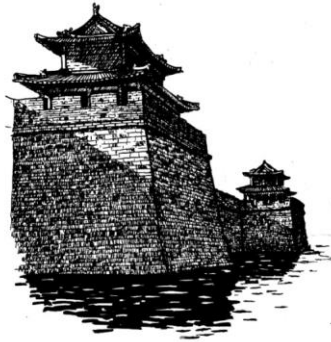


Await the Exhausted Enemy at Your Ease



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### Strategy 4

#### Await the Exhausted Enemy at Your Ease

*Whoever is first in the field and awaits the coming of the enemy will be fresh for the fight, whoever is second in the field and has to hasten into formation will fight already exhausted.*

Sun Zi, *The Art of War*

It is an advantage to choose the time and place for battle. In this way you know when and where the battle will take place, while your enemy does not. Encourage your enemy to expend his energy in futile quests while you conserve your strength. When he is exhausted and confused, you attack with energy and purpose.

#### Spring and Autumn Period China

In 684 B.C. the state of Qi attacked the state of Lu. When the two armies met at Changshao, Duke Zhuang of Lu wanted to beat the drums and begin his advance, but he was dissuaded by his chief advisor Cao

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Cui who said, *"Not yet."* Only after the Qi troops had beaten their drums three times did Cao cry, *"Now is the time to beat ours!"*

The Lu troops then charged and defeated the Qi. The duke was eager to pursue the retreating Qi troops when he was again stopped by Cao who said, *"Not yet."* Cao then dismounted his chariot and went to inspect the tracks made by the retreating Qi troops. When he climbed back aboard he said, *"All right, let's pursue them."* The Qi troops were thus driven out of the Lu territory.

After the victory was won the duke asked Cao Cui the reason for his actions, to which Cao Cui replied,

*"In battle, it is all a matter of morale. The first beating of the drum is to rouse the soldiers to action.*

*If no action is taken, then, at the second beating, their morale begins to dwindle, and at the third it is gone. When the enemy was at the end of their enthusiasm, we were at the peak of ours. That is the time to attack."*

*"Because of this we were able to defeat them. But in dealing with seasoned generals it is often difficult to see through their tactics. I was therefore afraid that they might have made an ambush ready for us.*

*But when I found that during their retreat their chariot tracks were disorderly and their banners discarded, I knew we could chase them out."*

### **Spring and Autumn Period China**

In 628 B.C. the commander of a Qin division stationed in the capital of their ally, the state of Zheng, saw an opportunity to *"lead a sheep away"* and sent a message to his ruler, Duke Mu.

He reported that the Zheng officials had entrusted his division with the keys and defence of the north gate, therefore if the duke were to secretly send an army, the Qin garrison could attack from inside and open the gates, thus easily taking the city.

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Duke Mu consulted his advisor, Jian Shu, on his plan to secretly attack Zheng and the latter replied,

*"I have never heard of wearing out an army attempting to make a surprise attack on a distant state.*

*If our army is worn out and its strength exhausted while the ruler of the distant state has prepared for our attack, will the outcome not be disaster?*

*If our army knows where it's going, certainly Zheng will find out as well, after traveling a thousand li, who could fail to guess our intentions?"*

But the Duke ignored this advice and ordered his troops to mobilize. As the army rode out the gate they passed the old advisor who stood weeping by the roadside.

When asked why he was crying, Jian Shu replied, *"I see the army marching out and my son with it, but I will see neither return. If Jin (a rival kingdom) should decide to intervene they will intercept you at the Yao Pass. It is there that I shall go to retrieve your bones."*

As the old advisor predicted, Zheng discovered the plot and the Qin collaborators fled to distant parts. When the Qin army arrived they discovered Zheng well prepared to meet them. Seeing no way to capture the capital, the Qin army turned for home stopping along the way to wipe out the small state of Hua.

Meanwhile, in the state of Jin , which was an ally of the now defunct state of Hua, the commander Yuan Zhen was enraged by the actions of Qin.

He said to the king, *"Qin has ignored Jian Shu's advice and has worn out its people on a mission of greed. Heaven presents us with this opportunity, and an opportunity thus presented must not be lost! One must not allow the enemy to escape, for to do so means trouble in the future. We must attack the Qin army."*

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The king was persuaded and the order was issued to attack. The Qin army was soundly defeated at the Yao Pass.

### Chinese Folk Tale

Emperor Xuan of Zhou loved to gamble on cock fights and kept a stable of specially bred fighting roosters. Although they were strong and fierce they would nevertheless lose against the roosters trained by Ji Xingze. The emperor therefore hired Ji to train his roosters.

Ten days had passed when the emperor went to the stables to ask if they were ready to fight.

*"No," said Ji. "They are far too fierce and proud of their strength. They rush to attack even the slightest noise."*

After another ten days passed the emperor returned to inquire again. *"Not yet. They are still haughty and jump at everything that moves."*

After another ten days the emperor again asked the question. *"No, still not yet. Although they no longer rush to attack, they still raise their hackles and stare fiercely at the slightest provocation."*

After yet another ten days the emperor again asked if the roosters were ready.

*"Yes, they are nearly ready. Although some still crow from time to time, none ever change their countenance. From a distance they appear as steady as if they were made of wood. Before them, their untrained opponents would not dare accept their challenge and could only turn back and run."*

### Summary

While there are circumstances when it is necessary for an army to hurry to the battlefield in order to command the advantage of terrain, or weather, it is more often a mistake to rush to battle without a definite advantage for doing so.