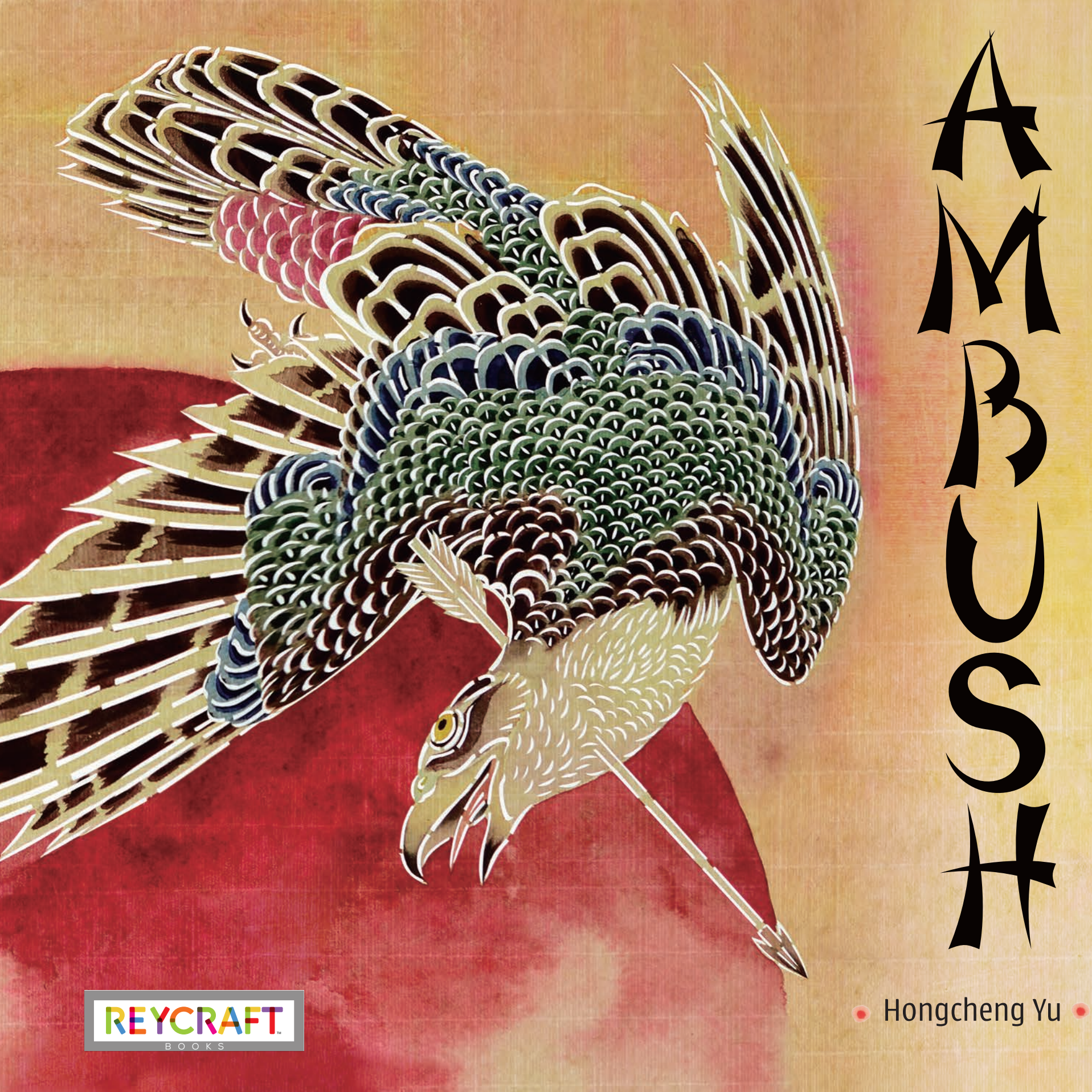


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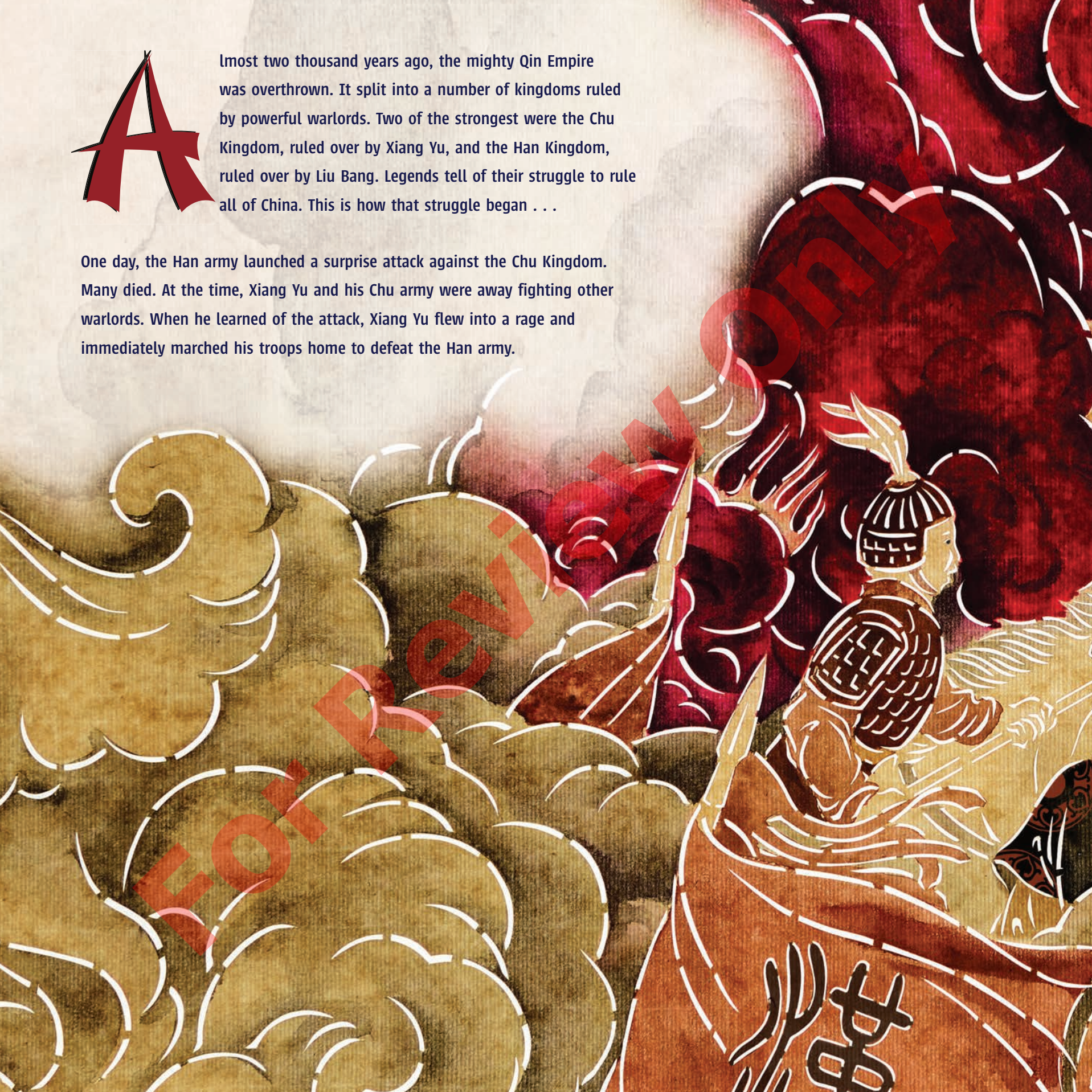
Hongcheng Yu



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Almost two thousand years ago, the mighty Qin Empire was overthrown. It split into a number of kingdoms ruled by powerful warlords. Two of the strongest were the Chu Kingdom, ruled over by Xiang Yu, and the Han Kingdom, ruled over by Liu Bang. Legends tell of their struggle to rule all of China. This is how that struggle began . . .

One day, the Han army launched a surprise attack against the Chu Kingdom. Many died. At the time, Xiang Yu and his Chu army were away fighting other warlords. When he learned of the attack, Xiang Yu flew into a rage and immediately marched his troops home to defeat the Han army.



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Terrified by Xiang Yu's fury, the Han forces retreated in chaos. But the fighting between the two sides continued on for another three years—without either side winning.

Xiang Yu knew his soldiers were exhausted from the battles and his army was short on supplies. But he was trapped. What could he do? Should he continue fighting?

He didn't have to decide.

One day, Liu Bang asked for a ceasefire. "I, the King of Han, am saddened by the miseries of the soldiers in both the Han and Chu armies. If the King of Chu agrees to release my family members whom he now holds hostage, I will call for peace and we will divide China into east and west. Each of us will be able to enjoy our lands without war."

After careful thought, Xiang Yu accepted Liu Bang's offer. With the treaty signed, Xiang Yu retreated eastward with his battle-weary army.



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However, one of Liu Bang's advisers wasn't happy with the ceasefire. "Now we own half of China, but our army feels depressed and defeated. Xiang Yu's soldiers are happily returning to their homeland, but they don't have enough supplies. They are exhausted and weakened. We should take this opportunity to wipe them out once and for all."

Liu Bang agreed.

The Han forces chased after Xiang Yu's army. Learning of their treacherous plan, Xiang Yu reversed course and attacked the Han forces. He quickly defeated them, but Liu Bang escaped death. Not one to give up, Liu Bang promised two other warlords large tracts of land if they would help him build an even stronger army to defeat Xiang Yu.



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More than six hundred thousand soldiers now prepared to attack Xiang Yu's army. They chased the Chu to a place called Gaixia. The huge Han army stretched several hundred miles—powerful and abundantly supplied.





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