would not permit it. For when the other feudal rulers saw that Qi’s troops were exhausted and

that ruler and subject were at loggerheads, they called out their own men and attacked Qi, inflicting a defeat. Its officers suffered shame, its soldiers bowed down, and all blamed the king, saying, 'Who made this plan?' The king said, 'Tian Wen made it!' and the great ministers thereupon revolted and drove Tian Wen from the state. Thus Qi's great defeat came about because in attacking Chu it played into the hands of Hann and Wei. This is what is called lending arms to bandits and providing rations to thieves.

"Your Majesty would do best to cultivate friendly relations with distant states and attack those close by. Then if you win an inch of land, it will be *your* inch, and if you win a foot, it will be *your* foot. To do otherwise and attack those who are far away is surely an error!

"In past times the state of Zhongshan measured 500 *li* square. But Zhao all by itself swallowed it up, winning merit, gaining fame, and annexing all the benefits to itself so that no one in the world could harm it.

"Now the states of Hann and Wei occupy the centre of the realm, the pivot of the world. If Your Majesty wishes to become a hegemon, you must ally yourself with the centre of the realm, the pivot of the world, and thereby overawe Chu and Zhao. If Chu is strong, join up with Zhao; if Zhao is strong, join up with Chu. And if you can join with both Chu and Zhao, then Qi will be terrified, and if Qi is terrified, it will come with humble words and rich gifts to court favour with Qin. With Qi on your side, you can make Hann and Wei your captives."

The king said, "Actually, I have wanted for some time to become friendly with Wei. But Wei is a country of many shifts and I have been unable to win its friendship. May I ask how I should go about winning over Wei?"

Fan Ju replied, "Court it with humble phrases and rich gifts. If that does not work, bribe it with territorial concessions. And if that does not work, call out your troops and attack it!"

The king said, "I will honour your instructions." He appointed Fan Ju a "guest minister" for the planning of military affairs. Heeding Fan Ju's advice, he dispatched the fifth rank counsellor Wan to attack Wei, where he captured Huai. Two years later he captured Xingqiu.

The guest minister Fan Ju spoke once more with King Zhaoxiang, saying: "The territories of Qin and Hann are interwoven like the strands of an embroidery. And Hann's existence is to Qin like a wood-borer to a tree, or a disease of the heart or belly to a man. As long as there is no drastic upset in the world, then it is all right. But if there should be some drastic upset, then no state will cause greater worry to Qin than Hann! Your Majesty would do best to take over Hann."

King Zhaoxiang said, "I would like very much to take over Hann. But suppose Hann will not listen — what will I do then?"

Fan Ju replied, “Why would Hann fail to listen? If you send troops to attack Xingyang,¹⁵² then the road to Gong and Chenggao will be cut off. And in the north this will block the road to the Taihang Mountains, so the army stationed in Shangdang cannot come south. Thus by sending your troops out in a single attack on Xingyang, you can cut the state of Hann into three pieces. If Hann sees that it is faced with certain destruction, why would it fail to listen? And If Hann listens to you, then you can lay plans to become a hegemon.”

“Very good,” said the king, and he made preparations to send an envoy to Hann.

Fan Ju day by day enjoyed greater intimacy with the king. After his suggestions had been heeded for several years, he requested a moment of the king’s leisure and spoke to him as follows: “When I was living east of the mountains I heard about Tian Wen in Qi, but I never heard that Qi had a king. I heard about the Queen Dowager, the marquis of Rang, and lords Huayang, Gaoling, and Jingyang in Qin, but I never heard that Qin had a king.

“The one who wields power in the state is called the king, the one who can dole out benefit or injury is called the king, the one who has the authority to kill or let live is called the king. Yet now the Queen Dowager wields authority without glancing in your direction, the marquis of Rang dispatches envoys without reporting to you on the matter, lords Huayang and Jingyang hand out penalties without compunction, and Lord Gaoling promotes and demotes men without asking leave. With four persons of such eminence, I have never heard of the state escaping peril. Where four persons of such eminence preside, one may say there is no king. How can the king’s authority fail to be subverted? How can he hope to issue his own orders?

“I have heard that one who is skilled at governing a country will make certain that his authority is firmly established within the state, and that his word is respected abroad. Yet the envoys of the marquis of Rang have usurped the king’s authority, deciding on relations with the other feudal rulers, handing out fiefs to the world, attacking states, punishing opponents, and no one dares disobey them. If there is victory in battle, if the attacks succeed, then the benefits go to the marquis of Rang’s fief in Tao and the losses are borne by the other feudal lords. And if the battles end in defeat, then it is the common people of Qin who are moved to anger, and it is Qin’s altars of the soil and grain that will suffer misfortune in the end.

“The *Book of Odes* says:

If the fruits of the tree are too many

they will break the branches,
and if they break the branches,
they will injure the tree's heart.
Enlarging the other cities
endangers the capital,
heaping too great honour on a subject
demeans the ruler.¹⁵³

"When Cui Shu and Nao Chi wielded power in Qi, they shot the king in the thigh, or pulled out the king's tendons and hung him from the beam of the ancestral temple so that in one night he died. When Li Dui wielded power in Zhao, he imprisoned the ruler Zhufu at Sand Hill and after 100 days he died of starvation.¹⁵⁴ Now I hear that in Qin the Queen Dowager and the marquis of Rang manage affairs, with lords Gaoling, Huayang, and Jingyang assisting them, and it is as though the king of Qin did not exist. The situation is like that under Nao Chi or Li Dui.

"The reason the rulers of the Three Dynasties lost their states was that they delegated power to others, while they amused themselves drinking or raced about hunting and shooting, paying no heed to government affairs. Those to whom they delegated power envied worth and ability, blocking the advancement of those below them, deceiving those above them, and thereby promoting their private interests and failing to consider the interests of the rulers. And the rulers never woke up to this, so that eventually they lost their states.

"Now among the holders of noble rank and the higher level ministers, as well as among Your Majesty's personal attendants, there are none who are not the marquis of Rang's men. When I see Your Majesty standing all alone in court, I cannot help fearing that, after your years of life are ended, those who rule the state of Qin will not be Your Majesty's descendants!"

King Zhaoxiang, thoroughly alarmed at these words, said, "You are quite right!" He then demoted the Queen Dowager and obliged the marquis of Rang and lords Gaoling, Huayang, and Jingyang to leave the capital and go beyond the Pass. He honoured Fan Ju with the post of prime minister, relieving the marquis of Rang of the seals of office and sending him to his fief in Tao. The government was ordered to supply wagons and oxen for the move, and a train of over 1,000 vehicles arrived at the Pass. The officials at the Pass, examining the contents, found that the precious vessels and other rare and unusual objects exceeded those in the possession of the royal house.

Qin enfeoffed Fan Ju in the region of Ying, giving him the title of marquis of Ying. The time was the forty-first year of King Zhaoxiang's reign (266 BC).

Fan Ju thus became prime minister of Qin, but Qin knew him by the name Zhang Lu. The people of Wei, his native state, unaware of his whereabouts, supposed that Fan Ju had died long ago.

When Wei heard that Qin was about to march east to attack Hann and Wei, it sent Fan Ju's old employer Xu Jia as an envoy to Qin. Fan Ju, learning of this, set off incognito, wearing shabby clothes and proceeding alone and on foot to the government lodge to see Xu Jia. When Xu Jia saw him, he was greatly startled and exclaimed, "Fan Shu! Are you alive and well?"¹⁵⁵

"I am," said Fan Ju.

"And have you come to Qin to offer advice?" asked Xu Jia with a laugh.

"No," said Fan Ju. "But some time ago I got into trouble with the prime minister of Wei and so I fled here to Qin. How would I dare offer advice?"

"And what are you doing now?" asked Xu Jia.

"I am working as a hired man for someone," said Fan Ju.

Xu Jia, feeling sorry for Fan Ju, invited him to stay a while and have something to eat and drink. "How hard up you look, Fan Shu!" he said, and taking one of his robes of coarse silk, he gave it to Fan Ju as a present.

Then he began to question Fan Ju, saying, "Lord Zhang, the prime minister of Qin — do you know him? I hear he enjoys great favour with the king and all matters of every kind are decided by him. The success or failure of this mission I am on depends entirely on this man. You wouldn't happen to know anyone who has access to him, would you, my boy?"

Fan Ju said, "My employer knows him very well, and even I am allowed into his presence on occasion. Let me arrange an interview with Lord Zhang for you."

"Ah, but my horse is ailing and the axle of my carriage is broken," said Xu Jia. "And if I don't have a large carriage and a team of four, I would never dare pay a call."

Fan Ju said, "I will ask my employer if I can borrow a large carriage and team of four for you."

Fan Ju returned to his quarters, called out a large carriage and team of four and, driving it himself, fetched Xu Jia and drove with him to the office of the Qin prime minister. As they approached the office, the people in the office, recognizing the carriage from a distance, all disappeared from sight, which struck Xu Jia as peculiar.

When they reached the gate of the prime minister's residence, Fan Ju said, "Wait for me. I'll go in ahead and inform the prime minister of your arrival."

Xu Jia waited by the gate, but after sitting in the carriage for some time, he said to the gatekeeper, "I wonder why Fan Shu doesn't come out?"

"There's no Fan Shu here," said the gatekeeper.

"The person who came with me in the carriage a while ago and went inside!" said Xu Jia.

"That was Lord Zhang, our prime minister," said the gatekeeper.

Xu Jia realized to his astonishment that he had been tricked. Getting down on his knees and baring his arms, he asked the gatekeeper to convey his confession of guilt.

Fan Ju, surrounded by curtains and with a host of attendants, received him in audience. Xu Jia bowed his head and acknowledged that he was deserving of death. "I had not imagined you could have risen so high above the blue clouds!" he said. "I will never again venture to read the world's books or comment on the world's affairs. I have committed a crime for which I deserve to be boiled alive, though with your permission I may perhaps be allowed to take myself far off to the lands of the Hu and Mo barbarians. My life and death are in your hands."

Fan Ju said, "How many are your crimes?"

"Though I plucked out the hairs of my beard to tally them all, they would not suffice!"

"No," said Fan Ju. "Your crimes are only three. Long ago, in the time of King Zhao of Chu, Shen Baoxu saved Chu by driving back the armies of Wu. The king of Chu wanted to enfeoff him with 5,000 households in Chu, but he refused to accept, saying that he had done what he did simply because his ancestral graves were in Chu. Now the graves of my ancestors are in Wei, and yet in the past you supposed that I had betrayed Wei to the state of Qi and spoke ill of me to Wei Qi. That was your first crime.

"When Wei Qi subjected me to shame by putting me in the privy, you did not stop him. That was your second crime. And when the drunkards took turns pissing on me, you could stand to see it happen — your third crime!

"Nevertheless, you will not be subjected to the death penalty, because of the kindness expressed by a coarse silk garment and the concern showed for an old friend. Because of those I am setting you free."

Thus Xu Jia's apologies were accepted and Fan Ju went in to speak with King Zhaoxiang, who decided to dismiss Xu Jia and send him back to Wei.

When Xu Jia came to take leave of Fan Ju, the latter prepared a great banquet, inviting all the envoys of the other feudal rulers and sitting with them in the upper part of the hall, where vast quantities of food and drink were set out. But he seated Xu Jia in the lower part of the hall, had chopped hay and beans placed before him, and stationed two tattooed criminals on either side to force him to eat in horse fashion. Then he berated him, saying, "Tell the king of Wei this for me — he had better bring me the head of Wei Qi at once! If not, I'll massacre every person in the Wei

capital of Daliang!”

When Xu Jia returned to Wei, he reported this to Wei Qi. Wei Qi fled in terror to Zhao, hiding at the home of Lord Pingyuan, a prince of Zhao.

After Fan Ju had become prime minister, Wang Ji, the master of guests who first introduced him to the king, said to Fan Ju, “There are three things you can never know, and three things you can do nothing about once it is too late. When the ruler may pass away — that’s the first thing you can never know. When you yourself may suddenly take leave of life — that’s the second thing you can never know. And when I may suddenly end tumbled in a ditch — that’s the third thing you can never know. Once the ruler has passed away, then it will be too late to regret what you might have done for me. Once you yourself have suddenly taken leave, then it will be too late for such regrets. And once I have suddenly ended tumbled in a ditch, then it will be too late!”

Fan Ju, troubled by these words, went in and spoke to the king, saying, “If it had not been for Wang Ji’s loyalty to the state, no one would have allowed me to enter the Hangu Pass. And if it had not been for Your Majesty’s sageliness and worth, no one would have thought of elevating me to high office. Now I have advanced to the post of prime minister and am ranked among the marquises, yet Wang Ji’s office is still that of master of guests. This is surely not what he expected when he first allowed me to enter Qin!”

King Zhaoxiang then summoned Wang Ji and honoured him with the post of governor of Hedong, not requiring him to submit government reports for the first three years. At Fan Ju’s recommendation, he also appointed Zheng Anping, Fan Ju’s old benefactor in Wei, to the position of general.

Fan Ju used his private wealth to repay all those who had helped him when he was starving and in distress. Persons who aided him with no more than a single meal invariably received their reward, but those who had so much as glared at him angrily were likewise paid back in full.

When Fan Ju had been prime minister of Qin for two years, in the forty-second year of King Zhaoxiang’s reign (265 BC), Qin advanced east, attacking the Hann cities of Shaoqu and Gaoping and capturing them. King Zhaoxiang of Qin, hearing that Fan Ju’s old enemy Wei Qi was at the home of Lord Pingyuan, wanted to help Fan Ju carry out his revenge. So, feigning a friendly tone, he wrote a letter to Lord Pingyuan, saying, “I have heard of your high ideals and would like very much to associate with you on terms of simple friendship. If you will be good enough to visit me, I wish to spend ten days drinking with you.”

Lord Pingyuan was fearful of Qin and, accepting the letter at face value, journeyed to Qin to visit King Zhaoxiang. After he and King Zhaoxiang had

drunk together for several days, the king said, "Long ago, when King Wen of the Zhou acquired the services of Lü Shang, he addressed him as Grand Duke, and when Duke Huan of Qi acquired Guan Zhong, he addressed him as Uncle. Now Lord Fan is in like manner an Uncle to me. Lord Fan's enemy is staying at your home. I would like you to send someone to go and fetch his head. If not, I will not permit you to leave the Pass."

Long Pingyuan replied, "When one is eminent he cultivates friends because he may some day be humble, and when he is rich he cultivates friends because he may some day be poor. Wei Qi is a friend of mine. Even if he were at my home, I would never hand him over. And in fact he is no longer there."

King Zhaoxiang then sent a letter to the king of the state of Zhao, saying, "Your younger brother is here in Qin, and Wei Qi, the enemy of our Lord Fan, is at the home of Lord Pingyuan in Zhao. You had better send someone to bring Wei Qi's head here as quickly as possible. Otherwise I will call out my troops and attack Zhao, and I will also see to it that your younger brother does not get out of the Hangu Pass!"

King Xiaocheng of Zhao dispatched soldiers to surround the house of Lord Pingyuan with all speed. Wei Qi fled in the night, and then went to call on the Zhao prime minister, Yu Qing. Yu Qing, convinced that he would never be able to reason with the king of Zhao, divested himself of the seals of the prime minister of Zhao and fled into hiding with Wei Qi.

Believing that there were none of the other feudal lords whom they could turn to in such an emergency, they hurried to the Wei capital of Daliang, hoping that Lord Xinling, a prince of Wei, would arrange for them to take refuge in Chu. But when Lord Xinling learned of the situation, he hesitated out of fear of Qin and was unwilling to grant them an interview. "What sort of person is Yu Qing?" he asked.

At that time a man named Hou Ying was attending him, and he replied, "It is no easy matter to judge a man correctly, or for a man to be correctly judged by others! Yu Qing, wearing straw sandals and shouldering a sunshade, had a single interview with the king of Zhao and the king presented him with a pair of white jade discs and 100 catties of gold. A second interview and he was honoured with a high ministerial post, a third interview and he received the seals of the prime minister and was enfeoffed as a marquis of 10,000 households. At that time the whole world scrambled to get to know him.

"Wei Qi, because he was in trouble and hard pressed, turned to Yu Qing. And Yu Qing, not daring to consider the lofty rank and emolument he would be losing, took off the seals of prime minister, cast aside his marquissate of 10,000 households, and escaped into hiding. But now this gentleman who is

in deep trouble comes to you, Prince, and all you say is, 'What sort of person is he?' Truly it is no easy matter to judge a man correctly, or for a man to be judged correctly by others!"

Lord Xinling, much chagrined, sent a carriage to the outskirts of the city to fetch the two men. But when Wei Qi learned that Lord Xinling had at first objected to granting him an interview, he was so angry that he cut his own throat. The king of Zhao, receiving word of this, was thus able in the end to turn over Wei Qi's head to Qin. King Zhaoxiang of Qin then permitted Lord Pingyuan to return to Zhao.

King Zhaoxiang, forty-third year (264 BC): Qin attacked and captured the Hann regions of Fen and Xing and proceeded to fortify the city of Guangwu on the Yellow River. Five years later, King Zhaoxiang, employing a strategy suggested by Fan Ju, the marquis of Ying, spread false rumours among the men of Zhao to deceive them. As a result, Zhao relieved Lian Po of command of the Zhao forces and replaced him with Zhao Kuo, the son of Lord Mafu. Qin inflicted a crushing defeat on Zhao at Changping and went on to besiege the Zhao capital city of Handan. Later, however, the marquis of Ying had a falling out with the Qin general Bai Qi, Lord Wuan, and spoke slanderously of him, bringing about his death.

Qin also ordered Zheng Anping, Fan Ju's old benefactor from Wei, to carry out a strike against Zhao, but when Zheng Anping was surrounded by the Zhao forces and hard pressed, he surrendered to Zhao along with the 20,000 soldiers under his command. Fan Ju, the marquis of Ying, spread a mat of straw and asked to be punished for his crime. (According to Qin law, if a person whom one has recommended is guilty of a misdeed, the recommender suffers the same punishment as the perpetrator of the misdeed.) It was judged that the marquis of Ying should be punished by having his three sets of relatives taken into custody. King Zhaoxiang, however, did not wish to do anything that would discomfort the marquis of Ying, and he accordingly circulated an order throughout the state that anyone venturing even to refer to the affair of Zheng Anping would be guilty of the same crime as Zheng himself. He also showered gifts of food and goods on the marquis of Ying and treated him with greater favour each day in order to reassure him. Two years later, however, Wang Ji, whom Fan Ju had also recommended and who was governor of Hedong, was accused of having secret dealings with the other feudal rulers and was condemned to death. The marquis of Ying grew more and more uneasy with each day.

One day when King Zhaoxiang was holding court, he heaved a sigh. The marquis of Ying stepped forward and said, "I have heard that if the ruler has worries, the minister should work to relieve them;¹⁵⁶ and if the ruler suffers disgrace, the minister should die. Now Your Majesty appears at

court in this state of worry — may I ask to receive the punishment that is my due?”

King Zhaoxiang said, “I hear that the iron swords of Chu are sharp and its entertainers are clumsy. If its iron swords are sharp, then its fighting men will be valorous, and if its entertainers are clumsy, then the ruler will turn his thoughts to distant campaigns. And if the ruler begins to think of distant campaigns and has valorous men at his command, I fear that Chu may have designs on Qin!

“Unless one stores up articles ahead of time, he will have no way to meet sudden needs. Now Lord Wuan is already dead and Zheng Anping and his men have turned against me. I have no good generals here at home, but many enemy states abroad. That is what causes me worry!”

The king wished in this way to inspire the marquis of Ying to greater effort. But the marquis in his anxiety did not know how to respond. Cai Ze, hearing of the situation, thereupon journeyed to Qin.

CAI ZE

Cai Ze was a native of the state of Yan. He travelled around to advance his studies and seek employment with the feudal rulers, visiting a number of states both large and small, but met with no success.

He asked Tang Ju to examine his face and tell his fortune, saying, “I hear, Master, that you examined Li Dui and predicted that within 100 days he would take over the affairs of a state. Is that true?”

“I did.”

“And what would you say about me?”

Tang Ju looked carefully at Cai Ze and then said with a laugh, “You, now, snub-nosed, giant-shouldered, bulging forehead, wrinkles on your nose, bandy legs — I’ve heard that sages are not much to look at — perhaps that applies to you.”

Cai Ze knew that Tang Ju was joking and so he said, “Wealth and honour I can get for myself. But I don’t know how long I’ll live. That’s what I want to hear.”

Tang Ju said, “As for your life span, you’ve got forty-three more years.”

Cai Ze laughed, thanked him, and took his leave. Later Cai Ze said to his carriage driver, “Plenty of grain, fat meat to chew on, dashing around with fast horses, seals of yellow gold in my robe, purple cords of office tied at my waist, bowing before the ruler — if I can eat meat and enjoy that kind of wealth and honour, then forty-three years will be enough!”

Leaving Tang Ju, Cai Ze went to Zhao, but he was expelled from the state. He went to Hann and Wei, but had his cooking pot stolen along the way. He heard that the marquis of Ying had recommended Zheng Anping and Wang Ji for office, but that both men had committed grave crimes against the state of Qin, causing serious embarrassment to the marquis of Ying. Cai Ze thereupon journeyed west to Qin.

Hoping to gain an interview with King Zhaoxiang, he sent someone to incite the marquis of Ying to anger by announcing, "Cai Ze, a visitor from Yan, is a man of extraordinary talent, one of the most eloquent and knowledgeable men in the world. If he once gains an interview with the king of Qin, the king is certain to make trouble for you and deprive you of your position!"

When the marquis of Ying heard this, he said, "I already know all about the Five Emperors and the Three Dynasties of antiquity, and I can refute any amount of eloquence put forward by these talkers. How is this man going to make trouble for me and steal my position away?"

Then he sent someone to summon Cai Ze. When Cai Ze entered, he bowed curtly to the marquis. The marquis was put out to begin with, and when he saw Cai Ze and met with this display of arrogance, he began to berate him, saying, "I hear you've been spreading word around that you want to replace me as prime minister of Qin. Is that true?"

"It is," was the reply.

"And may I hear how you intend to do it?" said the marquis.

Cai Ze said, "Ah, how slow you are to understand! As the four seasons take their round, so the achiever must give ground! While one is alive, to have sturdy limbs, nimble hands and feet, sharp ears and eyes, and a mind that is sage and wise — this is what a man wishes for, is it not?"

"Yes," said the marquis.

Cai Ze said, "To embody benevolence, cling to righteousness, practise the Way and dispense its blessings, to realize one's ambitions in the world, be welcomed, admired and respected by the world, so that everyone wishes to have him for their ruler — is this not what a man of wisdom and eloquence hopes for?"

"Yes," said the marquis.

Cai Ze said, "Wealth, honour, approbation, glory, helping the ten thousand things to attain order and completion, enabling each to find its place; a full life span, living out the years Heaven gave you without injury, everyone in the world carrying on his respective line, pursuing his undertakings, handing them down so they never come to an end; name and reality of the highest purity, blessings flowing out 1,000 miles, age after age singing praises without end, as long-lasting as Heaven and earth

themselves — these are the marks of the Way and its virtue, these are what the sages call good fortune and happy outcome, are they not?”

“Yes,” said the marquis.

Cai Ze said, “To be like the statesmen Lord Shang of Qin, Wu Qi of Chu, and Dafu Zhong of Yue — that’s what one should wish for, then?”

The marquis of Ying knew that Cai Ze was trying to use his arguments to force him into a corner, but he pretended to go along. “Yes, why not?” he said. “When Gongsun Yang or Lord Shang served Duke Xiao of Qin, he did his utmost without considering twice, gave all thought to public concerns and none to private ones. He established the penalties of the saw and knife in order to put an end to nefarious actions, made sure that rewards and punishments were carried out unfailingly so as to bring about good government. He laid bare the true feelings of his heart and mind, at times incurring enmity or censure, sometimes deceiving old friends, as when he seized the Wei leader Gongzi An, but bringing safety to Qin’s altars of the soil and grain and profit to its people. So for the sake of Qin he captured enemy generals, smashed armies, and snatched 1,000 *li* of territory.

“When Wu Qi served King Dao of Chu, he made certain that private interests could not harm the public good, that slander could not darken true loyalty. His words were not shaped merely to be agreeable nor his actions merely to be acceptable. Danger did not deflect him from a course of action, and in observing right he did not turn aside from difficulty. In working to make the ruler a hegemon and to strengthen the state, he did not hesitate to face misfortune or evil.

“When Dafu Zhong served the king of Yue, though the ruler was troubled and disgraced, Dafu Zhong exerted all his loyalty without ever slacking; though the ruler faced destruction, he exhausted his abilities and never deserted his post. Though he gained merit, he never boasted; though honoured and wealthy, he was never arrogant or lazy.

“These three men in fact represent the ultimate in righteous conduct, the model of loyalty. Therefore the gentleman, when faced with difficulties, will die for what is right, for then he looks on death as his destination. Rather than live in disgrace, he prefers to die in glory. He is fully prepared to sacrifice himself for the sake of his name; so long as it is in the cause of right, he will die without regret. So why not wish to be like these men?”

Cai Ze said, “When the sovereign is a sage and his ministers are worthy, that is the greatest good fortune for the world as a whole. When the ruler is clear-sighted and his ministers are honest, that is the good fortune of the state. When fathers are loving and sons filial, husbands trustworthy and wives faithful, that is the good fortune of the family.

“Nevertheless, though Bi Gan was loyal, he could not save the Yin

dynasty, though Wu Zixu was wise, he could not preserve the state of Wu, and though Prince Shensheng was filial, his country of Jin was beset by disorder. These states all possessed loyal ministers and filial sons, yet they encountered disorder and downfall. Why? Because there was no clear-sighted ruler or worthy father to heed the ministers and sons. Therefore the world heaps censure and shame on the rulers and fathers and pities the ministers and sons. Similarly, Lord Shang, Wu Qi, and Dafu Zhong carried out their role as ministers correctly, but the rulers they served were at fault. Therefore the world praises these three as men who achieved merit but failed to receive reward. But it surely doesn't wish to imitate their unfortunate deaths!

"If one must die first before he can prove his loyalty or establish his name, then Wei Zi was no model of benevolence, Confucius was unworthy to be called a sage, or Guan Zhong to be called great. When a man sets out to achieve merit, surely he hopes that he will be able to preserve his life at the same time, does he not? If he can preserve both life and name, that is the finest. If he leaves behind a model name but loses his life in the process, that is the next best. But if his name is heaped with censure and shame, while his life continues, that is the lowest of all."

The marquis of Ying indicated his approval.

After a little while, Cai Ze found an occasion to resume, saying, "Lord Shang, Wu Qi, and Dafu Zhong as ministers exerted utmost loyalty and achieved merit, and in that sense one could wish to be like them. But when Hong Yao served King Wen and the Duke of Zhou assisted King Cheng, surely they too were loyal and sage. From the point of view of the ideal relationship between ruler and minister, who is more worthy to be emulated, Lord Shang, Wu Qi, and Dafu Zhong, or Hong Yao and the Duke of Zhou?"

"Lord Shang, Wu Qi, and Dafu Zhong of course cannot compare with Hong Yao and the Duke of Zhou," said the marquis.

Cai Ze said, "And your own ruler — how does he compare to the rulers these men served, Duke Xiao of Qin, King Dao of Chu, or the king of Yue, in terms of kindness and benevolence, in trusting loyalty, in being faithful and generous to old associates, in sticking by the worthy and wise, the men of the Way, or in making it a principle never to betray a meritorious minister?"

"I would not know how to answer that," said the marquis.

Cai Ze said, "The present ruler in his concern for loyal ministers hardly surpasses Duke Xiao of Qin, King Dao of Chu, or the king of Yue. And you — how do you compare with Lord Shang, Wu Qi, or Dafu Zhong in exercising wisdom and ability, in striving for the sake of your ruler to overcome peril,

improve government, put down disorder, reinforce the armies, skirt danger and surmount difficulty, broaden the territory and increase grain supplies, enrich the nation and its families and strengthen the ruler, bring honour to the altars of the soil and grain and glory to the ancestral temples, so that no one in the world will dare cheat or defy him, and so that his achievements may be manifest to those ten thousand miles away, and his fame shine so brightly it will be handed down for 1,000 generations?"

"I am no match for them," said the marquis.

Cai Ze said, "The present ruler in his concern for loyal ministers or the way he remembers old associates cannot compare to Duke Xiao, King Dao, or King Goujian of Yue. And in terms of merits and achievements or the trust, intimacy, and favour you enjoy with the ruler you cannot compare to Lord Shang, Wu Qi, or Dafu Zhong. And yet your position is one of great distinction, your emolument generous, and your private wealth surpasses that of those three gentlemen. And if you do not withdraw in time, I fear you may meet up with even worse troubles than they did. For your sake I cannot help feeling alarmed.

"The proverb says, 'The sun at its height moves on, the moon when it's full starts to wane. Things when they flourish must decay.' This is the constant rule of Heaven and earth. To advance and retreat, expand and shrink, changing with the times — this is the constant way of the sage. Therefore, when the state possesses the Way, he takes office, but when the state does not possess the Way, he goes into hiding. The sage says: 'Flying dragon in the heavens; it is profitable to see the great man.' 'Wealth and honour not rightly gained are to me like floating clouds.'¹⁵⁷

"Now you have settled your scores with old enemies and repaid your debts of kindness. Your wishes are fulfilled. Not to plan for some change would, I venture to say, be unwise of you. The kingfisher and the snow goose, the rhinoceros and the elephant — it's not that they don't live in surroundings far removed from the threat of death. The reason they meet death is that they are beguiled by the bait. Men like Su Qin and Zhi Bo — it's not that they didn't have wisdom enough to avoid shame and stay far away from death. The reason they met death is that they were beguiled by greed and profit and did not know when to stop.

"Therefore the sage lays down codes of behaviour and regulates desires, observing moderation in what he exacts from the people, employing them only in the proper season and seeing that they have some rest from their labours. Hence his ambitions are never excessive, his actions are not arrogant; he is at all times in accord with the Way and never goes astray. And hence the world acquiesces and never turns against him.

"Long ago Duke Huan of Qi nine times called the other feudal lords

together, and in one stroke brought order to the world. But at the meeting at Sunflower Hill he showed himself arrogant and boastful in his ambitions, and nine of the feudal states turned against him.¹⁵⁸ King Fuchai of Wu had armies unrivalled by anyone in the world, but in his daring and might he was contemptuous of the other feudal rulers and lorded it over Qi and Jin, and therefore in the end he met death and his kingdom perished. Xia Yu and the grand historian Jiao roared so loud they startled the Three Armies, but both died at the hands of common soldiers.¹⁵⁹ These men all rode on a wave of splendid success and failed to return to the principle of the Way. They suffered because they did not assume a humble and retiring posture or observe restraint and moderation.

“When Lord Shang served Duke Xiao of Qin, he worked to clarify the laws and regulations and cut off evil conduct at the root, seeing to it that those deserving of noble rank were duly rewarded, and those who were guilty were duly punished. He adjusted scales, standardized measures, and made weights uniform. He broke down the barriers in the fields in order to stabilize the livelihood of the people, unify their customs, and encourage them to devote themselves to agriculture and get the greatest benefit from the soil. One family was not to pursue two occupations, but to work the fields and store up produce, and also to practise the arts of war. Hence when the troops were put into action, the territory of the state was extended, and when the troops were at rest, the state enjoyed prosperity. As a result, Qin stood unrivalled in the world, able to overawe the other feudal lords and fulfil the destiny of the state. But after Lord Shang had accomplished all these deeds, in the end he was torn in two by carriages.

“The state of Chu measures several thousand square *li* in area and boasts a million lance bearers. Yet Bai Qi, leading an army of 30,000 or 40,000 engaged Chu in battle and in one battle captured Yan and Ying and put Yiling to the torch. And in a second battle he advanced south and annexed the regions of Shu and Han. In addition, he crossed through Hann and Wei and attacked the powerful state of Zhao, in the north defeating Lord Mafu and massacring his host of 40,000 or more, wiping them all out at Changping, till the blood flowed in rivers and the cries rose up like thunder. Then he pushed on to lay siege to Handan, so that Qin could aspire to the position of emperor. Chu and Zhao were the most powerful states in the world and Qin’s chief enemies. But from this time on both Chu and Zhao bowed down in terror and did not venture to attack Qin — because of Bai Qi’s exertions. In person he conquered over seventy cities, yet after he had accomplished these deeds, in the end he was presented with a sword and ordered to die at Duyou.

“Wu Qi set up laws for King Dao of Chu, humbling the authority of the

great ministers, dismissing those without ability, doing away with those who were unfit. He abolished posts that were not essential, blocked the road to private appeal, unified the customs in the state of Chu, prohibited visitors from other states, and trained men in agriculture and warfare. In the south he took over Yang and Yue, in the north annexed Chen and Cai, smashing the states allied horizontally, scattering those allied vertically, so that the advocates of such alliances could not even open their mouths. He prohibited cliques in order to encourage the common people and brought stability to the Chu government, so that its armies made the whole world tremble and the other feudal lords bowed before its might. But after he had accomplished all that, at the last he was torn limb from limb.

"Dafu Zhong devised deep plans and far-reaching schemes for the king of Yue, rescuing him from peril at Kuaiji, turning destruction into survival, transforming shame into glory. He opened up the grasslands and founded cities, broadened the territory and planted grain, leading men from the four directions, commanding the strength of both high and low. He helped King Goujian, already a wise ruler, to carry out vengeance on his enemy King Fuchai, in the end taking prisoner the ruler of powerful Wu. He enabled Yue to become a hegemon, his accomplishments were manifest and indisputable, and yet at the last King Goujian turned on him and killed him.

"These four men were 'achievers who failed to give ground', and so misfortune befell them. This is what is called being able to stretch but not to contract, to go but not to return. Fan Li understood this, and so he blithely withdrew from the world and lived many more years under the name of Lord Zhu of Tao.¹⁶⁰ Haven't you ever watched a gambler? Sometimes he tries for a big haul, other times he is just out for little winnings. Surely this is the sort of thing that you are familiar with and can understand.

"Now you are serving as prime minister of Qin. You lay plans without stirring from your seat, concoct schemes without venturing from the hall of state, yet you can control the other feudal rulers, draw on the benefits of the Three Rivers, and make Yiyang yours. You have closed the Sheep Gut pass, blocked the road to Taihang, and sealed off the routes to Fan and Zhonghang, so that the Six States cannot join in alliance against Qin. You have built plank roads a thousand *li*, opening up communication with Shu and Han, and all the world stands in fear of Qin. Qin's desires have been gratified, and your merit could be no greater. But at the moment Qin is merely out for 'little winnings', and if you do not take this opportunity to retire, you will end up like Lord Shang, Bai Qi, Wu Qi, and Dafu Zhong.

"I have heard it said: 'He who mirrors himself in water his features may see; he who mirrors himself in men may learn his destiny.' The *Book of*

Documents says: 'Where great deeds have been done, one cannot linger long.'¹⁶¹ Do you think you can stand up against the misfortune that befell those other four men?

"Why not take this opportunity to return the seals of prime minister, make way for some other worthy person by relinquishing your post, and retire to live among the cliffs and contemplate the streams? In integrity you will be hailed as another Bo Yi, and you may continue to be called marquis of Ying, as may your descendants for generation after generation. Which is better, to rival Xu You and Prince Yanling in unselfishness and enjoy the longevity of Prince Qiao and the Master of Red Pine, or to end in disaster? Which fate will you choose? If you are too reluctant to tear yourself away, too hesitant to come to your own decision, you will invariably encounter the same misfortune as those four men.

"The *Book of Changes* says: 'The lofty dragon has regrets.'¹⁶² This describes one who knows how to go up but not how to come down, how to stretch but not how to contract, how to go but not how to return. Consider the matter carefully, I beg you!"

"Very well," said the marquis. "I have heard that when desire knows no stopping, one will lose what he desires, and when possession knows no surfeit, one will lose what he possesses. You, sir, have been kind enough to instruct me. I will respectfully heed your words." Then he led Cai Ze into the inner apartments and seated him in the place of honour.

After a few days, Fan Ju went to court and spoke to King Zhaoxiang of Qin, saying, "A visitor named Cai Ze has recently arrived from east of the mountains. He is a man of great eloquence, well versed in the affairs of the Three Dynasties, the achievements of the Five Hegemons, and the vicissitudes of the times. He is worthy to be entrusted with the government of the state of Qin. I have seen many men, but none who can match him. I am in no way his equal. That is why I venture to mention him."

King Zhaoxiang summoned Cai Ze to an audience and talked with him. Much pleased, he appointed him a "guest minister". Fan Ju, the marquis of Ying, thereupon pleaded illness and asked to be allowed to return the seals of prime minister. King Zhaoxiang urged him to remain in office, but Fan Ju insisted that his illness was too grave. Thus in the end he retired from the post of prime minister.

King Zhaoxiang, more delighted than ever by Cai Ze's schemes and proposals, eventually appointed him prime minister, and in the east appropriated the territory of the Zhou royal house. After Cai Ze had been prime minister for several months, someone spoke evil of him. Fearful of punishment, Cai Ze pleaded illness and returned the seals of prime minister, thereafter being known as Lord Gangcheng. He lived in Qin for

over ten years, serving King Zhaoxiang, King Xiaowen, and King Zhuangxiang, and finally the First Emperor. He acted as Qin's envoy to the state of Yan, and three years later Yan sent its heir apparent, Prince Dan, to be a hostage in Qin.

The Grand Historian remarks: Han Fei Zi says: Long sleeves make a good dancer, much money makes a good merchant.¹⁶³ How true are these words! Fan Ju and Cai Ze were what the age calls men of superlative eloquence. But both travelled around expounding their ideas to the feudal lords until their heads were grey without ever meeting with success, not because their schemes were inept, but because the persons they addressed wielded little power. Once these two travellers came to Qin, however, they one after the other received the seals of prime minister and accomplished deeds that are known to all the world. This was no doubt because the backing they had was weak in the former cases and strong in the latter.

And yet there is also an element of luck in such situations. There are many men who were as worthy of these two, but who never had an opportunity of fully expounding their ideas — too many, in fact, to finish describing! Nevertheless, if these two men had not met with adversity, they might never have been inspired to such efforts.¹⁶⁴