I've grown old. 
It's so long since I last 
dreamed of the Duke of Zhou. 
My ideals of ethics, music, 
humanity and harmony 
can be fulfilled only 
in times to come. 
Is it Master Kong Qiu, 
the mayor of Zhongdu? 
Indeed! 
Kindly follow me. 
Master Kong, you may bow inside. 
Announcing Master Kong Qiu, 
the mayor of Zhongdu. 
His Majesty arrives. 
Kong Qiu, you're here. 
Your humble servant Kong Qiu 
greets Your Majesty. 
Kong Qiu, 
you've been mayor of Zhongdu 
for about a year now. 
Many things have changed. 
Streets are safe, 
homes are secure. 
Your Majesty, 
as your humble servant has said of 
observing the rituals of Zhou, 
a year shows progress, 
I'd like to see 
your policies applied 
throughout the Kingdom of Lu! 
I have no position, 
it is not for me to say. 
This could be easily rectified. 
I'll appoint you to 
the right position. 
Lord Ji Yiru has just died. 
His oldest son Ji Sunsi 
has become Prime Minister 
and Chief General of the Army. 
But the post of 
Minister of Law is vacant. 
The 3 Noble Families 
all have their own nominees. 
But I'm inclined to appoint you. 
I cannot presume to be worthy. 
I will support you! 
You and your disciples 
could civilize the Kingdom of Lu. 
You could challenge those 
you've called unworthy 
in the past. 
Do you dare? 
Run! Hurry up! 
Run! Hurry up! 
My Lord, a burial slave 
has just escaped! 
What? Who is it? 
The late lord's favorite 
young servant, 
Qi Sigong! 
That little boy. 
My father ordered that 
this boy would be buried 
with him! Get him back! 
Yes. 
This way... Stop! 
There he is. Stop... 
Stop... 
This boy! Stop! 
Over there! Poisoned-arrow... 
Master, help me... 
Teacher, in your opinion,
could the Kingdom of
Lu grow stronger
by emulating the Dukedom of Qi?
Your Majesty,
the people of Qi obey the law
because they fear punishment.
If we respect the law
because we're civil, honest
and have integrity and dignity,
 isn't that much better?
When honorable and credible men
are given office,
theft and corruption
will disappear.
Men who care for
their parents and children
also care for others.
Men should perform their duties while
women would be given a home and family.
Then orphans and widows,
the old, the sick
and the weak would
be taken care of.
Then the people will
live well and work cheerfully.
Universal peace
and harmony will reign!
Mother...
Don't close it!
Let me out! Lift the stone!
Don't close it...
Prepare the meal.
Men should love their parents
and children indiscriminately...
Then the old would be taken care of,
and the strong would
apply their skills.
Your father has returned.
How do you know?
I heard his voice.
He'll be surprised
I've brought you to see him.
Hurry, take this to him.
Father. You're back.
You've been gone for half the day!
Mother and I've been waiting.

You haven't eaten yet?
You must be hungry.
Don't be afraid. Who are you?
I... I'm Qi Sigong.
Child.
Master.
Yan Hui, bring a doctor, quickly.
I will. Hurry, call for a doctor.
What's this all about?
Master, as I came here,
Ji Family troops were
chasing this boy.
So I rescued him.
He was a burial-slave.
The Ji Family soldiers
want him back.
Master, let's avoid trouble.
I can leave him with my brother-in-law
in the Kingdom of Wei.
This might be better for everyone.
No, Zilu, he can stay here.
Helping others is a measure of bravery.
Then Lord Ji Sunsi
will be furious.
Zilu, you did the right thing.
Stop!
What do you think you're doing?
Who are you?
General Gongshan Niu of
the city of Biyi.
Search the house!
General Gongshan!
Master...
Kong Qiu. What do you want?
It is reported that
the Minister's escaped slave
is hiding here.
If you don't turn him
over to us now,
it may damage your relations
with the Minister!
Minister Kong, a word in private.
Minister Kong, I too despise the
arrogance of the 3 Noble Families.
Today I can report that
I found nothing.
You and I should be friends
and partners.
Drive out the Noble Families
and rule the kingdom ourselves.
Tell me.
What do you think?
Our roads are different.
General, it's getting late,
you should be on your way.
Go!
My lords and ministers,
everyone has come to
observe the Winter Sacrifice.
But before we can begin,
a strange occurrence
demands explanation.
Yesterday, the officer responsible
for the sacrifice of birds
reported that one of
the 10 pheasants
prepared for the ceremony
had pecked off its own tail!
So today I must seek your
exalted opinion.
Ought we to cancel the ceremony?
Or delay?
I wish to speak.
Speak, Shu Sunwu.
In my opinion,
since the Winter Sacrifice marks
the most important sacrifice at year-end,
it must not be delayed nor canceled!
We address the gods
through this ceremony
the omen reflects a message
from Heaven.
Therefore, the pheasant should be
spared from sacrifice.
Otherwise we would
disrespect heaven.
We must obey the will of heaven
and allow this bird to live.
Good...
Kong Qiu, what is your view?
Your Majesty,
your humble servant fully
agrees with Lord Shu's opinion.
Then you ministers?
Your humble servants also
agree with the Ministers' opinions.
Since all are in
agreement, so be it!
Let the pheasant be released
into the mountain forests.
Good...
Your Majesty, your humble servant
wishes to speak.
Speak.
I request
an end to the evil ritual of
burying living servants
with their deceased masters.
Kong Qiu.
Why do you make such a request?
Because today your humble servant
is pleading for this slave's life!
Which slave?
Him!
Uncle.
Isn't that the slave
who ran away from your home?
Kong Qiu!
He was my family's slave.
You brazenly took him
into your house!
How dare you?
Master.
Minister, please pardon him.
This boy should not accompany
Lord Ji Yiru to the grave.
Don't you always approve of
observing our ancient traditions?
This is just one of them!
Minister.
Benevolence is love towards
our fellow men.
A ritual murder is still murder,
even if it complies with tradition!
Lord Shu,
you showed benevolence
towards a pheasant.
Now I ask you,
surely you must also speak up for this wounded boy.
We come today only to discuss the Winter Sacrifice.
This matter is unrelated!
No, there is a close relationship!
The Zhou code of ethics teaches us to value human life above all.
The burial of slaves was practiced in barbarous times.
It was outlawed in our dynasty when the Zhou reign commenced.
Our Kingdom of Lu is the ancient home of the Duke of Zhou and known for its ethics.
We should think afresh and abandon outdated traditions.
Right...
Your Majesty, my lords.
On my own life, I ask that you spare this young slave.
Spare him...
Kong Qiu!
It was Lord Ji Yiru's dying wish that those he loved should die with him.
It is not cruel to bury this slave.
Rather, it demonstrates the Minister's filial piety!
His love for his father!
General Gongshan! I know you served Lord Ji Yiru for years.
I hear he said many times that he could not live without you.
Right, that's correct.
Given how close you were to him, he must still need you now that he has passed on to the next life.
If you were willing to accompany your lord in death, I could not object to you taking this young slave with you.
You.
What say you?
You... you're mad!
It seems the General is not willing to serve his master beyond the grave.
He imposes on others what he will not impose on himself.
Your Majesty, your humble servant has no more to say.
The scholar's words seem to be profound!
I suppose.
Approved! Release him.
Good...
Great! You need never go back to the house of Ji.
Second bow.
Boy! Don't cry, stand up.
Qi Sigong, what's wrong?
Are you alright?
I'm not crying.
May I really stay here?
Alright now...
This is a special day.
Zilu, let's drink to it.
Good!
Ziqian, Boniu, help me fetch the wine.
Boy, come here Come here.
This is now your home.
They are all your brothers.
They will take care of you.
I know, Master, I know.
So we're family now!
Master, I could hardly believe it when Ji accepted your proposal.
Here comes the wine.
Come, what about you?
I have this.
Drink all you like.
Very well, drink up!
Drink up!
It tastes horrid!
Your Highness.
Making Kong Qiu a minister with many responsibilities will surely strengthen
the Kingdom of Lu.
And their strength threatens us
in the Dukedom of Qi.
Lu's strength is a threat to Qi.
For almost one hundred years,
all rulers of Qi have dreamed
of conquering Lu.
Clearing our way to
the western border.
Kong Qiu has already asserted
his authority in the Lu court.
Your Highness,
perhaps we should call a meeting
to congratulate Lu.
We could invite the ruler of Lu
and Kong Qiu
to Jiagu on our border.
Kong Qiu is a man of letters,
unfamiliar with military affairs.
He knows ethics, not bravery!
During the ceremony,
we'll take Lu's ruler hostage.
And make him and
the 3 Noble Families
submit to Qi's will!
An excellent proposal!
Minister Li, prepare
a formal invitation
to the ruler of Lu.
Invite him to Jiagu
to discuss forming a new alliance
between our states.
Dispatch it immediately!
Yes, Your Majesty.
This meeting at Jiagu
is my first challenge
as a minister.
It is a matter of honor
or humiliation, gain or loss.
And it will have significant
consequences! Yan Hui.
His Majesty agrees
that you should
take charge of the ceremony.
Ensure that both parties have
equal ground and equal respect.
I will.
Zilu. Master.
You and Zigong will be the only men
to carry swords on the meeting platform.
Guard His Majesty carefully,
regardless of what happens.
Understood!
Ran Qiu. Master.
Go in advance to Jiagu
to inspect the area
around the meeting platform.
Look for any hiding places.
What do you want me
to do, Master?
Master, the military commanders
are here.
Our respects, Minister of Law...
Please.
Qi specified the place
for the alliance talks.
It's known as a ravine.
A dead end.
I'd like you to bring
chariots nearby
in case we need them.
Minister, we're headquartered
in barracks.
We have only carriages at our
command, no war chariots.
Minister Ji and
General Gongshan Niu
control them all.
Minister,
I hear that the Prime Minister
and Gongshan Niu
are holding an archery
tournament in Biyi.
Very well.
Then I'll have to pay them a visit.
Master, we're approaching Biyi.
Master, they say that Biyi
has more mounted soldiers
and slaves
than any other city in Lu.
Be advised!
Those who shirk labor,
within 3 days, will be dragged out and put on public display. Compete at what? Archery. Please. The alliance talk between Lu and Qi is a serious matter. Can Your Lordship provide army chariots to protect our ruler and show our might? How many? 500. Isn't it supposed to be an alliance meeting? Why do you need such a show of force? As Zhou Gong taught us, any civil servant should be back up words with weapons. Qi is a barbarous country which has long wanted to conquer Lu. So we must be prepared! Good. Then let us have a match. My teacher respectfully requests a match and drinks to you. If you win, I'll grant you The archery match will begin. Please take your places. You have my word. If you win, they're yours. If you lose, you'll get nothing! Agreed. A pure heart makes a pure shot. Right, full score! A new minister with high ambitions! Full score! Good... Who would have thought that the Biyi city walls would be more than 18 feet high? Built to conceal their injustices and their onerous taxation! The tyranny within these walls puts tigers to shame! Prime Minister, has all this escaped your notice? Good! Right, full score!

Master Ji, may I ask how Lu stands today? It might just be that the Ji Family's real enemy is from within. Not across the border. Good! Right, full score! I hear you had no father. Who taught you such fine archery? My father was a warrior, but he left this world before his time. A diligent student needs no teacher. I taught myself! Right, full score! Excellent! Right wins. The minister has been most courteous. So you have your 500 chariots for the alliance talks. Address your request to Gongshan Niu. We have a kingdom because we have an army! And who raised and trained that army? Not your King of Lu! It was my Biyi! Right, it was our Biyi! Why should I blindly turn over my chariots to you? So that you can march my army into the desert and starve them? We will see. Let's go... See, what I say doesn't always count. I gave the order, but... Its implementation is your own concern. Master. Halt! Your Majesty! Master! Greetings, Your Majesty, Master! Has Gongshan's army moved or not? I don't know what's happening. Not one soldier or horse has moved yet. But that... that cannot be correct? Ji Sunsi ordered them
to deploy days ago.
Put our second plan
into effect, immediately!
Yes, Master.
Go!
Master, Qi has brought
so much cavalry.
Is there anything to
concern us about this?
Your Majesty, rest assured
as we're prepared.
Since Qi is host and Lu is guest,
we request that the Nobles of Qi
descend to welcome.
Your Highness, no undue courtesies.
We invite
the King of Lu to ascend.
Your Majesty.
Lu is the Guest and Qi
is the Host.
The Zhou Protocols mandate that
the nobles of Qi should descend.
Qi initiated the alliance talks.
How could Qi dishonor its guests?
Your Highness, Qi and Lu
share a close relationship.
Our ruler has come to rebuild
our brotherly alliance.
Please...
Please.
It is our desire
to respect each other
and forever abandon war!
Although our states
have different surnames,
in reality we are like brothers.
With this alliance,
we will be like a single state!
What Lord Li says is interesting.
All the territory and peoples
belonged to the emperor.
All the ministers and officials
were just his servants.
Therefore, Your Excellencies
both have responsibility
for protecting the
Emperor Zhou's ancestral territory.
Excellencies,
your humble servant advises that
when this alliance is formed,
each state must commit to
aiding the other.
Should Qi one day find
itself at war,
Lu would be asked
to provide 500 chariots
to supplement our army.
Excellent idea!
Excellencies,
your humble servant would also
like to make a request.
An alliance between us
should be founded on sincerity.
And we request
the return of
the 3 cities of Wenshang
won from Lu 30 years ago in war.
I can see your point.
Your Majesty...
A gentleman's word is golden,
Your Excellency.
Good...
I thank you for returning our
land to us, let's drink to it.
Kong Qiu, it seems that
you and your Master
have no plan to leave here today.
Look.
Yan Hui.
Your excellencies, we've come here
in peace today.
We brought only
But to safeguard the negotiations
from any unforeseen threats,
another 500 chariots
are waiting nearby.
Need we summon them here?
Look!
Your Majesty!
The advance party is here!
me to Jiagu.
We await your orders.
Minister Li,
Do you want to see
this ravine run with blood?
If this is how you demonstrate
the workings of an alliance,
who will ever again
trust the Dukedom of Qi?
Why are you still standing here?
Dismiss the troops!
Your Majesty...
Please forgive my minister's
shameful act.
May the alliance between
us last forever.
We make use of one hundred ox carts
to scare off Qi's 500 chariots.
Another triumph for our Master!
As he always says,
military strategy hinges
on innovation.
Come on, there
are drinks waiting!
Our Lady...
Has she gone missing again?
Our Lady! Where are you...?
Sir, the prince has
stormed into the palace
and is arguing with
His Majesty again.
Our Lady can't be
found anywhere.
She hasn't passed me.
Then what can we do?
This is awful!
Let's go back.
Go.
Father, I'm almost 40!
I have been prince
for almost 20 years.
You are getting old,
and our kingdom is stagnating.
But you just won't let go,
will you?
Kong Qiu in Lu has a saying.
Women and servants are
hard to raise.
But you let a woman
meddle in affairs of state!
You let her make decisions!
Madam, you're back.
Your Majesty.
What is so important that
the prince demand a talk?
There's a message from
General Gongshan Niu.
I wasn't asking you!
This Gongshan Niu, he's
an army general
with the Ji family in Lu.
He wants to know
if we'll give him refuge
in our kingdom.
So Wei is to become a haven
for cast-offs now?
That's exactly why I didn't approve.
Gongshan Niu is ready to serve us.
Why can't we give him refuge?
Giving him refuge would
bring no benefit.
He has served the Ji family
for many years
and the late Ji Yiru
was good to him.
Not only was he put
in charge of Biyi,
he was also exempted
from taxes for years!
And now he turns his
back on them.
What use do we have
for a turncoat like that?
I can control him.
Learn to control yourself first!
The kingdoms of Lu and Wei
depend on each other
for their survival.
If we took in Gongshan Niu,
wouldn't we offend Lu?
Have you forgotten?
The mighty Kingdom of Jin
is to our west
and the rough Kingdom of Chu
is to the south.
We have enemies on all sides!
If we lose our main ally,
what then?
Get out! Next time, don't.
If there's a next time,
you'll no longer be the prince.
The prince can't even
weigh up gains and losses.
How can I make him the regent?
Invite Kong Qiu here
to teach your prince.
Then Wei will be safe.
Your Majesty, write
a formal invitation
to Master Kong.
Do you think Master Kong
would come?
Master Kong’s talents
are undervalued.
In Lu, the 3 Noble Families
keep his talent in check.
Our invitation will be seen as
an appreciation of his talent.
If he comes, that’ll be best.
If he doesn’t,
Lu will put him to better use.
Lu will prosper,
and will bring Qi to heel.
That will suit us too.
What is this?
Letters of invitation
from both Wei and Qi.
We should start using
Master Kong better
or others will take him.
So how should we make
use of his talents?
One moment.
This Kong Qiu has no
proper line of ancestry.
Your Majesty gave him a role
in court less than a year ago.
First he was mayor of Zhongdu.
Then he was appointed
Minister of Law.
And now we're supposed to
promote him even higher?
Does Your Majesty plan to
make him a living god?
At the alliance meeting
between Lu and Qi,
Kong Qiu regained territory
and enhanced our
national prestige.
The whole country praises
him for that.
Kong Qiu was born a commoner.
But your father admitted
he is descended from
a noble Song family.
He won back the Three Cities
without using a single
soldier or chariot.
He may be a mere commoner
but his ideal of civility
in government works!
When my father died,
Kong Qiu was made Minister of Law.
Now I could vacate
the post of Interior
Minister for him.
If Your Majesty approves,
I could serve only
as Prime Minister.
Very well!
I am glad that our Prime Minister
has such a breadth of mind.
Good! This is wonderful.
When a country is in turmoil,
it has need of its talents.
Besides Kong Qiu,
most of his disciples are
available to serve our country.
Master Kong, this is
an outdated tradition.
The servant I dispatched to
the palace has reported secretly.
Minister of the Interior Kong Qiu
is not focusing on his
government work.
He's been preoccupied with building
the high Wuzi Platform.
Doesn't he claim it's part of
a defense against flooding?
Yes, that's what he says.
I do not trust him.
I think he has something
else in mind.
Kong Qiu is a mere commoner.
The ruler made him Minister of Law.
Now the ruler's made him Acting Minister
of the Interior too!
Uncle, I sense a conspiracy here.
He did not... did not eat again.
Cut off your tongue if
you stammer again.
Get out! Yes, Master.
Zhongni, I've made some
new black ink for you.
It won't wash off easily.
Try it!
Very well! Teacher,
the petition is ready.
Please take a look. It is fine!
It's fine!
Gong Boliao, ready the cart.
It's so late! Where are you going?
It is urgent, I need to
go to the Palace.
Wake up! Gong Boliao.
Leave me alone!
Rotten wood is hard to carve!
Leave him alone.
Master,
you've worked all day
and into the night.
It's too hard!
If this is for the betterment of
Lu's citizens, I don't mind.
Master, you're ordering
city walls to be demolished.
Won't the 3 Noble Families rebel
against your authority?
It's time to curb the power
of the Three Families.
We must act,
and act quickly! Master,
I think this is courting
great danger!
Yes, Master, this
is very dangerous!
Won't you reconsider?
Reconsider what?
Disciples,
my late teacher Master Zichan
had 2 fine sayings.
Please remember them
all your life.
Put your country
ahead of your life.
And Obstacles will be many,
so maintain your
strength of spirit!
What we are doing now
is not only for the short term.
Minister of the Interior Kong Qiu
is here to see His Majesty.
Tomorrow in court,
your humble servant will call for
Razing the Three City Walls.
Razing? What exactly
does that mean?
When the Duke of Zhou ruled these
lands, it was established
that no fiefdom should build walls
around its city more than
The aim was to prevent the nobles
from abrogating power to themselves.
But in recent decades,
these 3 families have made
their cities seats of power.
And their city walls
have grown taller.
I humbly propose that the walls of
these 3 cities be razed
to reunify the state.
That is a serious matter.
It will stir up discontent.
Can you win this?
If you fail,
you'll unleash chaos everywhere.
Your humble servant did
a fortune reading.
The reading was Headless Dragons. That's very auspicious.
To strengthen the throne, the power of the nobles must be reduced.
We must cut off the dragons' heads.
Serve my man here with the best wine and food.
Thank you, Minister...
Didn't I say this would happen?
It is vicious.
Razing the Three City Walls!
To pull down our walls is to undermine our strength!
Kong Qiu wants to bring down the fiefdoms of the Three Families.
Our fiefdoms?
Have we any fiefdoms?
Maybe Meng's fiefdom still belongs to Meng.
Does your fiefdom belong to you?
Or General Hou?
Is Biyi still mine?
Kong Qiu calls for demolition.
Fine, that would benefit us.
What should we do now?
Laozi teaches us.
Every gain is balanced by a loss.
Support Kong Qiu!
Raze the 3 city walls!
More speed!
We must reach Biyi tonight to see General Gongshan.
Come on! Fight! Peck...
Urgent report from the city of Houyi!
Urgent report from the city of Houyi!
Acting Interior Minister.
Just speak.
Yes, sir.
Hou Fan, rebel general of Shu Sunwu's territory, has escaped from Houyi!
Shu and Zigao's forces have succeeded in tearing down their walls.
Excellent! Well done!
Good, we caught them by surprise.
The Minister must be congratulated on his famous victory!
Come, drink!
Today we must celebrate.
No, it's not over yet.
Hou Fan will continue his resistance.
Ensure that Shu and Zigao tear down the walls quickly or the rebels will regroup behind them!
As I arrived in the city, I saw Zilu and his army encamped nearby.
Your Biyi is about to have its walls torn down.
You need a plan.
Let them tear down the wall!
They'll be leaving the capital undefended!
My plan is to seize the capital and execute Kong Qiu and banish the Three Families!
Halt...
Inspection!
Don't you recognize the Ji banner?
We are delivering Biyi's land taxes to the palace.
Open up!
The Minister of Law has ordered that all carts be inspected.
Seize the king of Lu! Slay Kong Qiu!
Seize the king! Slay Kong Qiu!
Drive out the Three Families!
Kill them all!
Report! General, the king is not in his palace.
Where is he?
It seems he has sought refuge with the Ji family.
Find him!
Open the gate! Open it!
In such a key moment,
where is Minister Ji?
He's out for a hunt, Your Majesty, follow me please.

Your Majesty, be careful.
Don't engage them, just try to hold them back for 2 hours.

Then lure them to the Wuzi Platform.
Yes, Minister.

Ji picked a fine time to go hunting.
Quick! Kill them all!
Ruler! Kong Qiu!
Three Families! Hear this.

Today, in the name of the late Lord Ji Yiru, under heaven's mandate, I will annihilate all who defy the will of heaven!

Annihilate all...
Destroy them!
March on!
Kill the king, kill Kong Qiu!
Retreat!
Flames!
Pull!
Release.

Report! Minister!
Gongshan Niu and his rebel army are defeated.
They are retreating from the capital.
Uncle...

An urgent report from the capital...
It's just as you predicted.

Gongshan Niu was defeated at the Wuzi Platform.
Then what are you waiting for?
Send the troops in, capture Gongshan alive.

Yes, sir...
Take Gongshan Niu alive!

Pull...
Release!
Pull!
Release!
Nobody is demolishing my Chengyi.
Why?

Chengyi stands right on the border between Qi and Lu.
The high walls of Chengyi serve as a bastion against a Qi invasion.

They must not be demolished.

How can you go back on your own word?

Didn't you approve the razing of the city walls?

Let him finish.

Kong Qiu reclaimed the 3 cities which used to belong to your family.

But were they returned to you?

No, they were handed to the ruler of Lu.

Kong Qiu forced General Hou Fan out of the city of Houyi.

And who is now in charge of the city?

Zigao, Kong Qiu's disciple.

And Biyi? Has it been returned to your family?

No!

Zilu, another of Kong Qiu's disciples, has been put in charge!

See?

And if they now take over my Chengyi, it will be handed over to the ruler of Lu.

Will there be any land or city left to us?

You Ministers, are you really willing to give the Kingdom back to the ruler of Lu and Kong Qiu?

Acting Interior Minister.

By the order of the Prime Minister, no one is allowed in.

Please wait here, I will make a request.

Master, those carriages are from the Meng and Shu families.

Master! Kong Qiu is requesting to see you...

I won't see him.
They're all inside.
Master.
I'm sure those are Meng and Shu carriages.
Master...
Master.
Come... Let's drink.
All of you should drink more.
Listen! Once all the walls have come down, we will truly become one big family.
Am I right? Right...
Father...
How far is the Qi army from our border?
Less than 30 miles.
But the Duke of Qi has sent an ambassador, Li Chu bearing gifts.
Gifts? What gifts?
more than 100 horses.
Has Li Chu made any demands?
He demanded that Kong Qiu be dismissed.
Off to the palace, we must see His Majesty tonight.
The Acting Interior Minister is here!
Your Majesty.
We cannot pull back now!
We've won back 2 of the cities, we cannot abandon the 3rd!
Do you know?
Li Chu has 30,000 Qi soldiers amassed on our border ready to invade.
If they form an alliance with the city of Chengyi, we will be encircled.
But you have proclaimed the razing of the 3 city walls, Your Majesty!
A man of high principles must be willing to die by his word!
He cannot bend his principles to save his life!
Who will be left to care about ethics if we're defeated in battle?
Victory and defeat are what matter.
Not ethics!
Don't you remember?
My father Prince Zhao was driven out of Lu by the Three Families.
He died in exile!
If the Three Families turn against me now, my fate will be much worse than his.
Your Majesty! Say no more!
I have supported you for the past one hundred days.
And so did the Ji family.
Last night Ji came to see me.
His words implied more than they said.
If the walls of Chengyi are demolished, it seems the Qi army will seize the chance to occupy the city with an army of 30,000.
Everything will be reduced to chaos.
Kong Qiu...
You should follow my example sometimes.
Play a little stupid.
Didn't your revered Laozi teach that accomplish everything by doing nothing?
Kong Qiu, the times are out of joint.
Chaos is everywhere.
But you still go your own way with your rituals, music, benevolence and harmony.
I'm so ashamed.
I've achieved nothing.
Then stop trying.
Men habitually long for fame and authority.
But such aims should
detain no man for long.
Then what should I,
your pupil, do?
I cannot hang useless on the door-beam
like a dried-out gourd
making no contribution
to the world.
Maybe no contribution
is the true contribution.
The weak survive,
the mild persist.
Nothing is softer than water.
And yet aggression and force
never triumph over water.
So be like water!
The Master's words are profound,
but I must be loyal to my chosen path.
The Master's way is
magnificent and shapeless.
It's beyond time and space,
beyond all worldly matters.
But my way keeps me in
the world of men.
Then tolerate the misunderstandings
of those in your world.
Unlike those who are rich,
I have no gold to give.
Only this simple advice.
The sacrifices for the year's end
ceremonies are over.
Has the sacrificial meat been
distributed to the nobles and officials?
Yes, it has.
And as you ordered,
one went to Kong Qiu's household.
Father.
Have some of this.
No point in waiting.
I don't think we will be getting
sacrificial meat this year.
Good...
My lord. What is it?
My master wishes to see the king.
His Majesty has no time for him.
Well, give this to Kong Qiu.
How did you get here?
The master is the body,
the pupil is the shadow.
I will stay with my master
until the end.
To be honest,
I don't know where I'm going.
Master.
Yan Hui, you have talents.
You would have no trouble finding
a good position in court.
But if you come with me,
you'll have no home or family.
You will always regret it.
No, I won't!
Yan Hui, look.
There are nothing
but hardships ahead.
No prospects for a fortunate life.
Only a vast wilderness.
Aren't you afraid?
Tell me, in what
respect am I wrong?
May I speak frankly?
Of course.
Master, you were wrong
to put all your faith
in the ruler of Lu.
Master, you once told me that
if a man cannot change the world,
then at least he should try
to change himself from within.
Good. Well said.
The humanity I sought stands before
me, my complaints are groundless.
Master...
Master, Ran Qiu and I
had some duties to finish.
That's why we're
late getting here.
That's right, Master, look.
We've brought all your scrolls.
Master! Without me,
who will drive your cart?
And, with me at your side,
obody will dare be rude to you!
That's true. Master!
Who would have thought
he snores louder than I do!
Let's go.
I am the special representative
of the ruler of Wei.
I am instructed by His Majesty and
the Royal Consort to welcome you to Wei.
Our Kingdom greets
Master Kong and his followers.
Master, what is your
impression of Wei so far?
Compared to Lu,
Wei has a larger population.
Yes, a larger population
makes it more difficult to govern.
There is more potential
for disorder.
Tell me, how can my government
remedy the devastation?
By making sure the common people
have their due share of prosperity.
The vast majority of them
are quite prosperous.
And yet there are signs of
social disorder everywhere.
Then the moral climate
is not good.
The people need education!
Good!
Good!
The master is truly a sage!
Then I hereby invite the Master
to teach in our country.
We will provide land
to build an academy.
And 60,000 stones of
grain every year.
Will that suffice?
Thank you, Your Majesty.
And I wish to consult you
on one other matter.
As you can see,
our Kingdom of Wei is
vulnerable on all 4 sides.
Each one of our neighbors
would conquer us if it could.
So I'd like the Master
help training our soldiers.
As a mere wandering exile,
dare I even speak of soldiering?
But I have heard it said,
the Master is a brilliant
military tactician.
If Your Majesty speaks of
sacrificial rituals,
I do have some small
knowledge of them.
But of military matters,
I have no great knowledge at all.
Alright...
I won't try to force you.
But there's one thing
you absolutely must agree to.
Your humble servant is a guest
here, your wish is my command.
My royal consort Nanzi
is eager to see you.
You won't say no, will you?
Of course not.
Better not to see her.
Doesn't Master know?
She has a very dubious reputation.
This woman is a great beauty.
But she is a succubus.
Her very name taints the kingdom!
Master.
Do you know of this woman's past?
This Nanzi was raised in the
house of the ruler of Song.
In Song, she had an affair with
the ruler's son, there was a scandal.
This kind of gossip is trivial.
Do you know who now
runs the Kingdom of Wei?
The King, of course!
I can see it isn't.
Wei's internal politics are very
chaotic, there are many seats of power.
But I can see that the real power
behind the throne
is Nanzi.

What kind of a man is this Kong Qiu?
In my view,
just poor and disheveled scholar.
His only pleasure is
in books and rituals.
Poor he may be,
but we could build up friendship.
This Kong Qiu is a worthy man.
You must treat him well.
I still hope
one day, we could ask him to be
the teacher of our young prince.
I have already promised him
Please be seated, Master.
Our lady will be here soon.
Your humble servant greets Madam.
You are the famous scholar Kong Qiu?
Master Kong, please be seated.
Thank you, madam.
I have heard one of your axioms is,
true benevolence is the love of mankind.
Does this 'benevolence'
extend to a woman with
a reputation like mine?
I hear that you are teaching
"The Book of Odes" here.
Yes, I am.
I also love poetry.
That line...
A beauteous lady,
a gentleman's fine match.
Can you tell me what that means?
The poem means
even while courting,
a gentleman observes all proprieties.
Of the 300 poems in
"The Book of Odes",
so many speak of love!
All 300 have one underlying point.
In true love, there is no evil.
I have liked poetry since
I was a child.
Will you take me as your student?
I have taken on a new student
in Wei, his name is Bu Shang.
Although still quite young,
he is some sort of prodigy. While studying "The Book of Odes" under me, he has shown much insight. So I humbly recommend that he becomes your study-companion. Our ministers consider your theories of civility in government to be impracticable. Do you truly believe they can work? Ruling with civility will benefit the state, its community, and its people. Why should it not be practicable? Without civility, a state will descend into chaos. Males are born lascivious. Their desires lead them into war and bloodshed. Since this is their nature, it will be hard to rein them in. The hardness of the task is the measure of the gentleman. Master, do you really believe that a gentleman's personal morality is the most important thing? My belief is that a man who wakes up living a life of civility will go to his death a justified man. Master, will you stay longer in our country? May we meet again? That would not be convenient. How so? Why inconvenient? Because I have not yet seen anyone who puts principles before licentiousness. Worldly people could probably come to understand the master's sufferings. But few will ever truly grasp the depth and breadth of those sufferings. That's scholar Kong! Let's take a look at him! By order of Commander Huan, Kong Qiu and his followers must leave the Kingdom of Song immediately. By order of Commander Huan, Kong Qiu and his followers must leave the Kingdom of Song immediately. Master, please begin. Poetry, books, ethics, music... a gentleman must understand all these. So today we will begin a review of our practices. Rulers should treat ministers with courtesy as ministers should serve rulers with loyalty. Loyalty and filial piety are the keys to humanity and harmony. All professions may prosper. Close to home, attend your parents. Further afield, placate your neighbors. There is also much to learn including the names of birds, beasts, grasses and trees. By order of Commander Huan Kui, leave the Kingdom of Song! Stop! The tree is coming down! Watch out! Master, let's quickly leave. Master, we must go! Excuse me, friends. Where's the river crossing?
Who's that man sitting on the cart? That's Master Kong! Master Kong? The famous Kong Qiu from Lu? Indeed! Isn't he supposed to know everything? Then he should know where the river crossing is. You fellows should stay here and become farmers instead of wandering around with him! Avoid all the trouble out there! That's right! Stay here as farmers! Yeah, stay out of politics like us! His thought would not be practicable. Let's stay here! Why are you laughing? Let's go. Let's move on, we will ask for direction later. Go... Don't leave. Come back! Alright... Let's get back to work. Fei, is there any news of Kong Qiu? They say he spent some time in Wei, then went to Zheng and is now in the Kingdom of Chen. In time of war, we need generals. In time of trouble, we need thinkers. Back when we held the alliance meeting, Kong Qiu won back the 3 cities without waging war. But we sent him into exile. Now it's clear that Qi tricked us. With our ruler dead and a mere child on the throne, Qi seizes the chance to invade us. Our strength is not what it was. If it comes to war, we have no outstanding general. Now I have a mission for you. Bring Kong Qiu back to Lu! Father, we mistreated Kong Qiu before. We forced him into exile. If we invite him back now, people will mock us. We could invite his disciple Ran Qiu back first. He is Kong's foremost disciple, he has good military skills. He would know how to counter the Qi army. Alright, invite Ran Qiu back first. Wake up... Wake up, Master! It's terrible! The Kingdom of Wu is invading! We have to leave at once! Hurry up... Have you seen an elderly foreigner? At the city's East Gate... The Qi army is poised to attack Lu. Master, Lord Ji asks you to allow Ran Qiu to come back to protect Lu. Master, please agree, for the sake of Lu! Master, we cannot let Ran Qiu go! They turn to us only when they're in trouble. Remember how badly they treated us! Yes... How did you find me? An old farmer told us he saw a foreigner near the East Gate. A forehead like King Yao's. Shoulders like Zichan's. Had the air of an important man but looked as scraggy as a stray dog. We guessed it was you. I'm not brave enough to be important. And my features don't resemble anyone famous. But that old farmer got it just about...
right when he said stray dog!
Master, you teach us to
practice what we learnt.
Our homeland is in peril!
The Prime Minister
asks Ran Qiu to return.
Lu's very survival is at stake.
As men of Lu,
we cannot stand idly by.
Well said, Yan Hui.
Lu is in danger,
I should allow you to return
to save the kingdom
from disaster.
Ran Qiu, you should go.
I will wait for good
news from you.
Master, once the battle is won,
I'll come back for you.
Pull!
Greetings, Prime Minister.
Father.
General Ran has lived
up to our hopes.
He has routed the Qi army
in the Battle of Lang.
The Qi army has retreated back
across the border.
This won't go unrewarded.
I will petition the king to put you
in charge of the Wen Shang Cities.
Prime Minister, this simple man does not
want to be in charge of the Three Cities.
I only have one simple request.
Speak.
My teacher, Master Kong,
has been wandering for many years.
He's destitute,
but goes on teaching.
But there has never been a moment
when the Kingdom of Lu
wasn't in his thoughts.
This simple man's request
is that you have him
invited back to Lu.
Well.
I'll need to discuss your request
with His Majesty.
I fully recognize your talents.
Stay here as our retainer.
No more aimless wandering
with Kong Qiu.
Look, a 9-tailed sparrow!
Seeing that bird fly past
means there must be
a village not far ahead.
Really? That's great!
We can finally get some food
in our bellies!
Hurry, everyone!
Quick! I'm dying of hunger!
Nobody around.
Looks like this is another village
torched by the Cai army.
We're all very tired.
Clean this place up a bit.
I think we can spend
the night here.
Master, look.
It seems that the Cai troops
have us trapped in this valley.
Master, I've found a small mountain path.
It's very narrow,
but I think it may lead
down the mountain.
Why don't I see where it leads?
I might be able to find some food
or at least someone
who can help us.
You can all rest here
and wait for me.
Zigong, you always find a way!
Come back soon.
Let's go, Zigao.
Father, doesn't heaven reward
those who are kind?
What wrong have we done
to deserve this?
How is it
that heaven allows us
to starve like this?
He's right!
Master is wise.
Maybe some cannot understand
because their thinking
is too backward.
Master taught us.
Only in winter, does the pine tree
show its true strength.
Master has been playing
that instrument for days now.
Yes, as if the music
would fill his belly!
Master, you haven't eaten for days.
This soup is
the last of the horsemeat.
Please drink some.
Are you alright, brother?
Brother.
Zilu, drink some soup.
Master, I'm not hungry.
You have some.
Look, I'm having some,
you have a little too.
Each of us should have a little.
I'm not hungry. You have some.
Master, at last you're
awake! Master!
Are you alright? Master!
Do you feel better?
I'm back at last.
You were gone for 7 days.
If you'd come back one day later,
you might have been too late!
Master, you're awake.
Zigong, tell me.
What's happening out there?
Master, we left the valley.
We were hunted down,
we almost died.
Thanks to Yan Zhuoju,
Zilu's brother-in-law.
He brought others to rescue us.
That's when we found out
how chaotic the world has become.
Men from Wu have conquered
the Kingdom of Zheng.
Men from Chu have devastated
the Kingdom of Cai.
The people of Cai
were forced to move south.
Come on... help me.
Quickly...
Master.
The ruler of Wei is dead, and his
successor greatly respects Zilu.
He wants to appoint Zilu
governor of the city of Puyi.
What are you men waiting for?
I'm waiting for a roast gigot!
Let's boil the water
and start cooking!
I am proud to see
one of my students so honored.
But enter not a dangerous state,
dwell not in a chaotic state.
The political situation
in Wei is not stable.
To be frank, I do not much
approve of you taking this post.
Master, just wait for me
to show my mettle in Puyi.
Then I'll be able to
raise a powerful army.
I will deal with
the chaos inside Wei
and appoint you
the new Prime Minister.
Undue haste has
no place in politics!
Zilu, you are headstrong
and demanding.
That's very dangerous
in this chaotic world.
Master, I know this.
But my undue haste
reflects my wish
to realize your ideals
of harmony and civility
in government.
An official wears his
robes of office
but it's his inner character and
spirit which reflect his true mettle.
Never forget this.
Don't look at,
listen to, speak to,
or do anything
which offends propriety.
Master's words will
stay with me all my life.
Qi Sigong, take care on the road.
Master...
Take care of yourself, Master,
your students bid you fare well!
Master.
What's that sound?
The ice is cracking!
Hurry up! Move!
The ice is cracking. Hurry up!
Hurry up! The ice is cracking.
Yan Hui...
Hui, where are you...?
Hui Yan Hui.
Grab the rope!
Yan Hui, come back up!
Come back up!
Master, please eat something.
It has been 8 hours.
He will not revive, Master.
Let go, Master.
Master...
Master!
Please eat something.
Kong Qiu hasn't come back.
Father, I have sent men
to look for him.
It's reported that
they're approaching the border.
He will never forgive
what I did to him.
Go in my place.
When you see him,
give him this.
He'll come when he sees this.
Master...
Qi Sigong, you are back?
Master, Qi Sigong is back...
Master...
Why are you back alone?

Where is Zilu?
Brother Zilu... he's dead.
Wei was in chaos,
Yang Hu of the Jin Kingdom
has taken over the capital.
Zilu tried to protect the young heir
to the Wei throne.
He went out to face
the invaders alone.
He...
He was killed!
Master says.
When a gentleman dies,
he should maintain his dignity.
Well said.
Well said.
Mighty Zilu!
You were a true gentleman!
My father asked me to
present Master with this jade.
Master Kong, my father...
He is dying.
Master!
I've found you at last!
Ran Qiu, you've found
your way here?
Master, I...
For the past years, Master, Minister Ji
has been taking off from the court
because of his sickness.
I'm afraid he doesn't have much time.
Whenever he looks back,
he deeply regrets
having you forced into exile.
He has sent his own son
to invite you back.
He hopes to apologize
to you in person.
Master, please come back to Lu.
A ring of jade.
Stand up.
Master, for the sake of
Lu's future, come home!
I can return.
But you must tell them
that I only want to teach.
They must no longer trouble me
with politics.
I will stress this point to him.
We will respect your wish.
Master.
Start packing up,
we are going home.
We're going home...
Father, Master Kong is on his way.
He'll be here soon.
Go!
Welcome him on my behalf.
We're home, we're finally home!
Lu! We're back.
Lu, land of my parents.
I have finally returned.
Master, did you say something?
Nothing.
Pack up "The Spring and Autumn of Lu"
and have it delivered.
Yes.
If the world will come to know me,
it will be through this book.
If the world will think
ill of me,
it will also be
because of this book.