Battles, Betrayals, and Brotherhood

Early Chinese Plays on the Three Kingdoms

Edited and Translated, with an Introduction, by

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There are some additions and exceptions to these rules. The Thirty Yuan Plays editions and some of the print and manuscript editions do not separate stage directions with parentheses. Sometimes the text is inconsistent in the use of parentheses. In the Thirty Yuan Plays edition and some of the early Ming manuscript, stage directions are set apart by large spaces. In this volume, we use long dashes to separate these stage directions, as in the opening to Single Sword Meeting:

emperor and entourage enter, open, stop. — extra male enters, makes a formal request, stops. — emperor speaks. — extra male speaks, stops. — male lan, entourage as qiao guolao, opens, stops, — extra male speaks. Speak as if pondering a question: The tripartite partition is already set now; I fear pulling out shield and spear will cause the people's lives more bitterness. You group of ministers should remonstrate with the Son of Heaven.

In the Selection of Yuan Plays edition of The Play of Interlocking Rings, Zang Maxun has added the phrase "continues in speech" (daiyan) to indicate the continuation of a thought in stylized speech:

(Sings)  
Who would have ever thought that right here, in my house,  
I would come up with this beautiful charmer?  
And on the day when we set the feast,  
In that bevy of rouge and powder a battle campaign will be secretly hidden away.  
How could he ever escape  
This crafty plan?

(Continues in speech) Diao Chun,  
I will have husband and wife be whole and complete,  
Forever reunited.

We have annotated the text primarily with students in mind. By the time these texts were created, many of the gems of Chinese poetry had entered the colloquial lexicon and had become standard, even cliché, parts of ordinary speech. Unless a poem has special significance in the text, we have merely identified these passages by putting them in quotation marks. They function as a form of speech the Chinese call "set phrases" (chengyu) or "colloquial sayings" (yongyu), which are handy euphemisms that are spoken to capture the moment linguistically as a precise category of behavior or feeling. These colloquial and set phrases are also enclosed in quotation marks. These are most often folk sayings, as in "Our mistake of a single day turns into a mistake for an entire generation," "When disaster upon themselves," or "A single branch completely leaked all of the news of spring."

I

Liu, Guan, and Zhang:  
The Tripartite Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Orchard

Anonymous

Few episodes in the tales of the Three Kingdoms are more iconic than that of Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei swearing brotherhood in the Peach Orchard. Starting from that moment, the storyline primarily follows the adventures of the three sworn brothers as they try to make a name for themselves and achieve a position, are separated and united, fight their way all over China, and end up as the rulers of Shu-Han in modern Sichuan. The essential tale of the Three Kingdoms begins with the oath in the Peach Orchard and ends when Liu Bei, against the advice of Zhuge Liang, goes to war against the kingdom of Wu in order to avenge the death of his sworn brother Guan Yu. That campaign will end in disaster and Liu Bei will die. Since Zhong Fei is already dead by that time, the many decades that are still to follow in the tale are simply an epilogue as Zhuge Liang continues to campaign against the Cao family and their generals. The oath in the Peach Orchard brings together three unlikely friends. In the Records of the Three Kingdoms in Plain Language, Guan Yu is a fugitive from the law, Zhang Fei a rich local landlord, and Liu Bei a student who, despite his noble background, is so impoverished that he has to make a living by weaving mats and plaiting sandals in order to support his mother. In the play we have translated here, Zhang Fei has metamorphosed from a landlord into a butcher. In premodern China the trade of a butcher was a necessary but lowly job, and butchers were often considered the dregs of society. The three friends are united by their love of the martial arts, their concern for the state of the country, and their urgent desire to make a career. Although this play, the Records in Plain Language, and the Romance of the Three Kingdoms locate the oath of brotherhood at the Peach Orchard, there existed another early tradition, preserved in the Tale of Hua Guan Sun, that places the oath at the temple of Jiang Ziya, the god of war. Similarly, the brothers sacrifice a white horse and a black ox, and they only seek to die on the same day; they do not wish to be born on the same day. But the unconditional nature of their bond is stressed when Liu Bei points out that he is the only one who is single and voices the distrust that his two sworn brothers may regret their oath because of their wives and children.
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To solve that issue, Zhang Fei kills Guan Yu's family, and Guan Yu massacres Zhang Fei, as shown in the following excerpt (not elsewhere in this volume):

From The Tale of Hua Guan Suo

Guan, Zhang, and Liu Bei became sworn brothers. In the temple of Jiang Ziya they made an oath with Heaven as their witness. They slaughtered a white horse in sacrifice to Heaven and killed a black ox in sacrifice to Earth. They only seek to die on the same day; they do not wish to be born on the same day. If the elder brother would be in trouble, the younger brothers would rescue him, and if a younger brother was involved in a fight, the elder brother would side with him. If they did not act according to this vow, Heaven would not cover them and Earth would not carry them: they would be banished to the backside of the mountains of shade, never to be reborn in a human body! Liu Bei said, "I am single, but you two have parents and children who weigh on your mind, so I am afraid that you may have regrets." Lord Guan said, "I will kill my parents and children and then follow you." Zhang Fei said, "How could you do such a thing, killing your own parents and children? You, elder brother; will kill my parents and children, and I will kill yours." And Liu Bei said, "Right!"

Zhang Fei promptly sets out for Xieliang, where he kills eighteen members of Guan Yu's household but saves the lives of Guan Yu's wife and their young son Guan Ping.

Liu, Guan, and Zhang: The Tripartite Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Orchard (Liu Guan Zhang Tianyuan san jieyi) is one of several anonymous Three Kingdoms plays preserved in the Muiwang Studio collection. Although modern scholars often classify it as a work of "the Yu clan or the Ming," we can conclude from the format of the manuscript and its language that it should be dated to the Ming dynasty. The play repeatedly refers to Ming emperors only in an oblique manner when the reigning emperor is described as the "happy bright" (shengming) ruler. The work betrays its origin in the palace workshops when our heroes issue, "we must keep to our station as we bide our time" (daibi shouben). That is, they should not take the initiative to collect a militia to fight the Yellow Turbans, as they do in the Records in Plain Language, but rather wait until they have been properly appointed as officials by the imperial court to take action. There was no possibility that the Ming emperors would sanction the raising of an army that would operate outside the limits of the imperial region. As is the common practice in Ming palace plays, this zaaji starts with long scenes all in prose, here devoted to Guan Yu's execution of a local official who

1. The deepest layer of the underworld.

is contemplating rebellion, further underlining the contrast the proper behavior of our heroes. And whereas the Records in Plain Language includes in its description of Liu Bei the fact that Liu Bei as a child used to play at being the Son of Heaven, the play omits any mention of such a potentially scandalous detail.

The Tripartite Oath is a regular zaaji consisting of four acts. The four sets of songs are assigned to the male lead, who plays the part of Zhang Fei throughout. In view of the structural similarity between the account provided in the Records in Plain Language and the play, it seems quite likely that the play is based on that work. If that is so, our anonymous playwright(s) have gone to considerable effort to enliven the rather undramatic action of its source where, after the three friends are only too eager to swear brotherhood, there is no dramatic conflict to speak of once Guan Yu has murdered his local prefect at the beginning of the play. The playwright has stressed the superhuman strength of both Zhang Fei and Guan Yu by having them move a thousand-pound rock in Act 1, and in Act 4 Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei each demonstrate mastery of a weapon of their choice. Both of these scenes will have contributed to the spectacle of the play.

Most of the liveliness of this zaaji, however, is generated by the introduction of the character of the butcher, a younger colleague of Zhang Fei who tries to talk some sense into his buddy to no avail. The young butcher also tries, unsuccessfully, to be included in the sworn brotherhood, and he eventually makes a fool of himself when he tries to handle the weapons of our heroes. This character of the butcher, played by a clown, derives from China's rich tradition of farce. As is the case with Shakespeare's fools, much of the humor of the clown's speeches derives from puns and bawdy insinuations. One telltale sign of the connection of this role to the tradition of farce is the presence of "commentary from backstage" when the clown is speaking. Such commentary from backstage is otherwise only encountered in farces that are included as such in zaaji. In the later novel, Romance of the Three Kingdoms, the oath in the Peach Orchard is described in the very first chapter. There, the oath is a reaction of Liu Bei, Zhang Fei, and Guan Yu to the emperor's edict recruiting volunteers to fight the Yellow Turbans. The novelist highlights Liu Bei's primacy among the brothers by describing him first, and only then introducing Zhang Fei and Guan Yu. Zhang Fei is now described as both a rich local landowner and a butcher. Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei are accompanied by three hundred troops, who, one trusts, will have been sufficient in number to consume the meat of the sacrificial animals. Whereas the buffaloes is quite common as a sacrificial animal in the Chinese tradition, the horse is actually quite rare, even though we do have a reference to Liu Bang sacrificing a white horse when he swore that only members of the Liu family would be enfeoffed as princes under his dynasty. The Red Scare, one of the anti-Mongol movements at the end of the Yuan dynasty, practiced horse and buffalo sacrifices, but they actually may have done so in imitation of the oath in the Peach Orchard.
Dramatis personae in order of appearance

Role type | Name and family, institutional, or social role
---|---
Opening male, extra | Guan Yu, Yunchang
Clown, extra, official | Zang Yigui, a local prefect
Zhang Qian | Zhang Qian, prefectural clerk
Clown | Pi Han, a head clerk
Male lead | Zhang Fei, Yide
Clown | Butcher, a younger associate of Zhang Fei
Clown | Innkeeper and wine seller
Extra | Liu Bei, Xuande
Extra | Huangfang Song, a high government official
Soldiers | Soldiers

Liu, Guan, and Zhang:
The Tripartite Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Orchard

ACT I

OPENING MALE, AN EXTRA, OFFICERS, COSTUMED AS GUAN YU,\(^5\) and speaks:

I once studied the *Three Strategies of the Yellow Lord,*\(^4\)
But for many years have been stuck here in this village.
Constantly I practice my martial arts without interruption;
I love to read *Zuo's Commentary to Springs and Autumn.*\(^5\)

I am Guan Yu, also known as Yunchang. I hail from Xielang in Purhous. Since my youth I have been brave and fierce. I have the eyebrows of a divine being and eyes of a phoenix. My beard hangs down in three braids. I am nine feet, two inches tall. Throughout my life I have been straight and proper, stubborn and strong. I fully command both the civil and the military arts, and my favorite reading is *Zuo's Commentary to Springs and Autumn.* Whenever I read about rebellious vessels or evil sons, my heart is filled with a furious rage. I employ a Green Dragon crescent-moon blade. But alas, the right moment for me has yet to come, and I have not yet achieved merit and fame. At present, Emperor Ling of the Han has ascended the throne and stalwart warriors have arisen on all

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\(^{4}\) The designation of role types and roles in this play depends on aspects from more common usage. The "opening male" (douzuo) refers to the actor who first appears on stage, but he is usually not identified as an "extra" (ran). This actor is said to be costumed as "the male role Guan," which we translate for convenience's sake as "Guan Yu." Likewise, the actor playing Liu Bei is said to be costumed as "the male role Liu."

\(^{5}\) The *Yellow Lord* (Huangdi, also known as Huangdi or gong) was the mythical teacher of Zhang Liang, one of Liu Bang's main advisers. In later centuries the Yellow Lord was considered the author of a handbook on military tactics entitled *Three Strategies* (Sanli).
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sides, creating chaos and confusion. That's why I live in hiding here in this village where I bide my time and keep to my station. Because the officials and clerks of this prefecture covet money and love kickbacks, they grievously harm the common people, and I am constantly filled with frustration. Today I have nothing else to do, so let me go out for a walk, on the main street for a leisurely stroll and to see if I can find any wise and good men.

My ambition reaches to heaven; my courage is lofty;
Loyal and righteous throughout my life—that's not just boasting!
I hope to remove threats, pacify disturbers, and bring peace to the world;
Sincere in my devotion to the state, I support the house of Han.

Exit.

CLOWN, costumed as extra, official, enters with ZHANG QIAN, and speaks:

As magistrate of prefecture or county I display my dirty tricks
And levy tax on grain and hay and on fields and plots alike;
Because of my power and might, people are frightened and scared:
The black-haired mulberries call me the Marquis of a Hundred Miles.

I am Zang Tigi, and I have been appointed as Prefect of Puzhou. At present Emperor Ling of the Han dynasty has ascended the throne. Throughout the empire stalwart warriors have arisen, each a hegemon of his own domain. The common people flee in all directions so the grain in the fields is left unharvested, resulting in terrible hunger and starvation and great deprivation. Only in our Puzhou do mulberry trees and fields of hemp bake in the sun, and wheat and millet stretch to the horizon, so the people are happy and prosperous. This must all be due, I believe, to my blessing! That is the reason why winds are mild and rains timely, and the black-haired masses are enjoying their life. So why should I not rise in rebellion and raise troops? This Puzhou of mine has a broad and extensive territory, the provisions are ample, the felder plentiful, and the soldiers stalwart heroes all! Why shouldn't I rise in rebellion and sow confusion? Why shouldn't I become a liege lord instead of a prefect? In my staff here I have a clerk by the name of Pi Han. This person is very capable. Let me call him over to discuss this with him. ZHANG QIAN, go and invite Clerk Pi Han. ZHANG QIAN speaks: Yes, sir. Act out inviting, and speaks: Clerk Pi Han, where are you? His Excellency is calling for you. CLOWN enters, costumed as HEAD CLERK, and speaks:

As a clerk I am in power,
A model for the magistrate!

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The Tripartite Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Orchard

Dirty tricks of the officials
All depend on my decision.

I am Pi Han, also known as Nete. I am a clerk here in the prefectural office of the Puzhou Prefecture. I'm not bragging, but this brush in my hand controls everything! All large and small affairs in this office have to be discussed with me and depend on my decision. Just as I was reading the Story of the Western Wing in my room, some underling has come and told me that His Excellency has called for me. I don't know what for, but I'll have to go. No need to announce me, I'll go in there by myself. Act out greeting, and speaks: Your Excellency called for me. What would you like to discuss? OFFICIAL speaks: I have something very important I want to discuss with you. At present stalwart warriors are rising up everywhere. The common people flee in all directions and the grain in the field is left unharvested, resulting in terrible hunger and starvation. Only in one Puzhou do mulberry trees and fields of hemp bake in the sun, and wheat and millet stretch to the horizon, so the people are happy and prosperous. This must all be due, I believe, to my blessing! That is the reason why winds are mild and rains timely, and the black-haired masses are enjoying their life. So why should I not rise in rebellion and raise troops? This Puzhou of mine has a broad and extensive territory, the provisions are ample, the felder plentiful, and the soldiers stalwart heroes all! Why shouldn't I rise in rebellion and sow confusion? Why shouldn't I become a liege lord instead of a prefect? So I have called you to discuss this. CLERK speaks: Your Excellency, even before you raised this issue, I had already considered it for a long time. Long ago that Exalted Ancestor of the Han also was only a common citizen of Fengtai. When he grew up, he became a post station chief at Sishang. Because the Great Wall was being constructed, he escorted corvée laborers to Mount Li, and he served as the headman. But many of these corvée laborers escaped and fled. When he arrived at Mount Manglang, he beheaded a white snake.9 But he was much indebted to the clerk Xiao He, whom he appointed as general manager for rising

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9. Pi Han (pihan) literally means "cold skin," and Nete (nete) literally means "box inside."

10. The Story of the Western Wing (Xingsheng) is China's most famous love comedy. Its most popular version was the five-act dramatization by Wang Shifu (late thirteenth century), which circulated widely in print in the sixteenth century. In traditional times, the Story of the Western Wing was often condemned as a "book that teaches licentiousness." See Wen and Huo 1995, pp. 3–5. Pi Han's interest in this sort of book is incongruent with Guan Yin's more virtuous readings. And of course, this is highly anachronistic since the play was not written until the fourteenth century.

11. Liu Bang, founder of the dynasty.

12. In traditional times the construction of the Great Wall by the First Emperor of the Qin was usually condemned as an act of folly and tyranny.

13. The white snake represents the Qin dynasty.
in rebellion and raising troops, hiring soldiers and buying horses, taking up high and storing provisions in order to complete the great enterprise. Your Excellency, who is right at your features and actions, you may be compared to Liu Bang. But I, Pi Han, am certainly no less gifted than Xiao He in terms of tricks and plots, wisdom and insight. Official speaks: You are right. This is exactly my idea. Do you have any other suggestions? Clerk speaks: Your Excellency, if you are like Liu Bang and I am like Xiao He, then we still lack a Grand Marshal like Han Xin. I will recommend someone to you. Official speaks: Whom will you recommend? Clerk speaks: In this locality lives a fine fellow named Guan Yu—also known as Yunchang. He can read Zuó’s Commentary to the Springs and Autumns. He combines in one person both wisdom and courage. He is the right person to be given the seal of marshal. In those days Xiao He recommended Han Xin, and today I, Pi Han, recommend Yunchang! Your Excellency, what do you think about it? Official speaks: Master Pi, how could your proposal be mistaken? The most important thing is to achieve this grand affair.13 Tell someone to invite this Guan Yunchang. Clerk speaks: I will have someone invite him. Hey you, Zhiang Qian! At the order of His Excellency you must go and invite Guan Yunchang. Zhiang Qian speaks: And where does this guy live? Clerk speaks: I will explain it to you, but you have to remember it well. When you go out through the gate of this office, go a bit to the east. Turn and cross the main street and enter that tallest house to the north of the crossing, to the southwest of the vegetable market, left of the police post, across the street from the brewery, and next to the baked bun seller. Zhiang Qian speaks: I have no clue! Clerk speaks: You may not know this. Zhiang Qian speaks: Okay, I’ll go. So I go outside through the gate of the office, pass through the main streets, go to that tall house, and have arrived there. This house must be it. Mr. Stoutfellow, are you at home? Guan Yu enters and speaks: My ambition reaches beyond the clouds, my courage is lofty: A phoenix helmet, golden armor, and a broadened battle coat. This red heart, blazing and bright, is filled with proper loyalty: I exalt my strength and risk my life for this sagely dynasty.

I am Guan Yunchang. I had just bought some books in the market and was reading them in my study when someone called at my door. Let me go and have a look. Here I am outside. Sir, what brings you here? Zhiang Qian speaks: Stout fellow, you and I will go and visit His Excellency. While we are talking, we have already arrived in front of the office. You wait here and I will announce you. Acts out announcing, and speaks: Your Excellency, Guan Yunchang has arrived. Clerk speaks: Your Excellency, just look at the fellow I recommend to you. Let’s not talk about his inner talents; just look at his outer appearance. With these features and actions he’ll attract more attention than others! Official speaks: Ask him to come in. Zhiang Qian speaks: Yes, sir. Please come in. Guan Yu acts out greeting, and speaks: Your Excellency, why have you summoned me? Clerk speaks: Guan Yunchang. His Excellency has invited you because he has something he wants to discuss with you. Your Excellency, please tell him. Official speaks: The reason only why I have invited you is this. At present, all the war heroes arise everywhere. The common people flee in all directions and the grain in the fields is left unharvested, resulting in terrible hunger and starvation and deprivation. Only in our Puzhou do mulberry trees and fields of hemp bake in the sun, and wheat and millet stretch to the horizon, so the people are happy and prosperous. This must all be due to my blessing! So now I want to rise in rebellion and raise troops. But I still need a Grand Marshal. Clerk Pi has recommended you as someone who combines civil and military arts in one person. You will receive the seal of commander—how about that? Guan Yu speaks: Your Excellency, I am just a poor scholar. What do I know of weapons and armor? How could you make the mistake of appointing me? I wouldn’t dare! Clerk speaks: Don’t be so modest! I recommended you! Once His Excellency becomes the great lord of the region, you won’t have to worry about a high position. Guan Yu speaks: I am not so sure. This sword is quite dazzling, but there is no other way now. Official speaks: Soldiers, bring it here. General, do you see this? This sword I will hang at your waist. Today is an auspicious day, so I appoint you here and now as commander. Hang the sword from your waist! Guan Yu speaks: In accordance with your command I have hung this sword from my waist. Official speaks: Grand Marshal, when will you start your campaign? Guan Yu speaks: Your Excellency, today is an auspicious day to prepare for a glorious campaign. As you employ me as your Grand Marshal, I will not hesitate or tarry, and start my campaign this very day. It’s rightly said, “Troops have no discipline without executions, and generals maintain no order unless they are strict.” So broadcast this order of the general: act in accordance with orders—whenever disorders will lose his head! Official speaks: Grand Marshal, you are right! Officers and soldiers obey the orders of the general! Guan Yu acts out grasping his sword, and speaks: I now hold this sword in my hand. Officers and soldiers, listen! This sword will behead whoever discloses military secrets, falsely assumes false titles, or does not honor the commands of the court. Prefect, is someone calling? Official speaks: Where? Guan Yu acts out beckoning him, and speaks: Get a taste of my sword! Official acts out dying. Clerk speaks: How could he commit such an act? This doesn’t look good. I’ll have to run for my life! Guan Yu acts out grabbing him, and speaks: Where are you off to? "One swipe of the sword makes two halves," Clerk acts out dying. Guan Yu speaks: I have killed off everyone in...
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this prefectural office, so I should grasp this opportunity and fight my way out. All of you lackey! Whoever opposes me will die; whoever blocks me will be stabbed. So be it! I cannot stay here any longer. I will have to go into hiding in some other prefecture and district.

With sword in hand I met my enemy and I leave the prefectural office: Corpses are strewn across the field and lie in the sandy dust. I set out on my journey to go into hiding at another place, whether it is at some corner of the sea or the edge of the sky.

Exits.

official and clerk struggle up: they don't say a word but act out making faces and hand gestures, and exit.\(^{15}\)

male lead, costumed as Zhang Fei, and clown, costumed as butcher, enter together. male lead speaks: I am Zhang Fei, also known as Yide. I hail from Fanying in Zhous Prefecture. From youth I have practiced the martial arts. I thrust the lance and cock the crossbow. I strike and hum and with whip and mace. There is no skill I do not possess; there is no skill I cannot master. But alas, my time has not arrived, so I engage in some petty trade, make a living by selling meat, and ply my blade as a butcher. Zhang Fei, when will you rise to glory? Sings:

(Xiaoméi mode: Diao jiangdun)
My character and personality are stubborn and strong. My knowledge and scheming are broad and capacious.
Very much a stalwart hero here!

butcher speaks: Brother, you seem pretty uninterested in our business lately. You only want to twirl your lance and swing your cudgel. How come? male lead sings:

Through practice have I perfected broadsword and long lance.

butcher speaks: Brother, what you say makes no sense to me. You don't have even the inclination to use your knife to make a living as a butcher. Go ahead and practice your broadsword and long lance, but even if you master them, what will you use them for? male lead sings:

I hope to support the altars of the state
And become a military commander.

13. Usually across playing characters who are killed or die are said to "exit unbravely." The precise nature of the stage direction here is unclear, although it may refer to their actions as ghastly; the intonations is probably farcical.
14. Here, specifically military knowledge and know-how.

The Tripartite Oath of Brotherhoood in the Peach Orchard

butcher speaks: Brother, you are surely mismatched! Commentary from backstage: You mean "mistaken"? Butcher speaks: Shit! It's "mistaken." You are uninterested in this business, but now you want to sell Ross and soy sauce? Commentary from backstage: He means "military commander."\(^{15}\) Butcher speaks: Brother, according to me, your younger brother, even if we are not in it for the money, we have wine and meat to eat every day, and even if we don't have meat, we still have more liver and offal than we can finish! male lead sings:

(Hanjiang long)
At present I live in a narrow alley.\(^{17}\)
And each day I buy myself useless, meticulously slicing thin little skins.

butcher speaks: Brother, you are really stupid. That great sage Confucius has said: If you do not suffer the greatest suffering of all suffering, you cannot topple the men on top.\(^{18}\) Just listen to me and get beyond it! Our line of business may be the lowest of the low, but it still manages to set out the plates! But you never take care of the shop. Tell me which day you don't drink yourself into a stupor? It's all rising early and late to eat! male lead sings:

Constantly it is "under the stars, by the light of the moon."\(^{19}\)
Each and every day I lie in the snow and sleep on the frost.\(^{20}\)

butcher speaks: Brother, because you had to grasp the lance and swing your cudgel, our business has really slowed down the last couple of days. male lead sings:

15. The use of "Commentary from backstage" is only known from faces; here it is an artifact of the cliché role of the butcher as played by the comic in earlier faces skins.
16. "Military commander" and "Ross and soy sauce" share the same pronunciation (rou-jia).
17. A comic reference to Yan Hui, Confucius' perfect disciple, who lived in utter happiness amidst his poverty. Analects 6:21 (trans. Singlerland 1979, p. 95): "The Master said, "What a worthy man was Yan Hui! Living in a narrow alley, subsisting on a basket of grain and a good full of water—other people could not have borne such hardship, yet it never spoiled Hui’s joy.""
18. Akin to the modern cliché, "You have to eat the bitter in the bitter before you can be man enough others" (cháibi běiyòng féng bái shí hou běiyòng rén). This is an obsolete reference not to Confucius, but to Mencius 12.3. "Hence, when Heaven is about to bestow a great responsibility on a particular person, it will always first subject one's heart and resolve to bitterness, humble one's mind and bones, narrow one's body and flesh, deplete one's persons, and thwart and bring choice to what one does. By means of these things it perturbs one's heart, toughens one's nature, and provides those things of which one is incapable," and, Mencius 15.5, "Only in these ways do we know that we live through adversity, but die through ease."
On top of that, how can I stand this desolate livelihood, encountering hardship?
A life of insignificance full of fortune’s constant change?

**Butcher speaks:** Brother, because our fated lot is no hundred and twenty percent joy, we need to make what we have richer. *Male lead sings:*
It’s all because our fortune stinks
And the devils are against us.

**Butcher speaks:** Brother, I will be honest with you. I have suffered such unhappiness these last few years. Look how my hair has all turned white from sorrow. *Male lead sings:*
To no avail he’s suffered till his dark hair turned hoary;
All in vain we’ve spent the fleeting light of years and months.

**Butcher speaks:** Brother, I will be honest with you. Yesterday I cooked up a blood sausage and I bought a bottle of fine wine. I had hoped that you would come and drink yourself into a stupor, but who could have known that you would not come? Now it was fine that you didn’t show up, but all through the night I have been pestered by my boatman—oh no, it’s by my wife—who told me that I was no good. Just look at my face, I’m still ashamed today. *Male lead sings: Younger brother, don’t blame me; I had some urgent business to attend to.*

**Butcher speaks:** Brother, I wouldn’t dare blame you! If I blamed you, I’d be the son of a whore! But—what kind of business was it? *Male lead sings:*

*(You bula)*
Every day I link up with heroic warriors for idle discussions.

**Butcher speaks:** I don’t know what kind of business you are engaged in but make sure not to involve me! *Male lead sings:*
I am not involved in some shady business; I only want to discuss military matters—how to rule the world.

**Butcher speaks:** You and I are only butchers. What do we understand of military books, battle tactics, or the martial arts? Do you know about the last that was three zhong tall? From backwoods: What do you mean "the last that was three zhong tall"? *Butcher sings:*
Well, it was completely empty inside! I just don’t believe you! *Male lead sings:*
I study the Six Tactics⁴ and Three Strategies—that’s no lie!

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The Six Tactics (Lister) is yet another handbook of military matters. Its authorship was attributed to Li Shang, an advisor to King Wen and King Wu, the founders of the Zhou dynasty. Also known as Li Weng, Jiang Shang, Jiang Taiyang, or Jiang Ziya, he was a hermit who spent his days angling in Pan Creek until he was brought to court at the age of seventy by King Wen of the Zhou. As the age of eighty, Li Shang assisted King Wu in his conquest of the Shang and the establishment of the Zhou dynasty. It was only in imperial times (i.e., after 220 BC) that he was enshrined with the authorship of this military handbook. His biography is found in translation in "Tai-kung of Chi, I Hereditary House 2", in Sima Qian 2006, pp. 35–46.

1. The character Junq (work district, area where work is carried out) is used in the term di-Junq (this place of work), which may be a simple mistake for di-fang (place); but the invocation itself seems to suggest that it is the place—and its associated hereditary occupation that determines social status—that will "bury" heroes out of sight. In this sense, Zhang Fei is complaining that no one would think of looking in the butcher stall for a hero, but also referring to the fact that many of the great military heroes of the past came from low positions (including Li Shang, purported author of the Six Tactics).

2. His epic military exploits began with building a uncle road to move his army across the Chenjing Mountains and ended with him forcing Xiang Yu to commit suicide at Roet
And Yue Yi’s achievements for Yan were extensive. They both received gifts and glory. And became famous for all eternity.

Butcher speaks: Brother, when you explain this way, I sort of get it. Brother, you told me yesterday that you had some urgent business today. Why haven’t you left yet? Male lead speaks: Younger brother, I will go to visit relatives. This rock out in the fields weighs about a thousand pounds. I rolled it over with both hands and put this knife under it. If someone comes to buy meat, no matter how much, if he can take out this knife, he can have the meat for free. Don’t ask him for any money. Just ask for his name and whereabouts. If I come back, I have my own plan.

Butcher speaks: Brother, I know this rock weighs a thousand pounds. Even if I see another twenty years worth of rice, I couldn’t budge it. I’m afraid that nobody has this kind of strength. Don’t worry! Of course I would like to gobble up this piece of meat, but I don’t have the strength in my body to move this rock. If I were to exert heart and lungs at the same time, I would waste my liver, my life’s source, you have so much in your heart, but tomorrow it will turn into a rotten stomach. Brother, you just got! Male lead speaks: Younger brother, remember what I said. Now I am off to see my relatives.

Exits.

Butcher speaks: Brother has left. I’ll keep standing here in front of this meat table to see who may come. Guan Yu enters and speaks: I am Guan Yunchang. After I killed the Prefect of Puzhou, I came here to Fanfang in Zhuo Prefecture, and am staying at a merchants’ inn. Let me go to the main street and buy some new snacks to eat as I drink my wine. Hello, can you help me? Butcher speaks: Sorry sir, Acts out looking at bom from head to toe, and speaks: Wow, this man has a fine physique. And this early in the morning he has already drunk so much that his face is all red. Sir, what would you like to eat? Commentary from River. When Kui Tung was trying to get Han to rebel against Liu Bao, he listed these ten great merits as his "ten major wrongs.")

24. When the state of Yan had almost completely been occupied by the state of Qi, it offered great rewards for capable men who would come to its service. One of those who responded was Yue Yi; in 264 BC he led the army of Yan in a campaign that freed the country and conquered seventy cities in the state of Qi.

25. “Heart and lungs” is a common term for one’s “authentic feelings” or “good heart.” Used here, of course, in a double sense, “to exert all my ability.”

26. There is a nice pun in the phrase “heart and lungs” here. The Chinese sentence reads: le xue ming. Goshua is written as “live liver,” but it is exactly the same pronunciation as “no waste in vain.”

27. Ie., “you think too much.”

28. Ie., “you’ll suffer from it.”

The Tripartite Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Orchard

(backstage: It is “to buy!” Butcher speaks: I mean to buy! Guan Yu speaks: I would like to buy two hundred coins worth of fresh snacks. Butcher speaks: Sir, I have the meat, but I don’t have a knife. My brother has gone off to see his relatives, and when he left he put his knife under this rock. He said that if anyone came to buy meat and could move the rock to take out the knife, it did not matter how much meat it was, but I should let him take it away for free. Old fellow, I’m not just making this up. This is a bamboo basket, and those are almonds. But if you can move that rock to one side and take out that knife, then you can cut as much meat as you like and I won’t ask you for any money. Guan Yu speaks: If that’s the case, I will lift this rock with both hands, set it aside, and pick up this knife. Sir, here, you have the knife. Now cut off some meat for me. Butcher speaks: Wow! That is some guy! With both hands he picked up that rock and lightly put it aside. What a guy! So I’ll take this knife and cut him some meat. Sir, this meat is free. We don’t want your money. Just take it with you. Guan Yu speaks: How is that possible? If you will not take my money, I cannot take this meat. If you take my money, I’ll leave with the meat. Butcher speaks: You are an honest man. So be it! You leave your money here and take the meat with you. Sir, what is your name, and where do you live? Guan Yu speaks: I am Guan Yu, also known as Yunchang. I am staying here at the inn. Butcher speaks: That inn isn’t far. It’s just around the corner. Sir, take your time, Guan Yu speaks: Well, then I’m going back to the inn with my meat. Exit. Butcher speaks: That red-faced fellow has left. My brother should be back soon. Male lead enters and speaks: I’ve just come back from a visit to your relatives. Let me go and see my younger brother. Brother, did anyone come to buy meat? Butcher speaks: Brother, there you are! Someone came to buy meat a tall guy with a red face who wanted two hundred coins worth of meat. I told him that the knife was stuck under the rock and that if you can move that rock and take out the knife, we don’t want your money. No matter how much, you can take the meat for free. That fine fellow picked up the rock with both hands and put it aside. Then he picked up the knife and cut off a slice. But he was an honest fellow and said, “Keep the money and I’ll take the meat and be on my way, but if you don’t keep the money, I won’t take the meat.” I offered it to him for free a number of times, but he stubbornly refused to accept it. Only after I took his money did he take the meat and go. Brother, I think he is even stronger than you! He is a fine fellow! Male lead speaks: Indeed he must be! Butcher speaks: I’m not lying! In case you don’t believe me, isn’t that the rock pushed to one side? Male lead speaks:

(Zui ju gu) He must be, I believe, awe-inspiring and brave, rich in talents, His know-how and strength out of the ordinary.)
The Tripartite Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Orchard

(Code)
You aren't really needed, so don't tarry or dawdle!
I have to go there in person and be filled with respect.

BUTCHER speaks: Brother, walk a little bit slower! MALE LEAD sings:
I have just taken a step,
But now hesitate and deliberate for a while.

BUTCHER speaks: Brother, there's no need for doubt. In my opinion this fellow is no liar. He definitely is staying at the inn. We will visit him there. MALE LEAD sings:

If I am lucky enough to meet a real friend when I make this visit ... BUTCHER speaks: Brother, you seem to have been in turmoil since you heard his name. We'll have to see what happens once you have met him. MALE LEAD sings:
I would be happy if we could become as attached as Chen and Lei.29
And I should not act slowly. I'll see to it that my heart and guts are like iron and rock,
To ensure that our feelings are unfettered, our ambitions eternal.

BUTCHER speaks: Brother, here in the city of Zhuo Prefecture I've never seen a man like this. MALE LEAD sings:

If I, here in this Fanyang in Zhuo Prefecture,
Can find a friendship that pleases me,
For all eternity I will support the court with loyalty and righteousness.

Exit together.

Act 2

GUAN YU enters and speaks:

My nature composed of loyalty and directness, my ambition unshakable,
My physique awe-inspiring, my energy vigorous,
With all my heart I support the dynasty with valor and righteousness.
To ensure the prosperity of the nation for ten thousand years.

I am Guan Yunchang. I just came back to the inn from the main street and have ordered someone to prepare a meal for me. I'll just sit here and see who may

29. Chen Zhang and Lei Yi are exemplary friends from the Eastern Han dynasty. They were said to be as attached to each other as glue to lacquer.
Anonymous

come along. Male Lead and Butcher enter. Male Lead speaks: Younger brother, come with me to the inn to find that stout fellow named Guan. Butcher speaks: I will help you find him. But you don't know this man. Why can't you get him out of your mind? Male Lead speaks: Younger brother, how could you understand? Sing:

(yushao mode: Doo anchor)

I want to associate myself with stalwart heroes,
Handle weapons and employ my martial skills.
I hope to exert both my strength and true sincerity
To pacify the borders and stabilize the land—
To distance myself from my base livelihood,
And set myself apart from companions in the world of dust.

Butcher speaks: Brother, as soon as you open your mouth you offend people. You want to eat fish and still complain about its stench! You haven't yet shed the name of "butcher" and you already call it "a base livelihood"? Well, fine! Which martial arts have you mastered? Male Lead sings:

On the basis of my strong ambition and ability
And my rash courage and bravery,
I wager my name will be listed in the Yellow Pavilion.30
More famous than anyone—past or present!

Butcher speaks: Well, as for me, I am not the equal of that man. Let's also not talk about my meat-sellign skills. But when it comes to my blood sausage, I do make more money than anyone else. If you want to reject me as unworthy, I'll have a look at which people you do want to befriend. Male Lead sings:

(Zhibu'er xiu)

I seek a trusted friend who knows my heart,
A good companion who shares my ambitions,
A poor scholar willing to slice his throat.31

Butcher speaks: Brother, you'd be better off emitting a foul odor than talking! You all too easily make up your mind to reject your old acquaintances. The friendship between the two of us is at least on the level of Guan and Bao.32

Male Lead sings:

I call to mind those former worthies Guan and Bao:
Their loyalty and filial piety were for real!
Yet I silently think of how in the beginning
They prized righteousness and rejected yellow gold like it was dung and dust.
We have to imitate great men from the past!

Butcher speaks: What kind of men! According to me, we should take care of our trade and make some money to take care of our wives, our parents, and our children. When the little kids get up in the early morning and are sitting there on the kang33 and want some baked buns to eat, how brother, if you ask me about my feelings, how can I bear to say no? Of course I buy some for them! Male Lead sings:

What do I care about shedding a family inheritance,
Or the glory or poverty of my wife and children?

Butcher speaks: Brother, here we are at the inn. It's that big fellow over there. Male Lead speaks: That's quite a big fellow indeed. I will go up to him and ask him a question. Stout fellow, pardon me. Guan yu speaks: Please, please, please. It's quite all right. Male Lead speaks: Stout fellow, are you the man who bought some meat a while ago? Guan yu speaks: Yes, I did. Do I perhaps still owe you some money? Male Lead speaks: Stout fellow, I didn't come here for the sake of money. Sing:

(Jin jiaoyi)

I came because of your sincere character, your pure and capable
Your lofty ambition, your manly might, and your heroic valor. You imitated the hegemon-king of Chu, whose heroic fame lasts forever;
He lifted that thousand-pound tripod with all the strength in his

Guan Yu speaks: So why have you come here? Male Lead speaks: This is the reason why I came: in front of my meat table there is a rock that weighs about

Zhong would later serve as the prime minister of Duke Huan of Qi (c. 686–664 bc). Thanks to the policies of Guan Zhong, Duke Huan became so rich and powerful that he became the first of the Five Hegemons. Later this reference to Guan and Bao comes to mean a friendship that accepts the idea that one person is due more than the other and that equality is not at issue.

13. The song is a noted platform in the house of Northern China that is heated by the smoke of the family stove, and on which families sleep at night.
14. We have maintained the play on these offal puns; the term "insides" (jife) figuratively means "what is in the bottom of your heart."
Anonymous

a thousand pounds. I placed my butcher's knife under that rock and left to see my relative. I told my younger brother that if anyone came to buy meat and took the knife from under the rock, he could keep both his money and the meat. Who could have known that you would come and get the knife? But you also insisted on giving us the money. This means you are an honest man. So I have come straightaway to visit you. guan yu speaks: What virtue do I have that I have bothered you to come all this way? MALE LEAD SINGS:

(Xiaotao hong)
From earliest youth, my character has been out of the ordinary;
I love to befriend true heroic personalities.

guan yu speaks: Sir, as you love to make friends, and that's why you come to seek me out. MALE LEAD SINGS:

I hope you'll be so kind as to share a cup with me.

guan yu speaks: I wouldn't dare. I am just an ordinary citizen of the streets.

MALE LEAD SINGS:

I have not miscalculated!

GuAN yu speaks: By the looks of it, sir, you have practiced the martial arts.

MALE LEAD SINGS:

I have practiced martial arts, but why?

guan yu speaks: Which martial arts have you practiced? MALE LEAD SINGS:

Even though just the long lance and broad axe...

guan yu speaks: What use will you put them to? MALE LEAD SINGS:

To find a viable way to establish myself.

guan yu speaks: What proof do you have for that? MALE LEAD SINGS:

Of course you know? A gentleman is decisive about his beginnings.

guan yu speaks: Sir, may I ask what your name is? MALE LEAD SINGS: I am Zhang Fei, also known as Yide. Since my youth I have practiced archery and riding. I use a one-zhang eight-foot-long steel-tipped lance. But alas, my time has yet to come, and I make a living by selling meat. May I ask where you are from and what your name is? Please let's exchange names. guan yu speaks: I hail from Xieliang in Puzhou. I am Guan Yu, also known as Yunchang. I love to read Springs and Autumns and Zuo's Commentary and I have practiced the martial arts. I employ a Green Dragon crescent-moon third-of-the-length blade.35 Because the Prefect of Puzhou did not honor the emperor’s command and wanted to be the liege lord of one of the regions, I killed Puzhou’s officials and clerks to remove this danger to the people. Now I have come to Zhuo Prefecture but I never thought I would meet such a gentleman. This is a truthful statement—please forgive me for any offense. MALE LEAD SINGS: You are a true man of valor! Come on, I don’t care who is older or younger. I honor virtue, not age. Elder brother, please be seated and accept these eight bows of your younger brother, Zhang Fei. guan yu speaks: How would I dare? What virtue or ability do I have? MALE LEAD SINGS: Acts out bowing. Sings:

(Chiaotiao heng)
Here I bow and bow again

In front of the steps.

35. Guan Yu's blade is mounted on a staff twice the length of the blade. See Fig. 1.
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need to be too modest. For you, the elder will come first, and little old me will be Number Three. Male lead sings:

(Seng Yiu-yung)
Elder brother; your ambition is extraordinary.
A truly great man!
Throughout your life your heroic valor has found no equal.
Your younger brother has a boorish personality.
His talents and insight are lacking.
And there is none in the world who knows less than me about past
and present.
You must make the best of this doltish, boorish fellow.

Guan Yu speaks: Younger brother, now we have become united as siblings, I hope you will accept my invitation to provide you with a simple meal in an inside room and offer you some crude brew so we can drink a few cups at will. Male lead sings: Elder brother, how could I not accept your kind offer? Butcher speaks: Right! For celebration wine, three cups is exactly right. I will help out, raise the bottle, and strain the wine. I will be the cook and carry the plates, invite the guests and tend the fire, bring in the good water to replace the muddy, and sit at the table and play guessing games—all of these jobs will be my responsibility! Guan Yu speaks: Brother, let's have some wine in an inner room. Male lead sings:

(Coda)
Let's drink today as much as we can without any sorrow or worry.
I, this Zhang Yide, may be foolish and stupid, rough by nature;
Before I met my time, I was an idle man,
But when my ambition is achieved I'll support the sagely bright
ruler.

Exit together.

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36. "Zhao, Qin, Sun, and Li; Zhao, Wu, Zheng, and Wang" are the first eight surnames listed in the One Hundred Surnames (Hundred surnames), a compendium of common surnames in composing four-syllable lines, which was widely used as a primer in premodern China.

37. This is perhaps a reference to the expression "cat and cat sleeping together," which has the meaning of high and low collaborating in crime and sin.

38. "Celebration wine" (cuiji) is a term usually used for a wedding banquet. It is surely meant in a satirical sense here.

39. "Guessing games" (cuiji) is a drinking game where one person holds a seed, chest piece, or other object in the hand, and the other person has to guess what it is.
Anonynous

Act 3

EXTRA, costumed as LNE BEE, enters and speaks:

My ancestors laid the foundation and created a solid land of emperors;
The age of Restoration was a world of chaos, each a power unto himself.
But the house of Han was reestablished, annihilating vile rebels,
And Iarry here around Zhong Prefecture, living in Lousang.

I am Lin Bei, also known as Xuande. I hail from Lousang in Dashu. I am
a seventeenth-generation grandson of Emperor Jing of the Han, and a descen-
dant of Liu Sheng, the Quiet Prince of Zhongshan. Because Wang Mang
monopolized power, he was able to supplant the house of Han. It was later re-
established during the Restoration, when Wang was annihilated and rebels
were captured. When Emperor Guangwu occupied the throne, the empire was
stable once again. At present Emperor Ling has ascended the throne, mighty
warriors have arisen everywhere, and the Yellow Turban bandits have rebelled.
Our Liu clan is incapable of maintaining its inherited enterprise. I am just a
common citizen and make a living by weaving mats and planting sandal. I have
studied both the civil and military arts, but so far have been unable to display
my heroic talents. I bide my time and keep to my station. Today I have nothing
else to do, so let me go for a walk down the main street.

Buried away in this red dust for so many years,
A real man's stalwart ambition rises up in heaving void.
One day I will take off and ascend that road to the clouds,
And then people will know I am a man, a true hero!

Exit.

CLOWN, costumed as INNKEEPER, enters and speaks:

I operate a wine house here,
But I swear I don't care for customers;
One jug of wine is as sweet as honey,
But the next sour as vinegar.

I am a wine seller. Everyone who engages in trade and passes by on the road
comes to my place to drink. I have cleaned out the compartments and hung up
a bundle of straw, so now I will heat up the wine warmer and see who comes
along. GUAN YU enters with MALE LEAD, and speaks: Since Zhang Fei and I have
become sworn brothers, I am very happy indeed. My younger brother is strong
and unyielding in his attachment to what is right and proper and has a character
like a raging fire. Today we have nothing to do and have gone for a walk here on
the main street. Younger brother, just look at how these Yellow Turban rebels
create chaos—this is the right moment when men of right are needed. When
will come the moment we brothers make our careers? MALE LEAD speaks: Elder
brother, even though you are right, we have to keep to our station as we hide
our time. Sings:

(ZIANG HUO MO: Fengde'er)
Calling to mind those heroic stalwarts before they made their names—
At the end of their ropes, drifting through the four directions—
They too suffered frustration for half their lifetime.

GUAN YU speaks: For instance, the Great Duke was angling in Pan Creek, but
later he established the Zhou dynasty that ruled the empire for eight hundred
years. And he also was awarded a title. MALE LEAD sings:

You mean Ziya who angled on the banks of the Wei in Pan Creek,
And later supported the establishment of the Zhou dynasty.
Acquiring signal merits in helping make the ancestral temple secure.

(ZAI CHUANGFENG)
If it weren't the case that "Zhang Shang met King Wen,"
He would have remained buried in the red dust until his death.

GUAN YU speaks: Men like us have stuffed their bellies with strategies and tac-
tics through their studies. There must be a place for us to find employment.
MALE LEAD sings:

Who is our equal in heroic talent and limitless courage?
When will this come to an end?
To an end?
We're fully trained in the martial arts,
Have an imposing air, a dashing courage,
And tricks, schemes, tactics, and strategies.

GUAN YU speaks: Here we have arrived on the main street. Let's just let our feet
take us where they will. LUE BEE enters and speaks: I am Liu Xuande. Here I have
arrived on the main street. Look at all those people engaged in selling and buying.
It's quite a bustling crowd. GUAN YU speaks: Younger brother, do you see

40. The "Age of Restoration" here refers to the years of civil war following the collapse of the
Xin regime (AD 9–15) of the usurper Wang Mang.
41. A bundle of straw or a flag was a sign that the wine house was open for business.
that gentleman over there? Māle lead speaks: Elder brother, where? Let me have a look. Act out looking. Māle lead speaks: That man has an exceptional physique! Guan yu speaks: Younger brother, let me tell you. His eyebrows hang down to his shoulders and his hands hang beyond his knees. He has an aquiline nose and a dragon face. He truly has the aura of greatness. This man must have blessings in store. Māle lead speaks: True. Sings:

(Hangqu incitement)
His features are awe-inspiring and impressive;
I linger on him to observe every little detail,
On top of that, that aquiline nose and dragon face cannot be faked.
In the future he will rise to high position.
And in due time enjoy great power and wealth.
And more than that, his intentions are honest and sincere.
His heart good and great.

Guan yu speaks: Younger brother, let's invite him to the wine house and have a few cups with him. Māle lead speaks: Elder brother, you are right. Let's go and meet him. Guan yu speaks: Sir! Please, Līu bei speaks: Oh! Please take no offense, you two stout fellows! Guan yu speaks: We brothers would like to invite you to this wine house to have a few cups. We hope you will accept our invitation. Līu bei speaks: I wouldn't dare. What kind of virtue or ability do I have that I can bother the two of you to do me this honor? But the proverb says: "Within the four seas all men are brothers." So let's enjoy ourselves and have a few together. Guan yu speaks: Here we have arrived in front of the wine house. Hen, wine seller, brings us two hundred cash worth of wine. Innerkeeper speaks: Gentlemen, please be seated. This compartment is nice and clean. There's wine! Drink all you want for two hundred cash. Guan yu speaks: Serve the wine! Sir, allow me to toast to you. Drink this cup to the full! Acts out offering him wine.

Līu bei speaks: I wouldn't dare. You drink first. Māle lead speaks in an aside: To judge by his bearing, this man is no commoner! Sings:

(Shall we) bus
I see that his outward appearance is right and proper, with no false pretense.
By accident we meet to drink a fragrant brew.
And he is so mild and respectful, humble and modest, right on point.
We only meet each other a moment ago,
But already we're like lacquer and glue.45

Līu bei speaks: What kind of virtue or ability do I have that you two gentlemen do me this honor? Guan yu speaks: Please! Māle lead sings:

Everything he says or speaks is exceptional and marvelous!
I could never expect that we'd make his acquaintance.
I am so unrefined and stupid—don't laugh at me.

Līu bei speaks: How would I dare? What kind of virtue or ability do I have?
Māle lead sings:

Really, I lack all politeness, Am just too stupid and muddled.

Līu bei speaks: You two gentlemen are too kind in treating me generously. Guan yu speaks: Please have another cup of wine. Līu bei speaks: Yes, I will. Acts out drinking, and speaks: Sir, please drink this cup to the full! Guan yu speaks: Yes, I will. Acts out drinking, and speaks: Sir, please drink one more cup! Līu bei speaks: Yes, I will. Acts out drinking, and speaks: This is enough wine for me!

Māle lead sings:

(Dou an chuan) The proverb says: "When you meet a true friend, a thousand cups are too few." Guan yu speaks: Bring more wine! This cup is for you, younger brother! Māle lead speaks: Elder brother, you drink first! Guan yu speaks: Younger brother, you drink! Māle lead sings:

I have no intention to refuse and with reciprocal feelings, reciprocal feelings, we pour each other a cup.
Elder brother, you are so sincere and shirk no trouble. How could your younger brother deserve all this?
Acts out drinking, and speaks: Elder brother, you drink this cup! Guan yu speaks: Yes, I will. Acts out drinking. Līu bei speaks: I am only a poor scholar and yet you two stout men show me such great honor! Guan yu speaks: Please! Māle lead sings:

We only wish that our bond will last as long as heaven And earth, But we also fear that this karmic affinity may be light and our lots in life too limited.

Guan yu speaks: Sir, where do you live? Līu bei speaks: I am from this prefecture and I live in Lousung in Dahu. Guan yu speaks: And what is your name? Līu bei speaks: I am Līu Bei, also known as Xihande. Guan yu speaks: What do
you do for a living! LÚ BÉI speaks: I make a lovely living weaving mats and plaiting sandals. Please don't look down on me for this. GUÁN YU speaks: I wouldn't dare! Sir, you are mistaken; many of the sages of antiquity engaged in lowly trades when they were still living in obscurity. MALE LEAD SINGS:

(Shäng xiàolù)
Níng Qí once upon a time sang his song, beating the horns of his ox.
Yí Yín once upon a time plowed and hoed his wheat and rice.
As for Fú Yúe who built up walls.
Maicén who carried firewood.
And Wú Yún who played the flute.
They all later rose to glory in the Eight Residences.

(Shäng niáng)
As they received that one vermilion edict sealed with purple wax.

LÚ BÉI speaks: You have spoken right! Bring in some more wine! Let me propose a toast to you. Stout fellows, please drink! GUÁN YU acts out drinking wine, and speaks: Sir, you should also drink one cup! LÚ BÉI acts out drinking wine.

44. Níng Qí attended the abdication of Duke Huan of Qí when he was singing a song of frustration while beating out the tempo on the horns of his ox.
45. Yí Yín eventually served as prime minister under Táng, the founder of the Shàng dynasty.
46. Fú Yúe was a slave in the era of Fán Yán (modern Shántung), where he worked on constructing walls of rammed earth (he is often wrongly credited as the inventor of the form system for these walls). According to the Records of the Grand Scribe, the Shàng-tearch Wúdài dreamed of obtaining a wise sage:
At night Wúdài dreamed of attaining a sage, who was named Yúe. Based on what he had seen in his dream, he looked at the assembled ministers and hundreds of clerks of his government, but none of them matched. At that point he sent his hundred officers to seek him in the wilds, and he obtained Yúe from the precipices of Fú. At this time Yúe was a slave, forming walls in the precipices of Fú, and when Wúdài saw him, he said, "This is he." He got him and conversed with him, and indeed Yúe was a mighty man, so he was raised to be minister and the state of Yúe was greatly governed. Therefore, he consequently bestowed on him the surname Fú because of the precipices of Fú and called him Fú Yúe.
47. Zhú Maicén (d. 105 B.C.) was a scholarly who continued reciting his books even while he was carrying firewood. His wife divorced him because of his poverty, but he later rose to high office.
48. Wú Yún (alos known as Wú Zhí; d. 144 B.C.) had to survive by begging, playing the flute, after he had fled from Chu. He later would achieve high office in the state of Wu.
49. The Eight Residences are a collective designation for the highest offices of the bureaucracy in Shàng dynasty times.

and speaks: My stout man, may I ask your name? GUÁN YU speaks: I am Guán Yu, also known as Yúanchang. I hail from Xìeliáng in Púshóu. LÚ BÉI speaks: And you, this stalwart fellow? Please also drink this cup of wine to its full. MALE LEAD acts out drinking wine, and speaks: Sir, please drink a cup too. GUÁN YU speaks: Bring it on. I also will drink another cup. It's true indeed: "When one meets true friends, a thousand cups of wine are too few!" Acts out drinking [LÚ BÉI] speaks: And may I ask this hero for his name? MALE LEAD speaks: I am Zàng Fēi, also known as Yíde. I hail from Fángyáng in Zhōu Prefecture. LÚ BÉI speaks: If I look at the might and energy of the two of you, your physiques are awe-inspiring and your appearances are majestic, without equal in this world. It is truly my good fortune to have met you two today. MALE LEAD SINGS:

(Máoxìng fén) This meeting of ours here today is the greatest! We truly are eminent men of this world.
Not little kids playing in the courtyard!
Each and every one a heroic talent, hiding the way of the former kings in his belly.
With stalwart energy and dashing courage,
We're exactly like the fierce tiger on the plains, disporting its claws.
Or the divine jiao dragon retracting its scales in the mud.
In fact we are ospreys at the edge of sky.
Quite unlike the swallows and sparrows under the eaves!

One day we'll soar to the highest layer of heaven.

GUÁN YU speaks: Younger brother, we must keep to our station as we ride our time. Sir, please drink another cup. LÚ BÉI acts out being drunk, and speaks: I've had a few too many. I'll have to sleep off this wine. Let me lean on this table and rest for a while. Acts out sleeping. GUÁN YU speaks: Younger brother, Liú Xuánduó is into his cups. As we were talking, he has fallen asleep. Wow! Little brother, did you see that? He is lying on one side and a little red and white snake is coming out of his mouth and going into his nose. Wow! It is coming out of his eye and boring into his ear! Younger brother, let me tell you, this is called the"snake boring through the seven openings." This means that this man is predestined for a lofty position in the future. We will wait until he wakes up and then honor him as the eldest brother, irrespective of actual age. What's your opinion? MALE LEAD speaks: Elder brother, you are right. That was also my idea. We'll do as you

50. The tiger is normally in the deep mountains. Here it means "to be out of place." They are hiding their time until they are properly used.
51. The jiao-dragon is a fantastic type of dragon that can display its true power only in deep water. The couplet speaks to the great and unrealized ambition of these three men.
say: GUAN YU speaks: Don't startle him! I've waking up! LUO BAI acts out waking up, and speaks: That was a good sleep! You two stout fellows, please don't take offenses: forgive me. GUAN YU speaks: We wouldn't dare! Xuanazi, may I ask you, who are your forebears? LUO BAI speaks: Just common citizens. GUAN YU speaks: Don't be so modest! You must be the descendant of a noble house of former times! LUO BAI speaks: I will be honest with you. I am a seventh-generation grandson of Emperor Jing, and a descendant of Liu Sheng, the Quiet Prince of Zhongshan. GUAN YU speaks: Younger brother, did you hear that? I told you he was not of common stock. He is a distant scion of a former emperor! However old you may be, we will honor you as our eldest sibling and swear brotherhood. Please allow your younger brothers to perform eight bowls. GUAN YU and MA LEAD act out performing their horses. MALE LEAD speaks: Eldest brother, please be seated. LUO BAI speaks: How could I dare to accept this honor? Please rise. Acts out leaving in return. MALE LEAD sings:

(Si/er yue)
We must bend our bodies then fall on our knees,
Crook our backs and lower our waists.
We are only commoners from among the people,
Whereas you are a scion of the Han dynasty.
It's not that we are prattling in front of the cups,
And don't think we are flattering or boasting!

LUO BAI speaks: What kind of virtue and ability do I have that the two of you should honor me in such a way? GUAN YU speaks: Elder brother, your younger brothers honor virtue, not age. MALE LEAD sings:

(Yamin ge)
Oh,
Even though we, orphaned and destitute, bear of virtue, may be your elder in age,
You definitely are branch and leaf of a noble house, not to be disesteemed.
We live at present in a "lowly base," but in impoverished circumstances,
But truly in this shallow water of a muddy pool, we've encountered
a leviathan.
If I consider things carefully,
Our courage and bravery throughout our life,
Were all because of the Way that is Heaven!

53. See note 13.
54. An eunuch-to-be is often called "a submerged dragon" who can hide in the water of a horse's hoof print. When he takes the throne, the dragon assumes its real form and soars into the heavens.
55. That is, the power of a king of virtue to transform his people through his own ethical actions.

The Tripartite Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Orchard

LUO BAI speaks: Now we have become sworn friends, we honor each other as brothers. There is a peach orchard outside the walls of Zhou Prefecture. Let's choose an auspicious day and a propitious hour, slaughter a horse in sacrifice to Heaven, kill an ox in sacrifice to earth and swear this oath with Heaven as our witness. We don't seek to be born on the same day, but we vow to die on the same day, to bind ourselves in friendship in life and death. Younger brothers, what do you think about it? GUAN YU speaks: Elder brother, we'll do as you say. We will choose an auspicious day and a propitious hour, prepare the objects of sacrifice, and offer them up to the gods.

We must learn from Guan and Bao, and how they divided gold. And later we will assist and aid the house of Liu to restore the empire.

MALE LEAD sings:

(Coda)
Of a mind to swear our brotherhood in the Peach Orchard
When the sun is high at the propitious hour on the auspicious day
we choose,
We will butcher this ox and slaughter this horse and announce to
blue heaven:
We desire only to share life and death as long as we live.

EXIT. LUO BAI speaks: Who would have thought that today I would have sworn brotherhood with my younger brothers. This is no ordinary joy!

Majestic physiques, courage and energy strong;
Unmatched in this world are my younger brothers Guan and Zhang.
Just look at the brotherhood we swore in the Peach Orchard;
For all eternity this will spread the fragrance of our names.

Exit together.

ACT 4

EXTRA, costumed as HUANGFU SONG, enters with soldiers, and speaks:

Straight and right and firm of heart: so I establish my place in history;
For the sake of the people and the benefit of the state I use my powers.
Removing the cruel and evil, I bring back the power of kindly
transformation.

Ensuring the longevity of the imperial house I ensure great peace.

54. See note 15.
I, this official, am Huangfu Song. At present Emperor Ling of the Han has ascended the throne. Because I am incorruptible and able, pure and capable, I have been appointed as Prefect of Bedi. Now in the first year of the reign period Zhongping there was a certain Zhang Jiao from Jutu who respectfully served the Yellow Emperor and the Old Master. He instructed his disciples in magical techniques that he called the Way of Great Peace. He consecrated holy water to cure people of their diseases, and the masses revered him like a god. Zhang Jiao dispatched his disciples throughout the four directions to spread their lies and lead people to delusion. After more than ten years he had amassed over a hundred thousand adherents. The people from the Eight Regions—Qing, Yu, You, Ji, Jing, Yang, Yao, and Yu—all were in his thrall. In total they formed thirty-six dioceses. A big diocese had more than ten thousand people, and a small diocese counted six or seven thousand people. One of Zhang Jiao’s disciples, Tang Zhou, sent up a petition to him, whereupon Zhang Jiao ordered all dioceses to rise in rebellion. They wrapped their heads in yellow turbans as a symbol, so people at the time called them the Yellow Turban rebels. Within a few weeks the whole empire had responded and the capital itself was shaken. The Sage convened his ministers for a conference. Together with the Palace Attendant-in-Ordinary Liu Qianghui, I stated, “The festering evil of the prohibition of cliques has created resentment and grudges among the people. If we do not declare an amnesty, these people may collaborate with Zhang Jiao and the adverse consequences may be even worse, and what can be done then? If these three proposals of ours are accepted, the Yellow Turbans will disappear by themselves.” When the Sage asked us which three proposals, I replied:

The first is to proclaim a general pardon throughout the subcontinental realm. The second is that if there are bandits and highwaymen who have rebelled and gathered in mountain forests, from there to threaten and attack walled cities, kill and harm duly appointed officials, plunder and rob granaries and storerooms, or wound and harm the common people—if they are willing to exterminate the Yellow Turbans, they will be recognized as good citizens of the state. The third is that if people do not take off their yellow turbans, they will be killed and their whole family annihilated.

The emperor followed the proposal and pardoned all clique members throughout the empire. The only one not to be pardoned was Zhang Jiao. The emperor

next ordered me to take these edicts of appointment with blamés for the names and pearls and jewels and all kind of treasure, and attract heroes and stout fellows to our cause. I have arrived here in Zhuo Commandery. I have often been told that this place has three heroes—one is called Liu Bei, also known as Xiaodong; one is called Guan Yu, also known as Yunchang; and one is called Zhang Fei, also known as Yide. These three men are sworn brothers. I’ve learned that today in the Peach Orchard they will slaughter a white horse in sacrifice to Heaven, and kill a black ox in sacrifice to Earth. They don’t seek to be born on the same day, but they vow to die on the same day—if one lives, three live, and if one dies, three die. These truly are outstanding men in the human realm. So I will spare on my horse and go straightway to the Peach Orchard to enrol these three men. Let me get going—what’s to stop me?

The four seas are in utter confusion, battle horses so bold! Right now the house of Han is rising again.

The huge blessing of the ‘sagely bright’ partakes of heaven and earth; it is within my power to have rebels and bandits beheaded.

Exits.

Butcher enters and speaks:

Butchering oxen and slaughtering horses is my living; they completely depend on the butcher for their affairs.

I am the butcher. Today is an auspicious day. Brother Zhang Fei has acquired two sworn brothers. One is surnamed Liu and one is surnamed Guan. That one surnamed Liu has a white face, the one surnamed Guan has a red face, and my brother has a black face. I wanted to become Number Four, but they said that my face is too blemishy and rejected me. Well, that is fine with me too. Commentary from backstage: How is that fine with you? Butcher speaks: It’s because my ‘way of color’ is not right. Today they want to swear brotherhood in the Peach Orchard, and they ordered me to prepare the sacrificial items. I have just slaughtered the ox and killed the horse. The incense, candles, flowers, and fruit are all laid out. They should be here soon. Liu Bei enters together with Guan Yu and makes lead. Liu Bei speaks: My younger brothers, today is a lucky day and a good hour. The sacrificial items have been prepared.

56. AD 184.
57. Later, the ‘founder’ of Daoism.
58. A failed attempt in 186 by some officials to curtail the power of eunuchs at court resulted in a “prohibition of cliques,” and persecutions of “clique members” in 189 and 190, creating widespread resentment.
59. A black face is a dark, sunburned face of someone who has to do physical work under the scorching sun.
60. The word used here, flower (line), can mean ‘blemish, multicolored, variegated’ and it can also refer to a pock-marked face.
61. The Chinese word for color (色) also is the common word for sex—hence the reference to pock marks.
Here in the Peach Orchard we will swear brotherhood. Let’s light the incense. 
**maLe Lead sings:** I never thought I would experience this day! 
**Sings:**

((shuanggao ming)) Xiaohui tian

Today we will swear brotherhood in the Peach Orchard, united in purpose.
Because my two elder brothers are magnanimous and tolerant.
They base themselves in talent and ability—they have no peer—
And rely on virtue and behavior—can be harsh or mild.
When I think of the past and the springs and autumns I so emphatically passed:
Such true and sincere fellows as us
Will never dissemble or lie!

**lIu bei speaks:** We have already arrived at the Peach Orchard. Have the sacrificial items all been laid out properly? 
**Butcher speaks:** My three elder brothers have arrived. Forgive me, your younger brother, for the crime of not welcoming you at the proper distance. 
**Elder brothers,** I have laid out everything most properly so the three of you may conduct your sacrifice. 
**Acts out kneeling down, and speaks:** My three elder brothers, please take into consideration how hard I have worked. There’s nothing to be done about that, but please, in one way or another add my name to the sacrificial statement. I’m happy to be Number Four! 
**GuAN yu speaks:** Elder brother, please raise your incense. 
**lIu bei speaks:** My two younger brothers, please. 
**GuAN yu speaks:** I wouldn’t dare. Elder brother, please raise your incense. 
**lIu bei acts out raising the incense.** The three of them act out kneeling down. 
**lIu bei acts out reciting the prayer text, and speaks:**

Liu Bei from Louang, Guan Yu from Xielang, and Zhang Fei from Zhao Commandery devoutly and sincerely bow in prayer, and present here, in sacrifice to the deities of the heavenly court, incense and candles, flowers and fruits, a white horse and a black ox, and various delicacies. Liu Bei and the others swear to become brothers, seeking not to be born on the same day, but vowing to die on the same day—as long as one is alive, may the three of us be alive, and as soon as one of us dies, may the three of us die. Together we will support the universal rule of the Han with full determination, Daring to engage in battle with any general. Once these hands lift aloft that pair of swords, I’ll have corpses cover the field and blood collect in pools.

**GuAN yu speaks:** A pair of swords like yours, elder brother, is unique in this world! 
**Butcher speaks:** What’s so special about that? I can do the same. 
**Acts out dancing with swords, and speaks:** It’s not as much fun as twirling a pinwheel of fleet **maLe Lead sings:**

((Chuan bo zao))

I see how he displays his fierce force; Truly, he’s rich in insight and strength. 
I gather his’s well versed in the martial arts. 
His divine eyes bulge out, His sword so sharp and keen it howls like a cold wind. 
In truth there applies “His heroic fame has no match.”

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65. It is customary politeness to wait at a distance from any gathering site to ensure one’s guests to that place.
66. More literally: (the area inhabited by) the Chinese (lou) and barbarians (zao).
67. precious animal” are animal-shaped incense burners made of precious materials.
68. Green ants is a common designation for newly brewed ale.
Anonymous

LIU BIE speaks: Eldest younger brother, what about you? GUAN YU speaks: My Green Dragon crescent-moon blade weighs nine times nine, eighty-one pounds, and I have a valour that ten thousand men cannot match.

With this Green Dragon crescent-moon third-of-the-length blade I display my heroism on the battlefield as I rein in my horse. With a loyal heart I require the state and remove evil plagues—My only desire is to defend the Han dynasty with my life.

LIU BIE speaks: Bravo! You truly have no match in the way you handle your blade! BUTCHER speaks: What's so special about that? Let's see who can handle it better, me or him. Acts out grabbing the knife but being unable to move it, and speaks: Aiyah, damn it! Even if I would eat rice for another twenty years, I would be unable to pick up this blade, but I'll say it's not that I can't handle this blade, just that I can't lift it. If I could lift it, I could wield it better than him! MALE LEAD sings:

(Qi: dancing)
Your know-how and schemes extend far and wide; your valor is like a young tiger.
When you lift your third-of-the-length blade, it moves with a natural grace.
Just lightly twist it and the breaths of death hisses coldly.
Strong as a god, you never wrinkle your brow to frown!

LIU BIE speaks: Second younger brother, what about your steel-tipped lance? BUTCHER speaks: Now my brother's lance has engaged in quite some underhand business! MALE LEAD speaks: Elder brother.

It's not that I, Zhang Fei, want to brag or boast,
But with lance alighting the saddle I spar my horse to be at the very front.
This one-chang eight-foot divine spear always comes out first—
All I want is to support the house of Liu for hundreds of years!

BUTCHER speaks: My brother was busy all the time selling meat, so he neglected his practice. You haven't seen what I can do with the lance! Acts out handling the lance, and speaks: Three quick stabs! Three slow strokes! Two hands folded!
Scattering flowers over the rooftops! Encircling the waist! Acts out stumbling and falling down, and speaks: Bah, I just had some fun with this lance despite my busy schedule. How does it compare to my elder brother? MALE LEAD sings:

(Mehua jiu)
How could my strength contain this divine spear eighteen feet long?

The Tripartite Oath of Brotherhood in the Peach Orchard

My fierceness surpasses that of the jiao and qiu, my insight and strength are both complete. When I meet with enemy troops, I will engage them in battle; When I run into rebels and bandits, I will never let them off. My energy pierces the skies, transfers Dipper and Buffalo. If you want to grapple with me, I need no excuse—I covet profit and fame, and the title of liege lord!

GUAN YU speaks: When will we ever stop just wasting time? MALE LEAD sings:

(Shou Jianggong)
Ah!
I want with all my heart to share the sorrow of our king—How can I earn enough glory to have an imperial audience at the Phoenix Tower? Isn't that better than throwing on a straw cape and wearing a bamboo hat on a fishing boat? Let me make something of nothing—In the arena of merit and fame I dare fight for the prize!

LIU BIE speaks: Today Liu, Guan, and Zhang, swearing brotherhood in the Peach Orchard, offer sacrifice to divine Heaven. We have laid out this banquet in celebration. Now listen to me: As sworn brothers we are united in purpose: Confronted with danger we will die and enter our graves together. Here in the Peach Orchard we sacrifice to Heaven and Earth, Our only wish to protect the state's borders for all eternity!

LIU BIE speaks: Look over there! Someone is coming! HUANGSU SONG enters with soldiers, and speaks: I am Huangfu Song, I am on my way to the Peach Orchard to visit these men. Let me be on my way! Here I am there already. Servants, take my horse. You there, inform Liu, Guan, and Zhang that they should come and receive the imperial edict! BUTCHER speaks: Yes, I will. You three gentlemen can let go now! Outside the gate there is a man who orders you to receive the imperial edict. LIU BIE speaks: An imperial edict has arrived. The three of us should go and receive it. Acts out greeting, and speaks: Your Excellence, please come in. HUANGSU SONG speaks: You three kneel down facing the palace and listen to His Majesty's command!

66. Both the jiao and the qiu are ferocious dragons.
67. Dipper is the Chinese name of Ursus Major. The Buffalo Star is Altair.
Because the Yellow Turbang has rebelled and there is no one to stop them, and because you three brothers have sworn brotherhood in the Peach Orchard and have excellent martial skills, the three of you are appointed as generals to defeat and annihilate the Yellow Turbang. Express your gratitude for Our Grace.

All speak: We are deeply moved by His Majesty's grace! Male lead speaks:
Elder brother, how can we repay the grace we brothers have received from the emperor? Whenever a military situation arises from now on we must display our loyalty and exhaust our strength! Liu Bei speaks: We may have received these official appointments today, but I'm afraid our martial skills are too limited to live up to our task. Male lead sings:

(Dianqian biao)
I just want to lead the bravest troops
And display my loyalty as I share the king's sorrow.

Liu Bei speaks: Second younger brother, don't boast! Male lead sings:

Elder brother, don't fret and worry,
Spoken without interruption! Whenever there is a military situation,
Songs
I will ready my spear!
This is the season for a real man to achieve his ambition.
This single eighteen-foot lance of mine cannot be stopped.
Whenever someone who needs to die engages me in battle,
I will root him out to the west, exterminate him in the east,
So my name will be recorded in history books.

Ma Xianqi speaks: After the three of you have defeated the Yellow Turbang bandits, you will of course be promoted and rewarded. Now listen:

This is all because that rebel from Juko creates havoc in the cosmos,
Covets money and goods, enslaves and plunders the good citizens,
And teaches them the heresies of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi,
Curing people's disease like magic with tallies and holy water.
He has gathered a million disciples in rebellion—all evil scoundrels
Who wrap their heads in a yellow turban which serves them as a sign.
The imperial command orders you to wipe out and remove these local bandits—
You will be promoted in rank and title, have many tripods, layers of carpets!