

Welcome to the Romance of the Three Kingdoms Podcast. This is episode 7.

When you get done with this episode, be sure to check out our website for supplemental materials like maps and graphs of the relationships between all the characters. Also, if you like what I'm doing so far, consider rating or reviewing the podcast on iTunes to help other people discover the show. Thanks!

So last time on the Three Kingdoms podcast, 18 contingents had formed an alliance to wage war against Dong Zhuo. Dong Zhuo sent one of his generals, Hua (4) Xiong (2), to Si (4) Shui (3) Pass to meet the vanguard of the invading army. When the vanguard led by Sun Jian arrived, Hua (4) Xiong (2) sent one of his officers, Hu (2) Zhen (1), out to meet them. But Hu (2) Zhen (1) was killed by one of Sun Jian's generals after just a few bouts, and Sun Jian ordered his men to storm the pass.

However, Hua (4) Xiong's (2) men rained down arrows on them and fought off the siege. Seeing his attack blunted for the time being, Sun Jian ordered his army to pull back and make camp. He then sent two messengers, one to Yuan Shao to report the initial victory, and the other to Yuan Shu (4) with an urgent request for provisions for his troops.

But not too surprisingly, when you've got 18 ambitious leaders of men in one coalition, some of them just seem incapable of being happy for others' success. And so it was the case with Yuan Shu. When he received Sun Jian's request for provisions, one of his advisers said,

"Sun Jian is a tiger in the east. If he breaches the capital and kills Dong Zhuo, then we would be getting rid of a wolf and putting a tiger in its place. Let's cut off his provisions. His army will surely fall apart then."

Yuan Shu listened to this adviser and declined to send along any provisions. With no food, it didn't take long for Sun Jian's army to fall into disarray. Spies reported this to Hua (4) Xiong (2), and one of his officers, Li (3) Su (4), offered a plan of attack.

"Tonight, I will lead a force and take the backroads to attack the rear of Sun Jian's camp while you attack the front," Li (3) Su (4) said. "We'll be able to capture Sun Jian."

Hua (4) Xiong (2) agreed and ordered his men to eat a full meal and disembark from the pass in the dark. It was around midnight when Hua (4) Xiong (2) arrived at Sun Jian's camp. The night wind was cool, and the moon was bright. All of a sudden, the sound of battle drums pierced the silent night, and Hua (4) Xiong's (2) army threw itself upon their unsuspecting enemy.

Caught off guard, Sun Jian hastily threw on his armor and got on his horse. As soon as he rode out, he ran into Hua (4) Xiong (2). The two had fought for only a few bouts before Li (3) Su's (4) army attacked from the rear and set the camp on fire. Sun Jian's men scattered, and his officers were all caught up in a melee. Sun Jian only had one of his four top generals, Zu (3) Mao (4), by his side. The two of them fought their way out of the scrum and fled, but behind them came Hua (4) Xiong (2). Sun Jian grabbed his bow, turned, and fired two straight arrows, but Hua (4) Xiong (2) dodged them both. As he was pulling back on the third arrow, Sun Jian pulled so hard that he snapped the bow, so all he could do was toss the broken bow away and try to flee at full gallop.

However, Hua (4) Xiong (2) kept closing in. Zu (3) Mao (4) said to Sun Jian, "My lord, your scarlet turban is too easily recognized by the rebels. Give it to me."

So Sun Jian traded his turban for Zu (3) Mao's (4) helmet, and the two split up and went in different directions. Hua (4) Xiong (2) and his men were keying in on the guy wearing the scarlet turban, so they chased after Zu (3) Mao (4). That allowed Sun Jian to escape along the backroads.

Zu (3) Mao (4), however, could not shake Hua (4) Xiong (2). Feeling the heat, he took off the turban and hanged it on the post of a half-burned house, and then dashed into some nearby woods and lay in wait.

Hua (4) Xiong (2) and his men soon got near. In the pale moonlight, they spotted the scarlet turban and surrounded it. However, knowing Sun Jian's reputation as a warrior, they did not dare to close in and instead just shot at it with arrows from a distance. When the turban remained motionless, they soon realized they had been tricked, and they went to pick up the turban. As they moved in, Zu (3) Mao (4)

dashed out of the woods with his twin blades aimed at Hua (4) Xiong (2). But Hua (4) Xiong (2) simply let out a big yell and cut down Zu (3) Mao (4) with one slash of his saber. Hua (4) Xiong (2) and Li (3) Su (4) then continued to slaughter Sun Jian's forces until dawn, at which point they led their troops back to the pass. So what had been a promising start for the coalition turned into a total debacle overnight.

After Hua (4) Xiong (2) left, Sun Jian's other three generals -- Cheng (2) Pu (3), Huang (2) Gai (4), and Han (2) Dang (1) -- found their master, and their army regrouped. Sun Jian, however, was grief-stricken by the loss of Zu (3) Mao (4). He sent an urgent message to Yuan Shao, who was stunned when he heard the news of the setback, and he summoned the other leaders to discuss what to do. Once everyone had assembled and taken their seat, Yuan Shao said,

"The day before, Bao (1) Xin's (4) brother Bao (1) Zhong (1) disobeyed our rules and rashly led a force into battle, and he ended up getting himself killed and lost many men. And now Sun Jian has also lost to Hua (4) Xiong (2). Our momentum has been shaken. What should we do?"

To this, no one present had an answer. As Yuan Shao scanned his tent to see if someone, anyone, could come up with just one idea, his eyes stopped on three guys standing behind Gongsun Zan (4), the leader of one of the contingents. These three men had striking appearances, and at the moment, they all wore a cynical smirk on their faces.

"Governor Gongsun, who are those men behind you?" Yuan Shao asked.

"This is an old friend of mine, Liu Bei, the magistrate of Pingyuan (2,2) County," Gongsun Zan said as he signaled for Liu Bei to step forward.

"Is he the Liu Bei who put down the Yellow Turban rebellion?" Cao Cao asked.

"The very same," Gongsun Zan replied and asked Liu Bei to bow to the assembled lords. He then told everyone about Liu Bei's background and service to the country.

"Well, since you are a member of the house of Han, you should have a seat," said Yuan Shao, who ordered that another chair be added.

Liu Bei tried to decline out of modesty, but Yuan Shao insisted. “This is not for your fame or office, but rather because I respect you as a member of the imperial family.”

And that statement kind of gives us a little glimpse into the kind of person Yuan Shao was. He had just been told about all the great deeds that Liu Bei had done, yet what he was most impressed by was the mere fact that this guy happened to be a member of the imperial house. You get the feeling that even if Liu Bei was nothing more than a doorstep, as long as he had imperial blood in him, Yuan Shao was going to offer him a seat.

So anyway, Liu Bei now had a seat at the table, so to speak, although he was in the very last seat, probably barely in the tent. And his brothers Guan Yu and Zhang Fei didn’t even get a seat. They just stood behind him with folded arms.

Just now, a soldier rushed in and reported that Hua (4) Xiong (2) and his armored cavalry were outside, flaunting Sun Jian’s turban on the end of a bamboo pole, hurling insults at the coalition, and challenging them to battle.

“Who dares to go meet him?” Yuan Shao asked.

Yu (2) She (4), a renowned general serving under Yuan Shu (4), stepped forward. Yuan Shao sent him out, but no sooner had he left that a messenger came back with the news that he had been killed after less than three bouts against Hua (4) Xiong (2).

Everyone was stunned. Governor Han (2) Fu (4) then said, “I have a valiant general named Pan (1) Feng (4). He can slay Hua (4) Xiong (2).”

Yuan Shao immediately ordered Pan (1) Feng (4) to go. Pan (1) Feng (4) grabbed his battle ax and rode out. Shortly thereafter, another messenger rushed in and reported that Pan (1) Feng (4) had also fallen under Hua (4) Xiong’s (2) saber. The assembled leaders now began to turn pale.

“It’s a pity that my top generals Yan (2) Liang (2) and Wen (2) Chou (3) haven’t arrived yet,” Yuan Shao lamented. “If either one were here, we would have no need to fear this Hua (4) Xiong (2).”

Before he could finish his lament, however, one man in the tent shouted,

“I am willing to go cut off Hua (4) Xiong’s (2) head and lay it before you!”

Everyone turned and looked. This man stood more than 7 feet tall. He had a beard about a foot long. He had the eyes of a phoenix, eyebrows thick and bushy like silkworms, a swarthy red face, and a voice as deep as the sound of a giant bell.

“Who is that?” Yuan Shao asked.

“He is Liu Bei’s brother Guan Yu,” Gongsun Zan replied.

“What rank does he currently hold?” Yuan Shao inquired.

“He is a mounted archer serving under Liu Bei.”

Upon hearing this, Yuan Shu (4) got angry.

“You’ve got some gall!” he shouted. “Do you think none of the lords here have any generals under their command? How dare a mere archer speak such nonsense?! Guards, beat him and kick him out!”

Cao Cao quickly intervened.

“Take it easy,” he said to Yuan Shu (4). “Since this man dares to talk the talk, he must be a valiant warrior. Let him try. If he fails, then we can reproach him.”

“But if we send out an archer to answer the challenge, Huang (4) Xiong (2) will laugh at us,” Yuan Shao said.

“This man has a striking appearance,” Cao Cao said. “Huang (4) Xiong (2) would never guess that he’s just an archer.”

At this point, after hearing everyone talk about him like he’s not here, Guan Yu spoke up.

“If I don’t win, feel free to cut off my head.”

His confidence really impressed Cao Cao, and he offered a heated cup of wine to Guan Yu before he went out.

“Set it aside for now. I’ll be right back,” Guan Yu said. He then grabbed his saber, hopped on his

horse, and rode out.

Back in the tent, the assembled lords listened intently. First they heard the fierce roll of the battle drums. And then a thunderous roar that sounded as though the heavens were falling and the earth was rising, as if the hills were trembling and the mountains were being torn asunder. All the lords were on edge. They were just about to send someone to see what's going on when they heard the soft tinkling of horse bells. Guan Yu galloped back into the center of the camp and threw down at their feet the head of Hua (4) Xiong (2). The whole thing took so little time that when Guan Yu picked up the cup that he had set aside earlier, the wine was still warm!

Ok, so you know a great deed like this cannot pass without a few lines of poetry being written to commemorate the occasion. So here goes:

The power of the man stood first in all the land,
when the battle drums rolled at the gate of the camp;
Before showing his valor, Guan Yu from the wine abstained;
And the cup was still warm when Hua Xiong laid slain.

Cao Cao was elated and impressed to see Guan Yu talk the talk and then walk the walk. Just as he was rejoicing this victory, Zhang Fei stepped out from behind Liu Bei and shouted, "My brother has killed Hua (4) Xiong (2). What are we waiting around for?! Let's storm the pass and capture Dong Zhuo!"

That did not sit well with Yuan Shu, who was probably already a bit red-faced over Guan Yu's victory after the tantrum he had thrown earlier. And now he was livid.

"You are but a pawn serving under a lowly county magistrate! How dare you flaunt your prowess like so, especially when even we high officials are so modest?! Kick them all out, I say!"

Cao Cao intervened again, "Anyone who renders a great service should be rewarded. What does it

matter what their rank is?”

“Well, if you guys hold a mere magistrate in such high honor, then I will take my leave of you,” said Yuan Shu, threatening to take his ball and go home.

“How can you jeopardize our great mission because of a single word?” Cao Cao said.

To defuse the situation, Cao Cao ordered Gongsun Zan to lead Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei back to their camp, and the other leaders dispersed. That night, Cao Cao secretly sent meat and wine to the Liu Bei and his brothers to soothe any hurt feelings.

So from this little episode and what happened earlier to Sun Jian, we have a pretty good idea of the kind of people most of the leaders in this coalition really were. They were either pretty useless -- seeing how no one ever had any ideas to offer or any worthwhile warriors under their command -- or they were rather petty individuals who cared more about appearances and jealously fought over the smallest things. And this was while they were winning. If Sun Jian had received the provisions he needed, or if the coalition had struck while the iron was hot and the wine still warm after Guan Yu killed Hua (4) Xiong (2), they might have already taken the pass and be on their way to the capital by now. But instead, despite having killed the enemy commander, they still found themselves sitting in front of the pass and not going anywhere.

Meanwhile, Hua (4) Xiong's (2) soldiers fled back to Si (4) Shui (3) Pass and told Li (3) Su (4) what happened. Li (3) Su (4) immediately sent an urgent message to Dong Zhuo requesting backup. Dong Zhuo assembled his officers to talk things over, and adviser Li (3) Ru (2) said,

“One of our top generals has been killed, and the rebels have momentum on their side. Yuan Shao is the leader of their coalition. His uncle Yuan Kui (2) is currently the the imperial guardian. If they conspire together, it would mean trouble. We need to remove this threat first. Then, prime Minister, you must lead the army yourself and go break up this coalition.”

Dong Zhuo did as Li (3) Ru (2) suggested. First, he ordered two of his generals, Li (3) Jue (2) and Guo (1) Si (4), to take 500 men, surround the home of Yuan Kui (2), and slaughter everyone inside. Young, old, men, women. No one was spared. Yuan Kui's (2) head was sent to the front lines to be displayed.

Dong Zhuo then mobilized a force of 200,000 and split it into two armies. The first, a force of 50,000 led by Li (3) Jue (2) and Guo (1) Si (4), went to Si (4) Shui (3) Pass with orders to only defend and not seek battle. Dong Zhuo himself led the remaining 150,000 men, along with Li (3) Ru (2), Lu Bu, Fan (2) Chou (2), and Zhang (1) Ji (4), to Hu (3) Lao (2) Pass, which was located about 15 miles from the capital. When they arrived, Dong Zhuo ordered Lu Bu to take 30,000 men and build a stockade in front of the pass, while Dong Zhuo himself remained at the pass with the main body of his army.

So you might be wondering why Dong Zhuo would take the bulk of his army and go not to the pass that's being attacked, but to another location. Well, remember from the last episode that the coalition forces were so numerous that their camps extended for some 70 miles. That is a rather sprawling line. And Hu (3) Lao (2) Pass just so happened to lie near the middle of that line, which means Dong Zhuo is threatening to cut the coalition forces in two.

When Yuan Shao got word of this from his scouts, he quickly recognized what Dong Zhuo was trying to do. He assembled the coalition leaders and they decided to send half of their forces to go meet Dong Zhuo while the other half remained at Si (4) Shui (3) Pass. So Yuan Shao ordered Wang (2) Kuang (1), Qiao (2) Mao (4), Bao (1) Xin (4), Yuan (2) Yi (2), Kong (3) Rong (2), Zhang (1) Yang (2), Tao (2) Qian (1), and Gongsun Zan (4) to lead their armies against Dong Zhuo at Hu (3) Lao (2) Pass, while Cao Cao would lead his army as reinforcement wherever they are needed.

Wang (2) Kuang (1) was the first to arrive, and Lu Bu led 3,000 armored cavalry out to face him. Wang (2) Kuang (1) arranged his army in battle formation and he looked out upon the enemy from under his banner. On the opposing line, he saw Lu Bu. On his head was a triple curved headdress of ruddy gold with pheasant tails. He wore a velvet-red robe made from the finest silk and embroidered with a

thousand flowers, which was overlapped by a suit of golden armor adorned with the gaping head of a beast, joined by rings at the sides and girt to his waist with a belt fastened by a beautiful lion-head clasp. His bow and arrows hanged by his side, and he carried a trident halberd. He was seated on his snorting steed, Red Hare. Indeed, as they say, Lu Bu was the man among men, as Red Hare was the horse among horses.

“Who dares to go fight him?” Wang (2) Kuang (1) turned and asked his men.

One officer behind him hoisted his spear and rode out. It was Fang (1) Yue (4), a renowned warrior from Henei Prefecture. But judging from what happened next, one gets the sense that Henei Prefecture might not be the best place to look for warriors, because Fang (1) Yue (4) didn't make it to five bouts before Lu Bu killed him with one thrust of the halberd. Lu Bu and his men then charged toward Wang (2) Kuang's (1) lines, and Wang (2) Kuang (1) was routed as his army scattered. Lu Bu rode to and fro, with no one able to slow him down in the least bit. Fortunately for Wang (2) Kuang (1), Qiao (2) Mao (4) and Yuan (2) Yi (2) arrived and rescued him, and Lu Bu, seeing that the enemy got reinforcements, ordered his men to fall back. All three coalition leaders' armies suffered some losses, and they fell back about 10 miles and made camp. When the other five leaders arrived, they gathered and all agreed that Lu Bu was invincible.

While they sat anxious and uncertain, word came that Lu Bu had returned to challenge them to battle. Seeing no choice but to go out and face this challenge, all eight leaders mounted their horses, led their forces out, and took up position on the high ground. In the distance they saw Lu Bu at the head of an army with splendid embroidered banners waving in the breeze, coming this way to storm their battle formation. Mu (4) Shun (4), a general under the command of governor Zhang (1) Yang (2), charged out with his spear to meet Lu Bu, but Lu Bu needed only one blow with his halberd to strike him down. The swiftness of the kill stunned everyone on the coalition side. Next, Wu (3) An (1) Guo (2), a general under governor Kong (3) Rong (2), rode out with his iron mace, and Lu Bu came up to meet him. This Wu (3) An

(1) Guo (2) apparently had a little more skill than the previous generals who went up against Lu Bu, because he actually lasted about a dozen bouts. But then Lu Bu's halberd caught him across his wrist and cut off one of his hands. Wu (3) An (1) Guo (2) threw his mace to the ground and fled, and the eight coalition contingents all rode out to rescue him. Only then did Lu Bu fall back.

The coalition leaders retreated back to their camp to discuss their next move. Cao Cao said, "Lu Bu's valor is peerless. We must assemble all 18 contingents and come up with a plan to deal with him. If we can capture him, then killing Dong Zhuo will be easy."

Of course, you could just imagine the other coalition leaders looking at Cao Cao and thinking, "Oh geez, thanks for stating the obvious. Yeah, capture Lu Bu. Sure, no problem. Why didn't you just say so?"

While they were discussing what to do, Lu Bu had come back to challenge them yet again, so all eight leaders rode out once again. This time, Gongsun Zan personally went out to fight Lu Bu, but he was no match and turned and fled after just a few bouts. Lu Bu spurred on Red Hare and gave chase. Now, we know Red Hare is an exceptionally fast horse, swift as the wind. So it wasn't long before Lu Bu had closed to within striking range, and he raised his halberd and prepared to stab Gongsun Zan in the heart from behind. Just then, a warrior galloped into the fray, his round eyes glaring, his mustache bristling, and his 10-foot serpent spear poised for action. This warrior roared:

"Stay where you are, you three-named bastard! I, Zhang Fei of Yan, have been waiting for you!"

Ok, so in case you don't get it, the loving moniker "three-named bastard" is a reference to the fact that Lu Bu is on Dad No. 3 and a knock on his lack of loyalty.

Lu Bu, sensing that Zhang Fei is probably a slightly more interesting challenge than Gongsun Zan, stopped his pursuit and turned to face Zhang Fei. Zhang Fei, energized since he's finally seeing some action, rode forth to tangle with him. And in each other, Lu Bu and Zhang Fei found a worthy opponent. The two fought for more than 50 bouts and neither could gain the upper hand. Seeing this, Guan Yu rode out waving his green-dragon saber to attack Lu Bu from the other flank. The three horses lined up in a T

while their riders traded blows. After some 30 bouts, Lu Bu still did not falter. At this point, Liu Bei pulled out his twin swords and joined the fray. The three brothers revolved around Lu Bu, taking one shot after another at him. The action was so fast and furious, that everyone in the eight coalition contingents simply stood and watched with their mouths agape.

This went on for a while, but then Lu Bu finally started to waver and could not keep up his defenses. It was one against three, after all, and these weren't the easy pickings he was facing earlier. Sensing trouble, he decided to make a run for it. So he faked a thrust at Liu Bei's face, which made Liu Bei sidestep to dodge the blow. This gave Lu Bu the opening he needed, and he galloped away, dragging his halberd behind him. Of course, the three brothers weren't about to just let him go, so they gave chase, and the coalition forces roared with thunderous cheers and charged after them. This tidal wave of men proved too much, and Lu Bu and his army had to abandon their camp and flee into the pass, with Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei in hot pursuit.

An ancient poet later described the scene:

The fateful day of Han came under emperors Huan and Ling,
Their glory declined as the sun at the close of day sinks.
Dong Zhuo, infamous minister of state, pulled down the youthful liege.
Replacing him with a weakling, too timid and out of his league.
Then Cao Cao abroad these wicked deeds did proclaim,
And the great lords, moved by anger, with their forces came.
In council they met and chose as their chief Yuan Shao,
Pledged themselves to maintain tranquility and the ruling house.
Among warriors of that time matchless Lu Bu was the boldest.

Within the four seas they all sang of his valor and prowess.
He clothed his body in silver armor like scales of a dragon,
On his head was a golden headdress with tails of pheasants,
Around his waist wild beast heads a shaggy belt did grip,
His embroidered cloak about his form flapped and flipped,
His swift steed bounded over the plain, a mighty wind following,
His terrible halberd, bright as a placid lake, in the sunlight gleaming.
Who dared face him as he rode forth to challenge for battle?
The coalition lords were torn with fear and their hearts trembled.
Then leaped forth Zhang Fei, the valiant warrior of the north,
His mighty hand gripped the long serpent spear as he rode forth,
His mustache bristled with anger, standing stiff like wire.
His round eyes glared, lightning flashes darted like fire.
No winner emerged though fierce did the combat rage,
Seeing this, Guan Yu on the frontlines became enraged.
His green-dragon saber shining as frost in the sunlight,
His bright colored robe fluttered like wings of butterflies,
Demons and angels shrieked at the thunder of his horse's hoofs,
In his eyes was fierce anger, a fire that only blood can soothe.
Next Liu Bei joined the battle, gripping his twin sword blades,
The majesty of his wrath made the heavens themselves shake.
These three assailed Lu Bu and long drawn out was the battle,
Time and again he warded off their blows, never a moment rattled.
Their shouts rose to the sky and were echoed by the earth,

Even at the frozen pole star was the battle cry heard.
Worn out, feeling his strength fast ebbing, Lu Bu thought to flee,
Glancing at the hills around and thither would fly for shelter he,
Then, dragging his halberd, its lofty point aimed low,
Hastily he fled, from the battle scene he did go.
Loosening the reins, he bade Red Hare to gallop fast,
Turning his face away and fled to Hu (3) Lao (2) Pass.

The three brothers chased Lu Bu all the way to the Pass. Looking up, they saw an immense black umbrella fluttering in the west wind.

"That must be Dong Zhuo!" Zhang Fei cried. "Who cares about chasing Lu Bu? If we seize the leader of the rebels, we will have rooted out this evil!"

And so he gave his horse a few vigorous whips and galloped toward the Pass. However, when he got near, rocks and arrows flew down like rain, and there was simply no way to advance. So Zhang Fei turned back and called it a day. The eight coalition leaders all praised the three brothers for their great deed and sent a messenger to Yuan Shao to report this victory. Upon receiving the news, Yuan Shao ordered Sun Jian and his army to advance on Si (4) Shui (3) Pass.

But first, Sun Jian had some unfinished business to take care of. Flanked by Cheng (2) Pu (3) and Huang (2) Gai (4), he went to Yuan Shu's camp. There, he confronted Yuan Shu.

"There was no personal quarrel between me and Dong Zhuo," Sun Jian said. "Yet I have risked life and limb and have held nothing back in battle. Why? It's because I want to rid the country of a rebel and to help you avenge your family. Yet, sir, you have listened to slanderous words and refused to give me my provisions, leading to my defeat. How can you live with yourself?!"

To this, Yuan Shu had no answer. To appease Sun Jian, he ordered the death of the man who advised

him to withhold provisions. Just now, a soldier came in to tell Sun Jian that an officer from Hu (3) Lao (2) Pass had arrived in his camp and wanted to meet with him.

So Sun Jian took his leave of Yuan Shu, returned to his camp, and summoned the officer. Turns out it was one of Dong Zhuo's top generals, Li (3) Jue (2).

"What do you want?" Sun Jian asked.

"General, you are the only man the prime minister respects and admires. That's why he has sent me here to propose an alliance through marriage between your families. The prime minister has a daughter, and he would like to wed her to your son."

"Preposterous! Dong Zhuo violates the way of heaven and subverts the throne. I wish I could exterminate his whole clan to appease the empire! How could he possibly think I would be willing to join my family with his? I won't kill you right now. Get out of here. Hurry up and surrender the pass, and I will spare you. If you delay, you will be crushed to dust!"

Li (3) Jue (2) scurried back to the pass and told his master about the rude reception he got from Sun Jian. Dong Zhuo was not pleased at all and asked Li (3) Ru (2) what he should do.

"General Lu Bu just suffered a defeat, and the army has lost its fighting spirit," Li (3) Ru (2) said. "Why don't we lead the army back to Luoyang and move the emperor to Changan. This would be in accordance with something that children have been singing on the streets lately:

'A Han in the west, a Han in the east, when the deer enters Changan, only then will he find peace.'

A quick aside here. The deer mentioned in these lines is a symbol for the emperor. Also, this is the second time in the novel that we have heard references to children's songs, and it won't be the last. It was a common strategy to cite children's songs that were going as either omens from heaven or indications of popular sentiments, and we will hear people do this time and again to justify a proposed course of action.

Well, Dong Zhuo, being a little dense, wasn't quite sure what the song meant. So Li (3) Ru (2)

explained.

“The line ‘A Han in the west’ obviously points to the Supreme Ancestor founding the dynasty in the western city of Changan and the throne being passed through 12 emperors. ‘A Han in the east’ is a reference to the capital shifting to the eastern city of Luoyang, where another 12 emperors have reigned. The revolution of the heavens has brought us back to the original starting point. If you move the capital to Changan, you will have no need to worry.”

“Aah, if you had not explained it to me, I would not have understood at all,” Dong Zhuo said. He then returned to Luoyang with Lu Bu to make plans for relocating the capital.

So how will this move affect his war against the coalition? Find out next time on the Romance of the Three Kingdoms Podcast. Thanks for listening.