

**THE
ELEVENTH DRAGON**

a novel about modern day China

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*Be extremely subtle, even to the point
of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious, even
to the point of soundlessness.
Thereby you can be the director of your
opponent's fate.*

Sun Tzu

The Art of War

PROLOGUE

Mao Zedong lay on his huge square bed in the Villa of The Two Wells nestled in the Fragrant Hills some distance outside of Beijing. It was spring of the year 1949, and he hesitated or tarried there for several months before entering the imperial city that would be the capital of his dynasty, The People's Republic of China.

Morning was coming in these sweet hills that had afforded so much pleasure to other emperors and their retinues: servants, concubines, eunuchs, generals, and plotting officials. It had not changed. Mao was surrounded by the same people except they were from peasant stock and dressed in the olive khaki of the People's Liberation Army

Several volumes of the Annals of the Twenty-four Dynasties, records of China's past greatness in minute detail, sprawled open on the bed. Their silk or rice paper pages were smudged from reading. They were the originals, priceless beyond belief. Mao loved them as he loved China for all its richness of spirit and love of art and tradition of strong leadership.

Mao had not slept, he seldom did at night; night was his time to think and dream. In the upper right hand corner of this huge mattressed platform, lay a girl of barely sixteen years. One of Mao's beloved *secret dancing partners*. She stirred, perhaps bothered by a dream of a

large Chinese dragon kite pulled across the sky by living, feet-flapping turtles. It confused her and yet comforted her to be part of this great man's life.

Mao paid her no heed.

Rising, he slipped on simple, peasant sandals, adjusted the collar button of his ill cut military style blue tunic and walked across the polished floor to gaze out at the land and hills and lakes about him. Mist rose, a bluish tint to the morning sky, making the scene like a painting from a distant dynasty, perhaps the Southern Song of the 13th century.

A large, yellow silk robe --the color reserved for emperors-- lay crumpled in a rose wood chair by the desk he used to hold books. He did not fancy wearing silk robes, but it was symbolic of his rise to The Mandate of Heaven, to his position as the new emperor in the new dynasty.

Several lines of poetry in the style of the late T'ang eased themselves into his mind, and for just a moment, Mao Zedong enjoyed the purity or perhaps the tranquillity of being a philosopher-poet. He knew all too well what lay in the sprawl of Beijing beneath the Fragrant Hills. He knew of power and betrayal, of joy and blood, of sadness and revenge. He knew of intrigue and assassinations, and he knew of the struggle that had been going on in China for lo these five thousand years before this morning.

Was it fear that prevented Mao from moving down from the hills and the Summer Palace to the center of activity that was Beijing? Or was it a pause to assure himself of his direction. The question would torment him for years; already the incipient paranoia had begun, the paranoia that would come close to undoing this new China.

The girl cooed softly to herself, and Mao regarded her

with detached curiosity.

Outside the bed-study chamber a guard cleared his throat and shuffled on his tired feet. Mao felt anger rise quickly; he hated to be disturbed. He quelled the anger with remembered love for his soldiers that had endured the Long March.

He poured himself a cup of mildly fragrant tea from a metal and glass thermos-- a relic of the struggle. Bringing the delicate porcelain cup to his lips, he frowned as an image of the future erased all thoughts of poetry. Chaos swirled before him; he pushed it away.

He was afraid of Beijing; he was already isolated; he was about to assume the Dragon Throne.

In Beijing outside the walls of the Forbidden City, a young child walked purposefully into the courtyard of his small house and sought a cricket for the cage his father had presented to him.

The father was an educated man from landlord stock. He believed in the Three Perfections: poetry, calligraphy, and painting as a unifying trio for both the ancient China and the new. In this way he was not different from his master, Mao Zedong. Neither man gave much heed to Marx or Lenin.

The father was an official in the Ministry of Education, well regarded and honored by his students from Beijing University where he lectured on the roots of Chinese culture. His specialty was the Warring States period (453-221 BC).

Later this kind and thoughtful man would be beaten to death by an angry mob of teenage Red Guards, the shock troops of the Cultural Revolution. His death would be but one of the many thousands upon thousands of needless senseless deaths. Innocence was not a criterion for survival

in those grim days launched by Mao.

The son was named Hao Chang; he was the hope for the future, so his father thought. A future that would cut its tether from the ancient China of autocracy and belief that the emperor was a divine embodiment, heaven come to earth.

But the father was wrong; the son, Hao Chang, was cut from the old cloth. He was also a man who would come to believe that he should be the Son of Heaven, the modern embodiment of the divine. Where this belief came from not even Hao Chang knew, but it was in his soul from early childhood.

His father would have been deeply saddened had he known the trajectory of his son's life.

The cricket eluded the son's grasp, and the cage remained empty. The child vowed to capture the cricket and sat down on the beaten earth to wait.

Who would have guessed that a little more than a half a century later, this small, patient child now an aging man, would once again with dedication bordering on obsession set a trap. His goal this time was to bring down modern day China.