

Welcome to the Romance of the Three Kingdoms Podcast. This is episode 64.

Last time, Zhou Yu had defeated Cao Ren's forces and was just about to celebrate by walking into his newly captured city of Nanjun when lo and behold, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang beat him to the punch and captured the city while he was busy defeating the enemy. Not only that, Zhuge Liang also took the opportunity to capture two other key locations, Jing Province and Xiangyang, without much effort. Zhou Yu was incensed, but before he could get around to launching an attack against Liu Bei, he was ordered by his master, Sun Quan, to return home and send reinforcements to help Sun Quan with his siege on the city of Hefei (2,2), which was under Cao Cao's control.

We'll leave Dongwu's campaign for now and turn our attention to Liu Bei, who was riding high after capturing three strongholds in Jing Province. After all, it had been a long, long time since he had tasted so much success. But he wasn't about to rest on his laurels. Instead, he started to talk with his staff about their next step.

One of Liu Bei's old acquaintances now came in to offer some advice. It was Yi (1) Ji (2), the guy who twice saved Liu Bei from plots to kill him when he was seeking refuge in Jing Province. Liu Bei was quite happy to see Yi (1) Ji (2) and showed him a great deal of deference, offering him a seat as they talked.

"My lord, if you wish to know what your grand plan for Jing Province should be, why not seek out talented men and ask them?" Yi Ji said.

"Where might I find such men?"

"The Ma (3) family of Jing Province has five brothers, all of whom are well known. The youngest is named Ma (3) Su (4). The eldest and most talented is named Ma Liang (2). He has white hairs in his eyebrows. There's a saying around these parts: 'Of the five Ma brothers, the best is the white brow.' Why not seek him out for advice?"

So Liu Bei sent someone to invite Ma Liang, and when he arrived, Liu Bei treated him with respect and asked him for advice on maintaining control of Jing Province.

“The province is surrounded by enemies on all sides,” Ma Liang said. “It is a difficult place to defend long term. You can leave Liu Qi here to recover from his illness and recruit members of his former staff to help defend the province. Send a memorial to the emperor asking that Liu Qi be made the imperial protector of Jing Province so as to make the people feel secure. Then, march south and conquer the counties of Wuling (3,2), Changsha (2,1), Guiyang (4,2), and Lingling (2,2). Use their wealth and grains as your foundation. This is a plan for the long run.”

Liu Bei was delighted by this idea and asked Ma Liang which of the four counties he should attack first.

“Lingling (2,2) is the closest and can be taken first,” Ma Liang answered. “Then take Wuling (3,2), followed by Guiyang (4,2) and finally Changsha (2,1).”

Liu Bei then appointed Ma Liang as the assistant to the imperial protector, with Yi Ji serving as the assistant to the assistant. He and Zhuge Liang then decided to send Liu Qi back to Xiangyang and summon Guan Yu, who was presently stationed in Xiangyang, to Jing Province. Once he was there, they put him in charge of defending Jing Province, while the adviser Mi Zhu and Liu Bei’s adopted son Liu Feng (1) were sent to oversee Jiangling (1,2). Liu Bei then organized an army of 15,000 and set out to conquer Lingling (2,2). Zhang Fei led the vanguard, Zhao Yun brought up the rear, while Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang led the center of the army.

Over in Lingling, the governor of the city, Liu Du (4), got word that Liu Bei was coming, so he huddled with his son, Liu Xian (2).

“Father, do not worry,” Liu Xian (2) said. “Liu Bei may have Zhang Fei and Zhao Yun, but we have an elite warrior in Xing (2) Daorong (4,2). He is the equal of 10,000 men and is a match for them.”

So Liu Du (4) ordered his son and Xing (2) Daorong (4,2) to take 10,000 men and set up camp in a strategic location by a stream and with their backs to some hills about 10 miles outside the city. Scouts soon reported that Zhuge Liang was leading an army their way, so Xing (2) Daorong (4,2) led his troops out to face them.

When the two sides lined up, Xing Daorong, wielding a big battle axe, shouted, “Rebels, how dare you encroach on my territory?!”

On the opposite side of the field, a squad of soldiers came out hoisting yellow flags. The flags parted, and out came a four-wheeled carriage. Seated atop the carriage was a man wearing a plaited band around his head and donning a Daoist robe adorned with crane patterns. He held a fan made of feathers, which he used to point at Xing Daorong as he spoke.

“I am Zhuge Liang of Nanyang (2,2). With but a little trickery, I obliterated Cao Cao’s army of a million. How can the likes of you stand against me? I have come to offer you amnesty. Surrender now.”

Xing Daorong, however, laughed and said, “The victory at Red Cliff was all thanks to Zhou Yu’s tactics. What does it have to do with you? How dare you speak such nonsense?”

Xing Daorong then galloped toward Zhuge Liang with battle axe raised. Zhuge Liang’s carriage retreated back into his lines, and the formation closed up behind him. When Xing Daorong approached the lines, the formation suddenly split into two and fell back. Xing Daorong spotted a cluster of yellow flags in the center and figured Zhuge Liang must be there, so he rushed toward the flags.

As he swept around the foot of the hills, Xing Daorong caught up to the yellow flags, but surprise! Where the flags parted, there was no sign of Zhuge Liang's carriage. Instead, a general riding on a horse and wielding a spear was waiting. This general let out a loud roar and made straight for Xing Daorong. It was none other than Zhang Fei.

Xing Daorong did not back down. He raised his axe and met Zhang Fei head on. But after just a few bouts, Xing Daorong realized he was way out of his league, and he turned and fled. Zhang Fei galloped after him and let out a mighty roar, at which point troops sprang out of hiding on both sides.

Just as Xing Daorong was scrambling for a way out, his path was blocked by another general, who shouted, "Do you recognize Zhao Yun?!"

Xing Daorong may not have recognized Zhao Yun, but he certainly knew the reputation. Xing Daorong figured he was no match for Zhao Yun, and seeing no way out, he bravely dismounted and surrendered. Zhao Yun tied him up and brought him back to camp to see Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang.

When they saw their prisoner, Liu Bei told his men to take Xing Daorong outside and behead him, but Zhuge Liang quickly interceded.

"If you would help me capture Liu Xian (2), then I will allow you to surrender," Zhuge Liang said to Xing Daorong.

Xing Daorong jumped at the opportunity to betray his master to save his own hide.

"If you would let me return to my camp," he said to Zhuge Liang, "then I will deceive Liu Xian. Tonight, you can come raid the camp, and I will serve as your inside man, capture Liu Xian alive, and present him to you. Once you capture Liu Xian, Liu Du (4) will naturally surrender."

Liu Bei was skeptical about Xing Daorong's sincerity, but Zhuge Liang said, "General Xing is not lying to us," and he let Xing Daorong go.

Well, Xing Daorong was indeed lying. As soon as he returned to camp, he told Liu Xian what happened and suggested that they set an ambush outside their camp while keeping up appearances inside the camp to lure Zhuge Liang and his raiding party in, and then capture him. Liu Xian agreed, and so they went about setting their trap.

Around 9 o'clock that night, a detachment Liu Bei's troops indeed showed up at the gates of the camp. Each soldier carried a bundle of straws and set the camp on fire. This was just what Liu Xian and Xing Daorong were waiting for. They charged out from both flanks and attacked, and the raiding party promptly fell back. Liu Xian and Xing Daorong gave chase, but after just a few miles, the raiding party disappeared.

Alarmed, Liu Xian and Xing Daorong turned around and headed back to camp, but the flames there were still raging, and suddenly, a general charged out from inside the camp. This was Zhang Fei.

"We cannot go into our camp! Let's go raid Zhuge Liang's camp instead!" Xing Daorong shouted, figuring that if Zhuge Liang had sent his troops to raid this camp, then his own camp must be vulnerable.

So they turned their army around again. They had gone just a couple miles when suddenly Zhao Yun charged out with a squad of soldiers. With one flick of his spear, Zhao Yun stabbed and killed Xing Daorong. Liu Xian tried to flee, but Zhang Fei caught up to him from behind and grabbed him from his horse, tied him up, and took him to see Zhuge Liang.

When Liu Xian saw Zhuge Liang, he said, "This was all Xing Daorong's idea; I didn't want to ambush you."

Well, in this case, blaming it all on the dead guy paid off. That, and the fact that Liu Xian happened to be the son of the governor of the city that Liu Bei was after. Zhuge Liang ordered his men to untie

Liu Xian, gave him a fresh set of clothes, and even treated him to some wine. He then asked Liu Xian to go back into the city to convince his dad to surrender. And oh by the way, if you don't surrender, then we will sack your city and kill your whole family. You know, just putting that out there for you to think about.

Liu Xian returned to Lingling (2,2) and sang Zhuge Liang's praises to his father, advising him to surrender. Liu Du (4) consented and literally raised the white flag atop the city wall. He flung open the city gates, went out with his official seal in hand, and headed to Liu Bei's camp to offer his surrender. Liu Bei gladly accepted, and, on Zhuge Liang's advice, kept Liu Du in his post as the governor of Lingling while sending his son to Jing Province as a ... umm, let's see, what's a less ugly word than hostage? Military aide, that's it. Yes, his son was sent to Jing Province as a military aide. So peace was restored to Lingling, and all the people of the county were very happy to now be ruled by the virtuous imperial uncle rather than the treasonous prime minister Cao Cao. That's what the book says anyway.

Once he entered Lingling and rewarded his troops, Liu Bei asked his officers, "Now that we have taken Lingling, who dares to go take the county of Guiyang (4,2)?"

At that, Zhao Yun stepped forward and volunteered, followed by Zhang Fei. The two of them then argued over who gets to go. Zhuge Liang intervened and said, "General Zhao spoke up first, so he should go."

But Zhang Fei refused to relent, so Zhuge Liang said, fine, let's draw lots. So they drew lots, and Zhao Yun won again. But Zhang Fei still would not concede.

"I don't need any other officer's help. I just need 3,000 soldiers, and I guarantee I will take the city," he said in a huff.

"I would only need 3,000 soldiers as well," Zhao Yun countered. "If I do not take the city, I am willing to be punished according to military law."

Zhuge Liang was delighted to see such eagerness in his officers. So he asked Zhao Yun to write a military pledge and then sent him off with 3,000 crack troops. Zhang Fei was still grumbling, but Liu Bei told him to shush and finally put an end to the matter.

We'll leave Zhang Fei pouting in his room and follow Zhao Yun to Guiyang. The governor of Guiyang also had the last name Zhao (4), and his name was Zhao (4) Fan (4). As soon as he got word that Zhao Yun was coming, he assembled his staff and asked them for ideas. Two of his officers, Chen (2) Ying (1) and Bao (4) Long (2), said they wanted to go out and fight. So these two started out as hunters in the nearby hills. Chen (2) Ying (1) was adept at throwing a trident, while Bao (4) Long (2) once shot and killed two tigers with his arrows. So they were pretty full of themselves.

"If Liu Bei comes here, we are willing to lead the vanguard," they told Zhao Fan (4).

But Zhao Fan was not so confident. "I have heard that Liu Bei is the imperial uncle. Besides, he has the strategies of Zhuge Liang and the valor of Guan Yu and Zhang Fei. And this Zhao Yun who's leading troops here, he dashed through Cao Cao's immense army like they weren't there. How many soldiers do we have here? We cannot resist; we can only surrender."

"Please allow me to go fight," Chen Ying (1) insisted. "If I cannot capture Zhao Yun, then you can still surrender."

Zhao Fan could not talk his two officers off the ledge, so he relented and let them lead 3,000 men out to face Zhao Yun. When the two sides had lined up, Chen Ying rode out with his trident in hand, and Zhao Yun came out to lecture him.

"My master Liu Bei is Liu Biao's kinsman," Zhao Yun said. "He is helping Liu Biao's son Liu Qi to govern Jing Province. He has sent us here to allay the fears of the people. How dare you greet us with arms?"

"We only serve Prime Minister Cao, not Liu Bei!" Chen Ying replied.

At this, Zhao Yun decided to let his spear do the talking instead. After four or five bouts, Chen Ying knew he was no match for Zhao Yun, so he turned and fled. Zhao Yun gave chase, and when he drew near, Chen Ying turned and flung his trident at Zhao Yun. This was Chen Ying's signature move. Unfortunately for him, it was a pretty pitiful signature move. Zhao Yun caught the incoming trident and flung it back at Chen Ying. While Chen Ying was busy dodging his own weapon, Zhao Yun caught up to him and yanked him off his horse and tossed him to the ground. Zhao Yun's men tied up their prisoner and took him back to camp, while Chen Ying's soldiers scattered.

Once back in camp, Zhao Yun lectured Chen Ying some more.

"How dare you go up against me with your pitiful skills? I will not kill you. Instead, I will release you. Go back and tell Zhao Fan to come surrender."

Chen Ying thanked Zhao Yun for his generosity and scurried back into Guiyang. Once Zhao Fan learned what happened, he said, "I wanted to surrender all along, but you all wanted to fight. Now look where it's gotten us?"

So Zhao Fan told Chen Ying to get out of sight while he went out of the city with his seal of office to surrender to Zhao Yun. Zhao Yun came out of his camp to greet Zhao Fan and treated him as a guest, throwing him a banquet while accepting his seal.

After a few rounds of wine, Zhao Fan said, "General, you and I are both named Zhao. That means 500 years ago, our families were one and the same. You are from the town of Zhending (1,4), and so am I. If it's not beneath you, it would be my great fortune to become sworn brothers with you."

Zhao Yun was delighted by this suggestion, so they swore the oath of brotherhood. Zhao Yun was the older brother by four months. Given their similarity in age and the fact that they grew up in the



same place, they became fast friends, and they feasted until nightfall, when Zhao Fan returned to the city.

The next day, Zhao Fan invited Zhao Yun to enter the city to assure the people that everything's cool. Zhao Yun left his army outside the city and only took 50 riders into the city. The residents were lining the streets, burning incense, and kneeling on the ground to welcome him. After some prerequisite speeches heralding a new era of peace and prosperity, Zhao Fan invited Zhao Yun to his residence for a feast.

After they had been drinking for a while, Zhao Fan invited Zhao Yun to the private quarters, where they continued the feast. By now, Zhao Yun was starting to get a little tipsy. Just then, Zhao Fan brought out a woman and asked her to refresh Zhao Yun's drink.

Zhao Yun took a look at this woman. She was wearing white mourning silk but had the kind of extraordinary beauty that could make nations crumble.

"Who is she?" Zhao Yun asked his host.

"This is Lady Fan (2), my sister-in-law," Zhao Fan answered.

When he heard this, Zhao Yun immediately changed his demeanor and treated her with the utmost courtesy. After she had replenished Zhao Yun's drink, Zhao Fan asked her to sit, but Zhao Yun respectfully requested otherwise. So Lady Fan (2) returned to her quarters.

As soon as she was gone, Zhao Yun asked, "Brother, why must you trouble your sister-in-law to refresh our drinks?"

"There's a good reason for this," Zhao Fan said with a smile. "Please bear with me. My elder brother died three years ago. I don't think my sister-in-law should spend the rest of her life as a widow, so I have often suggested to her that she should remarry. But she always says, 'I will only marry again if I find a man who meets three conditions. First, he must be well-versed in both

literature and martial skills and be known throughout the land. Second, he must be handsome and possess an uncommon air. Third, he must have the same last name as my late husband.' Now, where can you possibly find such a combination? But you, honored brother, meet all three conditions. If you do not think her too ugly, I am willing to provide the dowry and marry her to you. What do you think?"

When Zhao Yun heard this, he became incensed and sprang to his feet.

"Since I have become your sworn brother, then your sister-in-law is my sister-in-law. How can I violate the laws of morality with such incest?!" he said sternly.

This response filled Zhao Fan with shame. Humiliated, he retorted, "I meant well. Why must you be so rude?!"

As he was saying that, Zhao Fan was giving his attendants a look. Zhao Yun could tell that he was up to no good, so he knocked over Zhao Fan with one punch, stormed out of the house, and rode back out of the city to his camp.

Seeing this whole affair blow up in his face, Zhao Fan immediately summoned his officers Chen (2) Ying (1) and Bao (4) Long (2) to talk about how to proceed.

"Since Zhao Yun has stormed off in a huff, let's fight it out," Chen Ying suggested.

"But we might not be a match for him," Zhao Fan said.

"Then Chen Ying and I will pretend to defect to him," Bao (4) Long (2) said. "Governor, you can then come challenge for battle, and we will surprise him on the battlefield and capture him."

So Chen Ying and Bao Long led 500 men and went to Zhao Yun's camp to surrender. Zhao Yun was a pretty smart guy, so he already suspected that this was a trick, but he met with the two officers nonetheless.

Chen Ying and Bao Long came in, kneeled, and said, "Zhao Fan was trying to use seduction to trick you. Once you were drunk, he was going to assassinate you and send your head to Prime Minister Cao for a reward. He is too dishonorable. When we saw that you left in anger, we were worried that Zhao Fan would drag us down with him, so we have come to surrender."

Zhao Yun put on a happy face and welcomed the two with wine, wine, and more wine. The two drank so much, in fact, that they passed out drunk, and Zhao Yun had them tied up in the tent. Zhao Yun then rounded up their entourage and got the truth out of them.

Once this was done, Zhao Yun summoned the 500 men who had come with Chen Ying and Bao Long. He gave each soldier wine and food and told them, "Chen Ying and Bao Long are the ones trying to kill me. It has nothing to do with you. If you do as I say, then you shall be rewarded handsomely."

The 500 guys all bowed to thank Zhao Yun. Zhao Yun had Chen Ying and Bao Long executed, and then told the 500 soldiers to lead the way back to the city, while Zhao Yun led a detachment of troops behind them. The 500 arrived back at Guiyang and called out for the gates to be opened, saying that Chen Ying and Bao Long had killed Zhao Yun and wanted to consult with the governor.

The guards on the city wall took a look and confirmed that these were their own guys, so Zhao Fan quickly came out of the city. And surprise, Zhao Yun was waiting for him. Zhao Fan was seized immediately, and Zhao Yun entered the city to, once again, allay the fears of the residents and declare the start of a new age of peace and prosperity, for real this time. He then sent an urgent dispatch to Liu Bei informing him of the developments.

Upon receiving the news, Liu Bei and Zhuge Liang went to Guiyang. Zhao Yun welcomed them into the city and dragged Zhao Fan in to see them. When Zhuge Liang asked, Zhao Yun recounted the whole story about how Zhao Fan suggested that he marry his brother's widow.

"That would be a good thing," Zhuge Liang said to Zhao Yun. "What do you think about that?"

"First of all, since Zhao Fan and I have sworn to be brothers, if I marry my sister-in-law, I would be scorned throughout the land. Second, Zhao Fan has just surrendered, and his loyalties are in question. Third, our lord has just pacified this area and the situation is unsettled. How can I dare to throw away our lord's grand enterprise for a woman?"

"Well, now that we have succeeded, why don't you marry her?" Liu Bei asked.

"There are plenty of women in the world; why should one fret about finding a wife?" Zhao Yun said. "One should be concerned about making a name for himself instead."

"My friend, you are a true man!" Liu Bei said with admiration.

While Zhao Yun was having none of this marry-his-sister-in-law nonsense, Liu Bei did show Zhao Fan mercy. In fact, not only did he pardon Zhao Fan, he let him keep his job as governor of Guiyang. Liu Bei also rewarded Zhao Yun handsomely for his services.

But all this praise for Zhao Yun was getting on Zhang Fei's nerves.

"Is he the only one who can render service?! Am I useless?!" Zhang Fei shouted. "Give me 3,000 men as well, and I will go take the county of Wuling (3,2) and bring you its governor alive!"

Zhuce Liang was happy to see such eagerness. "General Zhang, you may go, but on one condition." he said. "When General Zhao came to take Guiyang, he wrote a military pledge. So you must do likewise before you go to Wuling."

So Zhang Fei wrote his pledge and headed straight for Wuling with 3,000 soldiers. The governor of Wuling, a man named Jin (1) Xuan (2), got word of this encroaching army and gathered his troops to go fight them. But his aid, Gong (3) Zhi (4), was against it.

“Liu Bei is the imperial uncle, and his honor and compassion are known throughout the land,” Gong (3) Zhi (4) said. “Besides, Zhang Fei is a valiant warrior, too much to resist. The best thing to do is surrender.”

“Are you in cahoots with these rebels?!” Jin (1) Xuan (2) said angrily. He immediately ordered the guards to execute Gong (3) Zhi (4), but the other members of his staff intervened and convinced him that it would be an inauspicious thing to execute one of his own people right before a battle. So Jin Xuan just told Gong Zhi to get lost, while he led his troops a few miles out of the city to meet Zhang Fei.

When they faced off, Zhang Fei hoisted his spear and shouted at Jin Xuan. Jin Xuan turned and asked his officers which among them would go out to fight. But he was greeted with crickets, as no one was that suicidal. So Jin Xuan had no choice but to wield his saber and go take on Zhang Fei himself.

But one thunderous roar from Zhang Fei was enough to make Jin Xuan turn pale and turn tail without a single blow being exchanged. As Jin Xuan fled, Zhang Fei and his troops gave chase. When Jin Xuan arrived at the foot of the city, instead of being let in, he was greeted with a shower of arrows from above.

Jin Xuan looked up in surprise, and standing atop the city wall was Gong (3) Zhi (4).

“You are going against heaven’s will and bringing destruction upon yourself!” Gong Zhi shouted. “The people of the city and I have already surrendered to Liu Bei!”

So in retrospect, yeah, it probably wasn’t the smartest thing to do for Jin Xuan to leave Gong Zhi alive while he went out to fight. Just then, an arrow struck Jin Xuan in the face and dropped him from

his horse. His soldiers cut off his head and presented it to Zhang Fei, and Gong Zhi opened the city gates to surrender. Zhang Fei ordered him to take the seal of office to see Liu Bei. Liu Bei was delighted when he got this present. For his service in surrendering, Gong Zhi was appointed the new governor of Wuling.

So Liu Bei is three-for-three so far in conquering the cities in his crosshairs. Can he go four for four? Find out in the next episode of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms Podcast. Thanks for listening.