



美人計

Měi Rén Jì

Strategy 31 The Strategy Of Beautiful Women

Increase the enemy's excesses, seize what he loves. Then we, acting from without, can cause a response from within.

Sima Fa, *Seven Military Classics*

Assist the enemy in his licentiousness and indulgence in music in order to dissipate his will. Make him generous gifts of pearls, and jade, and ply him with beautiful women.

The Six Secret Teachings of the Tai Gong

Send your enemy beautiful women to cause discord within his camp. This strategy can work on three levels. First, the ruler becomes so enamored with the beauty that he neglects his duties and allows his vigilance to wane. Second, other males at court will begin to display aggressive behavior, which inflames minor differences, hinders cooperation, and destroys morale. Third, other females at court,

motivated by jealousy and envy, begin to plot intrigues, further exasperating the situation.

Warring States Period China

A wandering strategist by the name of *Chang Yi* traveled to Chu in search of employment. By the time he arrived, he was reduced to poverty. His attendant became angry and wanted to go back.

Chang Yi said, *"So you are dissatisfied wearing rags and you wish to return, but wait until I have had an audience with the king and see then if our fortunes have not changed."*

The next day Chang Yi had an audience with the king who told him he had no need for another advisor, to which Chang Yi replied, *"Since your majesty has no need for my services will he permit me to travel to Jin to seek employment there?"*

"Granted," said the king.

Chang Yi said, *"Is there anything that I can procure for the king while I am in Jin?"*

The king sneered and said, *"Gold, pearls, gems, rhinoceros horn, and ivory are all available here. What does Jin have that I could possibly want?"*

"Ah, so the king is not interested in beautiful women?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because the women of Jin are renowned for their beauty and grace. Those who see them for the first time believe them to be goddesses."

"Well, if this is true we would be most interested in seeing such beauties."

Having said that, the king provided Chang Yi with pearls and jade with which to purchase a few girls.

At that time the king's two favorite wives, Queen Nan and the concubine *Zheng Xiu*, heard about Chang Yi's mission to Jin and were very much afraid. They both sent agents to him, each bearing five hundred catties of gold and a letter which read, "*We have heard of your mission to Jin and have sent you a thousand catties of gold that you may use to cover the costs of your journey.*"

The next day before Chang Yi was to depart he went to the king to say his farewell. Chang Yi asked permission to offer a toast to his majesty and the king agreed. After the first toast Chang Yi said, "*Is there no one who can join us in a toast to your majesty's health?*"

"*If you wish, I will call in my favorites to join us,*" replied the king, and he summoned Queen Nan and Zheng Xiu.

When they entered the room, Chang Yi took one look and then prostrated himself before the king saying, "*I have committed a mortal offense against your Majesty.*"

"*How so?*" asked the king.

"*I have traveled throughout the empire and seen countless beauties, but never have I seen two women as beautiful as these. So, when I said I would get our Majesty real beauties, I unintentionally deceived you.*"

"*You are pardoned,*" said the king. "*I always felt that in all the empire there were no women as beautiful as these.*"

The king allowed Chang Yi to keep the money he gave him and, along with the gold given by the king's women, Chang Yi became quite wealthy and found a suitable appointment with another king.

Han Dynasty China

In 199 B.C. the Han emperor, *Gaozu*, personally led his army against the invading Xiongnu. The emperor, however, was no match against the cunning tribesmen and he was led into a trap and suffered heavy losses (see Chapter 15). He and his remaining forces retreated to the city of Pingcheng for refuge, but were surrounded by some three hundred thousand horsemen.

The Thirty-Six Strategies of Ancient China - S. H. Verstappen

There the emperor remained surrounded for seven days with no possibility of bringing in either provisions or reinforcements. The emperor thought there was nothing left to do but surrender when his advisor, Chen Ping, came up with another strategy.

Chen had a painting made of a beautiful Chinese princess which he secretly delivered to the wife of the Xiongnu commander. Along with the painting he sent a message that read, "*My emperor intends to surrender to your husband, and so, to win his favor he is sending him a present of one of China's famous beauties to be his concubine.*"

When the Xiongnu commander's wife saw the painting and read the note she was mad with jealousy. Fearing that such a beautiful rival would steal her husband's affections, she persuaded her husband to lift the siege and return home.

The next morning when the emperor awoke he discovered the Xiongnu had left and he was able to return safely to his capital.

Three Kingdoms Period China

The last Han emperor was under the dominion of the powerful warlord of Wei, *Dong Zhuo*. He was a ruthless man who was in the habit of executing senior ministers and officials if they should disagree with his opinions. The governor of Wei, *Wang Yun*, knew it was only a matter of time before his head was on the chopping block as well. He spent many sleepless nights wondering how to rid the kingdom of this tyrant.

One night he was approached by his household sing-song girl known as Sable Cicada who offered to help Wang bring down the tyrant Dong.

Wang was touched by the girl's sincerity and agreed to use her in the Strategy of Beautiful Women. Now, it so happened that Dong Zhuo's second in command was a young and valiant warrior by the name of *Lu Bu*. Dong had adopted the popular commander as his son as a means of sealing both the youth's, and the army's loyalty.

One day, Wang invited Lu Bu to a gracious feast at his villa where he was wine, dined, and entertained by dancers and singers. As the evening progressed, Wang called for another pot of wine that was

brought in and served by the stunning Sable Cicada. The more Lu Bu drank, the more enamored he became with Sable, until he asked his host who she was.

Wang told him Sable was his niece and if the commander so desired, he could have her as his wife. Lu Bu was most grateful and Wang assured him that he would arrange a day for the wedding and send Sable to him at his palace.

A few days later Wang invited the warlord Dong Zhuo to his villa for dinner and entertainment. After they had drunk several pots of wine, the beautiful Sable was brought out to dance. Dong Zhuo was infamous for his sexual appetite and the instant he saw Sable he was stricken with desire. Wang, seeming to notice the general's interest, offered him his "little household maid" to be his concubine. The general happily accepted the offer and carried Sable off in his carriage that very night.

The next morning Lu Bu visited Wang to inquire about Sable. Wang told him the terrible news that Dong Zhuo, hearing of Lu Bu's impending marriage to his niece, came over to see if she met with his approval. Upon seeing how beautiful she was, he took her for himself. Wang pitifully explained that he was in no position to refuse the desires of such a powerful warlord.

Lu Bu was enraged and secretly went to visit Sable at Dong's palace. Sable confirmed Wang's story, and said that, although she loved Lu Bu and hated the old tyrant, there was nothing she could do.

Lu Bu continued to secretly visit Sable over several weeks. By this time Dong Zhuo, who was also completely taken with Sable, started to have suspicions about the constant presence of his second-in-command.

One day he happened upon the two of them talking in the garden and in a fit of jealousy chased Lu Bu with a spear. When he questioned Sable about what was going on, she told him that Lu Bu had been pestering her for weeks and was about to rape her when he arrived in time to chase him away. Dong Zhuo wanted to execute Lu Bu immediately, but his senior minister intervened saying that to do so would undermine the already shaky morale of the army. So, Dong delayed the order.

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Lu Bu was sulking in the woods when he happened upon Wang Yun. He told Wang the terrible sequence of events and Wang replied that truly Dong Zhuo was a tyrant and a traitor to the emperor for usurping his power. Together they plotted his assassination.

They forged an invitation from the emperor for Dong Zhuo to visit the capital where they prepared a trap. Upon entering the emperor's palace Dong had to present his weapons to the gatekeeper.

Once inside the palace he was attacked and killed by Lu Bu and his men. Lu Bu then assumed the title of General, had Dong's property confiscated, and every Dong family member executed.

Lu Bu married Sable who was a good wife to him.

Summary

The power of a beautiful woman is her ability to arouse intense feelings in those around her. Lust, jealousy, envy, and hatred are powerful emotions that create an atmosphere in which rational thought becomes impossible. This is psychological warfare at its most insidious.

